

In the Supreme Court of Georgia

Decided: December 14, 2021

S22Y0231. IN THE MATTER OF BILLY REID ZEH, III.

PER CURIAM.

This disciplinary matter is before the Court on a petition for voluntary surrender of license filed by Billy Reid Zeh, III (State Bar No. 784827), prior to the issuance of a formal complaint under Bar Rule 4-227 (b) (2) and without requiring the Office of General Counsel to commence a proceeding under Bar Rule 4-106. In his petition, Zeh, who has been a member of the Georgia Bar since 2001, admits that on August 16, 2021, in the Superior Court of Glynn County, he entered an *Alford*<sup>1</sup> plea to one count of aggravated assault and one count of simple assault. He was sentenced under the First Offender Act, see OCGA § 42-8-60, and given a total sentence of five years to serve on probation, with credit received for time

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<sup>1</sup> *North Carolina v. Alford*, 400 U.S. 25, 38 (91 SCt 160) (1970).

previously served in custody from August 21, 2019, to April 17, 2020.<sup>2</sup>

Zeh admits that, by virtue of his guilty plea entered in the criminal case, he has violated Rules 8.4 (a) (2) and (a) (3) of the Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct found in Bar Rule 4-102 (d). The maximum penalty for a violation of Rules 8.4 (a) (2) and (a) (3) is disbarment. The State Bar has filed a response, asking that we grant Zeh's petition in consideration of this Court's compelling interest in "the public's confidence in the profession," *In the Matter of Skandalakis*, 279 Ga. 865, 866 (2) (621 SE2d 750) (2005), and because Zeh's misconduct warrants disbarment. See *In the Matter of Collins*, 263 Ga. 185, 185 (429 SE2d 908) (1993).

Having reviewed the petition, we agree to accept Zeh's petition

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<sup>2</sup> In his petition, Zeh stated that while he was in custody, he worked with and directed his office assistant to ensure that all existing clients secured new counsel and that client files were promptly transferred; and that following his release from custody, he voluntarily decided to keep his law office closed. In its response to Zeh's petition, the State Bar provides that insofar as it may later impact Zeh's eligibility for reinstatement, it does not contest his assertion that following his release of custody, he voluntarily decided to keep his office closed and has not returned to the practice of law.

for voluntary surrender of license, which is tantamount to disbarment. See GRPC Rule 1.0 (r). Accordingly, it is hereby ordered that the name of Billy Reid Zeh, III be removed from the rolls of persons authorized to practice law in the State of Georgia. Zeh is reminded of his duties pursuant to Bar Rule 4-219 (b).

*Voluntary surrender of license accepted. All the Justices concur.*