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For Publication: District 7 Applicant Dr. Belinda Gail Quarterman Noah Challenges Disbarment; Rehearing Pending

Dr. Belinda Gail Quarterman Noah, S.J.D <belinotimbers@gmail.com> Fri, Nov 13, 2026 at 5:32 AM
To: rroa@cltampa.com

Dear Ray,

Valerie Smith contacted me by text seeking comment for an article about the Tampa City Council applicants. I am sending my complete response below because I do not yet have her confirmed Creative Loafing email address.

Please forward this to Valerie promptly and consider it for inclusion in the forthcoming coverage. Please confirm receipt and let me know the publication deadline.

Thank you,
Belinda

Dear Valerie,

Thank you for contacting me and providing an additional opportunity to respond. There is substantial information missing from a brief account of the disbarment and my pending motion for a rehearing, and I appreciate your willingness to consider the complete record.

As an applicant for the Tampa City Council District 7 vacancy and a New Tampa resident for 23 years, I welcome scrutiny of my qualifications and record. I ask that your coverage reflect my advanced legal education, decades of professional experience, and commitment to serving our neighborhoods. I am seeking this appointment to contribute to responsible budgeting, infrastructure, responsive constituent service, and thoughtful growth. The disciplinary matter deserves accurate reporting, including my pending challenge, alongside a fair account of what I would bring to the Council.

My commitment to public service also includes prior candidacies for Mayor of Tampa and circuit judge. In my 2022 race for the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit, Group 6, I received 87,669 votes, approximately 42% of the votes cast in that contest. Those campaigns gave me opportunities to hear residents' concerns directly, and I would bring that experience, together with 23 years as a New Tampa resident, to serving District 7.

For publication, my central statement is unequivocal:

"My disbarment is a gross miscarriage of justice and must be reversed. My position is unequivocal: no intervening evidence justified escalating The Florida Bar's proposed admonishment and educational requirements to disbarment. My explanations, disclosures, and

corrections should have reduced the assessment of culpability. Instead, this sanction has caused and continues to cause profound professional and financial harm after more than 43 years of legal practice and public service. It has also jeopardized substantial potential compensation for years of contingency work. As an African American and Native American woman, I ask that my concerns about discriminatory and disparate treatment receive independent examination. My motion for rehearing remains pending. I ask that the complete record, not simply the disciplinary summary, be examined, and that the Florida Supreme Court vacate the disbarment order, restore my eligibility to practice law in Florida, and dismiss the disciplinary proceeding."

The Florida Supreme Court entered its order on September 11, 2026, and the disbarment became effective October 11, 2026. My motion for rehearing requesting reinstatement of my Bar license and dismissal of the case remains pending. In a November 6, 2026, email, Bar counsel expressly acknowledged that the motion remained pending. I am challenging the disbarment through the judicial process.

There was no evidentiary justification for escalating an educational resolution to disbarment.

The Bar previously offered to resolve the matter through an admonishment and educational requirements, without suspension or disbarment. My recollection is that the educational component involved approximately one or two days of courses in Tallahassee. I declined because I disputed intentional wrongdoing and understood that the resulting disciplinary entry would remain publicly associated with my Bar profile for ten years.

I state emphatically that, in my assessment of the record, **there was no evidence justifying the escalation from that proposed resolution to disbarment.** Nothing intervened that warranted increasing the sanction. My subsequent explanations, disclosures, and corrections should have reduced the assessment of culpability rather than increased it.

I explained the inadvertent omissions, supplied additional information, addressed the campaign-report discrepancies, and disputed any intent to deceive. I maintain that the evidence did not establish a basis for transforming a matter previously considered suitable for an admonishment and education into grounds for ending my Florida legal career. Exercising my right to contest allegations cannot be treated as aggravating misconduct.

The two rules relied upon do not make every omission or discrepancy grounds for disbarment.

The findings against me rested on Rule 4-8.4(c) and Rule 4-8.2(b). The cited provisions included the prohibition against knowingly misrepresenting a candidate's qualifications or other facts and the requirement to maintain conduct consistent with judicial integrity.

