


**State Bar Court of California
Hearing Department
San Francisco**

Counsel For The State Bar Susan I. Kagan Deputy Trial Counsel 180 Howard Street San Francisco, CA 94105 (415) 538-2037 Bar # 214209	Case Number (s) 03-O-01776	(for Court's use) PUBLIC MATTER FILED  JUL 25 2007 STATE BAR COURT CLERK'S OFFICE SAN FRANCISCO
Counsel For Respondent Paul W. Vapnek Townsend & Townsend & Crew LLP Two Embarcadero Center, Eighth Floor San Francisco, CA 94111-3834 (415) 576-0200 Bar # 36576 In the Matter Of: Thomas D. Lininger Bar # 145957 A Member of the State Bar of California (Respondent)	Submitted to: Assigned Judge STIPULATION RE FACTS, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND DISPOSITION AND ORDER APPROVING ACTUAL SUSPENSION <input type="checkbox"/> PREVIOUS STIPULATION REJECTED	

Note: All information required by this form and any additional information which cannot be provided in the space provided, must be set forth in an attachment to this stipulation under specific headings, e.g., "Facts," "Dismissals," "Conclusions of Law," "Supporting Authority," etc.

A. Parties' Acknowledgments:

- (1) Respondent is a member of the State Bar of California, admitted **March 28, 1990**.
- (2) The parties agree to be bound by the factual stipulations contained herein even if conclusions of law or disposition are rejected or changed by the Supreme Court.
- (3) All investigations or proceedings listed by case number in the caption of this stipulation are entirely resolved by this stipulation and are deemed consolidated. Dismissed charge(s)/count(s) are listed under "Dismissals." The stipulation consists of **9** pages, not including the order.
- (4) A statement of acts or omissions acknowledged by Respondent as cause or causes for discipline is included under "Facts."
- (5) Conclusions of law, drawn from and specifically referring to the facts are also included under "Conclusions of Law".
- (6) The parties must include supporting authority for the recommended level of discipline under the heading "Supporting Authority."



- (7) No more than 30 days prior to the filing of this stipulation, Respondent has been advised in writing of any pending investigation/proceeding not resolved by this stipulation, except for criminal investigations.
- (8) Payment of Disciplinary Costs—Respondent acknowledges the provisions of Bus. & Prof. Code §§6086.10 & 6140.7. (Check one option only):
- ☒ until costs are paid in full, Respondent will remain actually suspended from the practice of law unless relief is obtained per rule 284, Rules of Procedure.
 - ☐ costs to be paid in equal amounts prior to February 1 for the following membership years:
(hardship, special circumstances or other good cause per rule 284, Rules of Procedure)
 - ☐ costs waived in part as set forth in a separate attachment entitled "Partial Waiver of Costs"
 - ☐ costs entirely waived

B. Aggravating Circumstances [for definition, see Standards for Attorney Sanctions for Professional Misconduct, standard 1.2(b)]. Facts supporting aggravating circumstances are required.

- (1) ☐ **Prior record of discipline** [see standard 1.2(f)]
- (a) ☐ State Bar Court case # of prior case
 - (b) ☐ Date prior discipline effective
 - (c) ☐ Rules of Professional Conduct/ State Bar Act violations:
 - (d) ☐ Degree of prior discipline
 - (e) ☐ If Respondent has two or more incidents of prior discipline, use space provided below.
- (2) ☐ **Dishonesty:** Respondent's misconduct was surrounded by or followed by bad faith, dishonesty, concealment, overreaching or other violations of the State Bar Act or Rules of Professional Conduct.
- (3) ☐ **Trust Violation:** Trust funds or property were involved and Respondent refused or was unable to account to the client or person who was the object of the misconduct for improper conduct toward said funds or property.
- (4) ☐ **Harm:** Respondent's misconduct harmed significantly a client, the public or the administration of justice.
- (5) ☐ **Indifference:** Respondent demonstrated indifference toward rectification of or atonement for the consequences of his or her misconduct.
- (6) ☐ **Lack of Cooperation:** Respondent displayed a lack of candor and cooperation to victims of his/her misconduct or to the State Bar during disciplinary investigation or proceedings.
- (7) ☒ **Multiple/Pattern of Misconduct:** Respondent's current misconduct evidences multiple acts of wrongdoing or demonstrates a pattern of misconduct.
- (8) ☐ **No aggravating circumstances** are involved.

