State Bar Court of California **Hearing Department** Los Angeles **ACTUAL SUSPENSION** Counsel For The State Bar Case Number(s): For Court use only 16-0-14533 **Drew Massey** 16-O-16600 PUBLIC MATTER 845 S. Figueroa Street 16-O-16775 Los Angeles, CA 90017 Tel: (213) 765-1204 Bar # 244350 FEB -6 2017 Counsel For Respondent STATE BAR COURT CLERK'S OFFICE Scott Well LOS ANGELES 2122 N Broadway Santa Ana, CA 92706 Tel: (714) 283-0600 Submitted to: Settlement Judge Bar # 134322 STIPULATION RE FACTS, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND **DISPOSITION AND ORDER APPROVING** In the Matter of: LESLIE VICTOR AMPONSAH **ACTUAL SUSPENSION** Bar # 164434 ☐ PREVIOUS STIPULATION REJECTED A Member of the State Bar of California (Respondent)

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 January 14, 1988.
- (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 **14** 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".

(Effective July 1, 2015)



(Do	not write	e above this line.)				
(6)		e parties must include supporting authority for the recommended level of discipline under the heading apporting Authority."				
(7)		more than 30 days prior to the filing of this stipulation, Respondent has been advised in writing of any ding investigation/proceeding not resolved by this stipulation, except for criminal investigations.				
(8)		yment of Disciplinary Costs—Respondent acknowledges the provisions of Bus. & Prof. Code §§6086.10 & 10.7. (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 5.130, Rules of Procedure. Costs are to be paid in equal amounts prior to February 1 for the following membership years: three billing cycles following the effective date of discipline . (Hardship, special circumstances or other good cause per rule 5.132, Rules of Procedure.) If Respondent fails to pay any installment as described above, or as may be modified by the State Bar Court, the remaining balance is due and payable immediately. Costs are waived in part as set forth in a separate attachment entitled "Partial Waiver of Costs". Costs are entirely waived.				
		ravating Circumstances [Standards for Attorney Sanctions for Professional onduct, standards 1.2(h) & 1.5]. Facts supporting aggravating circumstances are ired.				
(1)	□ (a)	Prior record of discipline 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)		Intentional/Bad Faith/Dishonesty: Respondent's misconduct was dishonest, intentional, or surrounded by, or followed by bad faith.				
(3)		Misrepresentation: Respondent's misconduct was surrounded by, or followed by, misrepresentation.				
(4)		Concealment: Respondent's misconduct was surrounded by, or followed by, concealment.				
(5)		Overreaching: Respondent's misconduct was surrounded by, or followed by, overreaching.				
(6)		Uncharged Violations: Respondent's conduct involves uncharged violations of the Business and Professions Code, or the Rules of Professional Conduct.				
(7)		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.				

(Do n	ot write	e above this line.)
(8)		Harm: Respondent's misconduct harmed significantly a client, the public, or the administration of justice.
(9) (10)		Indifference: Respondent demonstrated indifference toward rectification of or atonement for the consequences of his or her misconduct. Candor/Lack of Cooperation: Respondent displayed a lack of candor and cooperation to victims of his/her misconduct, or to the State Bar during disciplinary investigations or proceedings.
(11)	\boxtimes	Multiple Acts: Respondent's current misconduct evidences multiple acts of wrongdoing. See page 11.
(12)		Pattern: Respondent's current misconduct demonstrates a pattern of misconduct.
(13)		Restitution: Respondent failed to make restitution.
(14)		Vulnerable Victim: The victim(s) of Respondent's misconduct was/were highly vulnerable.
(15)		No aggravating circumstances are involved.
Addi	tiona	al aggravating circumstances:
	_	ating Circumstances [see standards 1.2(i) & 1.6]. Facts supporting mitigating mstances 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 likely to recur.
(2)		No Harm: Respondent did not harm the client, the public, or the administration of justice.
(3)		Candor/Cooperation: Respondent displayed spontaneous candor and cooperation with the victims of his/her misconduct or `to the State Bar during disciplinary investigations and proceedings.
(4)		Remorse: Respondent promptly took objective steps demonstrating spontaneous 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 with a good faith belief that was honestly held and objectively reasonable.
(8)		Emotional/Physical Difficulties: At the time of the stipulated act or acts of professional misconduct Respondent suffered extreme emotional difficulties or physical or mental 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 the difficulties or disabilities no longer pose a risk that Respondent will commit misconduct.

