

Christopher Cicero Faces Disbarment for Fourth Instance of Misconduct



Summary: *After being suspended in 2014 for trying to fraudulently eliminate a speeding ticket against him, attorney Chris Cicero may be disbarred for other misconduct.*

Apparently, after being reprimanded three times for misconduct, a Columbus attorney didn't learn his lesson and is now facing disbarment for a fourth misconduct. Christopher Cicero was already suspended from previous actions but may now be permanently disbarred for allegedly practicing without a license.

Cicero was suspended at the end of 2014 by the Ohio Supreme Court for trying to fix a speeding ticket he received that would have resulted in the loss of his driver's license. The Ohio Supreme Court used the findings by the Board of Commissioners on Grievances and Discipline for violating two provisions of the Rules of Professional Conduct.

Now the Board of Professional Conduct claims that Cicero improperly practiced law four or more times while suspended. Included in their claim filed Wednesday is the allegation that Timothy Dougherty, an attorney that works with Cicero, helped cover up Cicero's license status to clients and possible clients. One client even states that they asked Cicero if his license was suspended and he lied. Cicero told the client, "That's all taken care of." Dougherty has already been charged with allowing Cicero to be involved in legal cases while suspended. Cicero provided legal advice to a client and accepted thousands of dollars for legal work and an autographed copy of The Who's "Quadrophenia" album for work performed on cases.

Cicero could have eventually sought reinstatement of his suspended license but is now being threatened with permanent disbarment. The disciplinary board and two justices supported this possible punishment when they gave him an indefinite suspension.

In 2012, Cicero was suspended for one year for violating the client-confidentiality trust by tipping off the then-football coach at Ohio State University, Jim Tressel, to a scandal involving his players in an email. The Columbus tattoo shop owner, Edward Rife, approached Cicero for legal advice regarding a federal investigation against Rife for drug trafficking. Cicero used the knowledge he obtained from Rife to turn around and tell Tressel that his players were selling and trading memorabilia to the shop owner in exchange for tattoos. The memorabilia included Big Ten championship rings, athletic jerseys, and autographed shoes. Federal authorities confiscated the items from Rife's home during a raid. Tressel was eventually fired for the scandal.

Cicero argued in this case that Rife was not his client since Rife ended up hiring a different attorney but Justice Judith Ann Lanzinger did not agree. Lanzinger, who wrote the majority opinion in the ruling said, "The two discussed the possibility of a client-lawyer relationship. Cicero admitted this in his emails to Tressel, and Rife testified as to the discussion. This case goes to the very heart of confidentiality between a prospective client and an attorney. Prospective clients trust that their confidences will be protected when they engage in an initial consultation with an attorney."

In 1997, Cicero was also suspended for one year for bragging about a sexual relationship with then-Judge Deborah P. O'Neill. She had appointed him to represent a criminal client in a case that went before her.

Do you think a permanent disbarment is an appropriate action for an attorney that appears to have a hard time following the law? Tell us in the comments below.

To learn more about disbarred attorneys, read these articles:

- [Disbarred Attorney Owes over \\$42 Million](#)
- [Attorney Disbarred from Tennessee and Louisiana](#)
- [Attorney Disbarred over Missing Funds](#)

Photo: cleveland.com