

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF FLORIDA  
(Before a Referee)

THE FLORIDA BAR,

Complainant,

v.

TAYLOR WAYNE CASEY,

Respondent.

Supreme Court Case No.  
SC2025-0635

The Florida Bar File No.  
2024-00,270(4D)

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**REPORT OF REFEREE**

I. **SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS**

The undersigned was appointed as referee under R. Regulating Fla. Bar 3-7.6 to preside over the proceedings in this case.

On May 7, 2025, The Florida Bar (the Bar) filed its complaint against Respondent and its Request for Admissions in these proceedings. The Supreme Court of Florida entered an order on May 7, 2025, designating the Chief Judge of the Seventh Judicial Circuit of Florida to appoint a referee in this case. The Honorable Leah R. Case appointed the undersigned to serve as the referee.

Throughout these proceedings, the Bar was represented by Baker Christian Chapman. Respondent was pro se.

On September 26, 2025, a sanction hearing was held. The following exhibits were entered into evidence: TFB Exhibit 1 – Felony Arrest and Booking Report; TFB Exhibit 2 – Felony Information; TFB Exhibit 3 – Felony Judgment and Sentence; TFB Exhibit 4 – Felony VOP Arrest and Booking Report; TFB Exhibit 5 – Felony VOP DOC Amended Affidavit; TFB Exhibit 6 – CCIS Printout of Felony Docket showing VOP Hearing and Sentence; TFB Exhibit 7 – Municipal Ordinance Notice to Appear; TFB Exhibit 8 – Municipal Ordinance Information; TFB Exhibit 9 – Municipal Ordinance Judgement and Sentence; TFB Exhibit 10 – Misdemeanor Arrest and Booking Report; TFB Exhibit 11 – Misdemeanor Information; and TFB Exhibit 12 – Email from ASA Andrew Madry regarding Nolle Prose of Misdemeanor Charges. Respondent did not enter any exhibits into evidence. No witnesses were called either by the Bar or Respondent.

All items properly filed including pleadings, recorded testimony (if transcribed), exhibits in evidence, and the Report of Referee constitute the record in this case and are filed with the Supreme Court of Florida.

## II. FINDINGS OF FACT

Jurisdictional Statement. Respondent is, and at all times mentioned during these proceedings, a member of the Bar, subject to the jurisdiction and Rules Regulating The Florida Bar adopted by the Supreme Court of Florida.

Narrative Summary Of Case. On May 31, 2024, Respondent was found guilty, after a jury trial, of Count I: resisting an officer with violence in violation of Fla. Stat. § 843.01, a third-degree felony; Count II: trespass in violation of Fla. Stat. § 810.09, a first-degree misdemeanor; and Count III: disorderly intoxication in violation of Fla. Stat. § 856.011(1), a second-degree misdemeanor. On January 17, 2025, Respondent was sentenced on Count I to eighteen months' probation under the supervision of the Department of Corrections. Adjudication was withheld as to Counts II and III, with unsupervised probation for a period of one day.

## III. RECOMMENDATIONS AS TO GUILT

I recommend that Respondent be found guilty of violating the following Rules Regulating The Florida Bar:

3-4.3 (Misconduct and Minor Misconduct), 3-4.4 (Criminal Misconduct), and 4-8.4(b) (A lawyer shall not commit a criminal act that

reflects adversely on the lawyer's honesty, trustworthiness or fitness as a lawyer in other respects.)

IV. PERSONAL HISTORY AND PAST DISCIPLINARY RECORD

Before recommending discipline under R. Regulating Fla. Bar 3-7.6(m)(2)(D), I considered the following:

Personal History of Respondent:

Age: 44

Date admitted to the Bar: January 24, 2011

Prior Discipline: None

V. STANDARDS FOR IMPOSING LAWYER SANCTIONS

I considered the following Standards for Imposing Lawyer Sanctions before recommending discipline:

5.1 FAILURE TO MAINTAIN PERSONAL INTEGRITY

Suspension is appropriate when a lawyer knowingly engages in criminal conduct which is not included elsewhere in this subdivision or other conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation that seriously adversely reflects on the lawyer's fitness to practice.

I find the following aggravating factors under standard 3.2:

3) pattern of misconduct;

9) substantial experience in the practice of law.

I find the following mitigating factors under standard 3.3:

1) absence of prior disciplinary record;

5) full and fee disclosure to the bar or cooperative attitude toward the proceedings.

