

**ORDER OF THE SUPREME COURT OF TEXAS**

**Misc Docket No. 98- 9029**

Appointment of a District Judge to Preside  
in a State Bar Disciplinary Action

The Supreme Court of Texas hereby appoints the Honorable Lee Gabriel, Judge of the 367th District Court of Denton County, Texas, to preside in the Disciplinary Action styled:


**The Commission for Lawyer Discipline v. Laurence W. Watts**

to be filed in a District Court of Harris County, Texas.

The Clerk of the Supreme Court shall promptly forward to the District Clerk of Harris County, Texas, a copy of this Order and of the Disciplinary Petition for filing and service pursuant to Rule 3.03, Texas Rules of Disciplinary Procedure.

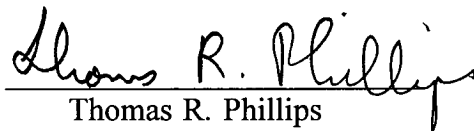
As ordered by the Supreme Court of Texas, in chambers,

with the Seal thereof affixed at the City  
of Austin, this 11th day of February, 1998.

  
JOHN T. ADAMS, CLERK  
SUPREME COURT OF TEXAS

This assignment, made by Misc. Docket No. 98-9029, is also an assignment by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court pursuant to Texas Government Code §74.057.

Signed this 12 day of February, 1998.

  
Thomas R. Phillips  
Chief Justice

CAUSE NO. \_\_\_\_\_

COMMISSION FOR LAWYER DISCIPLINE §  
v. §  
LAURENCE W. WATTS §  
§  
§  
§  
§  
IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF  
HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS  
\_\_\_\_ JUDICIAL DISTRICT

**DISCIPLINARY PETITION**

TO THE HONORABLE JUDGE OF THE COURT:

COMES NOW Petitioner, the COMMISSION FOR LAWYER DISCIPLINE, a committee of the State Bar of Texas (the "CFLD"), complaining of Respondent, LAURENCE W. WATTS, ("Respondent"), showing the Court:

**I.**

The CFLD brings this disciplinary action pursuant to the State Bar Act, Texas Government Code Annotated §81.001, *et seq.* (Vernon 1988 and supp. 1994), the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct, and the Texas Rules of Disciplinary Procedure. The complaint that forms the basis of this Disciplinary Petition was filed on or after May 1, 1992.

**II.**

Respondent is an attorney licensed to practice law in Texas and is a member of the State Bar of Texas. Respondent's residence is in and his principal place of practice is in Harris County, Texas, and therefore venue is appropriate in Harris County, Texas, pursuant to Rule 3.03 of the Texas Rules of

Disciplinary Procedure. An officer may serve citation on Respondent, Laurence W. Watts, by and through his attorney of record, Harold Lloyd, Inc., 11999 Kath Freeway, Suite 530, Houston, Texas, 77079.

### III.

On or about February 28, 1994, Complainant retained Respondent to pursue a wrongful termination claim. Respondent was paid a retainer of Two Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$2,500.00), in addition to an employment agreement to pay Respondent a contingency fee of forty percent (40%), and if the case went on appeal the fee would increase to forty-five percent (45%).

### IV.

Respondent never filed suit on Complainant's behalf, however, approximately one year later, he did draft a Complaint for filing in Federal Court and a Petition for filing in District Court in or around December 1995. Respondent returned Complainant's file and drafts of the pleadings on or about December 14, 1995. Ms. Granger's Statute of Limitation to file a complaint was due to expire January 1996.

### V.

Respondent failed to communicate with Complainant regarding the status of the case or what action had been taken by Respondent on her behalf. Although Respondent accepted a Two Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$2,500.00) fee from Complainant, he failed to take action to pursue her claim. Upon termination, Respondent did not refund to Complainant any portion of the fee.

## VI.

The acts and/or omissions of the Respondent described in Paragraphs III. - V. above, which occurred on or after January 1, 1990, constitute conduct in violation of Rule(s) **1.01(b)(1)** for neglecting Complainant's legal matter entrusted to Respondent; **1.01(b)(2)** for frequently failing to carry out completely the obligations owed to Complainant; **1.03(a)** for failing to keep a client reasonably informed about the status of a matter and promptly comply with reasonable requests for information; **1.03(b)** for failing to explain a matter to the extent reasonably necessary to permit the client to make informed decisions regarding the representation; **1.04(a)** a lawyer shall not enter into an arrangement for, charge or collect an illegal fee or unconscionable fee; **3.02** A lawyer shall not take a position that unreasonably delays resolution of the matter; **8.04(a)(1)** a lawyer shall not violate these rules; of the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct.

