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JOHN D. HADDEN CLERK

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA



ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY COMMISSION

AS COMPILED BY THE

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL

OF THE

OKLAHOMA BAR ASSOCIATION

JANUARY 1, 2018 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2018

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INTRODUCTION:

Pursuant to the provisions of Rule 14.1, Rules Governing Disciplinary Proceedings (RGDP), 5 O.S. 2011, ch. 1, app. 1-A, the following is the Annual Report of grievances and complaints received and processed for 2018 by the Professional Responsibility Commission and the Office of the General Counsel of the Oklahoma Bar Association.

THE PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY COMMISSION:

The Commission is composed of seven persons - five attorney and two non-lawyer members. The attorney members are nominated for rotating three-year terms by the President of the Association subject to the approval of the Board of Governors. The two non-lawyer members are appointed by the Speaker of the Oklahoma House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the Oklahoma Senate, respectively. Terms expire on December 31st at the conclusion of the three-year term.

Attorney members serving on the Professional Responsibility Commission during 2018 were R. Richard Sitzman, Oklahoma City; David Swank, Norman; Heather Burrage, Durant; Phillip J. Tucker, Edmond; and Sidney K. Swinson, Tulsa. The Non-Lawyer member was John Thompson, Oklahoma City. One Non-Lawyer position was vacant during 2018. R. Richard Sitzman served as Chairperson. Commission members serve without compensation but are reimbursed for actual travel expenses.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Professional Responsibility Commission considers and investigates any alleged ground for discipline, or alleged incapacity, of any attorney called to its attention, or upon its own motion, and takes such action as deemed appropriate to effectuate the purposes of the Rules Governing Disciplinary Proceedings. Under the supervision of the

Professional Responsibility Commission, the Office of the General Counsel investigates all matters involving alleged misconduct or incapacity of any attorney called to the attention of the General Counsel by grievance or otherwise, and reports to the Professional Responsibility Commission the results of investigations conducted by the General Counsel. The Professional Responsibility Commission then determines the disposition of grievances or directs the instituting of a formal complaint for alleged misconduct or personal incapacity of an attorney. The attorneys in the Office of the General Counsel prosecute all proceedings under the Rules Governing Disciplinary Proceedings, supervise the investigative process, and represent the Oklahoma Bar Association at all reinstatement proceedings.

VOLUME OF GRIEVANCES:

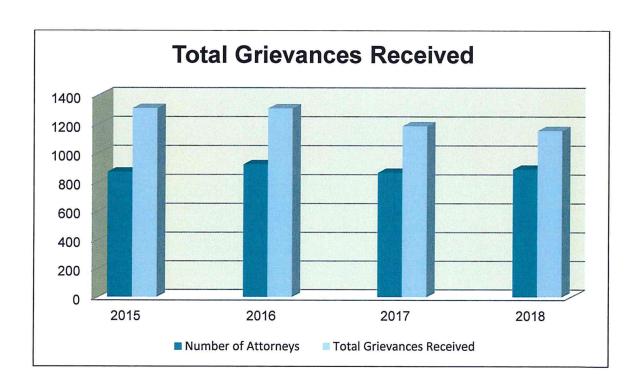
During 2018, the Office of the General Counsel received 242 formal grievances involving 176 attorneys and 917 informal grievances involving 713 attorneys. In total, 1,159 grievances were received against 889 attorneys. The total number of attorneys differs because some attorneys received both formal and informal grievances. In addition, the Office handled 213 items of general correspondence, which is mail not considered to be a grievance against an attorney.¹

On January 1, 2018, 141 formal grievances were carried over from the previous year. During 2018, 242 new formal grievances were opened for investigation. The carryover accounted for a total caseload of 383 formal investigations pending throughout 2018. Of those grievances, 236 investigations were completed by the Office of the

¹ The initial submission of a trust account overdraft notification is classified as general correspondence. The classification may change to an informal or formal grievance after investigation.

