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**State Bar Court of California
Hearing Department
San Francisco**

Counsel For The State Bar Tammy M. Albertsen-Murray 180 Howard Street San Francisco, CA 94105 (415) 538-2527 Bar # 154248	Case Number (s) 09-O-10058-LMA	(for Court's use) PUBLIC MATTER FILED <i>[Signature]</i> JUN 08 2010 STATE BAR COURT CLERK'S OFFICE SAN FRANCISCO
Counsel For Respondent Samuel C. Bellicini 1111 Civic Drive, Suite 215 Walnut Creek, CA 94596 (925) 944-5600 Bar # 152191	Submitted to: Assigned Judge STIPULATION RE FACTS, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND DISPOSITION AND ORDER APPROVING PRIVATE REPROVAL <input type="checkbox"/> PREVIOUS STIPULATION REJECTED	
In the Matter Of: STERLING C. JOHNSON Bar # 74598 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 June 28, 1977.
- (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.
- (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:
(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.

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- (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.
- (4) ☒ **Harm:** Respondent's misconduct harmed significantly a client, the public or the administration of justice. Respondent never performed the services for which he was retained. As a result, respondent's former client has not received her portion of the pension funds she is owed pursuant to an earlier judgment.
- (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.

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- (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.
- (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:

Respondent has no prior history of discipline in approximately 31 years of practice as of the time of the misconduct at issue in this case.

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 Reproval:

- (1) ☒ Respondent must comply with the conditions attached to the reproof for a period of one (1) 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. 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:

ATTACHMENT TO
STIPULATION RE FACTS, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND DISPOSITION

IN THE MATTER OF: Sterling C. Johnson

CASE NUMBER: 09-O-10058-LMA

Respondent pleads nolo contendere to the following facts and violations. Respondent completely understands that the plea for nolo contendere shall be considered the same as an admission of the stipulated facts and of his or her culpability of the statutes and/or Rules of Professional Conduct specified herein.

FACTS AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW.

COUNTS ONE AND TWO: Case No. 09-O-10058; Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 3-110(A) [Failure to Perform with Competence] and Business and Professions Code, section 6068(m) [Failure to Respond to Client Inquiries]

Facts.

In 1985, Micci Lindberg employed respondent to represent her in a dissolution matter. On April 8, 1986, Lindberg obtained a judgment which entitled her to a portion of her ex-husband's pension from the United States Postal Service when he retired.

In July 2005, Lindberg's ex-husband retired from the USPS.

In or about early 2006, Lindberg contacted respondent to assist her in her efforts to collect her portion of her ex-husband's pension. Respondent agreed to represent her and requested that Lindberg provide him with a copy of the dissolution judgment, which Lindberg provided to respondent.

Thereafter, respondent failed to take any action on behalf of Lindberg and failed to perform any services for her.

Between in or about early 2006 and October 2008, respondent promised Lindberg that he would resolve her issue.

Thereafter, respondent failed to take any action to obtain Lindberg's portion of her ex-husband's pension and ceased all communication with Lindberg.

Between in or about early 2006 and in or about October 2008, Lindberg telephoned respondent several times and left messages for respondent each time requesting that respondent provide her with a status update on her matter. Although respondent received the messages, he failed to respond to them and failed to provide Lindberg with a status update on her matter.

Conclusions of Law.

By failing to perform any services for Lindberg after respondent agreed to represent her and by failing to take any action to obtain Lindberg's portion of her ex-husband's pension, respondent intentionally, recklessly and repeatedly failed to perform legal services with competence, in violation of Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 3-110(A).

By failing to respond to Lindberg's messages requesting a status update, respondent failed to respond to reasonable status inquiries of a client in a matter in which respondent had agreed to provide legal services, in violation of Business and Professions code, section 6068(m).

COUNT THREE: Case No. 09-O-10058; Business and Professions Code, section 6068(i) [Failure to Cooperate in State Bar Investigations]

Facts.

On November 11, 2008, the State Bar opened an investigation in this matter.

On March 25, 2010, a State Bar Investigator wrote to respondent regarding his conduct in this matter by placing the letter in a sealed envelope correctly addressed to respondent at his address as maintained by the State Bar in accordance with Business and Professions Code section 6002.1. The letter was properly mailed by first class mail, postage prepaid, by depositing for collection by the United States Postal Service in the ordinary course of business on or about the date on the letter. The United States Postal Service did not return the letter sent to respondent as undeliverable or for any other reason. Respondent received the letter.

At no time did respondent provide a written response to the allegations of misconduct in this matter.

Conclusion of Law.

By failing to provide a written response to the allegations regarding respondent's conduct in this matter or otherwise cooperate in the investigation of this matter, respondent failed to cooperate in a disciplinary investigation.

PENDING PROCEEDINGS.

The disclosure date referred to, on page 2, paragraph A(6), was May 24, 2010.

AUTHORITIES SUPPORTING DISCIPLINE.

Standards for Attorney Discipline, 2.3(b).

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In the Matter of
STERLING C. JOHNSON

Case number(s):
09-O-10058-LMA

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.

5/28/10

Date

6/3/2010

Date

6/7/2010

Date



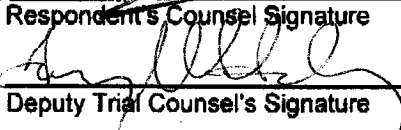
Respondent's Signature

Sterling C. Johnson
Print Name



Respondent's Counsel Signature

Samuel C. Bellicini
Print Name



Deputy Trial Counsel's Signature

Tammy M. Albertsen-Murray
Print Name

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In the Matter Of
STERLING C. JOHNSON

Case Number(s):
09-O-10058

ORDER

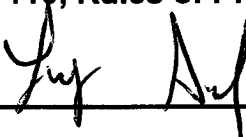
Finding that the stipulation protects the public and that the interests of Respondent will be served by any conditions attached to the reproval, IT IS ORDERED that the requested dismissal of counts/charges, if any, is GRANTED without prejudice, and:

- ☒ 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 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 reproval may constitute cause for a separate proceeding for willful breach of rule 1-110, Rules of Professional Conduct.

June 8, 2010
Date


Judge of the State Bar Court
LUCY ARMENDARIZ

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 San Francisco, on June 8, 2010, I deposited a true copy of the following document(s):

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

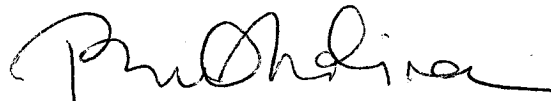
in a sealed envelope for collection and mailing on that date as follows:

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

**SAMUEL C. BELLICINI
FISHKIN & SLATTER, LLP
1111 CIVIC DR STE 215
WALNUT CREEK, CA 94596**
- ☐ by certified mail, No. , with return receipt requested, through the United States Postal Service at , California, addressed as follows:
- ☐ by overnight mail at , California, addressed as follows:
- ☐ by fax transmission, at fax number . No error was reported by the fax machine that I used.
- ☐ By personal service by leaving the documents in a sealed envelope or package clearly labeled to identify the attorney being served with a receptionist or a person having charge of the attorney's office, addressed as follows:
- ☒ by interoffice mail through a facility regularly maintained by the State Bar of California addressed as follows:

TAMMY A. ALBERTSEN-MURRAY, Enforcement, San Francisco

I hereby certify that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed in San Francisco, California, on June 8, 2010.



Bernadette C.O. Molina
Case Administrator
State Bar Court