I maintain that the Bar failed to prove the charged violations by clear and convincing evidence. In particular, I dispute that the few inadvertent omissions in a voluminous judicial application, descriptions of my credentials, campaign communications, and campaign reporting established deliberate or knowing dishonesty. My explanations, disclosures, and corrections supported my position that the discrepancies were inadvertent, and that the Florida Bar was mistaken concerning my actual credentials and HarvardX online coursework. I challenge the contrary findings and the treatment of that evidence.

Separately, even if a violation had been established, I maintain that disbarment was unwarranted on this record. Establishing a rule violation and justifying the ultimate sanction are distinct questions. The sanction required an individualized assessment of the conduct, mental state, actual or potential injury, aggravating circumstances, mitigation, and relevant precedent. My position is that neither the disputed evidence nor a proportionate consideration of those factors justified ending my ability to practice law in Florida.

To convey the magnitude of this escalation, imagine facing an admonishment for jaywalking, truthfully explaining the misunderstanding, and then being barred from walking on public sidewalks altogether. That is how extreme the escalation from an educational resolution to the loss of my ability to practice law in Florida feels to me after more than 43 years.

That is an analogy to the disproportionate consequences. The disbarment, if not reversed by the Florida Supreme Court, will bring unjustified professional harm to a legal career that began more than 43 years ago.

The damage extends to years of work and substantial potential contingency fees.

For years, I invested time and professional effort representing clients in litigation against multibillion-dollar companies, including United Airlines and Delta Air Lines. Contingency representation can require substantial work before any fee is earned or paid.

The disbarment has jeopardized my ability to recover compensation for years of that work. I estimate that the potential contingency fees affected amount to **hundreds of thousands of dollars and possibly millions**, depending on case outcomes and the resolution of any applicable fee arrangements or claims.

These are contingent amounts, not guaranteed recoveries or an assertion that every fee interest has been extinguished. Nevertheless, the financial exposure is substantial. The consequences reach beyond a professional designation to my livelihood, the value of years of labor, and the disruption associated with changing representation.

I am not suggesting that the size or identity of any defendant proves why the disciplinary action occurred. I am explaining the concrete consequences of a sanction I maintain was unsupported and grossly disproportionate.

My academic credentials must be reported precisely.

I hold an earned **Doctor of Juridical Science, or S.J.D., from Widener University School of Law**. That is my actual degree designation. I have explained its character as a research doctorate in law equivalent to a Ph.D. I am not asking anyone to identify the degree itself as a Ph.D.

Readers should not be left with the impression that I fabricated a doctoral education. The precise dispute concerns how my earned doctorate was described, and my explanation should accompany that allegation.

I also explained that my Harvard-related education involved HarvardX online courses. I did not earn a Harvard Law School degree, and I dispute the characterization that I knowingly fabricated one. I removed the disputed LinkedIn reference to avoid confusion.

Your reference to a “Supreme Court Committee” requires identification of the particular statement and document involved. A judicial nominating commission, a campaign committee, and a claim of judicial service are different matters and should not be conflated.

I also dispute the interpretation of my campaign slogan, **“A Justice for You,”** as a representation that I had already served as a judge or justice. It expressed the justice I sought to provide. As I previously explained to the Business Journal, when a podcast host mistakenly called me “Judge,” I corrected the host.

I dispute intentional deception—not merely the punishment.

My position is that the disputed omissions and reporting discrepancies were inadvertent. The application period included the COVID-19 emergency and serious family pressures associated with my husband's illness overseas.

I provided information to the Bar concerning omitted matters and explained the campaign-report amendments. I maintain that those discrepancies did not establish an effort to manufacture campaign resources, mislead the public, or obtain an improper advantage.

The referee reached contrary conclusions. Those conclusions are precisely what I challenge. Reporting should distinguish the findings made against me from my explanations and objections.

This disciplinary proceeding did not concern stealing a client's money, misappropriating client trust funds, or a criminal conviction. No client suffered financial loss from the conduct charged in this proceeding. Those distinctions matter when evaluating whether disbarment was proportionate.