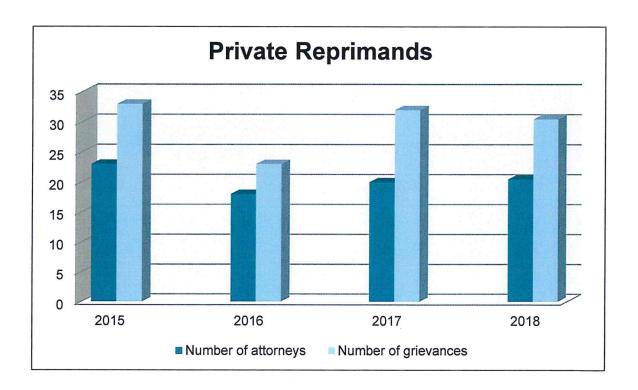
General Counsel and presented for review to the Professional Responsibility Commission. Therefore, 147 investigations were pending on December 31, 2018.

The time required for investigating and concluding each grievance varies depending on the seriousness and complexity of the allegations and the availability of witnesses and documents. The Professional Responsibility Commission requires the Office of the General Counsel to report monthly on all informal and formal grievances received and all investigations completed and ready for disposition by the Commission. In addition, the Commission receives a monthly statistical report on the pending caseload. The Board of Governors is advised statistically each month of the actions taken by the Professional Responsibility Commission.

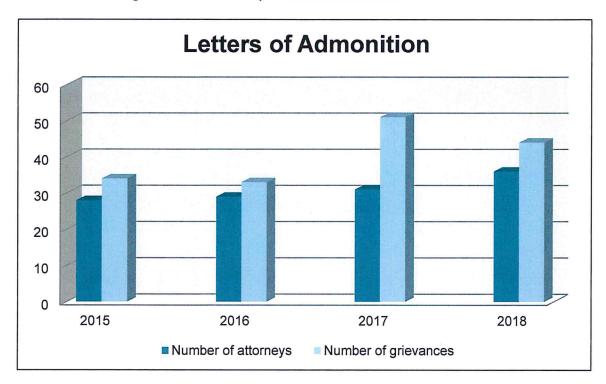


DISCIPLINE IMPOSED BY THE PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY COMMISSION:

- 1. <u>Formal Charges.</u> During 2018, the Commission voted the filing of formal disciplinary charges against 14 attorneys involving 23 grievances. In addition, the Commission also oversaw the investigation of 11 Rule 7, RGDP matters filed with the Chief Justice of the Oklahoma Supreme Court.
- 2. <u>Private Reprimands.</u> Pursuant to Rule 5.3(c), RGDP, the Professional Responsibility Commission has the authority to impose private reprimands, with the consent of the attorney, in matters of less serious misconduct or if mitigating factors reduce the sanction to be imposed. During 2018, the Commission issued private reprimands to 20 attorneys involving 30 grievances.



3. <u>Letters of Admonition.</u> During 2018, the Commission issued letters of admonition to 36 attorneys involving 44 grievances cautioning that the conduct of the attorney was dangerously close to a violation of a disciplinary rule which the Commission believed warranted a warning rather than discipline.



- 4. <u>Dismissals.</u> The Commission dismissed five grievances due to the loss of jurisdiction after the resignation pending disciplinary proceedings or disbarment of the respondent attorney. Furthermore, the Commission dismissed 19 grievances upon successful completion of a diversion program by the attorney. The remainder were dismissed where the investigation did not substantiate the allegations by clear and convincing evidence.
- 5. <u>Diversion Program.</u> The Commission may also refer respondent attorneys to the Discipline Diversion Program where remedial measures are taken to ensure that any deficiency in the representation of a client is not repeated in the future. During 2018, the Commission referred 46 attorneys to the Diversion Program for conduct involving 67 grievances.

The Discipline Diversion Program is tailored to the individual circumstances of the participating attorney and the misconduct alleged. Oversight of the program is by the OBA Ethics Counsel with the OBA Management Assistance Program Director involved in programming. Program options include: Trust Account School, Professional Responsibility/Ethics School, Law Office Management Training, Communication and Client Relationship Skills, Professionalism in the Practice of Law, and referral to the Lawyers Helping Lawyers program. In 2018, instructional courses were taught by OBA Ethics Counsel Joe Balkenbush, OBA General Counsel Gina L. Hendryx, OBA First Assistant General Counsel Loraine Dillinder Farabow, OBA Assistant General Counsel Katherine M. Ogden, OBA Management Assistance Program Director Jim Calloway, and OBA Practice Management Advisor Darla Jackson.