(Do no	ot write	e abov	e this line.)				
(9)		whic	ere Financial Stress: At the time of the misconduct, Respondent suffered from severe financial stress h resulted from circumstances not reasonably foreseeable or which were beyond his/her control and h 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 extraordinarily 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 ollowed by convincing proof of subsequent rehabilitation.				
(13)		No r	nitigating circumstances are involved.				
Addi	tiona	al mit	igating circumstances:				
	Α	bsen	ce of prior misconduct and prefiling stipulation. See page 11.				
D. D	isci	plin	9:				
(1)	\boxtimes	Stay	ed Suspension:				
	(a)	\boxtimes	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 fitness to practice and present learning and ability in the general law pursuant to standard 1.2(c)(1) 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)	\boxtimes	The above-referenced suspension is stayed.				
(2)	\boxtimes	Prob	pation:				
		espondent must be placed on probation for a period of two (2) years , which will commence upon the effective te of the Supreme Court order in this matter. (See rule 9.18, California Rules of Court)					
(3)	\boxtimes	Actu	al Suspension:				
	(a)	\boxtimes	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 fitness to practice and present learning and ability in the general law pursuant to standard 1.2(c)(1), 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:				

			A		_	4.5
- /	tibba	ınnal	Conditi	one of	Pro	hation

		·				
(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 present learning and ability in the general law, pursuant to standard 1.2(c)(1), Standards for Attorney Sanctions for Professional Misconduct.				
(2)	\boxtimes	During the probation period, Respondent must comply with the provisions of the State Bar Act and Rules of Professional Conduct.				
(3)	\boxtimes	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 Probatic 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)	\boxtimes	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:				
		☐ Substance Abuse Conditions ☐ Law Office Management Conditions				

(Do r	ot write	above	this line.)	 	
			Medical Conditions	\boxtimes	Financial Conditions
F. C	Other	Cor	nditions Negotiated by the Parties	s :	
(1)		the Cor one furt	Multistate Professional Responsibility Example and American Respon	mination Probation to pas	on: Respondent must provide proof of passage of in ("MPRE"), administered by the National tion during the period of actual suspension or within is the MPRE results in actual suspension without), California Rules of Court, and rule 5.162(A) &
			No MPRE recommended. Reason:		
(2)		Cal	ifornia Rules of Court, and perform the acts	s speci	must comply with the requirements of rule 9.20 , fied in subdivisions (a) and (c) of that rule within 30 e date of the Supreme Court's Order in this matter.
(3)		day perl	s or more, he/she must comply with the red	quirem ınd (c)	If Respondent remains actually suspended for 90 ents of rule 9.20 , California Rules of Court, and of that rule within 120 and 130 calendar days, Court's Order in this matter.
(4)		peri	dit for Interim Suspension [conviction round in interim suspension toward the interim suspension:		cases only]: Respondent will be credited for the ated period of actual suspension. Date of
(5)		Oth	er Conditions:		
	-				

