

FILE NO. _____

STATE OF MINNESOTA

IN SUPREME COURT

In Re Petition for Disciplinary Action
against STEPHANIE ANNE ONORATO,
a Minnesota Attorney,
Registration No. 292473.

**STIPULATION FOR DISPENSING
WITH PANEL PROCEEDINGS,
FOR FILING PETITION FOR
DISCIPLINARY ACTION,
AND FOR DISCIPLINE**

THIS STIPULATION is entered into by and between Martin A. Cole, Director of the Office of Lawyers Professional Responsibility, hereinafter Director, and Stephanie Anne Onorato, attorney, hereinafter respondent.

WHEREAS, respondent has concluded it is in respondent's best interest to enter into this stipulation,

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY STIPULATED AND AGREED by and between the undersigned as follows:

1. It is understood that respondent has the right to have charges of unprofessional conduct heard by a Lawyers Professional Responsibility Board Panel prior to the filing of a petition for disciplinary action, as set forth in the Rules on Lawyers Professional Responsibility (RLPR). Pursuant to Rule 10(a), RLPR, the parties agree to dispense with Panel proceedings under Rule 9, RLPR, and respondent agrees to the immediate filing of a petition for disciplinary action, hereinafter petition, in the Minnesota Supreme Court.

2. Respondent understands that upon the filing of this stipulation and the petition, this matter will be of public record.

3. It is understood that respondent has certain rights pursuant to Rule 14, RLPR. Respondent waives these rights, which include the right to a hearing before a referee on the petition; to have the referee make findings and conclusions and a recommended disposition; to contest such findings and conclusions; and to a hearing before the Supreme Court upon the record, briefs and arguments. Respondent hereby admits service of the petition.

4. Respondent waives the right to answer and unconditionally admits the allegations of the petition which may be summarized as follows:

a. Respondent neglected a client's post-dissolution matter, issued two insufficient funds checks drawn on her personal account to the court in payment of the client's motion fee and failed to comply with the court's directives in the matter concerning submission of a proposed order and payment of the motion fee and penalties, in violation of Rules 1.1, 1.3, 3.4(c) and 8.4(d), Minnesota Rules of Professional Conduct (MRPC).

b. Respondent made false statements regarding the cause of her insufficient funds checks in letters to the court and the District Ethics Committee investigator, and redacted information from the bank statements she produced to the Director, without informing the Director that she had done so, in violation of Rules 3.4(b), 4.1, 8.1(a) and (b), and 8.4(c), MRPC, and Rule 25, RLPR.

c. Respondent deposited fee and cost advances she received from two clients into her business account, in violation of Rule 1.15(a), MRPC, Lawyers Professional Responsibility Board Opinion No. 15, and the Supreme Court's holding in *In re Lochow*, 469 N.W.2d 91 (Minn. 1991).

d. Respondent knowingly issued two dishonored checks on her business account and deposited them into her personal account to eliminate negative balances in that account, in violation of Rule 8.4(c) and (d), MRPC.

5. Respondent understands that based upon these admissions, this Court may impose any of the sanctions set forth in Rule 15(a)(1) - (9), RLPR, including making any disposition it deems appropriate. Respondent understands that by entering into this stipulation, the Director is not making any representations as to the sanction the Court will impose.

6. The Director and respondent join in recommending that:

a. The appropriate discipline is a 90-day suspension pursuant to Rule 15, RLPR.

c. Respondent be required to successfully complete the professional responsibility portion of the state bar examination within one year of the date of this Court's order.

d. Respondent comply with Rule 26, RLPR.

e. Respondent pay \$900 in costs pursuant to Rule 24(a), RLPR.

f. Pursuant to Rule 18(f), RLPR, respondent be reinstated following the expiration of the suspension provided that at least 15 days before the expiration of the suspension period, respondent files an affidavit with the Clerk of Appellate Courts and the Director's Office establishing that respondent is current with Continuing Legal Education, has fully complied with Rules 24 and 26, RLPR, and has satisfactorily completed all other conditions imposed by the Court in its decision.