## VI. CASE LAW

I considered the following case law from the Bar before recommending discipline:

The Florida Bar v. Heimendinger, 2023 WL 8824680, SC2023-1224 (Fla. Dec. 21, 2023) - By Court order dated December 21, 2023, the attorney was suspended for two years. The attorney entered a plea of no contest to aggravated assault and carrying concealed firearm, both third degree felonies and improper exhibition of a dangerous weapon and battery, both first degree misdemeanors. The attorney was sentenced on the felony counts to five years of probation and on the misdemeanor counts to two days of imprisonment with credit for time served.

The Florida Bar v. Jones, 2016 WL 6825816, SC16-1190 (Fla. Nov. 17, 2016) - By Court order dated November 17, 2016, the attorney was suspended for eighteen months *nunc pro tunc* to the effective date of his felony conviction suspension. The attorney also was required to undergo a Florida Lawyers Assistance, Inc. evaluation. The attorney entered a no contest plea to one count of trespass to a structure and/or conveyance with a deadly weapon, a third-degree felony. Adjudication of guilt was withheld, and the attorney was placed on probation for two years with special conditions. No aggravating or mitigating factors were noted.

The Florida Bar v. Pagliara, 2019 WL 1303056, SC18-1286 (Fla. Mar. 21, 2019) - By Court order dated March 21, 2019, the attorney was suspended for eighteen months. This is a reciprocal discipline case. A New Jersey grand jury indicted the attorney on one count of aggravated assault, one

count of criminal restraint, and one count of tampering with physical evidence. The attorney failed to report the indictment, or the institution of felony charges, to the Bar as required. The attorney ultimately plead guilty to one count of aggravated assault. In exchange, the prosecution agreed to drop the remaining charges. The prosecution recommended entry into the Pre-Trial Intervention program (PTI) for two years. The attorney completed all terms of the PTI, and the court dismissed all remaining criminal charges, terminating the attorney's PTI successfully. The attorney had no prior discipline.

The Florida Bar v. Heaton, 2018 WL 2749015, SC17-1887 (Fla. June 7, 2018) - By Court order dated June 7, 2018, the attorney received a one-year suspension, effective immediately due to the attorney's existing suspensions, and three years of probation conditioned on Florida Lawyers Assistance, Inc. The attorney entered a no contest plea to five counts of illegal drug possession, all third-degree felonies. In a second matter, the attorney entered a plea of guilty to one count of illegal drug possession, a third-degree felony. In a third matter, the attorney entered a no contest plea to three counts of illegal drug possession, third degree felonies. The attorney's suspension was *nunc pro tunc* to the date of the felony conviction suspension. In aggravation, the attorney had an extensive disciplinary history, most of which concerned her failure to respond to the Bar's investigative inquiries.

The Florida Bar v. Natalie Patricia Bruzzese, SC18-1796 - By Court order dated October 29, 2018, the attorney was placed on felony suspension pursuant to Rule 3-7.2(f). The attorney was charged with battery on a law enforcement officer, resisting an officer with violence, and resisting an officer without violence. Following a jury trial, the attorney was found guilty of resisting an officer with violence and resisting an officer without violence. The Bar matter was resolved through consent judgment, and the Court accepted a three-year suspension effective immediately.

I also considered the following case law from the Respondent before recommending discipline:

The Florida Bar v. De La Torre, 994 So.2d 1032 (Fla. 2008) - By Court order dated October 16, 2008, the attorney was suspended for eighteen-months *nunc pro tunc* to October 4, 2007, followed by three years'

probation. The attorney entered a no contest plea in March 2000, to two felonies-possession of cocaine, battery on a law enforcement officer, and three misdemeanors- resisting an officer without violence, unlawful possession of cannabis, and possession of drug paraphernalia. Adjudication of guilt was withheld, and the attorney was sentenced to eighteen months' probation. The referee found substantial mitigating factors. The attorney had no prior disciplinary record and was experiencing personal and emotional problems at or around the time of the misconduct, including recovery from a serious injury, a significant period of unemployment, and a dissolution of his long-term marriage. There was also 'considerable evidence' of his good character and reputation, demonstrated interim rehabilitation by his 'seemingly exemplary record' since his 1999 arrest, and he completed the terms of his criminal sentencing. In aggravation, the attorney failed to notify the Bar about the determination of guilt until August 2007.