## V.

The complaint that forms the basis of this cause of action was brought to the attention of the Office of the General Counsel of the State Bar of Texas by Vickie Granger's filing of a complaint on or about December 20, 1995.

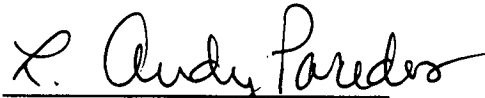
### Prayer

WHEREFORE, PREMISES CONSIDERED, Petitioner the COMMISSION FOR LAWYER DISCIPLINE respectfully prays that this Court discipline Respondent LAURENCE W. WATTS as the facts shall warrant; and that the CFLD have all other relief to which it may show itself to be justly entitled, including costs of court and attorney's fees.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven W. Young  
General Counsel

Office of the General Counsel  
STATE BAR OF TEXAS  
1111 Fannin, Suite 1370  
Houston, Texas 77002  
(713) 759-6931  
Fax No. (713) 752-2158



L. ANDY PAREDES  
State Bar No. 00788162

ATTORNEYS FOR THE COMMISSION FOR  
LAWYER DISCIPLINE

J:\WATTS\CFLD.LAPDP.WPD

# STATE BAR OF TEXAS



**Office of the General Counsel**

January 7, 1998

John T. Adams, Clerk  
Supreme Court of Texas  
P.O. Box 12248  
Austin, Texas 78711

Re: Commission for Lawyer Discipline v. Laurence W. Watts

Dear Mr. Adams:

Enclosed please find an original and two (2) copies of a Disciplinary Petition being filed by the Commission for Lawyer Discipline against Laurence W. Watts. Mr. Watts has designated Harris County, Texas, as his principal place of practice. Request is hereby made that the Court appoint an active District Judge who does not reside in the Administrative Judicial Region in which Respondent resides to preside in this case. Upon appointment, request is made that you notify the Respondent at the address shown below and the undersigned of the identity and address of the judge assigned:

Laurence W. Watts  
C/O Harold Lloyd  
11999 Katy Freeway, Suite 530  
Houston, Texas 77079

As a practical matter, I would respectfully suggest that you inquire with the judge to be appointed as to: (1) whether he or she will be able to comply with the 180 day deadline by which the case must be set for trial set forth in Section 3.07 of the Texas Rules of Disciplinary Procedure; and (2) whether he or she can accommodate compliance with Mellon Service Co., et al v. Touche Ross Co., 946 S.W.2d 862 (Tex. App. - Houston [14th Dist.] 1997), which requires that all proceedings incident to a case occur in the county of proper venue. If not, I would respectfully request that an alternate appointment be made.

Once a trial judge has been appointed, please forward the original and two (2) copies of the Disciplinary Petition, the filing fee check, also enclosed herewith, and the Court's appointing order to the District Clerk of Harris County, Texas, with the request that the suit be filed, service be obtained, and a file-marked copy of the petition be returned to the undersigned.

**1111 Fannin, Suite 1370, Houston, Texas 77002, (713)759-6931**

Mr. John Adams  
January 7, 1998  
Page Two

Also enclosed are a pre-addressed envelope for your use in transmitting the petition, etc., to the District Clerk of Harris County, Texas, and a return envelope to be sent to the District Clerk of Harris County, Texas, for the Clerk's use in returning a file-marked copy of the Petition to the undersigned.

Thank you for your courtesies in this matter.