Additional aggravating circumstances:

C. Mitigating Circumstances [see standard 1.2(e)]. Facts supporting mitigating circumstances are required.

- (1) ☒ **No Prior Discipline:** Respondent has no prior record of discipline over many years of practice coupled with present misconduct which is not deemed serious.
- (2) ☒ **No Harm:** Respondent did not harm the client or person who was the object of the misconduct.
- (3) ☐ **Candor/Cooperation:** Respondent displayed spontaneous candor and cooperation with the victims of his/her misconduct and to the State Bar during disciplinary investigation and proceedings.
- (4) ☐ **Remorse:** Respondent promptly took objective steps spontaneously demonstrating remorse and recognition of the wrongdoing, which steps were designed to timely atone for any consequences of his/her misconduct.
- (5) ☐ **Restitution:** Respondent paid \$ on in restitution to without the threat or force of disciplinary, civil or criminal proceedings.
- (6) ☐ **Delay:** These disciplinary proceedings were excessively delayed. The delay is not attributable to Respondent and the delay prejudiced him/her.
- (7) ☐ **Good Faith:** Respondent acted in good faith.
- (8) ☐ **Emotional/Physical Difficulties:** At the time of the stipulated act or acts of professional misconduct Respondent suffered extreme emotional difficulties or physical disabilities which expert testimony would establish was directly responsible for the misconduct. The difficulties or disabilities were not the product of any illegal conduct by the member, such as illegal drug or substance abuse, and Respondent no longer suffers from such difficulties or disabilities.
- (9) ☐ **Severe Financial Stress:** At the time of the misconduct, Respondent suffered from severe financial stress which resulted from circumstances not reasonably foreseeable or which were beyond his/her control and which were directly responsible for the misconduct.
- (10) ☐ **Family Problems:** At the time of the misconduct, Respondent suffered extreme difficulties in his/her personal life which were other than emotional or physical in nature.
- (11) ☐ **Good Character:** Respondent's good character is attested to by a wide range of references in the legal and general communities who are aware of the full extent of his/her misconduct.
- (12) ☐ **Rehabilitation:** Considerable time has passed since the acts of professional misconduct occurred followed by convincing proof of subsequent rehabilitation.
- (13) ☐ **No mitigating circumstances** are involved.

Additional mitigating circumstances

D. Discipline:

(1) ☒ **Stayed Suspension:**

- (a) ☒ Respondent must be suspended from the practice of law for a period of **two (2) years**.
- i. ☒ and until Respondent shows proof satisfactory to the State Bar Court of rehabilitation and present fitness to practice and present learning and ability in the law pursuant to standard 1.4(c)(ii) Standards for Attorney Sanctions for Professional Misconduct.
- ii. ☐ and until Respondent pays restitution as set forth in the Financial Conditions form attached to this stipulation.
- iii. ☐ and until Respondent does the following:
- (b) ☒ The above-referenced suspension is stayed.

(2) ☒ **Probation:**

Respondent must be placed on probation for a period of **two (2) years**, which will commence upon the effective date of the Supreme Court order in this matter. (See rule 9.18, California Rules of Court)

(3) ☒ **Actual Suspension:**

- (a) ☒ Respondent must be actually suspended from the practice of law in the State of California for a period of **ninety (90) days**.
- i. ☐ and until Respondent shows proof satisfactory to the State Bar Court of rehabilitation and present fitness to practice and present learning and ability in the law pursuant to standard 1.4(c)(ii), Standards for Attorney Sanctions for Professional Misconduct
- ii. ☐ and until Respondent pays restitution as set forth in the Financial Conditions form attached to this stipulation.
- iii. ☐ and until Respondent does the following:

