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Attorney disbarred, accused of misuse of clients' funds

Blair attorney John R. O'Hanlon has been disbarred from practicing law after filing a "Voluntary Surrender of License" in the wake of an investigation by the Nebraska State Bar Association.

The Bar Association's Counsel for Discipline began investigating O'Hanlon in September after receiving a complaint about mismanagement of trust fund money.

The complaint alleged that O'Hanlon "used client funds for unintended purposes," that the accounts of the funds were below "the amounts which should have been in the accounts representing client funds," and that O'Hanlon "commingled personal funds with client funds."

The allegations centered on four estates: the Larry Kuhr estate, the George Campbell estate, the Katherine Rathjen estate and the Ruth M. Blanchard estate.

According to the allegations indicated in the opinion of the Supreme Court of Nebraska, "on Feb. 18, 1998, \$25,722.98 was deposited into (O'Hanlon's) Washington County Bank

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attorney trust account on behalf of the Rathjen estate, and that by March 31, the account balance was \$5,278.27, even though no funds had been paid out of the account on behalf of said estate."

O'Hanlon voluntarily surrendered his license on Dec. 3, not contesting the allegations, and in doing so, forfeits a trial.

Washington County Attorney Ed Talbot said he had not reviewed the case files and did not know yet whether any criminal prosecution may result in the case.

The disbarment is issued for the state of Nebraska and is entered into a national database and precludes a disbarred person from practicing in other states, said a representative from the Nebraska State Bar Association.

The disbarment can be appealed after five years, but is rarely overturned, the representative said.

O'Hanlon passed the bar exam and was eligible to practice law beginning Feb. 28, 1972.

His disbarment was effective Jan. 8, 1999.