

Highlights

2003 Annual Report of the Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission filed with the Supreme Court on April 30, 2004

Registration

- 76,671 lawyers registered as of October 31, 2003, reflecting a 1.7% increase over 2002
- Registration demographics: 65% of lawyers between 30 and 49 years of age; 30% licensed for less than 10 years, and 31% women
- Commission reports on voluntary registration survey about race and practice setting of Illinois lawyers

Investigations

- 6,325 investigations involving 4,166 Illinois lawyers (about 5% of registered lawyers), reflecting a 2.3% increase over 2002 and the most investigations since 1998, with 7% of concluded investigations resulting in formal charges
- 66% of grievances alleged neglect, failure to communicate, deceit, improper fees or improper trust fund management; 59% of grievances arise from criminal, divorce, personal injury, or real estate matters

Hearing Board Activity

- Increased Hearing Board activity reflected by filing of 132 formal complaints, as compared to 118 in 2002

Review Board Activity

- Increased Review Board activity reflected in docketing of 71 appeals in last two years, as compared to 57 in preceding 2 years

Disciplinary Sanctions

- Highest number of sanctions since 1998, as Court disciplined 137 attorneys (more than 50% by consent) and Hearing Board reprimanded 4 attorneys
- Top five areas of misconduct: fraudulent or deceptive activity, neglect, criminal conduct, improper handling of trust funds, and failure to communicate with the client

New Rules

- New Supreme Court rules provide a wind down period for attorneys suspended for a definite time period (Rule 771) and rules authorizing a limited license for out-of-state attorneys to represent their Illinois corporate employer (Rule 716) or clients of Legal Service Programs (Rule 717).

Commission Demographic Study of Disciplined Attorneys

- Commission reports on its study of demographics of lawyers disciplined in last five years, including race, practice setting, and impairments

Client Protection Program

- Commission increased reimbursement caps on awards for those harmed by dishonest conduct of disciplined attorneys; approved 70 awards totaling \$499,810

Financial Report

- Commission addressed lower than projected revenues (due to smaller increases in registration fee revenues from 2000 to 2003) by controlling spending, but faces continuing financial pressure due to expenses of increasing disciplinary caseload and Client Protection Program
- Commission projects that present fee structure will support operations through 2006