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CLERK OF SUPREME COURT
OF WISCONSIN

February 28, 2026

Mr. Samuel Christensen
Wisconsin Supreme Court Clerk's Office
110 E. Main St. - Suite 215
P.O. Box 1688
Madison WI 53701-1688

RE: OLR v. Ryan V. Doherty
Case No.: 2025AP50-D

Dear Mr. Samuelsen:

Enclosed for filing in this matter please find my Referee's Report. By copy of this letter I am serving counsel with the same.

Also enclosed for the Court are:

- Original transcripts from the hearing
- White exhibit binder containing exhibits entered into evidence at the hearing
- Manila envelope containing exhibits not received into evidence at the hearing.

Yours very truly,



Hon. Jean A. DiMotto
Referee

Enclosures

cc Atty. Kim M. Kluck (w/ enclosure of Referee's Report)
Atty. Stacie H. Rosenzweig (w/ enclosure of Referee's Report)

MAR 03 2026

STATE OF WISCONSIN

CLERK OF SUPREME COURT
OF WISCONSIN

IN SUPREME COURT

IN THE MATTER OF DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS
AGAINST RYAN V. DOHERTY, ATTORNEY AT LAW.

CASE CODE: 30912

OFFICE OF LAWYER REGULATION,

Complainant,

CASE NO.: 2025AP50-D

RYAN V. DOHERTY,

Respondent.

REFEREE'S REPORT

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

- A. This matter has been pending since the first quarter of 2021 when the Office of Lawyer Regulation (OLR) opened it as Inquiry 2021MA765.
- B. A Complaint was not filed until four years later, on January 9, 2025, by the OLR Attorney Kim M. Kluck.
- C. The Respondent, Attorney Ryan V. Doherty, by Attorney Stacie H. Rosenzweig of Halling & Cayo, filed an Answer on April 14, 2025.
- D. A Scheduling Order issued on April 16, 2025.
- E. The OLR filed a Motion for Summary Judgment to which Attorney Doherty responded on September 5 and the OLR replied on September 19. The motion was denied on September 23, 2025.
- F. A hearing was held in Milwaukee on November 4-5, 2025. The OLR called Attorney Doherty adversely and Deputy Luke Wilhelm. Attorney Doherty testified in his own defense. Judge Todd Martens (ret.) and Attorney Mark Benson also testified for Attorney

Doherty, as did the victim in this matter, SMY (as she is identified in court documents. She was referred to as Victim One during the hearing and in the transcripts and briefs). Dep. Wilhelm was called as a rebuttal witness and examined briefly by Alexander Richardson under the student practice rule.

- G. The hearing was continued via zoom on December 9, 2025, to accommodate one of Attorney Doherty's witnesses, Jean Beauchesne, who had recently been diagnosed with cancer.
- H. Post-hearing briefs were simultaneously served electronically on January 30, 2026.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Attorney Ryan V. Doherty was admitted to the State Bar of Wisconsin in 2008. For almost his entire career, he has practiced law with his father at Doherty Law Office in West Bend, where Attorney Doherty was born and raised.
2. At times relevant in this matter, Attorney Doherty's father became an emeritus lawyer and therefore Attorney Doherty has essentially been a solo practitioner practicing in Washington, Dodge, Ozaukee, Fond du Lac, Waukesha and occasionally Milwaukee Counties. His practice focuses on family law, civil litigation with some criminal law.
3. Attorney Doherty and SMY met about 15 years ago. They began dating about six months later and have been in relationship together ever since.
4. Even before meeting Attorney Doherty, SMY was employed by a large Milwaukee car dealership where she does payroll for five stores. She has long been, and continues to be, able to support herself financially.
5. Since 2013, Attorney Doherty and SMY have resided together in West Bend in the home Attorney Doherty lived in. They each have children from prior relationships.

