

MICHAEL J. CRAWFORD
(Resignation in Lieu of Disciplinary Proceedings)

On July 12, 2024, the Idaho Supreme Court entered an Order accepting the resignation in lieu of disciplinary proceedings of Mountain Home attorney Michael J. Crawford. The Idaho Supreme Court's Order followed a stipulated resolution of disciplinary proceedings relating to the following conduct.

Mr. Crawford represented Danielle Smith in a child custody modification case. Ms. Smith, a California resident at the time, hired Mr. Crawford for \$1,500 to file a response to the modification petition in Elmore County, Idaho. Mr. Crawford failed to file a response on Ms. Smith's behalf and made false statements to her that he had filed it. A default judgment was entered against Ms. Smith and Mr. Crawford informed her that he would file a motion to set aside the default that day, but he failed to ever file such a motion. Ms. Smith filed a pro se motion to set aside the default judgment, but it was denied. Mr. Crawford never communicated with Ms. Smith again and did not return the unearned fee, until ten months later and only after Ms. Smith had filed a grievance and Client Assistance Fund claim against him which was about to be paid.

Mr. Crawford failed to respond to the ISB's inquiries regarding Ms. Smith's allegations in her grievance and her Client Assistance Fund claim. Mr. Crawford also made false statements to Bar Counsel about when he would submit his responses, and at one point, falsely stated in an email that his response had been mailed to the ISB.

The ISB filed a formal charge complaint against Mr. Crawford on October 12, 2023. Mr. Crawford failed to respond to the formal charge complaint, and the allegations were deemed admitted on January 23, 2024. With respect to the above conduct, Mr. Crawford admitted that he violated I.R.P.C. 1.2(a) [Failure to abide by client's objectives]; 1.3 [Failure to act with reasonable diligence and promptness]; 1.4 [Failure to reasonably communicate with client]; 1.5(a) [Making an agreement for, charging, or collecting an unreasonable fee or an unreasonable amount for expenses]; 1.16(d) [Upon termination of representation, failing to refund any advance payment of fee or expense that has not been earned or incurred]; 3.2 [Failure to make reasonable efforts to expedite litigation consistent with the interests of the client]; 8.4(c) [Engaging in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit or misrepresentation]; 8.4(d) [Engaging in conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice]; I.R.P.C. 8.1(a) [Knowingly making a false statement of material fact in connection with a disciplinary matter]; and I.R.P.C. 8.1(b) [Knowingly failing to respond to a lawful demand for information from a disciplinary authority in connection with a disciplinary matter].

While the formal charge case was pending, Mr. Crawford also failed to respond to two separate grievance investigations by Bar Counsel's Office. The grievances alleged that Mr. Crawford failed to perform legal services requested by clients, failed to communicate with clients, and failed to return unearned legal fees.

The Idaho Supreme Court accepted Mr. Crawford's resignation in lieu of disciplinary proceedings. By the terms of the Order, Mr. Crawford may not apply for admission to the Idaho State Bar sooner than five (5) years from the date of his resignation. If Mr. Crawford applies for admission, he will be required to comply with all the bar admission requirements in Section II of the Idaho Bar Commission Rules and shall have the burden of overcoming the rebuttable presumption of the "unfitness to practice law."

By the terms of the Idaho Supreme Court's Order, Mr. Crawford's name was stricken from the records of the Idaho Supreme Court and his right to practice law before the courts in the State of Idaho was terminated on July 12, 2024.

Inquiries about this matter may be directed to: Bar Counsel, Idaho State Bar, P.O. Box 895, Boise, Idaho 83701, (208) 334-4500.