

BEFORE THE  
DISCIPLINARY BOARD  
OF THE  
WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

In re  
**RICHARD A. LAWS,**  
Lawyer (WSBA No.36654)

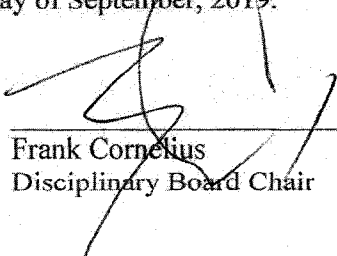
Proceeding No. 19#00021

DISCIPLINARY BOARD ORDER  
DECLINING *SUA SPONTE* REVIEW AND  
ADOPTING HEARING OFFICER'S  
DECISION

This matter came before the Disciplinary Board for consideration of *sua sponte* review pursuant to ELC 11.3(a). On August 30, 2019, the Clerk distributed the attached decision to the Board.

**IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT** the Board declines *sua sponte* review and adopts the Hearing Officer's decision<sup>1</sup>.

Dated this 23 day of September, 2019.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Frank Cornelius  
Disciplinary Board Chair

<sup>1</sup> The vote on this matter was 9-0. The following Board members voted: Cornelius, Wang, Graber, Vovos, Doyle, Rawlings, Louvier, Halwe, and Value.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I certify that I caused a copy of the RD ORDER DECLINING IGA SPONTANEOUS REVIEW IN ADOPTING  
to be delivered to the Office of Disciplinary Counsel and to be mailed HIS DECISION  
to RICHARD LAWS, Respondent/Respondent's Counsel  
at 1001 CONCRETE CT. CLARKSTON, VA 20128, certified/first class mail  
postage prepaid on the 24th day of September, 2019

  
Clerk/Counsel to the Disciplinary Board

FILED

Jul 18 2019

Disciplinary  
Board

Docket # 013

BEFORE THE  
DISCIPLINARY BOARD  
OF THE  
WASHINGTON SUPREME COURT

In re

**RICHARD A. LAWS,**  
Lawyer (Bar No. 36654).

Proceeding No. 19#00021

FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS  
OF LAW AND HEARING OFFICER'S  
RECOMMENDATION

The undersigned Hearing Officer held a default hearing by written submission under Rule 10.6 of the Washington Supreme Court's Rules for Enforcement of Lawyer Conduct (ELC).

**FINDINGS OF FACTS AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW  
REGARDING CHARGED VIOLATIONS**

1. The Formal Complaint (Bar File (BF) No. 2) charged Richard A. Laws with misconduct as set forth therein. A copy of the Formal Complaint is attached to this decision.

2. The Complaint was served on Respondent on April 17, 2019. Respondent neither appeared nor answered.

3. An Order of Default was issued May 24, 2019.

4. Under ELC 10.6(a)(4), the Hearing Officer finds that each of the facts set forth in the Formal Complaint is admitted and established.

5. Under ELC 10.6(a)(4), the Hearing Officer concludes that each of the violations charged in the Formal Complaint is admitted and established as follows:

1 Count 1

2 By committing the crime of tampering with physical evidence in violation of RCW  
3 9A.72.150, Respondent violated RPC 8.4(b), 8.4(c), and 8.4(i).

4 Count 2

5 By encouraging Ms. Goodson to leave the courthouse without testifying, and/or by  
6 concealing Ms. Goodson's presence from the State and the court, Respondent violated RPC  
7 8.4(c) and 8.4(d).

8 Count 3

9 By failing to promptly respond to a request for his response to the grievance,  
10 Respondent violated RPC 8.1(b) and 8.4(l) (by violating ELC 1.5, 5.3(f), and 5.3(h)(3)).

11 **FINDINGS OF FACTS AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW  
12 REGARDING RECOMMENDED SANCTION**

13 6. The following standards of the American Bar Association's Standards for  
14 Imposing Lawyer Sanctions ("ABA Standards") (1991 ed. & Feb. 1992 Supp.) presumptively  
15 apply in this case:

16 ***5.1 Failure to Maintain Personal Integrity***

17 Absent aggravating or mitigating circumstances, upon application of the factors set out  
18 in Standard 3.0, the following sanctions are generally appropriate in cases  
19 involving commission of a criminal act that reflects adversely on the lawyer's  
20 honesty, trustworthiness, or fitness as a lawyer in other respects, or in cases with  
21 conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation:

22 5.11 Disbarment is generally appropriate when:

- 23 (a) a lawyer engages in serious criminal conduct, a necessary element of which  
24 includes intentional interference with the administration of justice, false  
25 swearing, misrepresentation, fraud, extortion, misappropriation, or theft; or the  
26 sale, distribution or importation of controlled substances; or the intentional  
killing of another; or an attempt or conspiracy or solicitation of another to commit  
any of these offenses; or
- (b) a lawyer engages in any other intentional conduct involving dishonesty, fraud,  
deceit, or misrepresentation that seriously adversely reflects on the lawyer's  
fitness to practice.