As a result of the Trust Account Overdraft Reporting Notifications, the Office of the General Counsel is now able to monitor when attorneys encounter difficulty with management of their IOLTA accounts. Upon recommendation of the Office of the General Counsel, the Professional Responsibility Commission may place those individuals in a tailored program designed to instruct on basic trust accounting procedures. In 2018, the OBA Management Assistance Program opened its trust account diversion classes to all OBA members.

2018 Attorney Participation in Diversion Program Curriculum

Law Office Management Training: 13 Attorneys

Communication and Client Relationship Skills: 18 Attorneys

Professionalism in the Practice of Law: 6 Attorneys

Professional Responsibility / Ethics School: 20 Attorneys

Client Trust Account School: 15 Attorneys

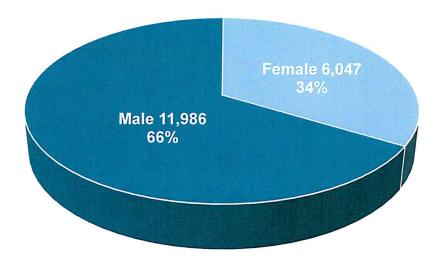
Law Office Consultations: 9 Attorneys

Lawyers Helping Lawyers Referral: 4 Attorneys

SURVEY OF GRIEVANCES:

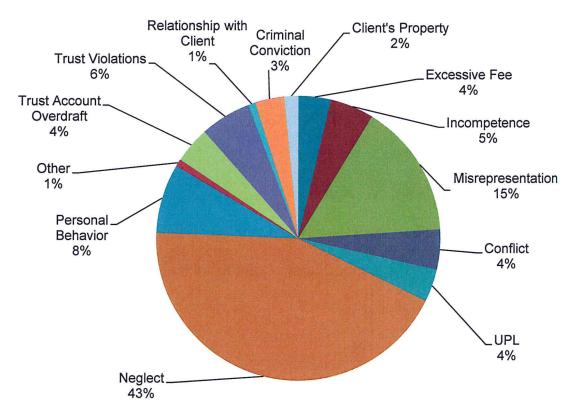
In order to better inform the Oklahoma Supreme Court, the bar, and the public of the nature of the grievances received, the numbers of attorneys complained against, and the areas of attorney misconduct involved, the following information is presented.

Total membership of the Oklahoma Bar Association as of December 31, 2018 was 18,033 attorneys. The total number of members included 11,986 males and 6,047 females.

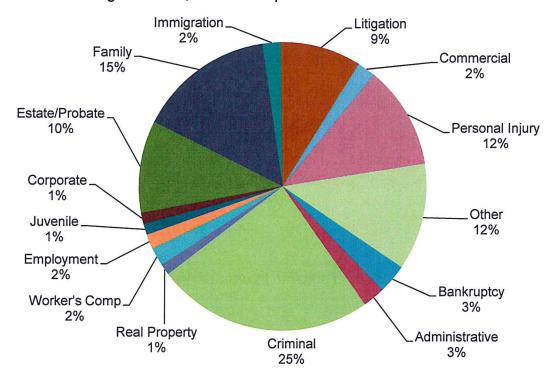


Formal and informal grievances were submitted against 889 attorneys. Therefore, approximately five percent of the attorneys licensed to practice law in Oklahoma received a grievance in 2018.

