State	Bar Court of Califor Hearing Department San Francisco REPROVAL	nia PUBLIC MATTER
Counsel for the State Bar Rachel S. Grunberg Senior Trial Counsel 180 Howard Street	Case Number(s): 17-0-00781-PEM	For Court use only
San Francisco, CA 94105 (415) 528-2443		FILED OCT 3 1 2018
Bar # <b>197080</b>		OCT 3 1 2018
In Pro Per Respondent		STATE BAR COURT CLERK'S OFFICE LOS ANGELES
Richard C Cheng PO Box 471 Skyforest, CA 92385-0471	kwiktag * 241 070 401	LOS ANGELES
Bar # <b>135992</b>	Submitted to: Assigned Juc	lge
In the Matter of: RICHARD C CHENG	STIPULATION RE FACTS, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND DISPOSITION AND ORDER APPROVING	
Bar # <b>135992</b>	PUBLIC REPROVAL	
A Member of the State Bar of California (Respondent)	PREVIOUS STIPULATIC	N 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 December 7, 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 11 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):
  - It is ordered that costs be awarded to the State Bar in accordance with Business and Professions Code section 6086.10, and are enforceable both as provided in Business and Professions Code section 6140.7 and as a money judgment.
  - Case ineligible for costs (private reproval).
  - It is ordered that costs be awarded to the State Bar in accordance with Business and Professions Code section 6086.10 and are enforceable both as provided in Business and Professions Code section 6140.7 and as a money judgment. SELECT ONE of the costs must be paid with Respondent's membership fees for each of the following years:

If Respondent fails to pay any installment as described above, or as may be modified in writing by the State Bar or the State Bar Court, the remaining balance will be 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.
- (9) The parties understand that:
  - (a) A private reproval imposed on a Respondent as a result of a stipulation approved by the Court prior to initiation of a State Bar Court proceeding is part of the Respondent's official State Bar membership records, but is not disclosed in response to public inquiries and is not reported on the State Bar's web page. The record of the proceeding in which such a private reproval was imposed is not available to the public except as part of the record of any subsequent proceeding in which it is introduced as evidence of a prior record of discipline under the Rules of Procedure of the State Bar.
  - (b) A private reproval imposed on a Respondent after initiation of a State Bar Court proceeding is part of the Respondent's official State Bar membership records, is disclosed in response to public inquiries and is reported as a record of public discipline on the State Bar's web page.
  - (c) A public reproval imposed on a Respondent is publicly available as part of the Respondent's official State Bar membership records, is disclosed in response to public inquiries and is reported as a record of public discipline on the State Bar's web page.

# B. Aggravating Circumstances [Standards for Attorney Sanctions for Professional Misconduct, standards 1.2(h) & 1.5]. Facts supporting aggravating circumstances are required.

- (1) **Prior record of discipline:** 
  - (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) 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.
- (8) Harm: Respondent's misconduct harmed significantly a client, the public, or the administration of justice.
- (9) Indifference: Respondent demonstrated indifference toward rectification of or atonement for the consequences of Respondent's misconduct.
- (10) Candor/Lack of Cooperation: Respondent displayed a lack of candor and cooperation to victims of Respondent's misconduct, or to the State Bar during disciplinary investigations or proceedings.
- (11) Multiple Acts: Respondent's current misconduct evidences multiple acts of wrongdoing. See page 9.
- (12) Dettern: Respondent's current misconduct demonstrates a pattern of misconduct.
- (13) **Restitution:** Respondent failed to make restitution.
- (14) Ulnerable Victim: The victim(s) of Respondent's misconduct was/were highly vulnerable.
- (15) **No aggravating circumstances** are involved.

Additional aggravating circumstances:

# C. Mitigating Circumstances [Standards 1.2(i) & 1.6]. 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 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 Respondent's misconduct or to the State Bar during disciplinary investigation 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 Respondent's 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 Respondent.
- (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 Respondent, such as illegal drug or substance abuse, and the difficulties or disabilities no longer pose a risk that Respondent will commit misconduct.
- (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 Respondent's control and which were directly responsible for the misconduct.
- (10) **Family Problems:** At the time of the misconduct, Respondent suffered extreme difficulties in Respondent's 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 Respondent's misconduct.
- (12) Rehabilitation: Considerable time has passed since the acts of professional misconduct occurred followed by subsequent rehabilitation.
- (13) **No mitigating circumstances** are involved.