E. Additional Conditions of Probation:

- (1) ☐ If Respondent is actually suspended for two years or more, he/she must remain actually suspended until he/she proves to the State Bar Court his/her rehabilitation, fitness to practice, and learning and ability in general law, pursuant to standard 1.4(c)(ii), Standards for Attorney Sanctions for Professional Misconduct.
- (2) ☒ During the probation period, Respondent must comply with the provisions of the State Bar Act and Rules of Professional Conduct.
- (3) ☒ Within ten (10) days of any change, Respondent must report to the Membership Records Office of the State Bar and to the Office of Probation of the State Bar of California ("Office of Probation"), all changes of information, including current office address and telephone number, or other address for State Bar purposes, as prescribed by section 6002.1 of the Business and Professions Code.
- (4) ☒ Within thirty (30) days from the effective date of discipline, Respondent must contact the Office of Probation and schedule a meeting with Respondent's assigned probation deputy to discuss these terms and conditions of probation. Upon the direction of the Office of Probation, Respondent must meet with the probation deputy either in-person or by telephone. During the period of probation, Respondent must promptly meet with the probation deputy as directed and upon request.

- (5) ☒ Respondent must submit written quarterly reports to the Office of Probation on each January 10, April 10, July 10, and October 10 of the period of probation. Under penalty of perjury, Respondent must state whether Respondent has complied with the State Bar Act, the Rules of Professional Conduct, and all conditions of probation during the preceding calendar quarter. Respondent must also state whether there are any proceedings pending against him or her in the State Bar Court and if so, the case number and current status of that proceeding. If the first report would cover less than 30 days, that report must be submitted on the next quarter date, and cover the extended period.

In addition to all quarterly reports, a final report, containing the same information, is due no earlier than twenty (20) days before the last day of the period of probation and no later than the last day of probation.

- (6) ☐ Respondent must be assigned a probation monitor. Respondent must promptly review the terms and conditions of probation with the probation monitor to establish a manner and schedule of compliance. During the period of probation, Respondent must furnish to the monitor such reports as may be requested, in addition to the quarterly reports required to be submitted to the Office of Probation. Respondent must cooperate fully with the probation monitor.
- (7) ☒ Subject to assertion of applicable privileges, Respondent must answer fully, promptly and truthfully any inquiries of the Office of Probation and any probation monitor assigned under these conditions which are directed to Respondent personally or in writing relating to whether Respondent is complying or has complied with the probation conditions.
- (8) ☒ Within one (1) year of the effective date of the discipline herein, Respondent must provide to the Office of Probation satisfactory proof of attendance at a session of the Ethics School, and passage of the test given at the end of that session.
- ☐ No Ethics School recommended. Reason: .
- (9) ☐ Respondent must comply with all conditions of probation imposed in the underlying criminal matter and must so declare under penalty of perjury in conjunction with any quarterly report to be filed with the Office of Probation.
- (10) ☐ The following conditions are attached hereto and incorporated:
- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Substance Abuse Conditions | <input type="checkbox"/> Law Office Management Conditions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medical Conditions | <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Conditions |

F. Other Conditions Negotiated by the Parties:

- (1) ☒ **Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination:** Respondent must provide proof of passage of the Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination ("MPRE"), administered by the National Conference of Bar Examiners, to the Office of Probation during the period of actual suspension or within one year, whichever period is longer. **Failure to pass the MPRE results in actual suspension without further hearing until passage. But see rule 9.10(b), California Rules of Court, and rule 321(a)(1) & (c), Rules of Procedure.**
- ☐ No MPRE recommended. Reason: .
- (2) ☒ **Rule 9.20, California Rules of Court:** Respondent must comply with the requirements of rule 9.20, California Rules of Court, and perform the acts specified in subdivisions (a) and (c) of that rule within 30 and 40 calendar days, respectively, after the effective date of the Supreme Court's Order in this matter.
- (3) ☐ **Conditional Rule 9.20, California Rules of Court:** If Respondent remains actually suspended for 90 days or more, he/she must comply with the requirements of rule 9.20, California Rules of Court, and

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perform the acts specified in subdivisions (a) and (c) of that rule within 120 and 130 calendar days, respectively, after the effective date of the Supreme Court's Order in this matter.

- (4) ☐ **Credit for Interim Suspension [conviction referral cases only]:** Respondent will be credited for the period of his/her interim suspension toward the stipulated period of actual suspension. Date of commencement of interim suspension: .
- (5) ☐ **Other Conditions:**

Attachment language begins here (if any):

FACTS AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Facts

At all relevant times, respondent practiced personal injury law, resided in the Sacramento area and maintained his office in Citrus Heights, California.