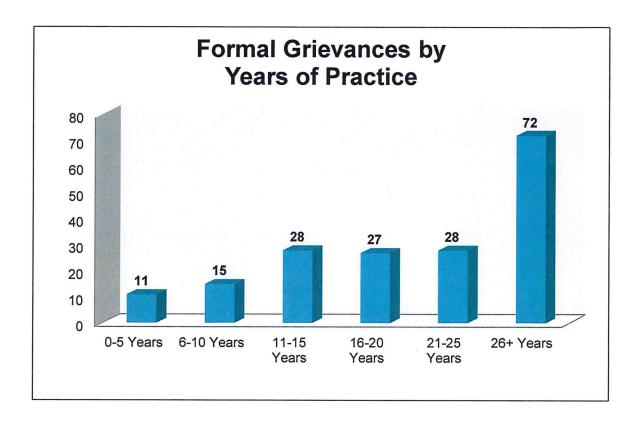
A breakdown of the type of attorney misconduct alleged in the 242 formal grievances opened by the Office of the General Counsel in 2018 is as follows:



Of the 242 formal grievances, the area of practice is as follows:



The number of years in practice of the 176 attorneys receiving formal grievances is as follows:



The largest number of grievances received were against attorneys who have been in practice for 26 years or more. The age of attorneys with formal charges filed and discipline imposed in 2018 is as follows:

Type of Complaint Filed - 2018	Rule 6, RGDP	Rule 7, RGDP	Rule 10, RGDP	Rule 8, RGDP
Number of Attorneys Involved	6	13	1	4
Age of Attorney			But the Artist	建 建设。1737年
21-29 years old	0	1	0	0
30-49 years old	3	5	0	0
50-74 years old	3	6	0	3
75 or more years old	0	1	1	1

Type of Discipline Imposed - 2018	Dismissals	Public Censure	Disciplinary Suspension	Confidential Suspension	Resignation Pending Disciplinary Proceedings	Disbarment
Number of Attorneys Involved	6	2	5	1	6	5
Age of Attorney						
21-29 years old	0	0	1	0	0	0
30-49 years old	3	1	1	0	1	2
50-74 years old	3	1	3	0	4	2
75 or more years old	0	0	0	1	1	1

DISCIPLINE IMPOSED BY THE OKLAHOMA SUPREME COURT:

In 2018, discipline was imposed by the Oklahoma Supreme Court in 24 disciplinary cases. The sanctions are as follow:

1. Disbarment.

Respondent	Order Date
Kleinsmith, Philip M.	1/17/18
Knight, David W.	6/19/18
Kruger, Joel L.	6/19/18
Gaines, Shanita D.	11/20/18
Minks, Steven P.	12/3/18

2. Resignations Pending Disciplinary Proceedings Approved by Court.

(Tantamount to Disbarment)

Respondent	Order Date
Menzer, James L.	6/4/18
Bedford, Ernie	9/10/18
Curthoys, Brian A.	9/10/18
Dalton, John E.	10/29/18
Merrill, Stephen J.	12/10/18

	Respondent		Order Date
	Oliver, J. Edward		12/11/18
3.	Disciplinary Suspensions	<u>5.</u>	
	Respondent	<u>Length</u>	Order Date
	Brooking, Meagan E.	60 days	1/30/18
	Bounds, John K.	2 years + 1 day	3/6/18
	Barrett, Colin R.	6 months	9/11/18
	Smalley, Richard E.	6 months	12/11/18
	Dunivan, John D.	1 year	12/18/18
	Rule 10 Confidential	Indefinite	9/10/18
4.	Public Censure.		
	Respondent		Order Date
	Black, Shawnnessy M.	10/30/18	
	Smalley, Richard E.	12/11/18	
5.	Dismissals.		
	Respondent		Order Date
	Tom, Paul R. (Dismissed due to death	1/16/18	
	Straily, Kristin D. (Misdemeanor Conviction)	3/26/18	
	Ruding, Jill N. (Misdemeanor Conviction)	5/7/18	
	Hooper, Michael R. (Reciprocal Discipline; F	5/14/18	

<u>Respondent</u> <u>Order Date</u>

Andrews, Joe S. 5/29/18

(Misdemeanor Conviction; Rule 7, RGDP)

Bryant, G. David 6/11/18

(Misdemeanor Conviction; Rule 7, RGDP)

There were 16 discipline cases filed with the Supreme Court as of January 1, 2018. During 2018, 24 new formal complaints were filed for a total of 40 cases pending with the Supreme Court during 2018. On December 31, 2018, 16 cases remain filed and pending before the Oklahoma Supreme Court².

