

State Bar Court of California  
Hearing Department  
Los Angeles



Counsel For The State Bar  
  
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Case Number (s)  
04-O-14630

(for Court's use)

**PUBLIC MATTER**

**FILED**

SEP 24 2007

STATE BAR COURT  
CLERK'S OFFICE  
LOS ANGELES

Bar # 161625

Counsel For Respondent

**MICHAEL G. GERNER**  
10100 Santa Monica Blvd, Ste. 300  
Los Angeles, CA 90067

Bar # 65906

Submitted to: **Assigned Judge**

In the Matter Of:  
**S. SEAN BRAL**

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

Bar # 190489

**PUBLIC REPROVAL**

A Member of the State Bar of California  
(Respondent)

PREVIOUS STIPULATION REJECTED

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

**A. Parties' Acknowledgments:**

- (1) Respondent is a member of the State Bar of California, admitted **December 2, 1997**.
- (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 **8** 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.

*Handwritten initials: MB*

(8) Payment of Disciplinary Costs—Respondent acknowledges the provisions of Bus. & Prof. Code §§6086.10 & 6140.7. (Check one option only):

- costs added to membership fee for calendar year following effective date of discipline (public reproof)
- case ineligible for costs (private reproof)
- costs to be paid in equal amounts for the following membership years: **the next two (2) billing cycles following the effective date of the disciplinary order herein.**  
(hardship, special circumstances or other good cause per rule 284, Rules of Procedure)
- costs waived in part as set forth in a separate attachment entitled "Partial Waiver of Costs"
- costs entirely waived

(9) The parties understand that:

- (a)  A private reproof 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 reproof 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 reproof 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 reproof 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 [for definition, see Standards for Attorney Sanctions for Professional Misconduct, standard 1.2(b)]. Facts supporting aggravating circumstances are required.**

- (1)  **Prior record of discipline** [see standard 1.2(f)]
  - (a)  State Bar Court case # of prior case
  - (b)  Date prior discipline effective
  - (c)  Rules of Professional Conduct/ State Bar Act violations:
  - (d)  Degree of prior discipline
  - (e)  If Respondent has two or more incidents of prior discipline, use space provided below or a separate attachment entitled "Prior Discipline."
- (2)  **Dishonesty:** Respondent's misconduct was surrounded by or followed by bad faith, dishonesty, concealment, overreaching or other violations of the State Bar Act or Rules of Professional Conduct.
- (3)  **Trust Violation:** Trust funds or property were involved and Respondent refused or was unable to account to the client or person who was the object of the misconduct for improper conduct toward said funds or property.

*my SB*  
Reproof

- (4)  **Harm:** Respondent's misconduct harmed significantly a client, the public or the administration of justice.
- (5)  **Indifference:** Respondent demonstrated indifference toward rectification of or atonement for the consequences of his or her misconduct.
- (6)  **Lack of Cooperation:** Respondent displayed a lack of candor and cooperation to victims of his/her misconduct or to the State Bar during disciplinary investigation or proceedings.
- (7)  **Multiple/Pattern of Misconduct:** Respondent's current misconduct evidences multiple acts of wrongdoing or demonstrates a pattern of misconduct.
- (8)  **No aggravating circumstances** are involved.

Additional aggravating circumstances:

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

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

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(Do not write above this line.)

- (11)  **Good Character:** Respondent's good character is attested to by a wide range of references in the legal and general communities who are aware of the full extent of his/her misconduct.
- (12)  **Rehabilitation:** Considerable time has passed since the acts of professional misconduct occurred followed by convincing proof of subsequent rehabilitation.
- (13)  **No mitigating circumstances** are involved.

Additional mitigating circumstances:

#### D. Discipline:

- (1)  **Private reproof (check applicable conditions, if any, below)**
- (a)  Approved by the Court prior to initiation of the State Bar Court proceedings (no public disclosure).
- (b)  Approved by the Court after initiation of the State Bar Court proceedings (public disclosure).

or

- (2)  **Public reproof (Check applicable conditions, if any, below)**

#### E. Conditions Attached to Reproof:

- (1)  Respondent must comply with the conditions attached to the reproof for a period of **one year**.
- (2)  During the condition period attached to the reproof, Respondent must comply with the provisions of the State Bar Act and Rules of Professional Conduct.
- (3)  Within ten (10) days of any change, Respondent must report to the Membership Records Office of the State Bar and to the Office of Probation of the State Bar of California ("Office of Probation"), all changes of information, including current office address and telephone number, or other address for State Bar purposes, as prescribed by section 6002.1 of the Business and Professions Code.
- (4)  Within thirty (30) days from the effective date of discipline, Respondent must contact the Office of Probation and schedule a meeting with Respondent's assigned probation deputy to discuss these terms and conditions of probation. Upon the direction of the Office of Probation, Respondent must meet with the probation deputy either in-person or by telephone. During the period of probation, Respondent must promptly meet with the probation deputy as directed and upon request.
- (5)  Respondent must submit written quarterly reports to the Office of Probation on each January 10, April 10, July 10, and October 10 of the condition period attached to the reproof. 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 the reproof during the preceding calendar quarter. Respondent must also state in each report 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 (thirty) days, that report must be submitted on the next following 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 condition period and no later than the last day of the condition period.

- (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.

(Do not write above this line.)

