

In the Supreme Court of the State of Alaska

In the Disciplinary Matter Involving

Jacob Sonneborn,
ABA Member No. 0711091
Respondent.

Supreme Court No. **S-19676**

Suspension Order

Date of Order: **March 2, 2026**

**ABA File Nos. 2016D128, 2017D119/120/121 (consolidated),
2021D141, 2021D154, and 2022D009 (related grievances),
2022D095, 2022D172, 2024D022, 2024D035, 2024D169**

Before: Borghesan, Pate, and Oravec, Justices [Carney, Chief Justice, and Henderson, Justice, not participating.]

On consideration of the Stipulation for Discipline by Consent Pursuant to Alaska Bar Rule 22(h) filed on **December 4, 2025,**

IT IS ORDERED:

1. The Stipulation¹ is accepted;
2. Jacob Sonneborn is suspended from the practice of law for 30 months, with credit for time served on interim disciplinary suspension, and no time stayed;
3. Before applying for reinstatement, Jacob Sonneborn must meet with the Lawyers' Assistance Committee and follow all recommendations of that committee;
4. Before applying for reinstatement, Jacob Sonneborn must make full restitution of any amounts owed to the Lawyers' Fund for Client

¹ The Stipulation executed by the parties on October 15, 2025, and the Board's Approval of Stipulation signed by the Board's President on October 31, 2025 are appended to this order.

Protection, the Alaska Bar Association, and to all clients for any fee arbitration awards that remain unpaid or that are ordered to be paid; and,

5. Pursuant to the schedule provided in Alaska Bar Rule 16(c)(3), Jacob Sonneborn will pay \$1,000 in costs and attorney's fees to the Alaska Bar Association within 60 days of entry of this order.

Entered at the direction of the court.

Clerk of the Appellate Courts



Meredith Montgomery

Distribution:

Shanahan, Philip E.
Orlansky, Susan C.

APPENDIX

BEFORE THE ALASKA BAR ASSOCIATION DISCIPLINARY BOARD

In The Disciplinary Matter Involving)
)
 JACOB A. SONNEBORN,)
)
 Respondent.)

ABA Membership No. 0711091

Alaska Bar Association File numbers:

ABA File No. 2016D128

ABA File Nos. 2017D119/120/121 (*consolidated*)

ABA File Nos. 2021D141, 2021D154, 2022D009 (*related grievances*)

ABA File No. 2022D095

ABA File No. 2022D172

ABA File No. 2024D022

ABA File No. 2024D035

ABA File No. 2024D169

STIPULATION FOR DISCIPLINE BY CONSENT

A. JURISDICTION; AUTHORITY TO CONSENT TO DISCIPLINE

1. Jacob A. Sonneborn is a member of the Alaska Bar Association, admitted to practice law by the Alaska Supreme Court, and subject to the Alaska Rules of Professional Conduct (ARPCs) and the Alaska Bar Rules, Part II (Rules of Disciplinary Enforcement).

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Pursuant to Alaska Bar Rule 22(h)

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2. The Disciplinary Board and the Supreme Court review this stipulation, and Sonneborn is authorized to consent to discipline, under Alaska Bar Rule 22(h).

B. BACKGROUND

3. On March 15, 2024, the Bar Association filed a motion with the Supreme Court for an order placing Sonneborn on interim suspension under Bar Rule 26(e). An accurate copy of the Bar's supporting brief is attached as Exhibit A.¹

4. On March 22, 2024, Sonneborn filed an opposition to the Bar's motion for interim suspension. An accurate copy of his opposition brief is attached as Exhibit B.

5. On March 29, 2024, the Bar filed a response to Sonneborn's opposition. An accurate copy of the Bar's response brief is attached as Exhibit C.

6. On April 2, 2024, the Supreme Court granted the Bar's motion and placed Sonneborn on interim suspension effective April 16, 2024. An accurate copy of the Court's order is attached as Exhibit D.

