

Public Discipline

These summaries are based on information provided by the Office of Lawyer Regulation (OLR), an agency of the Wisconsin Supreme Court. The OLR assists the court in supervising the practice of law and protecting the public from misconduct by lawyers. The full text of matters summarized can be located at <https://compendium.wicourts.gov/app/search>.

Disciplinary Proceedings Against John Ryan

John Ryan consented to the imposition of a public reprimand, as discipline reciprocal to that imposed by Minnesota. A Wisconsin Supreme Court-appointed referee issued the public reprimand on Nov. 13, 2025, pursuant to SCR 22.09(3).

Ryan was publicly reprimanded by the Minnesota Supreme Court for violations of Minnesota Rules of Professional Conduct (MRPC) 5.5(a), equivalent to SCR 20:5.5(a); MRPC 5.5(b)(1) and (2), equivalent to SCR 20:5.5(b)(1) and (2); and MRPC 8.4(d), which prohibits engaging in conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice and for which there is no equivalent in Wisconsin.

Ryan was licensed to practice law in Wisconsin in 2008. Ryan was never

admitted to practice law in Minnesota. Nevertheless, from 2008 until 2024, Ryan served as in-house counsel and then general counsel for a Minnesota corporation based in Brooklyn Park, Minn. Minnesota's in-house counsel rules require that a lawyer become licensed to practice law in Minnesota. Ryan practiced law in Minnesota by advising the corporation on Minnesota law. His profile on the corporation's website did not indicate that he was not licensed to practice law in Minnesota. Ryan also lived in Minnesota.

Ryan is not currently licensed to practice law in Wisconsin. He has no prior discipline.

Disciplinary Proceedings Against Michael B. Padden

On Nov. 12, 2025, the Wisconsin Supreme Court revoked the law license of Michael

B. Padden as discipline reciprocal to that imposed by Minnesota, effective immediately. Because the matter was resolved without the appointment of a referee, no costs were imposed. *Disciplinary Proc. Against Padden*, 2025 WI 47.

Padden was disbarred in Minnesota. The Office of Lawyer Regulation and Padden argued that a six-month suspension of Padden's license to practice law in Wisconsin was the equivalent to disbarment in Minnesota because of the difference in reinstatement procedures in the two states. The court rejected that argument, noting that disbarment in Minnesota and revocation in Wisconsin were the most serious and long-lasting sanctions available in each state.

Padden's Minnesota disbarment was based on his misconduct in several client matters. In the first, Padden created a forged fee agreement purportedly entitling himself to \$25,000 and failed to remit any portion of those funds to the client. He also knowingly made false representations to the client's wife and knowingly made false representations to the Minnesota investigative agency by submitting the forged fee agreement in connection with the investigation and claiming that the client signed the agreement.

In another matter, Padden failed to obtain a receipt for the payment of fees that was countersigned by the client, failed to refund the unearned portion of a \$8,500 flat fee, and failed to deposit the advanced fee into his trust account until earned.

In a third matter, Padden failed to refund the unearned portion of a \$5,000 flat fee.

In four additional client matters, Padden failed to appear for at least five court hearings.

Finally, Padden engaged in misconduct by failing to cooperate with the investigation of his trust account and client matters.

Padden was previously disciplined three times in Minnesota. In 1996, he was privately admonished. In 2017, he was publicly reprimanded. In 2019, he was again privately admonished. He has no prior discipline in Wisconsin. **WL**



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