In May 1997, in an effort to expand his law practice, respondent obtained telephone number (530) 893-0375 for the Chico area. From May 1997 through February 21, 1998, calls to that number were forwarded to respondent's Citrus Heights office.

On June 1, 1997, respondent hired non-attorney, Richard Gingery, Sr. ("Gingery") to work as a paralegal in his law practice. From June 1997 through January 1998, Gingery worked out of respondent's Citrus Heights office. In early 1998, Gingery moved to Chico, California.

On February 21, 1998, respondent leased an office space located at 574 Manzanita Avenue in Chico, California ("Chico office"). Respondent and Gingery found the office space together. Beginning on February 21, 1998, calls to telephone number (530) 893-0375 would go directly to the Chico office, when it was staffed. Otherwise, calls were forwarded to the Citrus Heights office telephone.

From February 21, 1998 through August 2000, Gingery ran respondent's Chico office. During that time period, with little or no supervision from respondent, Gingery signed up all of the Chico clients. As part of this task, Gingery would conduct client interviews and obtain client signatures on the contingency fee agreements. In addition, Gingery dealt with insurance companies and doctors, signed respondent's name to medical liens, prepared demand letters, negotiated settlements with insurance companies and prepared the settlement distribution statements and forwarded them to respondent for approval and distribution of the settlement funds.

Beginning in June 1997 through August 2000, respondent paid Gingery a salary. Beginning in June 1997 and through August 2000, in addition to the salary, respondent paid Gingery one-half of the net profits earned from the cases of respondent's Chico clients ("Chico clients"). The "net profits" represented gross attorney's fees earned from the Chico clients' cases, less Gingery's salary and Chico office expenses.

From June through December 1997, respondent paid Gingery \$15,000 in salary and \$33,388.95 in net profits, for a total of \$48,388.95. In 1998, respondent paid Gingery \$65,250 in salary and \$81,218 in net profits, for a total of \$146,408. In 1999, respondent paid Gingery \$75,000 in salary and \$16,150 in net profits, for a total of \$94,150.

On August 14, 2000, respondent terminated Gingery because he discovered that Gingery was directing respondent's prospective clients to Gingery's son, attorney Justin Gingery.

Conclusions of Law

By running respondent's Chico office as described above, with little or no supervision from respondent, Gingery, a non-lawyer, practiced law. By permitting Gingery to practice law, respondent aided and abetted Gingery's unauthorized practice of law in willful violation of rule 1-300(A) of the Rules of Professional Conduct.

By splitting the legal fees generated by the Chico office with Gingery, respondent shared a legal fee with a person who is not a lawyer in willful violation of rule 1-320(A) of the Rules of Professional Conduct.

WAIVER OF VARIANCE BETWEEN NOTICE OF DISCIPLINARY CHARGES AND STIPULATED FACTS AND CULPABILITY

The parties waive any variance between the Notice of Disciplinary Charges filed on December 13, 2006, and the facts and/or conclusions of law contained in this stipulation. Additionally, the parties waive the issuance of an amended

Notice of Disciplinary Charges. The parties further waive the right to the filing of a Notice of Disciplinary Charges and to a formal hearing on any charge not included in the pending Notice of Disciplinary Charges.

DISMISSALS

The parties respectfully request the Court to dismiss the following alleged violations in the interest of justice:

<u>Case No.</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Alleged Violation</u>
03-O-01776	Three	Section 6106 of the Business and Professions Code
03-O-01776	Four	Rule 1-400(C) of the Rules of Professional Conduct

PENDING PROCEEDINGS

The disclosure date referred to on page two, paragraph A (7) was July 3, 2007.

STATE BAR ETHICS SCHOOL

Because respondent has agreed to attend State Bar Ethics School as part of this stipulation, respondent may receive Minimum Continuing Legal Education credit upon the satisfactory completion of State Bar Ethics School.

SUPPORTING AUTHORITY

Standard 2.10 requires that a violation of any provision of the Rules of Professional Conduct not specified in the standards (e.g., rules 1-300(A) and 1-320(A)) shall result in reproof or suspension according to the gravity of the offense or harm, if any, to the victim, with due regard to the purpose of imposing discipline set forth in standard 1.3.