	the Matter of: ESLIE VICTOR AMPONSAH		Case Number(s): 16-O-14533; 16-O-16660; 16-O-1677	75
Fir	nancial Conditions			
а.	Restitution			
	payee(s) listed below. If the C	Client Security Fund (" amount(s) listed below	cipal amount, plus interest of 10% per CSF") has reimbursed one or more of w, Respondent must also pay restitutio	the payee(s) for a
	Payee	Principal Amount	Interest Accrues From	
	Respondent must pay above-r Probation not later than	referenced restitution and a	and provide satisfactory proof of paym	ent to the Office of
).	Installment Restitution Payment	ts		
).	Respondent must pay the abo must provide satisfactory proo as otherwise directed by the O	ve-referenced restitut f of payment to the Of office of Probation. No al), Respondent must i	ion on the payment schedule set forth ffice of Probation with each quarterly p b later than 30 days prior to the expirat make any necessary final payment(s)	robation report, or ion of the period
).	Respondent must pay the abo must provide satisfactory proo as otherwise directed by the O probation (or period of reprova	ve-referenced restitut f of payment to the Of office of Probation. No al), Respondent must i uding interest, in full.	ffice of Probation with each quarterly polater than 30 days prior to the expirate make any necessary final payment(s)	robation report, or ion of the period
).	Respondent must pay the abo must provide satisfactory proo as otherwise directed by the O probation (or period of reprovathe payment of restitution, inclination)	ve-referenced restitut f of payment to the Of office of Probation. No al), Respondent must i uding interest, in full.	ffice of Probation with each quarterly polater than 30 days prior to the expirate make any necessary final payment(s)	robation report, or ion of the period
).	Respondent must pay the abo must provide satisfactory proo as otherwise directed by the O probation (or period of reprovathe payment of restitution, inclination)	ve-referenced restitut f of payment to the Of office of Probation. No al), Respondent must i uding interest, in full.	ffice of Probation with each quarterly polater than 30 days prior to the expirate make any necessary final payment(s)	robation report, or ion of the period
) .	Respondent must pay the abo must provide satisfactory proo as otherwise directed by the O probation (or period of reprovathe payment of restitution, inclination)	ve-referenced restitut f of payment to the Of office of Probation. No al), Respondent must i uding interest, in full.	ffice of Probation with each quarterly polater than 30 days prior to the expirate make any necessary final payment(s)	robation report, o ion of the period
) .	Respondent must pay the abo must provide satisfactory proo as otherwise directed by the O probation (or period of reprovathe payment of restitution, incl. Payee/CSF (as applicable)	ve-referenced restitute f of payment to the Of Office of Probation. No al), Respondent must i uding interest, in full. Minimum Payment installment as describ	ffice of Probation with each quarterly polater than 30 days prior to the expirat make any necessary final payment(s) Amount Payment Frequency Deed above, or as may be modified by the	robation report, o ion of the period on in order to comple
	Respondent must pay the abo must provide satisfactory proo as otherwise directed by the O probation (or period of reprovathe payment of restitution, incl. Payee/CSF (as applicable) If Respondent fails to pay any	ve-referenced restitute f of payment to the Of Office of Probation. No al), Respondent must i uding interest, in full. Minimum Payment installment as describ	ffice of Probation with each quarterly polater than 30 days prior to the expirat make any necessary final payment(s) Amount Payment Frequency Deed above, or as may be modified by the	robation report, of ion of the period in order to comple
). :-	Respondent must pay the abo must provide satisfactory proo as otherwise directed by the O probation (or period of reprovathe payment of restitution, incl. Payee/CSF (as applicable) If Respondent fails to pay any the remaining balance is due at Client Funds Certificate 1. If Respondent possess report, Respondent me	ve-referenced restitute of payment to the Of payment to the Office of Probation. Note of the Probation of th	ffice of Probation with each quarterly polater than 30 days prior to the expirat make any necessary final payment(s) Amount Payment Frequency Deed above, or as may be modified by the	robation report, of ion of the period in order to complete to comp
·-	Respondent must pay the abo must provide satisfactory proo as otherwise directed by the O probation (or period of reprovathe payment of restitution, inclinate payment of restitution, inclinate payment fails to pay any the remaining balance is due at Client Funds Certificate 1. If Respondent possess report, Respondent me public accountant or o a. Respondent has me California, at a braining property of the country of the co	ve-referenced restitute for payment to the Of Diffice of Probation. Noted in the Probation of Pr	ffice of Probation with each quarterly polater than 30 days prior to the expirate make any necessary final payment(s). Amount Payment Frequency Deed above, or as may be modified by the live of the period covered by a rired report a certificate from Respondental approved by the Office of Probation ount in a bank authorized to do businese State of California, and that such account in a bank authorized to do businese State of California, and that such account in a bank authorized to do businese State of California, and that such account in a bank authorized to do businese State of California, and that such account in a bank authorized to do businese State of California, and that such account in a bank authorized to do businese State of California, and that such account in a bank authorized to do businese State of California, and that such accounts in the control of	robation report, of ion of the period in order to complet in order to continuous in order to complete in order to comple
-	Respondent must pay the abo must provide satisfactory proo as otherwise directed by the O probation (or period of reprovathe payment of restitution, inclinate payment of restitution, inclinate payment fails to pay any the remaining balance is due at Client Funds Certificate 1. If Respondent possess report, Respondent me public accountant or o a. Respondent has me California, at a braining property of the country of the co	ve-referenced restitute for payment to the Of Diffice of Probation. Noted in the Probation of the Probation	ffice of Probation with each quarterly polater than 30 days prior to the expirate make any necessary final payment(s). Amount Payment Frequency Deed above, or as may be modified by the live of the period covered by a rired report a certificate from Respondental approved by the Office of Probation ount in a bank authorized to do businese State of California, and that such account in a bank authorized to do businese State of California, and that such account in a bank authorized to do businese State of California, and that such account in a bank authorized to do businese State of California, and that such account in a bank authorized to do businese State of California, and that such account in a bank authorized to do businese State of California, and that such account in a bank authorized to do businese State of California, and that such accounts in the control of	robation report, of ion of the period in order to complete to comp
·	Respondent must pay the abo must provide satisfactory proo as otherwise directed by the O probation (or period of reprovathe payment of restitution, inclinate payment of restitution, inclinate payment fails to pay any the remaining balance is due at Client Funds Certificate 1. If Respondent possess report, Respondent me public accountant or o a. Respondent has me California, at a braining property of the country of the co	ve-referenced restitute for payment to the Of Diffice of Probation. Noted in the Probation of the Probation	ffice of Probation with each quarterly polater than 30 days prior to the expirate make any necessary final payment(s). Amount Payment Frequency Deed above, or as may be modified by the live of the period covered by a rired report a certificate from Respondental approved by the Office of Probation ount in a bank authorized to do businese State of California, and that such account in a bank authorized to do businese State of California, and that such account in a bank authorized to do businese State of California, and that such account in a bank authorized to do businese State of California, and that such account in a bank authorized to do businese State of California, and that such account in a bank authorized to do businese State of California, and that such account in a bank authorized to do businese State of California, and that such accounts in the control of	robation report, of ion of the period in order to complete to comp

