

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF FLORIDA

THE FLORIDA BAR,

Complainant,

v.

ANTONINA VAZNELIS,

Respondent.

Supreme Court Case  
No. SC-

The Florida Bar File  
No. 2014-30,234(09E)

CONDITIONAL GUILTY PLEA FOR CONSENT JUDGMENT

COMES NOW, the undersigned respondent, Antonina Vaznelis, and files this Conditional Guilty Plea pursuant to R. Regulating Fla. Bar 3-7.9(a).

1. Respondent is, and at all times mentioned herein was, a member of The Florida Bar, subject to the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of Florida.

2. The respondent is currently the subject of a Florida Bar disciplinary matter which has been assigned The Florida Bar File No. 2014-30,234(09E).

3. As to The Florida Bar File No. 2014-30,234(09E), there has been a finding of probable cause by the grievance committee.

4. The respondent is acting freely and voluntarily in this matter and tenders this plea without fear or threat of coercion.

5. Respondent is represented by counsel in this matter.

6. The disciplinary measures to be imposed upon the respondent are as

follows:

A. Public reprimand to be administered by publication in the Southern Reporter;

B. Five year period of probation with the following conditions: Respondent will participate actively in the program offered by Florida Lawyers Assistance, Inc., by signing a rehabilitation contract with that organization within thirty (30) days of the Order of the Supreme Court of Florida. Respondent shall follow all recommendations by Florida Lawyers Assistance, Inc., during the entire probation period. Respondent will pay a Florida Lawyers Assistance, Inc., registration fee of \$250.00 and a probation monitoring fee of \$100.00 a month to The Florida Bar's headquarters office. All monthly monitoring fees must be remitted no later than the end of each respective month in which the monitoring fee is due. All fees must be paid to the bar's headquarters office in Tallahassee. Failure to pay shall be deemed cause to revoke probation; and,

C. Payment of the disciplinary costs.

7. The following allegations provide the basis for respondent's guilty plea in this matter:

A. Respondent represented the trustee in the administration of a complex estate with multiple beneficiaries. Respondent also represented

parties in interrelated trust and estate cases.

B. Over a period of many years, respondent failed to timely marshal assets and failed to timely administer the trusts and estates.

C. During the period that respondent failed to timely administer the matters, some of the potential beneficiaries passed away.

D. In January 2013, Jenny Sieg, the attorney for a surviving beneficiary, attempted to contact respondent to obtain information about the estates and assets.

E. Respondent failed to respond to Ms. Sieg's requests for information.

F. Ms. Sieg met with respondent at her law office and found that respondent had boxes of financial information in regard to the estates.

G. Respondent indicated that the estates were complicated by all of the secrets the various parties kept from each other and from respondent.

The matter was complicated further when some parties brought respondent briefcases full of documents which they believed to be important. Some of which were relevant, but most were not. The CPA firm hired by respondent to conduct a forensic financial review and construct an accounting, failed to perform these tasks. Respondent had also been experiencing personal problems which included injuries from three traffic accidents for which she

was not at fault, having to relocate her practice after dissolution of the law firm for which she worked, and the disability and death of close family members.

H. Due to respondent's personal problems and inability to provide diligent representation, she voluntarily withdrew from the matter. Ms. Sieg ultimately substituted as counsel.

8. The following Rules Regulating The Florida Bar provide the basis for the discipline to be imposed in this matter: 4-1.1 [Competence]; 4-1.2(a) [Objectives and Scope of Representation]; 4-1.3 [Diligence]; 4-1.4(a) [Communication]; 4-1.16(a)(2) [Declining or Terminating Representation]; 4-3.2 [Expediting Litigation]; 4-3.4(a), (c) [Fairness to Opposing Party and Counsel]; 4-5.3(b), (c) [Responsibilities Regarding Nonlawyer Assistants]; and 4-8.4(d) [Misconduct].