5.12 Suspension is generally appropriate when a lawyer knowingly engages in  
criminal conduct which does not contain the elements listed in Standard 5.11 and  
that seriously adversely reflects on the lawyer's fitness to practice.

1 5.13 Reprimand is generally appropriate when a lawyer knowingly engages in any  
2 other conduct that involves dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation and  
3 that adversely reflects on the lawyer's fitness to practice law.

4 5.14 Admonition is generally appropriate when a lawyer engages in any other conduct  
5 that reflects adversely on the lawyer's fitness to practice law.

6 **6.3 Improper Communications with Individuals in the Legal System**

7 Absent aggravating or mitigating circumstances, upon application of the factors set out  
8 in Standard 3.0, the following sanctions are generally appropriate in cases  
9 involving attempts to influence a judge, juror, prospective juror or other official  
10 by means prohibited by law:

- 11 6.31 Disbarment is generally appropriate when a lawyer:  
12 (a) intentionally tampers with a witness and causes serious or potentially serious  
13 injury to a party, or causes significant or potentially significant interference with  
14 the outcome of the legal proceeding; or  
15 (b) makes an ex parte communication with a judge or juror with intent to affect the  
16 outcome of the proceeding, and causes serious or potentially serious injury to a  
17 party, or causes significant or potentially significant interference with the  
18 outcome of the legal proceeding; or  
19 (c) improperly communicates with someone in the legal system other than a witness,  
20 judge, or juror with the intent to influence or affect the outcome of the  
21 proceeding, and causes significant or potentially significant interference with the  
22 outcome of the legal proceeding.

23 **7.0 Violations of Duties Owed as a Professional**

24 Absent aggravating or mitigating circumstances, upon application of the factors set out  
25 in Standard 3.0, the following sanctions are generally appropriate in cases  
26 involving false or misleading communication about the lawyer or the lawyer's  
services, improper communication of fields of practice, improper solicitation of  
professional employment from a prospective client, unreasonable or improper  
fees, unauthorized practice of law, improper withdrawal from representation, or  
failure to report professional misconduct.

7.1 Disbarment is generally appropriate when a lawyer knowingly engages in  
conduct that is a violation of a duty owed as a professional with the intent to  
obtain a benefit for the lawyer or another, and causes serious or potentially  
serious injury to a client, the public, or the legal system.

7.2 Suspension is generally appropriate when a lawyer knowingly engages in  
conduct that is a violation of a duty owed as a professional and causes injury or  
potential injury to a client, the public, or the legal system.





CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I certify that I caused a copy of the FDF, COL & RW's Recommendation  
to be delivered to the Office of Disciplinary Counsel and to be mailed  
to Richard Laws ~~Respondent/Respondent's Counsel~~  
at 1241 Suncryst Ct - Clarkston, MA 01929 by Certified/first class mail  
postage prepaid on the 16th day of July, 2019

  
Clerk/Counsel to the Disciplinary Board



**FILED**

Mar 29 2019  
Disciplinary  
Board

Docket # 002

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7 **BEFORE THE**  
8 **DISCIPLINARY BOARD**  
9 **OF THE**  
10 **WASHINGTON SUPREME COURT**

11 In re

12 **RICHARD A. LAWS,**  
13 Lawyer (Bar No. 36654).

Proceeding No. 19#00021  
FORMAL COMPLAINT

14 Under Rule 10.3 of the Washington Supreme Court's Rules for Enforcement of Lawyer  
15 Conduct (ELC), the Office of Disciplinary Counsel (ODC) of the Washington State Bar  
16 Association charges the above-named lawyer with acts of misconduct under the Washington  
17 Supreme Court's Rules of Professional Conduct (RPC) as set forth below.

18 **ADMISSION TO PRACTICE**

19 1. Respondent Richard A. Laws was admitted to the practice of law in the State of  
20 Washington on November 2, 2005.

21 **FACTS RELATED TO COUNTS 1-2**

22 2. On May 6, 2015, the Asotin County Prosecuting Attorney's Office (the "State")  
23 charged Robert Goodson with felony assault and multiple counts of violation of a protection

1 order in State of Washington v. Robert Goodson, Asotin County Superior Court Cause No. 15-  
2 1-00075-8 for conduct involving his wife, Nora Goodson.

3 3. On May 8, 2015, the court appointed Respondent to represent Mr. Goodson.

4 4. Ms. Goodson was not cooperative in the prosecution of the case against Mr.  
5 Goodson.

6 5. The State obtained a material witness warrant to secure the presence and testimony  
7 of Ms. Goodson at trial.

8 6. The court continued Mr. Goodson's case several times.

9 7. The State was unable to locate Ms. Goodson or serve her with the material witness  
10 warrant.

11 8. Respondent knew that the State wanted Ms. Goodson to testify at trial.

12 9. Ms. Goodson's presence at trial, no matter what she testified to, would have been  
13 harmful to Mr. Goodson.

14 10. On July 7, 2018, the State proceeded to trial without Ms. Goodson.