6. While there have been conflicts and arguments throughout their long-term relationship, there had never been violence.
7. Topics that caused tension between them were the frequency of his playing golf and the amount of his drinking, particularly binge drinking on weekends.
8. On the date in question, Saturday, October 24, 2020, Attorney Doherty participated in a golf outing, played 18 holes, and consumed alcohol during and after the round of golf.
9. He was expected to be home in time to carve pumpkins with SMY and her daughter and grandchildren, but he did not arrive back home until sometime between 4:30 and 5:30 p.m. which was too late.
10. SMY was “really angry” and started yelling at him for prioritizing his friends.
11. Attorney Doherty left their home to avoid conflict and went to a nearby property they owned which had a pond and a boathouse, intending to fish and cool off.
12. Shortly thereafter SMY came and “started screaming at him” until she saw someone approaching with a child. She left and headed to the home of a friend of hers where she remained for some 4-5 hours.
13. Attorney Doherty went back to their residence where he had a drink, made dinner on the grill, and continued to drink through dinner. He then selected a movie and continued to drink while he watched the movie. When the movie was finished, he went to bed and fell asleep on his stomach with the remote up by his chest.
14. Sometime later he was startled awake by SMY smacking or hitting him on his side trying to get the remote out from under him.
15. The two got into a loud argument during which he pushed her out of the bedroom. He then locked the door.

16. Attorney Doherty sat down with his feet against the door and his back braced against a wall. This was because the door was a hollow-core door which, if hit hard enough, could flex inward and pop the lock.
17. SMY wanted to leave the house, however her shoes and wallet were in the bedroom and she was trying to get them.
18. For his part, Attorney Doherty heard her yelling on the other side of the door and trying to jiggle the lock open. SMY was able to flex the door somewhat inward. Then he heard her hitting the door with an object, likely a Yeti tumbler. He heard a “whack” or two on the door, then heard something shatter. It was the glass sconce on the wall directly opposite the bedroom door.
19. That caused him to open up the door and ask “What the [expletive] are you doing out here?” He grabbed her by the neck but she turned to run away down the 10-foot hall towards the kitchen, slipping on some of the broken glass from the sconce. As she was beginning to fall he tackled her and she fell, hitting her face on the raised kitchen island and again on the floor where he was then on top of her.
20. Notwithstanding that Attorney Doherty is physically bigger than SMY, as he was beginning to roll off of her, she was able to roll over onto her back. She had glass in her lip from the fall that Attorney Doherty tried to fish it out. She slapped his hand away.
21. He slapped her once in the face. She began to spit at him and hit him. He covered her mouth and nose with one hand to stop the spitting and held down her arm with his other hand.
22. He was sitting on her between her breast line and her stomach, which area included her diaphragm. This caused her to have difficulty breathing and she began feeling

- lightheaded. She told Attorney Doherty that she could not fully breathe, so he released his grips on her.
23. The altercation from the time Attorney Doherty opened the bedroom door until he got off of SMY lasted approximately three minutes.
24. Attorney Doherty did not punch her or throw any object at her, nor did he use a knife or any other type of weapon.
25. After he got off of her, she got up, and they sat in separate chairs on opposite sides of the living room. He underhand-tossed her a bag of frozen corn to put on her face because he noticed swelling and that her face looked “terrible.”
26. SMY has a platelet disorder that causes her to bleed easily.
27. They continued to argue for about an hour but did so without yelling. Nonetheless the situation escalated again when Attorney Doherty pressed SMY about why she was acting like this and breaking his stuff. He then threw some of her clothes and a framed picture of her daughter off the porch/balcony onto the lawn as a way to say, “How would you like if I trashed your stuff too?”
28. By then, SMY had gone into the bathroom, locked the door, saw her face in the mirror, “freaked out,” thought she heard a clanging in the kitchen which she interpreted to mean that Attorney Doherty had picked up a knife, and called 911. The call registered at the police station at 12:08 a.m. on Sunday, October 25, 2020.
29. Meanwhile, Attorney Doherty knocked on the bathroom door yelling, “Open the [expletive] door.” This was captured on the 911 call. He did not realize she had called 911 until he then heard her ask for an officer to come.
30. Attorney Doherty pulled up a lawn chair at the edge of the driveway and waited for law enforcement officers to arrive.