- b. Respondent has kept and maintained the following:
 - i. A written ledger for each client on whose behalf funds are held that sets forth:
 - 1. the name of such client;
 - 2. the date, amount and source of all funds received on behalf of such client:
 - 3. the date, amount, payee and purpose of each disbursement made on behalf of such client; and,
 - 4. the current balance for such client.
 - ii. a written journal for each client trust fund account that sets forth:
 - 1. the name of such account:
 - 2. the date, amount and client affected by each debit and credit; and,
 - 3. the current balance in such account.
- iii. all bank statements and cancelled checks for each client trust account; and,
- iv. each monthly reconciliation (balancing) of (i), (ii), and (iii), above, and if there are any differences between the monthly total balances reflected in (i), (ii), and (iii), above, the reasons for the differences.
- c. Respondent has maintained a written journal of securities or other properties held for clients that specifies:
 - i. each item of security and property held;
 - ii. the person on whose behalf the security or property is held;
 - iii. the date of receipt of the security or property;
 - iv. the date of distribution of the security or property; and,
 - v. the person to whom the security or property was distributed.
- 2. If Respondent does not possess any client funds, property or securities during the entire period covered by a report, Respondent must so state under penalty of perjury in the report filed with the Office of Probation for that reporting period. In this circumstance, Respondent need not file the accountant's certificate described above.
- 3. The requirements of this condition are in addition to those set forth in rule 4-100, Rules of Professional Conduct.

d. Client Trust Accounting School

Within one (1) year of the effective date of the discipline herein, Respondent must supply to the Office of Probation satisfactory proof of attendance at a session of the Ethics School Client Trust Accounting School, within the same period of time, and passage of the test given at the end of that session.

ATTACHMENT TO

STIPULATION RE FACTS, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND DISPOSITION

IN THE MATTER OF:

LESLIE VICTOR AMPONSAH

CASE NUMBERS:

16-O-14533; 16-O-16600; 16-O-16775

FACTS AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW.

Respondent admits that the following facts are true and that he is culpable of violations of the specified statutes and/or Rules of Professional Conduct.