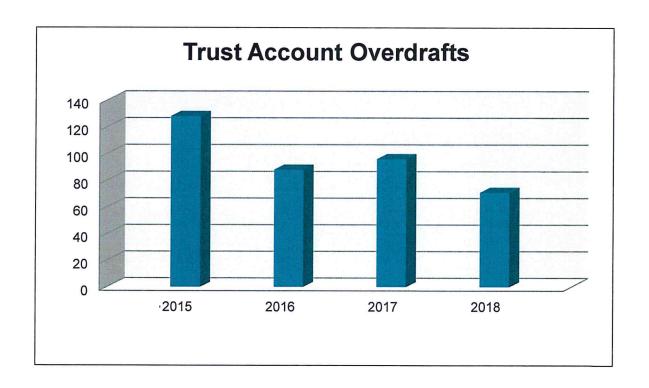
REINSTATEMENTS:

There were six petitions for reinstatement pending before the Professional Responsibility Tribunal and three petitions for reinstatement pending with the Supreme Court as of January 1, 2018. There were eight new petitions for reinstatement filed in 2018. In 2018, the Supreme Court granted seven reinstatements, denied two reinstatements, and three were withdrawn by the Petitioner. On December 31, 2018, there were three petitions for reinstatement pending before the Professional Responsibility Tribunal and two petitions for reinstatement pending before the Oklahoma Supreme Court.

² Four cases were stayed by the Court and are still considered pending by the Office of the General Counsel: SCBD 6318, Rule 7, RGDP; SCBD 6354, Rule 7, RGDP; SCBD 6512, Rule 7, RGDP; and SCBD 6553, Rule 7, RGDP.

TRUST ACCOUNT OVERDRAFT REPORTING:

The Office of the General Counsel, under the supervision of the Professional Responsibility Commission, has implemented the Trust Account Overdraft Reporting requirements of Rule 1.15(j), Oklahoma Rules of Professional Conduct, 5 O.S. 2011, ch. 1, app. 3-A (ORPC). Trust Account Overdraft Reporting Agreements are submitted by depository institutions. In 2018, 71 notices of overdraft of a client trust account were received by the Office of the General Counsel. Notification triggers a general inquiry to the attorney requesting an explanation and supporting bank documents for the deficient account. Based upon the response, an investigation may be commenced. Repeated overdrafts due to negligent accounting practices may result in referral to the Discipline Diversion Program for instruction in proper trust accounting procedures.



UNAUTHORIZED PRACTICE OF LAW:

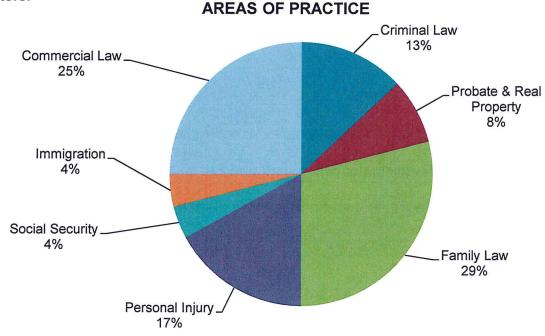
Rule 5.1(b), RGDP, authorizes the Office of the General Counsel to investigate allegations of the unauthorized practice of law (UPL) by non-attorneys, suspended attorneys and disbarred attorneys. Rule 5.5, ORPC, regulates the unauthorized practice of law by attorneys and prohibits attorneys from assisting others in doing so.

1. Requests for Investigation.

In 2018, the Office of the General Counsel received 24 complaints for investigation of the unauthorized practice of law. The Office of the General Counsel fielded many additional inquiries regarding the unauthorized practice of law that are not reflected in this summary.