The proper discipline for aiding in the unauthorized practice of law and fee splitting is actual suspension. (See *In the Matter of Bragg* (Review Dept. 1997) 3 Cal. State Bar Ct. Rptr. 615; see also, *In re Arnoff* (1978) 22 Cal.3d 125; *In the Matter of Jones* (Review Dept. 1993) 2 Cal. State Bar Ct. Rptr. 411; *In the Matter of Scapa and Brown* (Review Dept. 1993) 2 Cal. State Bar Ct. Rptr. 635; *In the Matter of Nelson* (Review Dept. 1991) 1 Cal. State Bar Ct. Rptr. 178].)

Based on the length of respondent's discipline-free practice and the fact that the misconduct ceased in 2000, a 90-day actual suspension is the appropriate level of discipline in this matter.

FACTS SUPPORTING AGGRAVATING AND MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES

AGGRAVATING CIRCUMSTANCES

Aiding and abetting in the unauthorized practice of law and fee splitting with a non-lawyer for a period of three years demonstrates multiple acts of misconduct (std. 1.2(b)(ii).)

MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES

Standard 1.2(e)(i). Respondent has been in practice since 1990. He has no prior record of discipline.



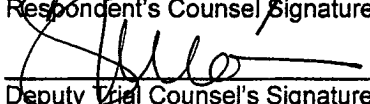
Standard 1.2(e)(iii). Respondent's clients were not harmed by his misconduct.

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In the Matter of Thomas D. Lininger	Case number(s): 03-O-01776
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SIGNATURE OF THE PARTIES

By their signatures below, the parties and their counsel, as applicable, signify their agreement with each of the recitations and each of the terms and conditions of this Stipulation Re Fact, Conclusions of Law and Disposition.

7.16.07		Thomas D. Lininger
Date	Respondent's Signature	Print Name
July 18, 2007		Paul W. Vapnek
Date	Respondent's Counsel Signature	Print Name
7/18/07		Susan I. Kagan
Date	Deputy Trial Counsel's Signature	Print Name

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In the Matter Of
Thomas D. Lininger

Case Number(s):
03-O-01776

ORDER

Finding the stipulation to be fair to the parties and that it adequately protects the public, IT IS ORDERED that the requested dismissal of counts/charges, if any, is GRANTED without prejudice, and:

- ☒ The stipulated facts and disposition are APPROVED and the DISCIPLINE RECOMMENDED to the Supreme Court.
- ☐ The stipulated facts and disposition are APPROVED AS MODIFIED as set forth below, and the DISCIPLINE IS RECOMMENDED to the Supreme Court.
- ☐ All Hearing dates are vacated.

The parties are bound by the stipulation as approved unless: 1) a motion to withdraw or modify the stipulation, filed within 15 days after service of this order, is granted; or 2) this court modifies or further modifies the approved stipulation. (See rule 135(b), Rules of Procedure.) **The effective date of this disposition is the effective date of the Supreme Court order herein, normally 30 days after file date. (See rule 9.18(a), California Rules of Court.)**

Date

July 23, 2007

Judge of the State Bar Court

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE
[Rule 62(b), Rules Proc.; Code Civ. Proc., § 1013a(4)]

I am a Case Administrator of the State Bar Court of California. I am over the age of eighteen and not a party to the within proceeding. Pursuant to standard court practice, in the City and County of San Francisco, on July 25, 2007, I deposited a true copy of the following document(s):

**STIPULATION RE FACTS, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND DISPOSITION
AND ORDER APPROVING**

in a sealed envelope for collection and mailing on that date as follows:

- ☒ by first-class mail, with postage thereon fully prepaid, through the United States Postal Service at San Francisco, California, addressed as follows:

**PAUL W. VAPNEK
TOWNSEND & TOWNSEND & CREW
2 EMBARCADERO CTR 8FL
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94111 - 3834**

- ☒ by interoffice mail through a facility regularly maintained by the State Bar of California addressed as follows:

SUSAN I. KAGAN, Enforcement, San Francisco

I hereby certify that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed in San Francisco, California, on **July 25, 2007**.



Bernadette C. O. Molina
Case Administrator
State Bar Court