

PUBLIC MATTER

FILED

JUN 20 2017

**STATE BAR COURT CLERK'S OFFICE
SAN FRANCISCO**

**STATE BAR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
HEARING DEPARTMENT - SAN FRANCISCO**

In the Matter of)	Case No. 16-O-12809-LMA
)	
VI KATERINA TRAN,)	DECISION AND ORDER OF
)	INVOLUNTARY INACTIVE
A Member of the State Bar, No. 244412.)	ENROLLMENT
_____)	

In this matter, respondent Vi Katerina Tran (Respondent) was charged with four counts of misconduct stemming from a single client matter. Respondent failed to participate either in person or through counsel, and her default was entered. The Office of Chief Trial Counsel of the State Bar of California (State Bar) filed a petition for disbarment under rule 5.85 of the Rules of Procedure of the State Bar.¹

Rule 5.85 provides the procedure to follow when an attorney fails to participate in a disciplinary proceeding after receiving adequate notice and opportunity. The rule provides that if an attorney's default is entered for failing to respond to the notice of disciplinary charges (NDC), and the attorney fails to have the default set aside or vacated within 90 days, the State Bar will file a petition requesting the court to recommend the attorney's disbarment.²

kwiktag®

226 150 614



¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all references to rules are to this source.

² If the court determines that any due process requirements are not satisfied, including adequate notice to the attorney, it must deny the petition for disbarment and take other appropriate action to ensure that the matter is promptly resolved. (Rule 5.85(F)(2).)

In the instant case, the court concludes that the requirements of rule 5.85 have been satisfied, and therefore, grants the petition and recommends that Respondent be disbarred from the practice of law.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Respondent was admitted to practice law in this state on November 22, 2006, and has been a member since then.

Procedural Requirements Have Been Satisfied

On December 9, 2016, the State Bar properly filed and served an NDC on Respondent by certified mail, return receipt requested, at her membership records address. The NDC notified Respondent that her failure to participate in the proceeding would result in a disbarment recommendation. (Rule 5.41.) The NDC was returned to the State Bar by the U.S. Postal Service as undeliverable.

In addition, reasonable diligence was used to notify Respondent of this proceeding. The State Bar attempted to contact Respondent without success. These efforts included sending a State Bar investigator to Respondent's office,³ mailing a copy of the NDC to Respondent by regular first class mail at her official membership records address; emailing a copy of the NDC to Respondent at her membership records email address; and calling Respondent at her membership records telephone number.

Respondent failed to file a response to the NDC. On January 12, 2017, the State Bar filed and properly served a motion for entry of Respondent's default. The motion complied with all the requirements for a default, including a supporting declaration of reasonable diligence by the deputy trial counsel declaring the additional steps taken to provide notice to Respondent. (Rule 5.80.) The motion also notified Respondent that if she did not timely move to set aside her

³ The investigator went to Respondent's office on June 6, 2016 – prior to the filing of the NDC.

default, the court would recommend her disbarment. Respondent did not file a response to the motion, and her default was entered on January 30, 2017. The order entering the default was served on Respondent at her membership records address by first class mail.⁴ The court also ordered Respondent's involuntary inactive enrollment as a member of the State Bar under Business and Professions Code section 6007, subdivision (e), effective three days after service of the order, and she has remained inactively enrolled since that time.

Respondent did not seek to have her default set aside or vacated. (Rule 5.83(C)(1) [attorney has 90 days to file motion to set aside default].) On May 9, 2017, the State Bar filed the petition for disbarment. As required by rule 5.85(A), the State Bar reported in the petition that: (1) it has had no contact with Respondent since the default was entered; (2) Respondent has other disciplinary matters pending; (3) Respondent has no prior record of discipline; and (4) the Client Security Fund has not made any payments resulting from Respondent's conduct. Respondent did not respond to the petition for disbarment or move to set aside or vacate the default. The case was submitted for decision on June 6, 2017.