15 11. On July 8, 2018, the State rested.

16 12. Before the parties presented closing arguments, Ms. Goodson contacted Respondent  
17 outside of the courtroom where the trial was being held.

18 13. Ms. Goodson told Respondent that she wanted to testify on behalf of Mr. Goodson.

19 14. Respondent told Ms. Goodson that she would be arrested if she went inside of the  
20 courtroom.

21 15. Respondent implored Ms. Goodson to leave the courthouse without testifying.

22 16. Ms. Goodson immediately left the courthouse after speaking with Respondent.

23 17. Respondent did not tell the State or the court about Ms. Goodson's appearance or

1 willingness to testify.

2 18. The parties presented their closing arguments and the jury deliberated.

3 19. The jury convicted Mr. Goodson of second degree assault and several counts of  
4 violation of a protection order.

5 20. Sometime after the verdict, the State discovered that Ms. Goodson stated that she  
6 had appeared in court and was ready to testify, but she left because the Respondent “implored”  
7 her to.

8 21. Law enforcement investigated Ms. Goodson’s claims.

9 22. The court appointed new counsel to represent Mr. Goodson.

10 23. Mr. Goodson’s counsel filed a motion for a new trial based on Respondent’s  
11 conduct involving Ms. Goodson.

12 24. The court denied the motion for new trial.

13 25. The court sentenced Mr. Goodson and he appealed his conviction.

14 26. The Court of Appeals affirmed Mr. Goodson’s conviction.

15 27. On July 5, 2018, the State charged Respondent with one count of tampering with  
16 physical evidence under RCW 9A.72.150 based on his conduct involving Ms. Goodson in State  
17 v. Richard Laws, Asotin County District Court Case No. P00005232.

18 28. On July 7, 2018, *The Lewiston Tribune* published an article about Respondent’s  
19 criminal charge.

20 29. On August 15, 2018, Respondent pleaded guilty as charged to tampering with  
21 physical evidence.

22 30. Respondent committed the crime of tampering with physical evidence by interfering  
23 with the State’s ability to take testimony from Ms. Goodson, a material witness.

1 31. The court sentenced Respondent to 364 days in jail with all but 349 days suspended,  
2 based on the condition that he complete 120 hours of community service and remain crime-free  
3 for 12 months.

4 32. On August 16, 2018, *The Lewiston Tribune* published an article about Respondent's  
5 criminal conviction.

6 33. Respondent knowingly encouraged Ms. Goodson to leave without testifying.

7 34. Respondent intentionally interfered with the administration of justice.

8 35. Respondent's conduct caused potentially serious injury to the State.

9 36. Respondent's conduct caused injury to the justice system and to the reputation of the  
10 legal profession.

11 **COUNT 1**

12 37. By committing the crime of tampering with physical evidence in violation of RCW  
13 9A.72.150, Respondent violated RPC 8.4(b), 8.4(c), and/or 8.4(i).

14 **COUNT 2**

15 38. By encouraging Ms. Goodson to leave the courthouse without testifying, and/or by  
16 concealing Ms. Goodson's presence from the State and the court, Respondent violated RPC  
17 8.4(c) and/or 8.4(d).

18 **FACTS RELATED TO COUNT 3**

19 39. On July 11, 2018, ODC sent Respondent a letter notifying him that it had opened a  
20 grievance against him and that the investigation would be deferred pending the outcome of State  
21 v. Richard Laws, Asotin County District Court Case No. P00005232.

22 40. On September 11, 2018, ODC sent Respondent a letter requesting a written response  
23 to the grievance.

1 41. Respondent did not respond.

2 42. On October 16, 2018, ODC sent Respondent a letter requesting his response to the  
3 grievance and informing him that if ODC did not receive his response on or before October 29,  
4 2018, ODC would subpoena him for a deposition.

5 43. Respondent did not respond.

6 44. Respondent was personally served with a subpoena requiring his presence for a  
7 deposition at the Washington State Bar Association offices on November 20, 2018.

8 45. On November 20, 2018, Respondent provided ODC with his response to the  
9 grievance and the deposition was cancelled.

10 46. Respondent knowingly failed to respond to this grievance.

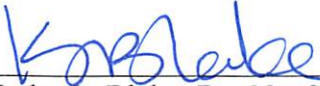
11 47. Respondent's conduct caused harm to the discipline system.

12 **COUNT 3**

13 48. By failing to promptly respond to a request for his response to the grievance,  
14 Respondent violated RPC 8.1(b) and/or 8.4(l) (by violating ELC 1.5, 5.3(f), and/or 5.3(h)(3)).

15  
16 THEREFORE, Disciplinary Counsel requests that a hearing be held under the Rules for  
17 Enforcement of Lawyer Conduct. Possible dispositions include disciplinary action, probation,  
18 restitution, and assessment of the costs and expenses of these proceedings.

19 Dated this 29<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2019.

20  
21   
22 \_\_\_\_\_  
Kathy Jo Blake, Bar No. 29235  
23 Managing Disciplinary Counsel