31. Six deputies from the Washington County Sheriff's Office arrived three minutes after they were dispatched with their long guns drawn. Deputy Luke Wilhelm, the primary officer on the case, observed that Attorney Doherty was boisterous and agitated with some slurring of his words.
32. For his part Attorney Doherty was surprised at the deputies' aggressive response until he found out later that SMY had told the dispatcher he had a knife and threatened to kill her.
33. Attorney Doherty denied having a knife and denied threatening to kill her even though SMY stated that to the 911 operator.
34. Dep. Wilhelm went inside the home to investigate and meet with the victim. He observed debris on the floor, including glass shards, fragments of items, a frozen bag of corn and other items strewn about.
35. He made contact with SMY in the hallway outside of the bathroom. He observed that the left side of her face had sustained "pretty significant trauma," that she was physically shaking, and spoke with a wavering voice. She was tearful, appeared fearful and anxious and was almost hyperventilating.
36. SMY stated that Attorney Doherty was trying to kill her and that he told her she was going to die tonight.
37. Dep. Wilhelm asked her if she would write a statement. He said words to the effect, "Someone is going to jail tonight." SMY heard this to mean that if she didn't write a statement, she would be the one to go to jail for having called 911. So she wrote a statement which included both of the statements listed in Finding no. 36.
38. Attorney Doherty does not believe he made those statements, but does not have an independent recollection one way or the other.

39. Dep. Wilhelm went back outside where Attorney Doherty agreed to give a breath sample. The result was a BAC of 0.145g/DL. Attorney Doherty was cooperative as he was arrested and transported to the Washington County Jail.
40. On Monday, October 26, 2020, in Washington County Case No. 2020CF477, Attorney Doherty was charged with three crimes, each with a domestic abuse modifier: strangulation and suffocation, a class H felony; battery, a class A misdemeanor; and disorderly conduct, a class B misdemeanor.
41. At his afternoon bond hearing he signed a signature bond that included conditions of no contact with SMY, absolute sobriety and a firearms ban.
42. Attorney Doherty was released from jail at 3:45 p.m. that afternoon. A mere three days later, upon his own initiative, he had his first appointment for therapy with the well-experienced, well-credentialed psychotherapist, Jean Beauchesne.
43. SMY had come to the bond hearing because she wanted to recant the statement she wrote the night before to say that she wasn't afraid of him and just wanted him gone that night. She was unsuccessful.
44. Thereafter she retained counsel, Attorney Nate Cade, who succeeded in getting the no contact order changed to a no violent contact order on December 9, 2020. Also on that date, Hon. Sandy Williams, Ozaukee County Circuit Judge, ordered Attorney Doherty to submit to a SCRAM ankle bracelet.
45. After ongoing plea negotiations in the criminal case, a Deferred Prosecution Agreement (DPA) was presented to the court for approval on February 16, 2022. The prosecutor noted that the negotiations for the DPA took into account SMY's position that she was not supportive of the prosecution, believing that she was responsible for the incident.

46. The DPA recommended that the misdemeanor count of battery be amended to a misdemeanor disorderly conduct. Attorney Doherty then pleaded guilty to what were now two disorderly conduct charges, and he was convicted of both. He pleaded guilty to the felony charge but that plea was not accepted by the court.
47. The sentence by Hon. Paul Malloy, Ozaukee County Circuit Judge, was in accord with the DPA: a withheld sentence in favor of two years' probation for the two misdemeanor counts and a withheld adjudication on the felony count pending compliance with the conditions of probation. The conditions of probation were an AODA assessment and treatment, absolute sobriety, no firearms, and no violent or abusive contact with SMY.
48. The felony count was dismissed two years later at the conclusion of Attorney Doherty's compliance with the DPA.
49. From December 9, 2020, until February 16, 2022, Attorney Doherty wore a SCRAM ankle bracelet to detect any alcohol he may have imbibed. There were no violations.
50. Between February 2022 and February 2024, Attorney Doherty was urine-tested weekly. All of these samples were negative for alcohol.
51. Attorney Doherty no longer hunts because he gave away his hunting firearms.
52. Since October 29, 2020, three days after his release from jail, Attorney Doherty has been attending weekly psychotherapy sessions with Jean Beauchesne. He progressed so well in therapy in the first 21 sessions that his sessions were pushed out to biweekly appointments, then to monthly appointments, and since 2024, every 4-6 weeks.
53. She diagnosed him with alcohol abuse disorder, moderate.
54. In all of his years of therapy, Attorney Doherty has never missed an appointment.
55. Attorney Doherty has always been candid with Ms. Beauchesne.