The Admitted Factual Allegations Warrant the Imposition of Discipline

Upon entry of Respondent's default, the factual allegations in the NDC are deemed admitted and no further proof is required to establish the truth of such facts. (Rule 5.82.) As set forth below in greater detail, the factual allegations in the NDC support the conclusion that Respondent is culpable as charged and, therefore, violated a statute, rule, or court order that would warrant the imposition of discipline. (Rule 5.85(F)(1)(d).)

⁴ This order should have been served by certified mail, return receipt requested. (See rule 5.80(D).) This error, however, was not prejudicial to Respondent considering that all of the court's mailings to her official membership records address were returned to the court by the U.S. Postal Service as undeliverable.

Case No. 16-O-12809 – The Bansel Matter

Count One – Respondent willfully violated Business and Professions Code section 6068, subdivision (m) (failure to respond to client inquiries) by failing to promptly respond to numerous reasonable client status inquiries.

Count Two – Respondent willfully violated rule 3-700(A)(2) of the Rules of Professional Conduct (improper withdrawal) by terminating her employment without notice to her clients.

Count Three – Respondent willfully violated rule 3-700(D)(1) of the Rules of Professional Conduct (failing to release file) by failing to promptly turn over her clients' papers and property upon her clients' request following termination of employment.

Count Four – Respondent willfully violated Business and Professions Code section 6068, subdivision (i) (failing to cooperate in a disciplinary investigation) by failing to provide a substantive response to the allegations in a disciplinary investigation after being contacted by the State Bar.

Disbarment is Recommended

Based on the above, the court concludes that the requirements of rule 5.85(F) have been satisfied, and Respondent's disbarment is recommended. In particular:

- (1) the NDC was properly served on Respondent under rule 5.25;
- (2) reasonable diligence was used to notify Respondent of the proceedings prior to the entry of her default;
- (3) the default was properly entered under rule 5.80; and
- (4) the factual allegations in the NDC deemed admitted by the entry of the default support a finding that Respondent violated a statute, rule, or court order that would warrant the imposition of discipline.

Despite adequate notice and opportunity, Respondent failed to participate in this disciplinary proceeding. As set forth in the Rules of Procedure of the State Bar, the court recommends disbarment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Disbarment

The court recommends that respondent Vi Katerina Tran be disbarred from the practice of law in the State of California and that her name be stricken from the roll of attorneys.

California Rules of Court, Rule 9.20

The court also recommends that Respondent be ordered to comply with the requirements of California Rules of Court, rule 9.20, and to perform the acts specified in subdivisions (a) and (c) of that rule within 30 and 40 days, respectively, after the effective date of the Supreme Court order in this proceeding.

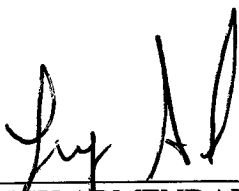
Costs

The court further recommends that costs be awarded to the State Bar in accordance with Business and Professions Code section 6086.10, such costs being enforceable both as provided in Business and Professions Code section 6140.7 and as a money judgment.

ORDER OF INVOLUNTARY INACTIVE ENROLLMENT

In accordance with Business and Professions Code section 6007, subdivision (c)(4), the court orders that Vi Katerina Tran, State Bar number 244412, be involuntarily enrolled as an inactive member of the State Bar of California, effective three calendar days after the service of this decision and order. (Rule 5.111(D).)

Dated: June 20, 2017



LUCY ARMENDARIZ
Judge of the State Bar Court

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

[Rules Proc. of State Bar; Rule 5.27(B); 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 June 20, 2017, I deposited a true copy of the following document(s):

DECISION AND ORDER OF INVOLUNTARY INACTIVE ENROLLMENT

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:

VI K. TRAN
LAW OFFICES OF VI K. TRAN
1625 THE ALAMEDA STE 800
SAN JOSE, CA 95126

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

ERICA L. M. DENNINGS, Enforcement, San Francisco

I hereby certify that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed in San Francisco, California, on June 20, 2017.



Bernadette Molina
Case Administrator
State Bar Court