¹ The exhibits (documents, audio, and video recordings) which are referenced in Exhibit A are already included in the Supreme Court's interim suspension file.

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7. Sonneborn has remained on interim suspension since April 16, 2024, pending the final resolution of misconduct allegations against him.

8. The Bar incorporates its motion for interim suspension and reply brief, Exhibits A and C, as its statement of background relevant to this stipulation.

9. In his Supreme Court opposition brief, Sonneborn contested aspects of the Bar's motion for interim suspension. He incorporates his opposition brief, Exhibit B, as his interim statement of background relevant to this stipulation.

10. The criminal charges against Sonneborn were all dismissed, some at the discretion of the prosecutor and some because the prosecutor was not prepared to try the case before the expiration of Criminal Rule 45. The parties recognize that many factors influence a prosecutor's decision on which cases to try.

11. KN's petition for a long-term stalking protective order was denied following an evidentiary hearing. The magistrate judge did not find by a preponderance of evidence that Sonneborn placed KN in

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objective (i.e., reasonable) fear of death or physical injury. A copy of the court's decision is attached as Exhibit G.

12. Sonneborn has used the time of his interim suspension constructively to learn new skills in impulse control and conflict resolution. Exhibit E provides additional information on Sonneborn's rehabilitative efforts since his interim suspension. Exhibit F is a letter that Sonneborn previously provided to the Bar Association that reflects his attitude about the conduct that led to his suspension.

13. Sonneborn and the Bar agree that disputed aspects of their Supreme Court pleadings and background statements would be open to argument during formal proceedings before a disciplinary hearing committee. Not all of the alleged misconduct described by the Bar in its Supreme Court motion for interim suspension would necessarily result in a hearing committee recommendation for professional discipline. The uncertain outcome of formal proceedings is a basis for entering this stipulation.

14. Sonneborn has complied with the terms and conditions of the Supreme Court's interim suspension order, and has cooperated with the Bar Association in its oversight role and in negotiations for a final

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disciplinary order. His compliance and cooperation are a basis for entering this stipulation.

C. ALLEGATIONS OF MISCONDUCT

Harassment ARPC 8.4(f)

15. Alaska Rule of Professional Conduct 8.4(f) forbids a lawyer to knowingly engage in harassing conduct during the lawyer's professional relations with, among others, lawyers working for other law firms.

"Harassment" is defined in ARPC 8.4(g) as unwelcome conduct, verbal or physical, that has no reasonable relation to a legitimate purpose and is so severe or sustained that a reasonable person would consider it intimidating or abusive.

16. Sonneborn admits that he violated Rule 8.4(f) through a pattern of harassment against KN and AL, opposing counsel in separate matters, as alleged in ABA File Nos. 2024D022 and 2024D169.

17. Alaska Rule of Profession Conduct 4.4(a) forbids a lawyer who represents a client to use means that have no substantial purpose but to embarrass, delay, or burden a third person.

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18. The Bar Association believes that Sonneborn's conduct in ABA File Nos. 2016D128, 2017D119/120/121, 2021D141, 2021D154, 2022D009, 2022D095, 2022D172, and 2024D035 raises an issue that his pattern of confrontational and disruptive conduct violated Rule 4.4(a). Sonneborn admits that he used inappropriate means of dealing with some lawyers and third persons, but asserts that he meant to advance his clients' legitimate litigation goals, and denies that his means had no substantial purpose but to embarrass, delay, burden or otherwise harass third persons. The parties acknowledge that the disciplinary hearing committee might find that Sonneborn's conduct in these cases had some legitimate litigation purpose.

**Criminal conduct adversely reflecting on a lawyer's
honesty, trustworthiness, and fitness
(ARPC 8.4(b))**

19. Alaska Rule of Professional Conduct 8.4(b) states that it is professional misconduct for a lawyer to commit a criminal act that adversely reflects on the lawyer's honesty, trustworthiness, or fitness to practice law. A conviction is not required to impose discipline under the rule.