56. In his ongoing psychotherapy throughout the pendency of this matter, Attorney Doherty completed The Early Recovery Skills program which is a matrix of intensive outpatient treatment created by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).
57. Moreover, Attorney Doherty completed a Relapse Prevention program, which is also matrix of intensive outpatient treatment structured by SAMHSA.
58. In addition to completing the SAMHSA substance-abuse protocols that Ms. Beauchesne had offered, Attorney Doherty completed a plethora of mental health education programs with her. These programs were anger management, cognitive restructuring, collaborative problem solving, communication training, coping strategies, crisis intervention, exploration and verbalization of feelings, journaling, homework assignments, guided imagery/relaxation training, mindfulness, pattern identification and interruption, positive parenting skills, psychoeducation, self-care routine plan, setting and maintaining boundaries, sobriety, focused techniques, stress management, and improving work-life balance.
59. Further, Attorney Doherty completed a 16-week Domestic Violence Treatment Program at Alliance Counseling Center.
60. In therapy with Ms. Beauchesne, Attorney Doherty received skills in the Cognitive Behavioral modality and in the Dialectical Behavior Therapy focusing on cognitive restructuring/modification of thoughts, behavioral activation, interpersonal effectiveness, distress tolerance, and emotional regulation.
61. According to Ms. Beauchesne, emotional regulation “is a really big one because ... when [people] are not doing so good and they just want to explode, the best thing is to teach them how not to explode....” ((Dec. 2025 Tr. 14:9-13).

62. Attorney Doherty demonstrated an understanding of the seriousness of his domestic violence actions “since day one” with Ms. Beauchesne.
63. Attorney Doherty “absolutely” expressed remorse to Ms. Beauchesne for his actions on the night in question. He also expressed remorse at the hearing, and has apologized to SMY “more times than [he] can count.” His remorse is genuine.
64. Ms. Beauchesne characterized him as having both a willingness and insight to have an open mind which is necessary to be successful in therapy.
65. As to the success of Attorney Doherty’s therapy, Ms. Beauchesne described him as “like a different person.” “He is calmer” and demonstrates that he has the tools necessary to handle conflict without violence. (Dec. 2025 Tr. 23:17-24:5).

[H]e has worked hard over the past five years. I have seen major transformations in him, even in regards to his children. You know, I hope this doesn’t sound condescending, but I am very proud of the work he has done. It says a lot about him.

(Dec. 2025 Tr., 29:14-20).

66. Attorney Doherty also reflected on the positive results of his therapy. He now regards conflict resolution with SMY as “terrific.” The tools he has learned in psychotherapy have resulted in conflict that doesn’t progress to a higher level of discord between them. Disagreements are resolved by a lot more listening and patience on his part. If things start to get heated, he steps away, but instead of letting it fester for 24 hours, he comes back in one-half to one hour to talk it out and figure out a resolution, versus concern about who is right or wrong.
67. Attorney Doherty is genuinely and deeply remorseful about his violent actions on October 24, 2020. He has apologized to SMY “more times than [he] can count.” He

regrets the years it took for SMY and him to get to a point where their trust and love was secure again. He regrets that he tore the fabric of his family, and also set them back financially as he paid for SCRAM and psychotherapy.

68. Because West Bend is a smaller community, the fact of his arrest and convictions is known by many. He recognizes the negative impact on his professional practice as clients still ask about it and he tells them the outcome. Yet it also has impacted his practice in a positive way in that he now is more empathic as an attorney, able to see both sides of the coin and understand the genuine fear that victims of domestic violence experience.

69. He understands what he should have done differently that night:

I should have avoided -- first off, I should have had more respect for [SMY] and followed through with what was planned. I should have not drank to excess. Had I not done that, we wouldn't be in this situation. The -- I should have stayed behind the locked door. I should have left. I mean, there is a million and a half things. I should not have gotten on top of her. I shouldn't have put my hand over her mouth. I shouldn't have thrown her things off the balcony. I shouldn't have been screaming at her when I was in the wrong. (Nov. 4 Tr. 260:14-25).