g. Respondent be subject to a two-year period of probation following reinstatement, on the following terms and conditions:

i. Respondent shall cooperate fully with the Director's Office in its efforts to monitor compliance with the probation and promptly respond to the Director's correspondence by the due date. Respondent shall cooperate with the Director's investigation of any allegations of

unprofessional conduct that may come to the Director's attention. Upon the Director's request, respondent shall provide authorization for release of information and documentation to verify compliance with the terms of this probation.

ii. Respondent shall abide by the Minnesota Rules of Professional Conduct.

iii. Respondent shall be supervised by a licensed Minnesota attorney, appointed by the Director to monitor compliance with the terms of this probation. Respondent shall provide to the Director the names of four attorneys who have agreed to be nominated as respondent's supervisor within two weeks from the date of the Court's order approving this stipulation. If, after diligent effort, respondent is unable to locate a supervisor acceptable to the Director, the Director will seek to appoint a supervisor. Until a supervisor has signed a consent to supervise, the respondent shall on the first day of each month provide the Director with an inventory of active client files described in paragraph iv. below. Respondent shall make active client files available to the Director upon request.

iv. Respondent shall cooperate fully with the supervisor in his/her efforts to monitor compliance with this probation. Respondent shall contact the supervisor and schedule a minimum of one in-person meeting per calendar quarter. Respondent shall submit to the supervisor an inventory of all active client files by the first day of each month during the probation. With respect to each active file, the inventory shall disclose the client name, type of representation, date opened, most recent activity, next anticipated action, and anticipated closing date. Respondent's

supervisor shall file written reports with the Director at least quarterly, or at such more frequent intervals as may reasonably be requested by the Director.

v. Respondent shall initiate and maintain office procedures which ensure that there are prompt responses to correspondence, telephone calls, and other important communications from clients, courts and other persons interested in matters which respondent is handling, and which will ensure that respondent regularly reviews each and every file and completes legal matters on a timely basis.

vi. Respondent shall maintain law office and trust account books and records in compliance with Rule 1.15, MRPC, and Appendix 1 to the MRPC. These books and records include the following: client subsidiary ledger, checkbook register, monthly trial balances, monthly trust account reconciliation, bank statements, canceled checks, duplicate deposit slips and bank reports of interest, service charges and interest payments to the Lawyer Trust Account Board. Such books and records shall be made available to the Director within 30 days of the approval of this stipulation and thereafter shall be made available to the Director at such intervals as he deems necessary to determine compliance.

7. This stipulation is entered into by respondent freely and voluntarily, without any coercion, duress or representations by any person except as contained herein.

8. Respondent hereby acknowledges receipt of a copy of this stipulation.

9. Respondent has been advised of the right to be represented herein by an attorney but has freely chosen to appear *pro se*.

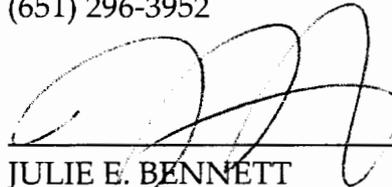
IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties executed this stipulation on the dates indicated below.

Dated: October 16, 2006.



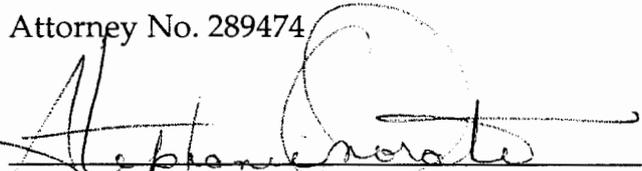
MARTIN A. COLE
DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF LAWYERS
PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY
Attorney No. 148416
1500 Landmark Towers
345 St. Peter Street
St. Paul, MN 55102-1218
(651) 296-3952

Dated: October 16, 2006.



JULIE E. BENNETT
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
Attorney No. 289474

Dated: 10/31, 2006.



STEPHANIE ANNE ONORATO
RESPONDENT
P.O. Box 359
Lonsdale, MN 55046
(507) 744-4970