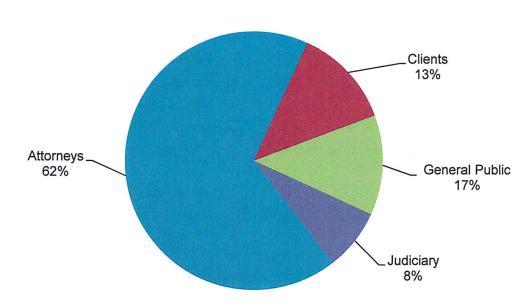
2. Practice Areas.

Allegations of the unauthorized practice of law encompass various areas of law. In previous years, most unauthorized practice of law complaints involved non-lawyers or paralegals handling divorce matters but that trend had declined over the last few years. However, in 2018, a significant number of UPL complaints again involved family law matters.



3. Referral Sources.

Requests for investigations of the unauthorized practice of law stem from multiple sources. In 2018, the Office of the General Counsel received the most complaints from attorneys.



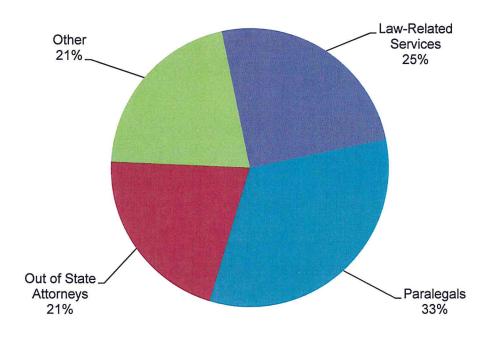
REQUESTS TO INVESTIGATE: REFERRAL SOURCES

4. Respondents.

For 2018, most requests for investigation into allegations of the unauthorized practice of law related to paralegals.

For purposes of this summary, the category "paralegal" refers to an individual who advertises as a paralegal and performs various legal tasks for their customers, including legal document preparation.

RESPONDENTS ALLEGEDLY PARTICIPATING IN UPL



5. Enforcement.

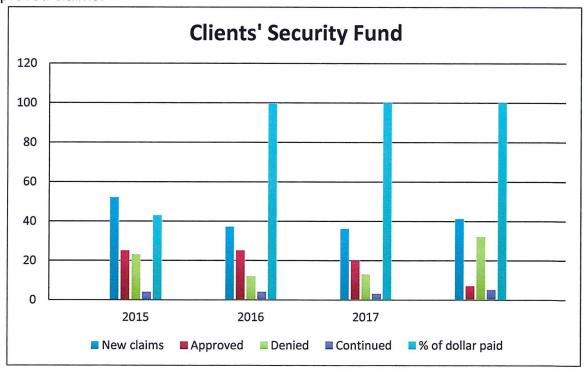
In 2018, of the 24 cases opened, the Office of the General Counsel took formal action in four matters. Formal action includes issuing cease and desist letters, initiating formal investigations through the attorney discipline process, referring a case to an appropriate state and/or federal enforcement agency, or filing the appropriate district court action. Thirteen cases were closed for no finding of the unauthorized practice of law. The remainder of the cases continue under investigation.

CLIENTS' SECURITY FUND:

The Clients' Security Fund was established in 1965 by Court Rules of the Oklahoma Supreme Court. The Fund is administered by the Clients' Security Fund Committee which is comprised of 17 members, 14 attorney members and 3 non-lawyers, who are appointed in staggered three-year terms by the OBA President with approval

from the Board of Governors. In 2018, the Committee was chaired by attorney member Micheal Salem, Norman. Chairman Salem has served as Chair for the Clients' Security Fund Committee since 2006. The Fund furnishes a means of reimbursement to clients for financial losses occasioned by dishonest acts of attorneys. It is also intended to protect the reputation of attorneys in general from the consequences of dishonest acts of a very few. The Board of Governors budgets and appropriates \$175,000.00 each year to the Clients' Security Fund for payment of approved claims.

In years when the approved amount exceeds the amount available, the amount approved for each claimant will be reduced in proportion on a prorata basis until the total amount paid for all claims in that year is \$175,000.00. The Office of the General Counsel reviews, investigates, and presents the claims to the committee. In 2018, the Office of the General Counsel presented 41 new claims to the Committee. The Committee approved 7 claims, denied 32 claims, and continued 5 claims into the following year for further investigation. In 2018, the Clients' Security Fund paid a total of \$120,350.41 on 7 approved claims.