9. In mitigation, respondent has been admitted to the practice of law since 1990 with no prior discipline [9.32(a)]; respondent did not display a dishonest or selfish motive [9.32(b)]; she was forthright and cooperative with the bar throughout this proceeding [9.32(e)]; and, she sought to rectify her mistakes and has expressed remorse for her misconduct [9.32(1)]. During the time period that the misconduct occurred, respondent was experiencing numerous personal problems, and she was suffering from depression and anxiety [9.32(c)].

Respondent is under the care of a therapist, and she has offered to be monitored by Florida Lawyers Assistance for a period of five years.

10. If this plea is not finally approved by the referee and the Supreme Court of Florida, then it shall be of no effect and may not be used by the parties in any way.

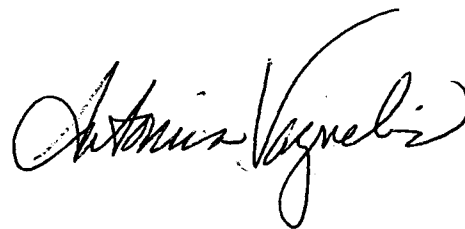
11. If this plea is approved, then the respondent agrees to pay all reasonable costs associated with this case pursuant to R. Regulating Fla. Bar 3-7.6(q) in the amount of **\$1,490.00**. These costs are due within 30 days of the Court order. Respondent agrees that if the costs are not paid within 30 days of this Court's order becoming final, the respondent shall pay interest on any unpaid costs at the statutory rate. Respondent further agrees not to attempt to discharge the obligation for payment of the bar's costs in any future proceedings, including but not limited to, a petition for bankruptcy. Respondent shall be deemed delinquent and ineligible to practice law pursuant to R. Regulating Fla. Bar 1-3.6 if the cost judgment is not satisfied within 30 days of the final Court order, unless deferred by the Board of Governors of The Florida Bar.

12. The respondent acknowledges the obligation to pay the costs of this proceeding and that payment is evidence of strict compliance with the conditions of any disciplinary order or agreement, and is also evidence of good faith and fiscal responsibility. Respondent understands that failure to pay the costs of this

proceeding or restitution will reflect adversely on any other bar disciplinary matter in which the respondent is involved.

13. This Conditional Guilty Plea for Consent Judgment fully complies with all requirements of The Rules Regulating The Florida Bar.

Dated this 9<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2014.



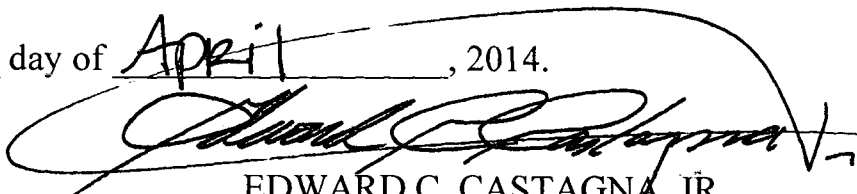
RECEIVED

APR 10 2014

The Florida Bar  
Orlando Office

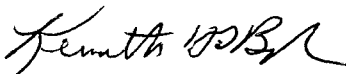
ANTONINA VAZNELIS  
Respondent  
River Country Square  
8235 River Country Drive  
Spring Hill, Florida 34607-2137  
(352) 597-7363  
Florida Bar No. 874530  
[AttnyNinaV@yahoo.com](mailto:AttnyNinaV@yahoo.com)

Dated this 9<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2014.



EDWARD C. CASTAGNA, JR.  
Counsel for Respondent  
Castagna Law Firm, P.A.  
611 Druid Road East, Suite 710  
Clearwater, Florida 33756-3947  
(727) 446-6699  
Florida Bar No. 198102  
[castfirm@gmail.com](mailto:castfirm@gmail.com)

Dated this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of May, 2014.



KENNETH H. P. BRYK  
Bar Counsel

The Florida Bar  
1000 Legion Place, Suite 1625  
Orlando, Florida 32801-1050  
(407) 425-5424  
Florida Bar No. 164186  
[kbryk@flabar.org](mailto:kbryk@flabar.org)  
[orlandooffice@flabar.org](mailto:orlandooffice@flabar.org)