Additional mitigating circumstances:

Pretrial Stipulation. See page 9.

#### D. Discipline:

#### Discipline – Reproval

Respondent is **Publicly** reproved. Pursuant to the provisions of rule 5.127(A) of the Rules of Procedure of the State Bar, this reproval will be effective when this stipulation becomes final. Furthermore, pursuant to rule 9.19(a) of the California Rules of Court and rule 5.128 of the Rules of Procedure, the court finds that the protection of the public and the interests of Respondent will be served by the following conditions being attached to this reproval. Failure to comply with any condition attached to this reproval may constitute cause for a separate disciplinary proceeding for willful breach of rule 1-110 of the State Bar Rules of Professional Conduct. Respondent is ordered to comply with the following conditions attached to this reproval for **one year** (Reproval Conditions Period) following the effective date of the reproval.

- (1) Review Rules of Professional Conduct: Within 30 days after the effective date of the order imposing discipline in this matter, Respondent must (1) read the California Rules of Professional Conduct (Rules of Professional Conduct) and Business and Professions Code sections 6067, 6068, and 6103 through 6126, and (2) provide a declaration, under penalty of perjury, attesting to Respondent's compliance with this requirement, to the State Bar's Office of Probation in Los Angeles (Office of Probation) with Respondent's first quarterly report.
- (2) Comply with State Bar Act, Rules of Professional Conduct, and Reproval Conditions: Respondent must comply with the provisions of the State Bar Act, the Rules of Professional Conduct, and all conditions of Respondent's reproval.
- (3) Maintain Valid Official Membership Address and Other Required Contact Information: Within 30 days after the effective date of the order imposing discipline in this matter, Respondent must make certain that the State Bar Attorney Regulation and Consumer Resources Office (ARCR) has Respondent's current office address, email address, and telephone number. If Respondent does not maintain an office, Respondent must provide the mailing address, email address, and telephone number to be used for State Bar purposes. Respondent must report, in writing, any change in the above information to ARCR within ten (10) days after such change, in the manner required by that office.
- (4) Meet and Cooperate with Office of Probation: Within 30 days after the effective date of the order imposing discipline in this matter, Respondent must schedule a meeting with Respondent's assigned probation case specialist to discuss the terms and conditions of Respondent's discipline and, within 45 days after the effective date of the court's order, must participate in such meeting. Unless otherwise instructed by the Office of Probation, Respondent may meet with the probation case specialist in person or by telephone. During the Reproval Conditions Period, Respondent must promptly meet with representatives of the Office of Probation as requested by it and, subject to the assertion of applicable privileges, must fully, promptly, and truthfully answer any inquiries by it and provide to it any other information requested by it.
- (5) State Bar Court Retains Jurisdiction/Appear Before and Cooperate with State Bar Court: During Respondent's Reproval Conditions Period, the State Bar Court retains jurisdiction over Respondent to address issues concerning compliance with reproval conditions. During this period, Respondent must appear before the State Bar Court as required by the court or by the Office of Probation after written notice mailed to Respondent's official membership address, as provided above. Subject to the assertion of applicable privileges, Respondent must fully, promptly, and truthfully answer any inquiries by the court and must provide any other information the court requests.

#### (6) X Quarterly and Final Reports:

- a. Deadlines for Reports. Respondent must submit written quarterly reports to the Office of Probation no later than each January 10 (covering October 1 through December 31 of the prior year), April 10 (covering January 1 through March 31), July 10 (covering April 1 through June 30), and October 10 (covering July 1 through September 30) within the Reproval Conditions Period. If the first report would cover less than 30 days, that report must be submitted on the next quarter date and cover the extended deadline. In addition to all quarterly reports, Respondent must submit a final report no earlier than ten (10) days before the last day of the Reproval Conditions Period and no later than the last day of the Reproval Conditions Period.
- b. Contents of Reports. Respondent must answer, under penalty of perjury, all inquiries contained in the quarterly report form provided by the Office of Probation, including stating whether Respondent has complied with the State Bar Act and the Rules of Professional Conduct during the applicable quarter or period. All reports must be: (1) submitted on the form provided by the Office of Probation; (2) signed

and dated after the completion of the period for which the report is being submitted (except for the final report); (3) filled out completely and signed under penalty of perjury; and (4) submitted to the Office of Probation on or before each report's due date.

