

**PRACTICE OF LAW BOARD  
STATE OF WASHINGTON**

1325 Fourth Avenue, Suite 600, Seattle, WA 98101-2539  
(206) 727-8252 ■ Fax (206) 727-8314

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December 30, 2009

Sylvia Bonner-Nix

██████████  
Yakima, WA ██████████

RE: File No. 09-41 Unauthorized Practice of Law Complaint  
against Sylvia Bonner-Nix

Dear Ms. Bonner-Nix:

The Practice of Law Board was created by order of the Washington State Supreme Court, General Rule (GR) 25. The Board is charged with the investigation of allegations of unauthorized practice of law in Washington. Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 2.48.180 states that a non-lawyer practicing law or holding himself out as entitled to practice law constitutes the unauthorized practice of law. Court rule GR 24 defines the practice of law. The unauthorized practice of law is a crime in Washington.

A ██████████ M ██████████ filed a complaint alleging that you held yourself out as a Washington-licensed lawyer and offered to handle her marital dissolution for \$6,000. According to the complaint, Ms. M ██████████ was looking for an attorney because she and her husband had filed for divorce. On July 24, 2009, Mr. M ██████████ spoke with you over the phone, mentioning that she'd heard you were a good attorney who could handle her divorce. You asked her to mail to you her file so that you could look it over before deciding whether to take the case. You called Ms. M ██████████ back on July 28, 2009, and told her that you had decided to take her case. In reply to Ms. M ██████████'s question about why you weren't listed as an attorney or advertised, you stated that you were such a good attorney that you did not need to advertise. You told Ms. M ██████████ that you charged \$6,000 in advance for the divorce and \$300 per hour.

Following several disconcerting phone calls, in which you contacted Ms. M ██████████ late in the evening and your speech was sometimes slurred, Ms. M ██████████ decided to cancel the appointments she had made with you. Ms. M ██████████ requested

that you return her file. You responded by leaving Ms. M [REDACTED] a message in which you used abusive language. After leaving several messages, Ms. M [REDACTED] was subsequently able to pick up her file from your home. She reported you to the Yakima Police Department.

You are not a lawyer. RCW 2.48.180(2)(a) states that a non-lawyer practicing law or holding himself out as entitled to do so constitutes the unauthorized practice of law. By misrepresenting yourself as an attorney to Ms. M [REDACTED], and by offering to represent Ms. M [REDACTED] in her divorce for \$6,000, you engaged in the unauthorized practice of law. GR 24(a) states that the practice of law includes, but is not limited to:

- (1) Giving advice or counsel to others as to their legal rights or the legal rights or responsibilities of others for fees or other consideration.
- (2) Selection, drafting, or completion of legal documents or agreements which affect the legal rights of an entity or person(s).
- (3) Representation of another entity or person(s) in a court, or in a formal administrative adjudicative proceeding or other formal dispute resolution process or in an administrative adjudicative proceeding in which legal pleadings are filed or a record is established as the basis for judicial review.
- (4) Negotiation of legal rights or responsibilities on behalf of another entity or person(s).

At this time, pursuant to GR 25(f)(4)(B), we request that you enter into a written agreement with this Board, to refrain from the following conduct:

- Holding yourself out as authorized to practice law; and
- Engaging in any activity which is defined as the practice of law in GR 24.

We further ask you to stipulate that in the event you violate this agreement, you agree that this stipulation, evidence of your further violation, the investigative report to the Board of your past violations, the original complaint, your response, and all other evidence of such violations shall be turned over to the appropriate Police Department of County Prosecutor's Office with a request from the Board that that office institute a criminal proceeding against you.

In the event you do not return this stipulation as signed and agreed to within 15 days of the mailing of this letter, the Board may send this report and the investigation file to the appropriate police department or prosecuting attorney's office.

This letter finding that you engaged in the unauthorized practice of law constitutes final board action. If you disagree with the Practice of Law Board's final action, you may seek review by filing a Notice of Petition for Review with the Washington Supreme Court. The Notice must be filed within 30 days of final Practice of Law Board action. You must serve the original Notice of Petition for Review on the Supreme Court Clerk and a copy on the Practice of Law Board. Your Notice must set out you name and address, the name and address of your counsel, if any, and a concise statement of the reason for your appeal. Your Petition must comply with the Rules of Appellate Procedure (RAP). For further information on Petitions for Review, please see GR 25(g).

We are hopeful that we will be able to resolve these matters by stipulation. If you are willing to so stipulate, please sign and date your signature and have your signature witnessed by a person over the age of eighteen, who will also sign as the witness. The signed letter should be returned to the Board within 15 days.

Thank you in advance for your anticipated cooperation.

Very Truly Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy C. Ivarinen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "N".

Nancy C. Ivarinen, Chair  
Practice of Law Board

Enclosure: Agreement to Refrain

JS:as

cc: A [REDACTED] M [REDACTED] (w/out enclosure)