Case No. 16-O-14533 (State Bar Investigation)

FACTS:

- 1. During the relevant time period, Respondent maintained a Client Trust Account at Wells Fargo Bank, account number XXXXX0247 ("Wells Fargo CTA").
- 2. On April 1, 2016, Respondent issued check number 1031 drawn on his Wells Fargo CTA in the amount of \$6,025 and made payable to Pars Business Lending. When the check was presented for payment, his account was overdrawn by \$11.50. Wells Fargo honored the check despite the insufficiency.
 - 3. Respondent thereafter placed additional funds in the CTA to eliminate the deficiency.
- 4. Between February 12, 2016 and April 29, 2016, Respondent issued numerous checks from his Wells Fargo CTA for business and personal expenses as follows:

DATE OF CHECK	PAYEE	CHECK NUMBER	AMOUNT
2/12/2016	Avista Group	1028	\$950
2/26/2016	Avista Group	1002	\$3,000
3/4/2016	Avista Group	1001	\$7,000
3/11/2016	Pars Business Lending	1007	\$4,550
3/14/2016	Pars Business Lending	1003	\$500
3/15/2016	Pars Business Lending	1026	\$500
3/18/2016	Pars Business Lending	1004	\$6,000
3/21/2016	Pars Business Lending	1005	\$1,500
3/25/2016	Premier Marketing	1027	\$2,700
3/29/2016	Pars Business Lending	1029	\$1,750
3/30/2016	Pars Business Lending	1030	\$4,000
4/1/2016	Pars Business Lending	1031	\$6,025
4/4/2016	Pars Business Lending	1032	\$1,900
4/8/2016	Pars Business Lending	1034	\$2,500
4/11/2016	Pars Business Lending	1038	\$2,100
4/19/2016	Pars Business Lending	1037	\$750

,			
4/29/2016	Pars Business Lending	1040	\$3,900

5. None of the above payments were made on behalf of a client or using client funds. Instead, Respondent had deposited personal or business funds into his Wells Fargo CTA to pay these expenses.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

6. By commingling personal and business funds into his Wells Fargo CTA, and by using his Wells Fargo CTA to pay for personal and business expenses, Respondent willfully violation Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 4-100(A).

Case No. 16-O-16600 (State Bar Investigation)

FACTS:

- 7. During the relevant time period, Respondent maintained a separate client trust account at Bank of America, account number XXXXXXXXX6934 ("Bank of America CTA").
- 8. On September 13, 2016, a check drawn on Respondent's Bank of America CTA in the amount of \$4,300 was presented for payment. It was paid on insufficient funds and resulted in an overdraft of \$138.74.
- 9. On September 15, 2016, a check drawn on Respondent's Bank of America CTA in the amount of \$7,800 was presented for payment. It was paid on insufficient funds and resulted in an overdraft of \$938.74.
- 10. Respondent subsequently deposited personal or business funds into his Bank of America CTA in order to cure the deficiencies.
- 11. The checks drawn on Respondent's Bank of America CTA were for personal or business expenses. There were no client funds in the Bank of America CTA. Instead, Respondent had placed business or personal funds into the Bank of America CTA.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

12. By commingling personal and business funds into his Bank of America CTA, and by using his Bank of America CTA to pay for personal and business expenses, Respondent willfully violation Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 4-100(A).

Case No. 16-O-16775 (State Bar Investigation)

FACTS:

- 13. During the relevant time period, Respondent maintained a second client trust account at Wells Fargo bank, account number XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX0122 ("Second Wells Fargo CTA").
- 14. On September 15, 2016, a check drawn on Respondent's Second Wells Fargo CTA in the amount of \$2,110 was presented for payment. The check was returned due to insufficient funds.

- 15. On September 21, 2016, a check drawn on Respondent's Second Wells Fargo CTA in the amount of \$1,750 was presented for payment. It was paid on insufficient funds and resulted in an overdraft of \$5.67.
- 16. Respondent subsequently made good on the unpaid check and added additional funds to his Second Wells Fargo CTA to cure the deficiency. The Second Wells Fargo CTA was subsequently closed.
- 17. The checks drawn on Respondent's Second Wells Fargo CTA were for personal or business expenses. There were no client funds in the Second Wells Fargo CTA. Instead, Respondent had placed business or personal funds into the Second Wells Fargo CTA.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

18. By commingling personal and business funds into his Second Wells Fargo CTA, and by using his Second Wells Fargo CTA to pay for personal and business expenses, Respondent willfully violation Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 4-100(A).