- c. Submission of Reports. All reports must be submitted by: (1) fax or email to the Office of Probation; (2) personal delivery to the Office of Probation; (3) certified mail, return receipt requested, to the Office of Probation (postmarked on or before the due date); or (4) other tracked-service provider, such as Federal Express or United Parcel Service, etc. (physically delivered to such provider on or before the due date).
- d. Proof of Compliance. Respondent is directed to maintain proof of Respondent's compliance with the above requirements for each such report for a minimum of one year after the Reproval Conditions Period has ended. Respondent is required to present such proof upon request by the State Bar, the Office of Probation, or the State Bar Court.
- (7) State Bar Ethics School: Within one year after the effective date of the order imposing discipline in this matter, Respondent must submit to the Office of Probation satisfactory evidence of completion of the State Bar Ethics School and passage of the test given at the end of that session. This requirement is separate from any Minimum Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) requirement, and Respondent will not receive MCLE credit for attending this session.
- (8) State Bar Ethics School Not Recommended: It is not recommended that Respondent be ordered to attend the State Bar Ethics School because
- (9) State Bar Client Trust Accounting School: Within one year after the effective date of the order imposing discipline in this matter, Respondent must submit to the Office of Probation satisfactory evidence of completion of the State Bar Client Trust Accounting School and passage of the test given at the end of that session. This requirement is separate from any Minimum Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) requirement, and Respondent will not receive MCLE credit for attending this session.
- (10) Minimum Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) Courses California Legal Ethics [Alternative to State Bar Ethics School for Out-of-State Residents]: Because Respondent resides outside of California, within after the effective date of the order imposing discipline in this matter, Respondent must either submit to the Office of Probation satisfactory evidence of completion of the State Bar Ethics School and passage of the test given at the end of that session or, in the alternative, complete hours of California Minimum Continuing Legal Education-approved participatory activity in California legal ethics and provide proof of such completion to the Office of Probation. This requirement is separate from any MCLE requirement, and Respondent will not receive MCLE credit for this activity.
- (11) Criminal Probation: Respondent must comply with all probation conditions imposed in the underlying criminal matter and must report such compliance under penalty of perjury in all quarterly and final reports submitted to the Office of Probation covering any portion of the period of the criminal probation. In each quarterly and final report, if Respondent has an assigned criminal probation officer, Respondent must provide the name and current contact information for that criminal probation officer. If the criminal probation was successfully completed during the period covered by a quarterly or final report, that fact must be reported by Respondent in such report and satisfactory evidence of such fact must be provided with it. If, at any time before or during the Reproval Conditions Period, Respondent's criminal probation is revoked, Respondent is sanctioned by the criminal court, or Respondent's status is otherwise changed due to any alleged violation of the criminal probation conditions by Respondent must submit the criminal court records regarding any such action with Respondent's next quarterly or final report.
- (12) Minimum Continuing Legal Education (MCLE): Within after the effective date of the order imposing discipline in this matter, Respondent must complete hour(s) of California Minimum Continuing Legal Education-approved participatory activity in SELECT ONE and must provide proof of such completion to the Office of Probation. This requirement is separate from any MCLE requirement, and Respondent will not receive MCLE credit for this activity.

- (13) Other: Respondent must also comply with the following additional reproval conditions:
- (14) Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination Within One Year: It is further ordered that Respondent be ordered to take and pass the Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination administered by the National Conference of Bar Examiners within one year after the effective date of the order imposing discipline in this matter and to provide satisfactory proof of such passage to the State Bar's Office of Probation within the same period. Failure to do so may result in suspension. (Cal. Rules of Court, rule 9.10(b).)
- (15) The following conditions are attached hereto and incorporated:
  - Financial Conditions

Medical Conditions

Substance Abuse Conditions

# ATTACHMENT TO STIPULATION RE FACTS, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND DISPOSITIONS

IN THE MATTER OF:	RICHARD C CHENG
CASE NUMBER:	17-O-00781-PEM

#### FACTS AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW.

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

#### Case No. 17-O-00781-PEM

FACTS:

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1. In January 2017, the State Bar opened an investigation in case number 17-O-00781 concerning allegations of misconduct against respondent.

2. On March 24, June 5, and July 13, 2017, a State Bar investigator mailed respondent letters, addressed to respondent's then current official membership records address, asking that respondent respond in writing to the specific allegations of misconduct being investigated by the State Bar. The letters were returned as undeliverable because as of May 18, 2016, respondent was no longer receiving mail at that address and did not update his membership records address.