The Florida Bar v. Cohen, 919 So.2d 384 (Fla. 2005) - By Court order dated November 23, 2005, the attorney was suspended for ninety days, followed by a three-year probationary. The attorney entered a no contest plea to a felony marijuana charge for personal use and five misdemeanor counts- driving under the influence, possession of drug paraphernalia, fleeing and eluding officers, resisting arrest without violence, and reckless driving. The attorney was adjudicated guilty on one misdemeanor, and adjudication was withheld on the remaining charges. The attorney was sentenced to thirty days in jail, with one year of drug-offender probation, followed by two years of probation.

The Florida Bar v. Laing, 695 So.2d 299 (Fla. 1997) – By Court order dated April 24, 1997, the attorney was suspended for ninety-one days. The attorney was ordered to submit proof of rehabilitation prior to reinstatement and then upon reinstatement, he was placed on probation for one year to be monitored by a member of the Bar and he was required to take and pass the ethics portion of the Bar examination. The attorney was found guilty on six counts. In one count, the attorney failed to appear to his driving under the influence charge in Ohio and a warrant was issued. In another count, the attorney was convicted of resisting an officer without violence. After hearing testimony, the referee found that many of the violations alleged were more technical than unlawful and there were mitigating circumstances.

The Florida Bar v. Kinsella, 260 So.3d 1046 (Fla. 2018) - By Court order dated December 20, 2018, the attorney received a three-year suspension. The attorney entered a plea of no contest to one reduced charge of petit theft, a misdemeanor, and received probation with adjudication withheld. The attorney was employed at a department store and stole from three different registers. The referee found the following mitigating factors: no prior disciplinary record, personal or emotional problems not related to alcohol or drug abuse, a timely good faith effort to make restitution or rectify the consequences of her misconduct, a full and free disclosure to the Bar or had a cooperative attitude toward the proceedings, she was inexperienced in the practice of law, other penalties or sanctions have been imposed for the same conduct, and she showed remorse. In aggravation, the referee found the attorney acted with a dishonest or selfish motive, engaged in a pattern of misconduct, and committed multiple offenses.

VII. RECOMMENDATION AS TO DISCIPLINARY MEASURES TO BE IMPOSED

I recommend that Respondent be found guilty of misconduct justifying disciplinary measures and be disciplined by:

- A. Eighteen-month suspension *nunc pro tunc* to the date of his release from jail (September 16, 2025).
- B. Respondent will contact Florida Lawyers Assistance, Inc. (FLA, Inc.), at 954-566-9040 for a comprehensive mental health and substance abuse evaluation within thirty (30) days of the order of the Supreme Court of Florida. At the end of the thirty (30) day period, Respondent will provide the Bar's headquarters office with proof that Respondent has scheduled an evaluation. Respondent will abide by all recommendations

made by FLA, Inc., including, but not limited to, entering into a rehabilitation contract within thirty days of the recommendation. Once Respondent enters into a rehabilitation contract with FLA, Inc. then the contract will be monitored by FLA, Inc. until such time as Respondent has been reinstated or completed the contract.

Prior to petitioning for reinstatement, Respondent must undergo a comprehensive mental health and substance abuse evaluation by an approved FLA, Inc. provider, comply with any recommendations including entering into a rehabilitation contract and receive a recommendation from FLA, Inc. in support of his reinstatement.

C. Payment of the Bar's costs in these proceedings.

VIII. STATEMENT OF COSTS AND MANNER IN WHICH COSTS SHOULD BE TAXED

I find the following costs were reasonably incurred by the Bar:

Administrative Fee	\$1,250.00
Court Reporters' Fees	\$ 994.75
Investigative Costs	\$ 131.85

TOTAL	\$2,376.60
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I recommend that the above costs be charged to Respondent and that interest accrues at the statutory rate. Respondent will be delinquent

thirty days after the judgment in this case becomes final unless Respondent pays the costs in full or the Board of Governors of The Florida Bar defers payment under R. Regulating Fla. Bar 1-3.6.

Dated this 13<sup>th</sup> day of November 2025.

/S/ Linda L. Gaustad  
Hon. Linda L. Gaustad, Referee  
101 N Alabama Ave DeLand,  
Florida 32724-4316

Filed with the Supreme Court of Florida via the Florida Courts E-Filing Portal with copies served via the Portal to:

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