

## Longtime attorney loses law license over allegations

By [Diana Hefley](#), Herald Writer

LYNNWOOD -- A longtime Lynnwood attorney has had his law license stripped over allegations that he stole from a client and forged documents.

The state Supreme Court late last month disbarred Stephen L. Conroy, upholding a disciplinary board's findings that the lawyer [violated several rules](#) of professional conduct. The court declined to wait until October to yank Conroy's license.

The former municipal court judge had been licensed to practice law here since 1973.

Meanwhile, Conroy remains the subject of a criminal investigation. Lynnwood detectives have forwarded their findings to Snohomish County prosecutors. The case remains under review for possible charges.

Earlier this year, Lynnwood detectives sought Conroy's bank records, alleging that there was probable cause to believe he committed first-degree theft. The search warrant relied heavily on findings made by a hearing officer in December as part of a Washington State Bar Association investigation.

Conroy came to the attention of the bar in 2010 when a former client filed a grievance.

The Lynnwood lawyer represented the woman on an insurance claim after a traffic accident. Conroy filed a lawsuit on her behalf and negotiated a \$25,000 settlement, according to court records. The woman didn't receive any of the money directly. Instead, she was told that the entire amount went to pay bills, including Conroy's fees.

The woman later was attempting to get receipts for tax purposes when she discovered that Conroy had overstated the amount of the bills. She also alleged that Conroy forged her signature on a fee agreement.

The woman said she agreed to pay Conroy \$5,000 for his services. Detectives estimated that Conroy pocketed an additional \$6,000.

The hearing officer concluded that Conroy took more than what had been negotiated, and failed to communicate with the client the basis for his fees. More than a dozen professional conduct violations were alleged.

Conroy appealed the hearing officer's findings. Conroy accused the woman of tampering with the case file. He denied forging any documents, insisted that he didn't lie to state investigators or withhold money from the client. He also denied violating any rules.

The state Supreme Court agreed with the bar's disciplinary board's recommendation to disbar Conroy, effective July 30. The justices also ordered Conroy to pay legal fees associated with the investigation

and \$6,000 in restitution.

Conroy faced legal trouble in 2000 after being [censured](#) by the state Commission on Judicial Conduct. He resigned as the municipal court judge in Edmonds and Lynnwood after being accused of mixing his personal life with his public duties.

The censure came after Conroy dismissed, without a legal basis, a traffic citation for a woman with whom he had an intimate personal relationship. The commission also found that Conroy had lied to state investigators.

At the time, Conroy said he was stepping down because of personal reasons. His departure, however, was negotiated as part of a settlement related to his censure.

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