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20. Sonneborn admits that, in ABA File Nos. 2024D022 and ABA File No. 2024D169 he violated Rule 8.4(b) by committing disorderly conduct and trespass at the offices of KN and AL.

Negligent failure to safekeep funds

(ARPC 1.15(e))

21. Alaska Rule of Professional Conduct 1.15(e) requires that when a lawyer holds funds for two or more persons who have conflicting claims, the lawyer must keep the funds separate pending resolution of the dispute.

22. In the civil case underlying the grievance in ABA File No. 2022D172, the superior court ordered Sonneborn to hold marital funds in trust pending further direction about their distribution. The court later issued an order that Sonneborn interpreted to allow distribution of the funds to his client. At a hearing on March 25, 2022, the court acknowledged that its order could have been more clear, but specified that the client must deliver the disputed funds to the opposing party. In motion practice, Sonneborn disclosed that he had already distributed the funds to his client, but at the March 25 hearing he did not disclose that he had withheld a portion to pay legal fees the client owed him. The

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opposing party learned about the distribution and informed the court, the court ordered Sonneborn to deliver the funds he had withheld to the opposing party, and Sonneborn complied.

23. Sonneborn admits that he negligently violated ARPC 1.15(e) by failing to resolve court orders that were ambiguous or open to interpretation, and delivering disputed funds to his client and himself.

24. The Bar Association believes that Sonneborn's conduct at the March 25 hearing raises an issue that he breached his duty of candor by omitting to inform the court that he had transferred a portion of disputed funds to himself. The parties acknowledge that a disciplinary hearing committee could disagree with the Bar and instead conclude that discussion at the hearing focused on whether Sonneborn's client had any right to the funds under an unclear order. This would not support a finding that Sonneborn knowingly failed to provide more detail about how the funds were allocated.

D. SANCTION ANALYSIS

25. The sanction for Sonneborn's misconduct is first evaluated using the American Bar Association Standards for Imposing Lawyer Sanctions (1986, amended 1992), adopted in *In re Buckalew*, 731 P.2d

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48 (Alaska 1986). Under ABA Standard §3.0, these factors are considered: (a) the duty violated; (b) the lawyer's mental state; (c) actual or potential injury caused by the misconduct; and (d) facts in aggravation or mitigation. These factors are addressed in a three-part methodology: (1) consider the first three factors; (2) determine the indicated sanction; and (3) apply aggravating and mitigating factors. *In re Schuler*, 818 P.2d 128, 140 (Alaska 1991).

Sanction Methodology Part 1 *Duty; Mental State; Actual or Potential Injury*

A. Duty Violated

26. Sonneborn's violations of ARPC 8.4(f) breached duties he owed as a professional and an officer of the court to the public and to others in the legal system under ABA Standards §7.0. His violations of ARPC 8.4(b) breached duties he owed to the public as an officer of the court under ABA Standards §5.0. His violation of ARPC 1.15(e) breached duties he owed as a professional under ABA Standards §6.0.

B. Mental state

27. Under the ABA Standards §III Definitions:

"Intent" is the conscious objective or purpose to accomplish a particular result.

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“Knowledge” is the conscious awareness of the nature or attendant circumstances of the conduct but without the conscious objective or purpose to accomplish a particular result.

“Negligence” is the failure of a lawyer to heed a substantial risk that circumstances exist or that a

result will follow, which failure is a deviation from the standard of care that a reasonable lawyer would exercise in the situation.

28. For the reasons described in Sonneborn’s background statement, Exhibit E, and in the discussion of mitigating factors below, the parties stipulate that as to each instance of admitted misconduct he acted with a mental state of knowledge or negligence, but not intent.

