

Lawyer Alison Motta Suspended for Saying F-Word in Court



Summary: Chicago attorney, Alison Motta has been suspended for 90 days for using profanity during a trial.

UPDATE: Alison Motta's attorney Jim Doppke contacted JD Journal and informed us that Motta had stated "f-ing bullsh-t" only once during the trial, and that detail has been corrected as of 5/16/17. Doppke also informed us that Motta was not disciplined in court by the judge for taking photographs, and instead, the discipline was issued later.

"Ms. Motta was not disciplined in any way until the Executive Committee entered its May 8 order. That order contains no findings or conclusions concerning photography in the courtroom. Therefore, it is not true to state or imply that Ms. Motta was disciplined for conduct involving photography in the courtroom," Doppke stated.

When you're a defense attorney, you're naturally going to be in battle with someone--but that someone shouldn't be the judge...

That's the important lesson Alison Motta from Chicago learned. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, the "take-no-prisoners" criminal defense lawyer made an enemy of her federal judge when she dropped the f-bomb and "bullsh*t" under her breath during the trial. According to Motta's attorney, the remark was not said directly to the judge or jury, but under her breath.

In late January, Motta of Motta & Motta was representing a female client accused of weapons violations. During the eight days of testimony, Motta was frequently reprimanded by the judge for her line of questioning, but it was her behavior during closing arguments that got her escorted out of the courthouse by deputy U.S. marshals, according to *The Chicago Tribune*.

Motta reportedly took cell phone photos of the prosecution's exhibit during closing arguments, and she and her co-counsel were escorted away after the verdict was read because of that action.

Motta's client Vandetta Redwood was acquitted. She had been charged with giving her teenage cousin a gun before the teen killed a 14-year-old during an after-school fight.

One week after the trial ended, Judge St. Eve filed a complaint with the Executive Committee outlining Motta's misconduct during the trial. In March, Motta was issued a letter, asking for a response.

On Friday, Motta was suspended from practicing in Illinois for 90 days for using profanity during a trial, scoffing at judicial rulings, and being disruptive. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, one of her most egregious violations was when she rolled her eyes and said "f-ing bullsh-t" after U.S. Judge Amy St. Eve overruled an objection.

The committee who determined Motta's suspension said that attorneys are influenced when lawyers visibly react to testimony.

"Not only are witnesses thrown off balance when the opposing lawyer visibly reacts to testimony (such as by rolling her eyes), a lawyer's outright defiance of a trial judge's decision endangers the judge's control of the courtroom," the committee stated.

Motta is now suspended for 90 days and is forbidden to practice as the lead attorney in a trial for a full year. She must also undergo ethics and professionalism courses and must inform all of her clients of her suspension. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, the suspension was "rare."

Last month, Motta apologized for her behavior, and she said that she had been acting out of frustration. Her attorney, James Doppke, told *Chicago Tribune* that his client was remorseful.

"Ms. Motta sincerely regrets that she projected her frustration with the system in her demeanor in the way the judge described," the statement said.

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Source: *Chicago Tribune*

Photo courtesy of *Chicago Tribune*

What do you think of Motta's behavior? Let us know in the comments below.

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