

Timeline of Events

This timeline combines information from the provided sources focusing on the case of Ray Bedell and Kristi Michelle Morley. It also incorporates broader context regarding attorney misconduct and disciplinary actions.

Undetermined Time Period:

- **Pre-2017:** California implements a mandatory fingerprinting rule for all licensed attorneys to comply with a law requiring the state bar to receive notifications about lawyer arrests and convictions.
- **Pre-Bedell Case:** Arizona establishes the Client Protection Fund, a program that refunds clients of dishonest lawyers up to \$100,000 per victim using funds collected from annual dues paid by licensed attorneys in the state.

Specific Events:

- **Unknown Date (Prior to 2019):** Ray Bedell, a retired electrician in Phoenix, hires attorney Kristi Michelle Morley for a family court case regarding custody time with his daughter. Bedell pays Morley over \$5,000 for her legal services.
- **Over One Year Later:** Morley begins to "ghost" Bedell and other clients, failing to communicate and leaving their cases in jeopardy.
- **Six Days Before Important Court Date:** Bedell is unable to contact Morley.
- **Subsequent Period:** The State Bar of Arizona investigates Morley's conduct and discovers a pattern of client abandonment and potential financial impropriety. Morley claims medical issues, but evidence suggests otherwise.
- **Unknown Date:** Bedell learns about the Client Protection Fund and submits a claim.
- **Unknown Date:** Morley is disbarred by the State Bar of Arizona.
- **Within 2.5 Years of Filing Claim:** Bedell's claim is processed and approved by the Client Protection Fund.
- **September (Unknown Year):** Bedell receives a check for \$5,500 from the Client Protection Fund, fully reimbursing him for the fees he paid Morley.
- **April 1, 2019:** A news report highlights that California's lawyer fingerprinting program has uncovered over 6,000 criminal history reports, including more than 2,200 previously undisclosed convictions. The program is ongoing, and the number of convictions is expected to rise.
- **February 17, 2021:** An article is published discussing the tools available to the New Jersey legal system to address lawyer misconduct, particularly in light of concerns regarding false statements and frivolous litigation. The article mentions the Rules of Professional Conduct, potential sanctions, and the possibility of criminal prosecution for offenses like false swearing.

Cast of Characters

Ray Bedell: A retired electrician from Phoenix, Arizona, who hired and was subsequently abandoned by attorney Kristi Michelle Morley. He successfully applied for and received reimbursement from the Arizona State Bar's Client Protection Fund.

Kristi Michelle Morley: A disbarred Arizona attorney who abandoned Bedell and other clients after receiving payment for legal services. She claimed medical issues but was found to have engaged in potentially dishonest conduct.

Rebekah L. Sanders: A reporter for The Republic | azcentral.com who wrote the article detailing Ray Bedell's experience with the Client Protection Fund.

Jim Penny: A board member of the Arizona State Bar's Client Protection Fund, quoted in Sanders' article highlighting the purpose and importance of the program.

Debra Cassens Weiss: Author of the April 1, 2019, article reporting on the success of the lawyer fingerprinting program in California in uncovering previously unknown criminal convictions.

Ellen L. Koblitz: Co-author of the February 17, 2021, article on addressing attorney misconduct, a retired Presiding Appellate Division Judge, and Special Counsel at Pashman Stein Walder Hayden P.C.

Kim D. Ringler: Co-author of the article on addressing attorney misconduct and founder of Ringler Law Firm, specializing in attorney ethics matters.

Other Individuals:

- The article by Koblitz and Ringler mentions several individuals involved in high-profile cases of alleged attorney misconduct, including former President Donald Trump, Rudy Giuliani, and Sidney Powell, but they are not central to the timeline constructed from the provided sources.

Organizations:

- **State Bar of Arizona:** The governing body for lawyers in Arizona responsible for lawyer licensing, discipline, and administration of the Client Protection Fund.
- **Client Protection Fund:** A program administered by the State Bar of Arizona to provide financial reimbursement to clients who have suffered losses due to dishonest conduct by their attorneys.
- **State Bar of California:** The equivalent governing body for lawyers in California.
- **California Department of Justice:** Responsible for maintaining criminal records and providing information to the State Bar of California regarding lawyer arrests and convictions.