3. On August 22, 2017, a State Bar investigator mailed respondent a letter, addressed to an alternate address for respondent, asking that respondent respond in writing to the specific allegations of misconduct being investigated by the State Bar. Respondent received the letter, but did not respond.

4. On July 12, 2018, the State Bar filed a Notice of Disciplinary Charges against respondent.

5. Respondent did not communicate with the State Bar until August 15, 2018. At that time, respondent provided evidence in defense of the charges.

6. Respondent did not update his official membership records address until August 28, 2018.

#### CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

7. By vacating his office on May 18, 2016, and failing to notify the State Bar of a change of address within 30 days, respondent failed to maintain a current official membership records address in willful violation of Business and Professions Code section 6068(j).

# MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES.

**Pretrial Stipulation:** By entering into this pretrial stipulation, respondent has acknowledged culpability and he is entitled to some mitigation credit. Because a violation of Business and Professions Code section 6068(j) is an easily provable offense, respondent is not entitled to full mitigating weight. (See *In the Matter of Oheb* (Review Dept. 2006) 4 Cal. State Bar Ct. Rptr. 920, 938 [significant mitigation not afforded where admissions of culpability were easily provable violations].)

# 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. (Std. 1.7(b) & (c).)

Here, respondent failed to comply with his express statutory duty to update his official membership records address—a violation of Business and Professions Code section 6068(j). Standard 2.12(b) is directly on point and provides that a reproval is the presumed sanction for a violation of the duties required of an attorney under Business and Professions Code section 6068(j). Respondent is entitled to some mitigation for entering into this pretrial stipulation, and there are no aggravating factors. Nevertheless, this is not a situation of simple neglect. Respondent purposefully avoided interactions with the State Bar, which resulted in his lack of timely participation in a State Bar investigation and an undue burden on State Bar time and resources. (See generally *Lydon v. State Bar* (1988) 45 Cal. 3d 1181, 1186 ["it is the attorney's

obligation to keep the State Bar informed of any address changes"; "it is disingenuous for petitioner to demand actual . . . notice of the proceedings when he admittedly tried to insulate himself from the outside world"].) Under these circumstances, discipline at the higher end of standard 2.12(b) is appropriate. Accordingly, a public reproval with conditions will serve to remind respondent of his professional responsibilities and adequately protect the public and the profession.

# 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>	Alleged Violation
17-O-00781-PEM	One	Rules of Professional Conduct, Rule 5-200(B)
17-O-00781-PEM	Two	Business and Professions Code, section 6106
17-O-00781-PEM	Three	Business and Professions Code, section 6068(i)

# COSTS OF DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS.

Respondent acknowledges that the Office of Chief Trial Counsel has informed respondent that as of October 25, 2018, the discipline costs in this matter are \$3,857. 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.

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In the Matter of:	Case Number(s):
Richard C Cheng	17-O-00781-PEM

# 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.

October 26, 2018 Date	Respondent's Signature	Richard C Cheng Print Name
Date	Respondent's Counsel Signature	Print Name
16/29/18	Ranger	Rachel S. Grunberg
Date	Deputy Trial Counsel's Signature	Print Name

In the Matter of: Richard C Cheng Case Number(s): 17-O-00781-PEM

# **REPROVAL ORDER**

Finding that the stipulation protects the public and that the interests of Respondent will be served by any conditions attached to the reproval, 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 REPROVAL IMPOSED.

- The stipulated facts and disposition are APPROVED AS MODIFIED as set forth below, and the REPROVAL IMPOSED.
- All court dates in the Hearing Department 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 Rules Proc. of State Bar, rule 5.58(E) & (F).) Otherwise the stipulation shall be effective 15 days after service of this order.

Failure to comply with any conditions attached to this reproval may constitute cause for a separate proceeding for willful breach of rule 1-110, Rules of Professional Conduct.

ctoper 30, 2018

Date

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 Court Specialist 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 October 31, 2018, 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:

RICHARD C. CHENG PO BOX 471 SKYFOREST, CA 92385 - 0471

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

RACHEL S. GRUNBERG, Enforcement, Los Angeles

I hereby certify that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed in Los Angeles, California, on October 31, 2018.

4º. 50

Paul Songco Court Specialist State Bar Court