CIVIL ACTIONS (NON-DISCIPLINE) INVOLVING THE OBA:

The Office of the General Counsel represented the Oklahoma Bar Association in several civil (non-discipline) matters during 2018. One case carried forward into 2018. The following is a summary of all 2018 civil actions against or involving the Oklahoma Bar Association:

- 1. Alexander Bednar v. Farabow, Willis, Blasier and Oklahoma Bar Association, Oklahoma County Case No. CJ-2017-1192. Bednar filed suit against the OBA Defendants on February 28, 2017, alleging, among other things, that Defendants exhibited a pattern of harassment and attacks against him and requested the district court declare that his prior attorney discipline was not based on ethical violations and enjoin the OBA from further investigating his actions. Bednar also filed a Motion for Special Master to Investigate, Motion to Quash Administrative Subpoenas and for Protective Order, Motion to Seal Confidential Information and a Supplemental Petition. The OBA moved to dismiss the matter and after argument, an Order of Dismissal with Prejudice was entered by Judge Dixon and filed August 4, 2017. Bednar filed a Motion to Set Aside for Good Cause on September 5, 2017. After the OBA response and argument, the Court allowed Bednar to supplement his filing with a transcript from the motion to dismiss hearing. At the hearing on January 19, 2018, Judge Davis reconsidered Judge Dixon's order and dismissed Bednar's suit without prejudice to refiling. At the hearing, Bednar indicated he filed another lawsuit that morning against Defendants (see below). Thereafter, Bednar filed a Supplemental Petition, Application for Emergency Orders and other documents. After response and argument, Bednar's motions were overruled and the case was transferred to another county.
- 2. Alexander Bednar v. Hammond, et al., Oklahoma County Case No. CJ-2018-373 (before the Honorable Paul Hesse, Canadian County). Bednar filed suit against OBA Defendants Farabow, Hendryx, Blasier and Willis on January 19, 2018, alleging, among other things, that the court must stop Defendants from discussing private bar investigation matters with judges, attorney and attorneys and that one OBA defendant acted outside the scope of employment while investigating him. Bednar also filed an Application for Emergency Orders, Application to Consolidate and/or Reassign Case to Judge Davis, and an Application for Discovery Master. Less than a month later, Bednar filed a Supplemental Application for Emergency Orders and to Transfer and/or Reassign Case to Judge Davis. The OBA filed a Motion to Dismiss. After argument, the court dismissed Bednar's Motion for Discovery Master and for an injunction against employees of the OBA. Bednar filed or caused to be filed two Applications to Intervene in Support of a Motion for Special Master. The OBA responded to said applications and filed a supplemental motion to dismiss. After argument, the applications were denied and the motions to dismiss were granted. Thereafter, Bednar filed a First Amended Petition and other motions. The OBA again responded to Bednar's filings and filed another Motion to Dismiss. In the interim, Bednar unsuccessfully attempted to have Judge Hesse recuse. Bednar then filed a Motion to Set Aside the Order Denying Recusal

to which the OBA responded. This case was then transferred to Oklahoma County and back to Canadian County. At this time, the OBA Defendants' Motion to Dismiss is pending and is set to be heard on February 1, 2019 by Judge Hesse.

- 3. Vance-1 Properties, LLC. v. Energy Production Services, LLC., Oklahoma County Case No. CJ-2017-4737. On June 25, 2018, "Plaintiff, Compulsory Cross Claimant" Kris Agrawal filed a Petition for Damages in Fraud by Chris Holland and Lawyers Upon Courts to Steal Money of a Non-Judgment Debtor-Energy Production Services, LLC. Agrawal requested that "Nominal Defendant Oklahoma Bar Association" make rules to "punish Lawyers who abuse Court Procedures, who are thieves, and enforce the current Rules of Professional Conduct." The OBA filed a Motion to Dismiss based on lack of subject matter jurisdiction. On September 6, 2018, the court granted the OBA's Motion to Dismiss with Prejudice.
- 4. Vance Properties, LLC, v. Energy Production Services, LLC., v. Kris K. Agrawal v. Daniel Delluomo, Chris Holland, et al., and Oklahoma County Court Clerk, Michael T. Bridwell, Jerry Parent, Sunoco Partners Marketing and Terminals, Jerry Kite, and Oklahoma Bar Association, Supreme Court Case Nos. 117553, 117554, 117555, 117556, 117557, 117558. On November 26, 2018, Agrawal initiated six appeals. The Oklahoma Bar Association responded to the Petitions in Error. The cases were consolidated to Case No. 117554. This case is pending.

