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## State bar reprimands ex-judge Armijo, disbars wife

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A former Pierce County Superior Court judge now working as a private attorney has been reprimanded by the Washington State Bar Association for violating professional rules of conduct.

Sergio Armijo entered into a stipulated agreement with the association instead of submitting to a disciplinary hearing, according to records obtained recently by The News Tribune.

Armijo conceded he failed to show up for several hearings his clients had scheduled in U.S. Immigration Court, did not provide files to another client who wished to change lawyers and practiced shoddy bookkeeping in his law office, the records show.

"Your actions discredit you and the legal profession and show a disregard for the high traditions of honor expected from a member of the association," state bar president Michele Radosevich wrote in a reprimand filed June 13.

Armijo agreed to serve two years' probation, to hire a bookkeeper and to submit to periodic audits of his books as part of his deal with the Bar Association, the records show.

He declined to comment on the reprimand when contacted by The News Tribune last week.

The Bar Association leveled several charges against Armijo in January after nine people filed grievances against him. Eight accused him of missing their hearings. The ninth contended Armijo unnecessarily delayed his hiring of a different lawyer by withholding his case files.

In a written answer to the complaints, Armijo admitted missing some hearings but said he had valid excuses, including being ill. In other cases, he'd lined up a substitute lawyer to cover for him but the person did not show, he contended.

The Bar Association also accused him of improper bookkeeping.

Armijo's wife, attorney Belinda Armijo, worked out of his law office and handled the business's books until she was suspended in April 2012, amid allegations she did not properly account for client fees and testified falsely at a deposition in the case, bar records show.

She was disbarred Tuesday.

Sergio Armijo had been summoned to a hearing in June to answer the violations against him but worked out a deal instead.

He served as a Superior Court judge for 15 years before being defeated in the 2008 election by local attorney Michael Hecht.

Hecht subsequently lost his job in 2009 after being convicted of felony harassment and patronizing a prostitute, allegations originally made public by Armijo supporters, including his son, Morgan Armijo, a local private investigator.

Hecht, who maintains the Armijo family set him up as a political vendetta, is appealing his convictions.

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