70. Attorney Doherty articulated what he has changed as a result of therapy so that he is never violent again: He spends the vast majority of his time with SMY, golfs less frequently, avoids establishments where alcohol is the primary focus, seldom drinks and never to intoxication so that he has control over his faculties, has given up relationships with people he now realizes weren't true friends but rather drinking buddies, is surrounded by people who are supportive of where he's at, and continues his years in counseling because it keeps him grounded so that violence will never happen again.

71. Attorney Doherty and SMY became engaged in January 2024 and married in July 2025.

72. Attorney Doherty has a reputation for honesty and trustworthiness in the community, as well as a reputation for competence, being prepared and being a good advocate. He is respected by judges and other attorneys.

COUNT I

By his two convictions for disorderly conduct, each with a domestic abuse modifier, Attorney Ryan Doherty violated SCR 20:8.4(b), via comment [2].

DISCUSSION AS TO COUNT 1

The OLR is asking for a six-month suspension of Attorney Doherty's license to practice. It has cited three cases in support of its recommendation: Disciplinary Proceedings Against Netzer, 2014 WI 7, 352 Wis. 2d 310, 841 N.W.2d 820; Disciplinary Proceedings Against Gorokhovsky, 2013 WI 100, 351 Wis. 2d 408; 840 N.W.2d 126; and Disciplinary Proceedings Against Meyer; 2022 WI 39, 401 Wis. 2d 732, 975 N.W. 2d 229.

In Netzer, the attorney was disciplined for the misconduct of stalking and harassment. He pleaded guilty to two misdemeanor counts of violating a harassment injunction that his former girlfriend had obtained against him. Two felony counts of stalking and bail jumping were read in for purposes of sentencing. ¶ 20.

Attorney Netzer later stipulated to facts of his misconduct with the OLR, which stipulation the referee accepted and adopted as his findings of fact. ¶43 Attorney Netzer thereafter appealed the referee's report, arguing, *inter alia*, that the findings were erroneous, faulty and defective. ¶ 39, ¶ 49.

In recommending a 90-day suspension of Attorney Netzer's license to practice law, the referee expressed significant concern about Attorney Netzer's mental health as well as his minimizing his wrongdoing. ¶ 29.

The Court imposed a 90-day suspension, taking in to account Attorney Netzer's prior discipline for "strikingly similar" conduct with another woman. ¶ 40, ¶ 47, ¶ 49.

I find this case factually inapposite to Attorney Doherty's case. Attorney Netzer's misconduct consisted of stalking and harassment. He demonstrated a pattern of continuing misconduct. He had previously been disciplined for the same type of misconduct. And he repeatedly minimized his wrongdoing.

In contrast, Attorney Doherty's misconduct was a single violent event. He has no prior discipline. He has not minimized his misconduct. And he has engaged in substantial rehabilitative efforts to excellent effect.

Turning next to the Meyer case, the OLR cited it for "sanction guidance [that] can be gleaned from cases bearing similarities." OLR's Post-Hearing Brief, p. 36.

The only similarity I can find is that Matthew Meyer and Attorney Doherty both engaged in domestic violence acts.

There are a plethora of differences.

First, Attorney Doherty and SMY were not in a dating relationship but were, and are, in a long-term relationship. In contrast, Meyer's misconduct was against a woman he was dating and then continued after they broke up.

Secondly, Meyer's misconduct endured over a lengthy period of time; Attorney Doherty's was a single, non-repeated event.

Third, there was no repentance from Meyer, whereas Attorney Doherty has repented and shown genuine remorse repeatedly to SMY, in therapy, and during the hearing.

Fourth, Meyer fabricated letters of reference and gave them to the prosecutor. In contrast, Attorney Doherty enjoys a reputation for honesty and truthfulness.

Fifth, Attorney Doherty has engaged in self-initiated rehabilitation for five years since the domestic violence.