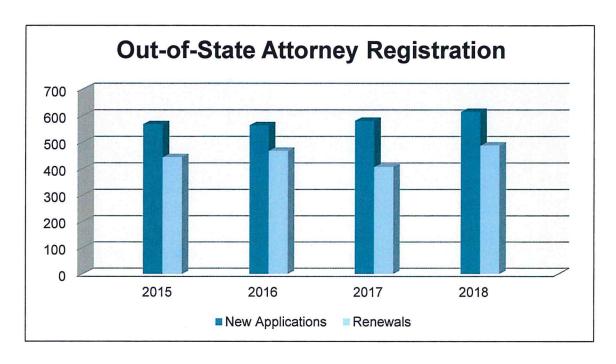
ATTORNEY SUPPORT SERVICES:

1. Out-of-State Attorney Registration.

In 2018, the Office of the General Counsel processed 633 new applications and 488 renewal applications submitted by out-of-state attorneys registering to participate in a proceeding before an Oklahoma Court or Tribunal. Out-of-State attorneys appearing pro bono to represent criminal indigent defendants, or on behalf of persons who otherwise would qualify for representation under the guidelines of the Legal Services Corporation due to their incomes, may request a waiver of the application fee from the Oklahoma Bar Association. Certificates of Compliance are issued after confirmation of the application information, the applicant's good standing in his/her licensing jurisdiction and payment of

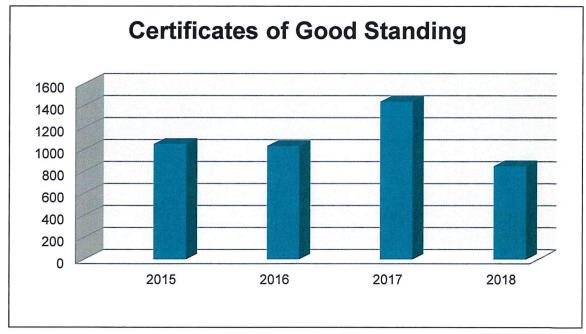
applicable fees. All obtained and verified information is submitted to the Oklahoma

Court or Tribunal as an exhibit to a "Motion to Admit."



2. Certificates of Good Standing.

In 2018, the Office of the General Counsel prepared 849 Certificates of Good Standing/Disciplinary History at the request of Oklahoma Bar Association members.



ETHICS AND EDUCATION:

During 2018, the General Counsel, Assistant General Counsels, and the

Professional Responsibility Commission members presented more than 80 hours of

continuing legal education programs to county bar association meetings, attorney practice

groups, OBA programs, law school classes, and various legal and civic organizations. In

these sessions, disciplinary and investigative procedures, case law, and ethical standards

within the profession were discussed. These efforts direct attorneys to a better

understanding of their ethical requirements, the disciplinary process, and informs the

public of the efforts of the Oklahoma Bar Association to regulate the conduct of its

members. In addition, the General Counsel was a regular contributor to The Oklahoma

Bar Journal.

The attorneys, investigators, and support staff for the General Counsel's office also

attended continuing education programs in an effort to increase their own skills and

training in attorney discipline. These included trainings by the Oklahoma Bar Association

(OBA), National Organization of Bar Counsel (NOBC), and the Organization of Bar

Investigators (OBI).

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED this 31st day of January, 2019, on behalf of the

Professional Responsibility Commission and the Office of the General Counsel of the

Oklahoma Bar Association.

Gina L. Hendryx, General Counsel

Oklahoma Bar Association

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