The opportunity to present mitigation was a central fairness issue.

I participated in the hearing on the merits. My objection concerns, among other matters, the subsequent sanctions hearing.

While overseas following my husband's death, I requested a short continuance or permission to participate remotely. My filings explained my circumstances and stated that Bar counsel did not oppose an accommodation so long as the reporting deadline remained intact. The requests were denied, and the sanctions hearing proceeded without my participation.

I submitted written mitigation. The referee stated that it was considered but ultimately found no mitigating factors. I challenge whether I received a meaningful opportunity to present mitigation and whether my circumstances were fairly evaluated before disbarment was recommended.

My rehearing grounds also address discrepancies concerning the identification and certification of the operative amended referee report, the adequacy and independence of the findings, and the sufficiency of the evidence supporting intent and aggravating factors.

Other disciplinary decisions receiving less onerous sanctions demonstrate the importance of proportionality and mitigation.

These documented outcomes warrant comparison:

- ***The Florida Bar v. Ashley Ruth Morin*, No. SC2025-1211:** A one-year suspension imposed September 11, 2026, following no-contest pleas to two third-degree felonies concerning false real-property documents and personal-identification information. Adjudication was withheld. The Bar's account describes a deed bearing a victim's signature stamp used without consent, while recording Morin's position that she did not know fraud was occurring.

- ***The Florida Bar v. Alex Finch*, No. SC2024-0238:** A one-year suspension for excessive fees, a resulting conflict, deficient trust-account and contingency-fee records, and noncompliance concerning employment of a disbarred lawyer.

- ***The Florida Bar v. Hubbell Clay Losson*, No. SC2026-1409:** A 60-day suspension involving client-service and Bar-response failures, with an unrelated no-contest plea to battery.

- ***The Florida Bar v. Lyle Barrister Mazin*, No. SC2024-1828:** A public reprimand and educational requirements for misconduct involving public communications, a demand directed at a property manager, and an untimely Bar response.

- ***The Florida Bar v. Tauler*, 775 So. 2d 944 (Fla. 2000):** A three-year suspension followed by conditional probation, despite misappropriation of more than $56,000 in client funds. Restitution, rehabilitation, and significant family and financial hardship were central to the decision.

- ***The Florida Bar v. Schiller*, 537 So. 2d 992 (Fla. 1989):** A three-year suspension for knowing misuse of client trust funds, with restitution, remorse, and rehabilitation central to the Court's analysis.

- ***The Florida Bar v. McFall*, 863 So. 2d 303 (Fla. 2003):** A three-year suspension for misappropriation, with significant medical and psychological mitigation, restitution, and probationary conditions.

These cases demonstrate that serious misconduct has received an individualized consideration of mitigation and rehabilitation, and not disbarment. I contend that the treatment of my circumstances, and the escalation within my own proceeding to disbarment cannot be reconciled with a fair and proportionate assessment.

My earlier disciplinary history must also be accurately stated.

In my 43-year legal career, only one earlier Florida Bar suspension was for **30 days only in 2014—not for ten years**. The separate bankruptcy-court proceedings and agreement concerning cessation of bankruptcy practice only in the Middle District of Florida must be accurately identified and distinguished from that Florida Bar suspension.

The Business Journal editor confirmed in an October 15 email that the publication had corrected its inaccurate disciplinary-history reference. Please use the corrected history.

My concerns about discriminatory and selective treatment deserve independent examination.

I am an African American and Native American woman admitted to The Florida Bar in 1983. I believe the severity of this sanction, the procedural issues I have raised, and the different outcomes in other cases warrant examination for discriminatory and selective treatment.

I am not representing that a court has already adjudicated unlawful targeting or discrimination in my favor. I am stating the concerns I have raised and the evidence I believe warrants investigation. Those concerns should be assessed through the complete record.

I welcome scrutiny of the underlying documents. Please review my responses and rehearing grounds alongside the referee's findings and the Bar's position.

Please let me know your publication deadline and provide any specific follow-up questions in writing. Thank you for considering the full circumstances and giving my response meaningful attention.

Sincerely,

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