C. Actual or potential injury

29. Sonneborn’s harassment of KN and AL, along with disorderly conduct and trespass he committed at their offices, resulted in stress to the lawyers and their staffs, time-consuming protective measures, and in KN’s case the fear of potential danger, but did not result in physical harm to any person. His mismanagement of funds held in trust caused delay and litigation expense, but not permanent harm.

30. With or without a criminal conviction, a lawyer’s physical and verbal intimidation of others, and conduct that disrupts the orderly functioning of offices providing legal services, undermines public

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respect for the administration of justice and the reputation for professionalism earned by other members of the Alaska Bar Association.

Sanction Methodology Part 2 Indicated Sanction Under ABA Standards

31. Sonneborn's discipline for violating ARPC 8.4(f) is governed by ABA Standards §7.22, which provides that suspension is generally appropriate when a lawyer knowingly engages in conduct that violates a duty to the legal profession, and causes injury or potential injury to a client, the public, or the legal system.

32. Sonneborn's discipline for violating ARPC 8.4(b) is governed by ABA Standards §5.12, which provides that suspension is generally appropriate when a lawyer knowingly engages in criminal conduct that seriously adversely reflects on the lawyer's fitness to practice.

33. Sonneborn's discipline for violating ARPC 1.15(e) is governed by ABA Standards §6.23, which provides that reprimand (public censure by the Supreme Court) is generally appropriate when a lawyer negligently violates a court order and causes injury or potential injury to a client or party, or causes interference or potential interference with a legal proceeding.

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Sanction Methodology Part 3 Aggravating and Mitigating Factors

34. Aggravating factors. There are two most serious aggravating factors in this case. Sonneborn engaged in a pattern of misconduct—he repeatedly committed certain offenses. This is an aggravating factor under ABA Standards §9.22(c). And Sonneborn committed multiple offenses—he violated more than one ethics rule. This is an aggravating factor under ABA Standards §9.22(d). Sonneborn was admitted to practice in 2007 and at the time of his misconduct had substantial experience in the practice of law, an aggravating factor under ABA Standards §9.22(i). The aggravating factor for illegal conduct (ABA Standards §9.22(k)) does not apply because criminal conduct is already the basis for the violation of ARPC 8.4(b) that Sonneborn admits. There are no other aggravating factors.

35. Mitigating factors. Sonneborn has no prior disciplinary record, a mitigating factor under ABA Standards §9.32(a). Sonneborn admits his misconduct, has made full and free disclosure during the Bar's investigation, and has cooperated in the resolution of the charges against him. ABA Standards §9.32(e). His most extreme conduct toward others, in February and March 2024, was heavily influenced by a change in the

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medication prescribed for him by his psychiatrist; rather than enhance Sonneborn's ability to control his mood and his impulses, as expected, instead, in the words of his psychiatrist, the medication change increased Sonneborn's irritability and caused a state of hyper-focused attention to challenges encountered during his practice of law. After discontinuing the medication, Sonneborn experienced significantly reduced irritability and increased capacity to modulate and control his emotions and behavior, and there were no further similar incidents, leading his psychiatrist to conclude that the extreme behavior in February and March 2024 was due to the medication change. The influence of the medication may be characterized as a type of mental disability. Because Sonneborn provided evidence from his doctor that the medication caused or contributed to his misconduct, that he has had a sustained period of recovery from the effects of the medication, and that recurrence of the misconduct is unlikely, the mitigating factor in ABA Standards §9.32(i) applies.

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F. STIPULATED DISCIPLINE

36. Sonneborn and the Bar Association acknowledge that under Bar Rule 16(a)(2) the Supreme Court can order a lawyer to be suspended for up to five years. The parties agree that circumstances and mitigators unique to this case warrant suspension in the middle of the range.

37. Subject to approval by the Disciplinary Board and the Supreme Court, Sonneborn and the Bar Association agree that he should be suspended from practice for thirty months, with credit for time served on interim disciplinary suspension, and no time stayed.