AGGRAVATING CIRCUMSTANCES.

Multiple Acts of Wrongdoing (Std. 1.5(b)). Respondent has commingled his personal funds in his client trust account. He has written at least seventeen checks for business or personal purposes. Multiple acts of wrongdoing are an aggravating factor. (In the Matter of Elkins (Review Dept. 2009) 5 Cal. State Bar Ct. Rptr. 160, 168.)

MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES.

Prefiling Stipulation (if the parties reach a resolution through a stipulation). Respondent admitted to the misconduct and entered into this stipulation fully resolving this matter prior to the filing of disciplinary charges. Respondent's cooperation at this early stage will save the State Bar significant resources and time. Respondent's cooperation in this regard is a mitigating factor in this resolution (Silva-Vidor v. State Bar (1989) 49 Cal.3d 1071, 1079 (where mitigation credit was given for entering into a stipulation as to facts and culpability).)

Absence of Prior Misconduct. Respondent has been admitted to practice law since June 1993 and has been active at all times since then. Respondent has been discipline free for 22 years of practice from admission to the earliest misconduct herein (February 2016) and is therefore entitled to significant mitigation. (*Hawes v. State Bar* (1990) 51 Cal.3d 587, 596.)

AUTHORITIES SUPPORTING DISCIPLINE.

The Standards for Attorney Sanctions for Professional Misconduct "set forth a means for determining the appropriate disciplinary sanction in a particular case and to ensure consistency across cases dealing with similar misconduct and surrounding circumstances." (Rules Proc. of State Bar, tit. IV, Stds. for Atty. Sanctions for Prof. Misconduct, std. 1.1. All further references to standards are to this source.) The standards help fulfill the primary purposes of discipline, which include: protection of the public, the courts and the legal profession; maintenance of the highest professional standards; and preservation of public confidence in the legal profession. (See std. 1.1; *In re Morse* (1995) 11 Cal.4th 184, 205.)

Although not binding, the standards are entitled to "great weight" and should be followed "whenever possible" in determining level of discipline. (In re Silverton (2005) 36 Cal.4th 81, 92, quoting In re Brown (1995) 12 Cal.4th 205, 220 and In re Young (1989) 49 Cal.3d 257, 267, fn. 11.) Adherence to the standards in the great majority of cases serves the valuable purpose of eliminating disparity and assuring consistency, that is, the imposition of similar attorney discipline for instances of similar attorney misconduct. (In re Naney (1990) 51 Cal.3d 186, 190.) If a recommendation is at the high end or low end of a standard, an explanation must be given as to how the recommendation was reached. (Std. 1.1.) "Any disciplinary recommendation that deviates from the Standards must include clear reasons for the departure." (Std. 1.1; Blair v. State Bar (1989) 49 Cal.3d 762, 776, fn. 5.)

In determining whether to impose a sanction greater or less than that specified in a given standard, in addition to the factors set forth in the specific standard, consideration is to be given to the primary purposes of discipline; the balancing of all aggravating and mitigating circumstances; the type of misconduct at issue; whether the client, public, legal system or profession was harmed; and the member's willingness and ability to conform to ethical responsibilities in the future. (Stds. 1.7(b) and (c).)

Standard 2.2(a) provides that an actual suspension of three months is the presumed sanction for commingling. Respondent here commingled his personal funds in a CTA and therefore a three month actual suspension is appropriate.

While Respondent does have a significant period of discipline-free prior practice, the ongoing misuse of the trust account is particularly concerning. Not only did he commingle funds, but he allowed his account to be overdrawn. This raises the very concerns a trust account was intended to avoid. Therefore, the period of prior discipline-free practice, standing alone, is insufficient to deviate from the Standards. Respondent should receive a two (2) year stayed suspension, and a two (2) year period of probation with conditions including an actual suspension of ninety (90) days as well as attendance at State Bar CTA school. This level of discipline is necessary to protect the public, the courts, and the legal profession; maintain the highest professional standards; and preserve the public confidence in the legal profession.