Sincerely,



L. Andy Paredes  
Assistant General Counsel

LAP/vr

Enclosures

J:\WATTS\CFLD.LAP\CLERK1.NEW





# THE SUPREME COURT OF TEXAS

CHIEF JUSTICE  
THOMAS R. PHILLIPS

POST OFFICE BOX 12248      AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711

TEL: (512) 463-1312

FAX: (512) 463-1365

CLERK  
JOHN T. ADAMS

EXECUTIVE ASS'T  
WILLIAM L. WILLIS

ADMINISTRATIVE ASS'T  
NADINE SCHNEIDER

JUSTICES  
RAUL A. GONZALEZ  
NATHAN L. HECHT  
CRAIG T. ENOCH  
ROSE SPECTOR  
PRISCILLA R. OWEN  
JAMES A. BAKER  
GREG ABBOTT  
DEBORAH G. HANKINSON

FEB 19 1998

The Honorable Charles Bacarisse  
District Clerk of Harris County  
P.O. Box 4651  
Houston, Texas 77002

Dear Mr. Bacarisse:

Pursuant to Rule 3.03 of the Texas Rules of Disciplinary Procedure, I am sending for filing State Bar of Texas Disciplinary Action styled: The Commission for Lawyer Discipline v. Laurence W. Watts, and a copy of the Supreme Court's order appointing the Honorable Lee Gabriel, Judge of the 367<sup>th</sup> District Court of Denton, Texas, to preside in this Disciplinary Action.

Sincerely,

**SIGNED**

John T. Adams  
Clerk

cc: Hon. Lee Gabriel  
Mr. L. Andy Paredes  
Mr. Laurence W. Watts



## THE SUPREME COURT OF TEXAS

CHIEF JUSTICE  
THOMAS R. PHILLIPS

POST OFFICE BOX 12248      AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711

TEL: (512) 463-1312

FAX: (512) 463-1365

FEB 19 1998

CLERK  
JOHN T. ADAMS

EXECUTIVE ASS'T  
WILLIAM L. WILLIS

ADMINISTRATIVE ASS'T  
NADINE SCHNEIDER

JUSTICES  
RAUL A. GONZALEZ  
NATHAN L. HECHT  
CRAIG T. ENOCH  
ROSE SPECTOR  
PRISCILLA R. OWEN  
JAMES A. BAKER  
GREG ABBOTT  
DEBORAH G. HANKINSON

Honorable Lee Gabriel  
Judge, 367<sup>th</sup> District Court  
Joseph Carroll Courts Building  
401 W. Hickory Street  
Denton, Texas 76201

Dear Judge Gabriel:

We enclose for your information a copy of the order of assignment, a copy of the Disciplinary Action, a copy of the notification letter to Mr. Watts and Mr. Paredes, and a copy of the letter to the District Clerk of Harris County.

It is recommended that, six to eight weeks after receipt of this letter, you contact the Harris County District Court Administrative Office (713-755-7593) to find out the district court to which this disciplinary case has been assigned. We then recommend that, either before or immediately after you set the case for trial, you again contact the Harris County District Court Administrative Office (713-755-6593) to reserve a courtroom, provide for a court reporter, etc. Finally, you should contact the Presiding Judge of the Administrative Judicial Region into which you have been assigned (713-471-3911) to obtain information on lodging, allowable expenses, and claims forms for your expenses incident to presiding over this disciplinary case.

Sincerely,

**SIGNED**

John T. Adams  
Clerk



## THE SUPREME COURT OF TEXAS

CHIEF JUSTICE  
THOMAS R. PHILLIPS

POST OFFICE BOX 12248      AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711

TEL: (512) 463-1312

FAX: (512) 463-1365

FEB 19 1998

JUSTICES  
RAUL A. GONZALEZ  
NATHAN L. HECHT  
CRAIG T. ENOCH  
ROSE SPECTOR  
PRISCILLA R. OWEN  
JAMES A. BAKER  
GREG ABBOTT  
DEBORAH G. HANKINSON

CLERK  
JOHN T. ADAMS

EXECUTIVE ASS'T  
WILLIAM L. WILLIS

ADMINISTRATIVE ASS'T  
NADINE SCHNEIDER

Mr. L. Andy Paredes  
Assistant General Counsel, State Bar of Texas  
1111 Fannin, Suite 1370  
Houston, Texas 77002

Mr. Laurence W. Watts  
c/o Harold Lloyd  
11999 Katy Freeway, Suite 530  
Houston, Texas 77079

Dear Mr. Paredes and Mr. Watts:

Pursuant to Rule 3.02 of the Texas Rules of Disciplinary Procedure, I hereby notify you that the Supreme Court of Texas has appointed the Honorable Lee Gabriel, Judge of the 367<sup>th</sup> District Court of Denton, Texas to preside in

Commission for Lawyer Discipline v. Laurence W. Watts

Sincerely,

**SIGNED**

John T. Adams  
Clerk