38. Before applying for reinstatement, Sonneborn must meet with the Lawyers' Assistance Committee and follow all recommendations of that committee.

39. Before applying for reinstatement, Sonneborn must make full restitution of any amounts owed to the Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection, the Alaska Bar Association, and to all clients for any fee arbitration awards that remain unpaid or that are ordered to be paid.

40. Under Alaska Bar Rule 16(c)(3), Sonneborn must pay the Bar costs of proceedings in the amount of \$1,000.

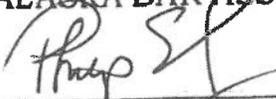
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DATED this 15th day of October, 2025, at Anchorage, Alaska.

ALASKA BAR ASSOCIATION


Philip Shanahan
Bar Counsel
Bar Member No. 9406046

DATED this 15th day of October, 2025, at Anchorage, Alaska.

ALASKA BAR ASSOCIATION


Mark Woelber
Assistant Bar Counsel
Bar Member No. 8011118

DATED this 13th day of October, 2025, at Anchorage, Alaska.


Jacob A. Sonneborn
Respondent Attorney
Bar Member No. 0711091

DATED this 14 day of October, 2025, at Anchorage, Alaska.


Susan Orlansky
Attorney for Respondent
Bar Member No. 8106042

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CONSENT OF RESPONDENT

Respondent hereby consents, pursuant to Alaska Bar Rule 22(h), to the discipline stipulated above and states that this consent is freely and voluntarily given and is not the subject of any coercion or duress and that respondent admits to the allegations set forth above.

DATED this 13th day of October, 2025, at Anchorage, Alaska.


Jacob A. Sonneborn
Respondent Attorney
Bar Member No. 0711091

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN to before me this 13 day of October,
2025.

(SEAL)




Notary Public in and for Alaska-Wisconsin
My commission expires: 06/19/2028

[https://alaskabar.sharepoint.com/sites/Sklak/WordDocs/Ds/DISC CASES/2016/2016D129/Stipulation - 2025/Second step for discipline of Bar and](https://alaskabar.sharepoint.com/sites/Sklak/WordDocs/Ds/DISC CASES/2016/2016D129/Stipulation - 2025/Second%20step%20for%20discipline%20of%20Bar%20and%20)

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**BEFORE THE ALASKA BAR ASSOCIATION
DISCIPLINARY BOARD**

In The Disciplinary Matter Involving)
)
 JACOB A. SONNEBORN,)
)
 Respondent.)

ABA Membership No. 0711091
Alaska Bar Association File numbers:
ABA File No. 2016D128
ABA File Nos. 2017D119/120/121 (consolidated)
ABA File Nos. 2021D141, 2021D154, 2022D009 (related grievances)
ABA File No. 2022D095
ABA File No. 2022D172
ABA File No. 2024D022
ABA File No. 2024D035
ABA File No. 2024D169

**DISCIPLINARY BOARD APPROVAL OF
STIPULATION FOR DISCIPLINE BY CONSENT
AND RECOMMENDATION**

The attached Stipulation has been reviewed by the Disciplinary Board. After consideration, the Board voted to approve the Stipulation and to recommend its adoption by the Alaska Supreme Court.

DATED this 31st day of October, 2025 at Anchorage, Alaska.

ALASKA BAR ASSOCIATION


Rebecca Patterson
President
Disciplinary Board

Annette Blair

From: Appellate Clerk's Office, Alaska Court System <no-reply@akcourts.us>
Sent: Monday, March 2, 2026 12:30 PM
To: Phil Shanahan; gwelt@alaskabar.org; Annette Blair; mmontgomery@akcourts.gov
Subject: S19676 In the Disciplinary Matter Involving Attorney S
Attachments: S19676 Suspension Order with Appendix1.pdf

The Order for the above-noted case has been issued.

If you have questions please contact Clerk Meredith Montgomery at mmontgomery@akcourts.gov or (907) 264-0612.

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