Case law supports this recommendation. In *Kelly v. State Bar* (1991) 53 Cal.3d 509, the Supreme Court was confronted with an attorney who deposited client funds into his general account, wrote a check on insufficient funds from his client trust account, and misappropriated \$750 from a client. The Court found that the misappropriation did not stem from deceit or an intent to deceive and that the trust account violations stemmed from a time when the attorney was moving his office and his long time office manager (who handled the bank accounts) had left his employ. There was also an absence of harm with regard to the insufficient check and the commingling. Given the above, as well as mitigation for 13 years of practice without prior discipline, the Court ordered a three year stayed suspension and a three year probation with conditions including an actual suspension of 120 days.

Respondent's commingling is similar to the conduct in *Kelly*. However, the misconduct in *Kelly* also included misappropriation and the failure to promptly return client funds which is not present here. Factors in mitigation are roughly equivalent with the Kelly attorney and Respondent both having discipline-free practices. On balance, given that misappropriation is not present and there is no failure to return fees, a level of discipline slightly less than that imposed in *Kelly* is appropriate. A 90 day actual suspension is sufficient to protect the public, the courts, and the legal profession; maintain the highest professional standards; and preserve public confidence in the legal profession.

COSTS OF DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS.

Respondent acknowledges that the Office of Chief Trial Counsel has informed respondent that as of December 9, 2016, the discipline costs in this matter are \$5,141. Respondent further acknowledges that should this stipulation be rejected or should relief from the stipulation be granted, the costs in this matter may increase due to the cost of further proceedings.

EXCLUSION FROM MINIMUM CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION ("MCLE") CREDIT

Respondent may <u>not</u> receive MCLE credit for completion of **State Bar Ethics School or State Bar** Client **Trust Accounting School.** (Rules Proc. of State Bar, rule 3201.)

In the Matter of: LESLIE VICTOR AMPONSAH	Case number(s): 16-O-14533; 16-O-16600; 16-O-16775

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 Facts, Conclusions of Law, and Disposition.

1-13-2017	at the Ange.	Leslie Amponsah
Date	Respondent's Signature	Print Name
1-23-2017	June My	Scott Well
Date	Respondent's Counsel Signature	Print Name
1-30-17	11/1/www.	Drew Massey
Date	Deputy Trial Counsel's Signature	Print Name

(Do not write	above this line.)	
In the Mat LESLIE	tter of: VICTOR AMPONSAH	Case Number(s): 16-O-14533; 16-O-16600; 16-O-16775
	ACTUAL SUSP	ENSION ORDER
Finding the requested of	stipulation to be fair to the parties and that it addismissal of counts/charges, if any, is GRANTE	lequately protects the public, IT IS ORDERED that the D without prejudice, and:
	The stipulated facts and disposition are APP Supreme Court.	ROVED and the DISCIPLINE RECOMMENDED to the
×	The stipulated facts and disposition are APP DISCIPLINE IS RECOMMENDED to the Sup	ROVED AS MODIFIED as set forth below, and the preme Court.
	All Hearing dates are vacated.	
• On j	page 1 of the Stipulation, at paragraph A. e is inserted "June 10, 1993".	(1), "January 14, 1988" is deleted, and in its
• In the	he caption on page 7 of the Stipulation, "1 orted "16-O-16600".	6-O-16660" is deleted, and in its place is
within 15 day stipulation. (\$	ys after service of this order, is granted; or 2) th See rule 5.58(E) & (F), Rules of Procedure.) Th	s: 1) a motion to withdraw or modify the stipulation, filed is court modifies or further modifies the approved e effective date of this disposition is the effective date er file date. (See rule 9.18(a), California Rules of
راد	10/17 W	maedifila

DONALD F. MILES
Judge of the State Bar Court

Date

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 Los Angeles, on February 6, 2017, 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 Los Angeles, California, addressed as follows:

SCOTT B. WELL LAW OFFICES OF SCOTT B. WELL 2122 N BROADWAY SANTA ANA, CA 92706

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

DREW D. MASSEY, Enforcement, Los Angeles

I hereby certify that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed in Los Angeles, California, on February 6, 2017.

Mazie Yip

Case Administrator State Bar Court