During the period of probation, Respondent must furnish 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 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 conditions attached to the reprobation.
- (8)  Within one (1) year of the effective date of the discipline herein, Respondent must provide to the Office of Probation satisfactory proof of attendance at a session of the Ethics School, and passage of the test given at the end of that session.
- No Ethics School recommended. Reason: .
- (9)  Respondent must comply with all conditions of probation imposed in the underlying criminal matter and must so declare under penalty of perjury in conjunction with any quarterly report to be filed with the Office of Probation.
- (10)  Respondent must provide proof of passage of the Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination ("MPRE"), administered by the National Conference of Bar Examiners, to the Office of Probation within one year of the effective date of the reprobation.
- No MPRE recommended. Reason: .
- (11)  The following conditions are attached hereto and incorporated:
- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Substance Abuse Conditions | <input type="checkbox"/> Law Office Management Conditions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medical Conditions         | <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Conditions             |

**F. Other Conditions Negotiated by the Parties:**

None.

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Attachment language (if any):

## FACTS AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW.

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

### FACTS:

1. On December 20, 2000, Henry Miranda ("Mr. Miranda"), and his wife, Alice Miranda ("Mrs. Miranda"), and their three grandchildren, Daniel Hearn ("Daniel"), Tommy Hearn ("Tommy"), and Steven Hearn ("Steven") employed Respondent to represent them in an uninsured motorist claim for personal injuries sustained in an auto accident that occurred on October 23, 2000 ("auto accident claim"). Respondent agreed to represent them on a contingency fee basis. Daniel, Tommy and Steven were minors at the time of the accident, and their mother, Belinda Hearn ("Hearn"), employed Respondent on their behalf.
2. At the time of the accident that gave rise to the auto accident claim, Mrs. Miranda was the driver of the vehicle, and Mr. Miranda, Daniel, Tommy and Steven were passengers. Therefore, they had potentially conflicting interests.
3. At no time did Respondent obtain Mr. Miranda's, Mrs. Miranda's, Daniel's, Tommy's and Steven's informed written consent to represent each of them in the auto accident claim.

### CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

4. By failing to obtain Mr. Miranda's, Mrs. Miranda's, Daniel's, Tommy's and Steven's informed written consent to represent each of them in the auto accident claim, Respondent accepted representation of more than one client in a matter in which the interests of the clients potentially conflicted without the informed written consent of each client in willful violation of Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 3-310(C)(1).

### SUPPORTING AUTHORITY.

Standard 1.3, Title IV, Standards for Attorney Sanctions for Professional Misconduct, provides that the primary purposes of the disciplinary system are: "the protection of the public, the courts and the legal profession; the maintenance of high professional standards by attorneys and the preservation of public confidence in the legal profession."

Recently, the Supreme Court emphasized the importance of the standards and held that great weight should be given to the application of the standards in determining the appropriate level of discipline. The Court indicated that unless it has "grave doubts as to the propriety of the recommended discipline," it will uphold the application of the standards. In re Silverton (2005) 36 Cal. 4th 81, 91-92.

Standard 2.10 provides that a violation of any provision or rule of the Business and Professions Code or Rules of Professional Conduct "not specified in these standards shall result in reproof or suspension according to the gravity of the offense or the harm, if any, to the victim, with due regard to the purposes of imposing discipline set forth in standard 1.3."

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In this case, there is no compelling reason or mitigating circumstances that would justify a deviation from the standards.

PENDING PROCEEDINGS.

The disclosure date referred to, on page one, paragraph A.(7), was August 8, 2007.

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(Do not write above this line.)

In the Matter of S. SEAN BRAL	Case number(s): 04-O-14630
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**SIGNATURE OF THE PARTIES**

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

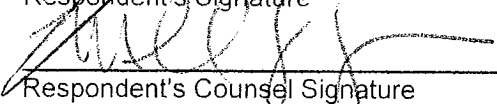
8-21-07  
Date

8-27-07  
Date

8/29/07  
Date

  
Respondent's Signature

S. SEAN BRAL  
Print Name

  
Respondent's Counsel Signature

MICHAEL G. GERNER  
Print Name

  
Deputy Trial Counsel's Signature

AGUSTIN HERNANDEZ  
Print Name



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In the Matter Of S. SEAN BRAL	Case Number(s): 04-O-14630
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### ORDER

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

On page 2 of the stipulation at paragraph A.(8), the following language should be added:

Upon S. Sean Bral's failure to timely make any installment payment of restitution, the unpaid balance is due and payable immediately unless relief has been granted under the Rules of Procedure of the State Bar of California. (Rules Proc. of State Bar, rule 286.)

The parties are bound by the stipulation as approved unless: 1) a motion to withdraw or modify the stipulation, filed within 15 days after service of this order, is granted; or 2) this court modifies or further modifies the approved stipulation. (See rule 125(b), Rules of Procedure.) **Otherwise the stipulation shall be effective 15 days after service of this order.**

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

9/20/07  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Judge of the State Bar Court  
**DONALD F. MILES**

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

I am a Case Administrator of the State Bar Court of California. I am over the age of eighteen and not a party to the within proceeding. Pursuant to standard court practice, in the City and County of Los Angeles, on September 24, 2007, I deposited a true copy of the following document(s):

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

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

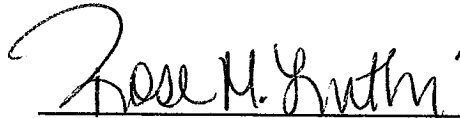
- by first-class mail, with postage thereon fully prepaid, through the United States Postal Service at Los Angeles, California, addressed as follows:

**MICHAEL GALEN GERNER, ESQ.**  
**MICHAEL G GERNER, A PROF LAW CORP**  
**10100 SANTA MONICA BLVD #300**  
**LOS ANGELES, CA 90067**

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

**AGUSTIN HERNANDEZ, ESQ., Enforcement, Los Angeles**

I hereby certify that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed in Los Angeles, California, on **September 24, 2007**.



**Rose M. Luthi**  
Case Administrator  
State Bar Court