Lastly, the nature of the misconduct differs vastly. While both engaged in physical violence, Meyer's continued, bizarre, obsessive, abusive and violent pattern of conduct was "aimed at [victim] to cause her to believe that [he] would ruin her life, commit acts of violence against her and her family and friends, damage her property, interfere with future relationships she might have, and leave her without a job and money. [He] also made threats to ... ruin her reputation with her employer." Meyer, ¶ 6.

Meyer made "unwelcome and persistent phone calls to [her]. On at least one occasion he made in excess of 120 calls in one day. [She] was employed as a physician's assistant and had to keep her phone on at all times. [He] also sent [her] hundreds of unwelcome email messages." Meyer, ¶ 8.

"During and after the relationship, [he] communicated his intent to harm [her] by using criminal defendants to enact violence on her family and men [he] believed she had been intimate with; by employing a private investigator to follow [her]; and threatening to sue [her] for \$20,000 for posting a negative Google review of [his] law practice. Meyer, ¶ 12.

"Meyer repeatedly told [her] that he was insulated from legal consequences because of his position as a criminal defense lawyer." Meyer, ¶ 12.

He made "an extremely high number of calls to [her] from blocked phone numbers in rapid succession...." On one day, [she] "received 68 calls from blocked or spoofed phone numbers, 41 WhatsApp text messages, 12 WhatsApp phone/video calls, and 12 emails from [him.]" Meyer, ¶ 15.

"By using SpoofCard, [he] was able to call and send text messages that appeared to be sent from other numbers in her contact list, such as friends and family. Meyer, ¶ 16.

Said the Court:

The undisputed facts show a clear pattern of Attorney Meyer using his position as an attorney to intimidate and threaten [the victim].

On more than one occasion, Attorney Meyer physically assaulted [her].

One of the assaults resulted in injuries serious enough to cause [her] to miss approximately two weeks of work. On more than one occasion, although police were called, [she] said she did not want to pursue criminal charges because she was afraid of Attorney Meyer. ¶ 32

Meyer also created a fake email that purported to be from her father alleging that she had committed HIPAA violations, threatened to send the email to [her] employer if she did not give in to his demands, and did ultimately send the email to the employer. ¶ 33

“When criminal charges were finally filed against him, Attorney Meyer falsified letters of reference and presented them to the district attorney in an effort to gain leniency.” ¶ 34

“The facts of this case demonstrate a clear pattern of disturbing and egregious misconduct by Attorney Meyer and a complete and utter disregard for his obligations as an attorney.” ¶ 35

I have quoted extensively from the Meyer decision to demonstrate how egregious his misconduct was, not only in itself but particularly in comparison to Attorney Doherty’s. It is readily apparent that Meyer’s misconduct is so far afield from Attorney Doherty’s misconduct as to render the Meyer case meaningless as so-called “sanction guidance” for Attorney Doherty.

Both the OLR and Attorney Doherty cited Disciplinary Proceedings Against Gorokhovsky. Attorney Gorokhovsky was convicted after a jury trial of two counts of battery and one count of disorderly conduct, all as acts of domestic violence.

The referee recommended a public reprimand, but the Court imposed a 60-day suspension based on Attorney Gorokhovsky's prior discipline (two episodes) coupled with his dishonesty with a court in Illinois that constituted additional misconduct in the case.

The Gorokhovsky case is similar to the case at bar in that his domestic violence convictions were misdemeanors. And while I appreciate Attorney Doherty's thoughtful argument about whether his misconduct seriously reflects adversely on his fitness to practice, I believe Gorokhovsky controls here and stands for the proposition that domestic violence is a serious crime and constitutes misconduct under SCR 20:8.4(b), cmt. [2].

The Gorokhovsky case differs from the case at bar in that Attorney Doherty has no prior discipline, has a reputation for honesty and truthfulness, has readily acknowledged his misconduct, and has been involved in extensive rehabilitative work.

Gorokhovsky is also significant in demonstrating that not every instance of domestic violence requires a harsh, punitive approach to the violent individual as is being recommended by the OLR for Attorney Doherty.

The OLR gives short shrift to Attorney Doherty's rehabilitation. But Attorney Doherty has done all that we could hope for and expect of a man who has engaged in domestic violence. His self-initiated rehabilitation is extraordinary. At the earliest possible opportunity, he started psychotherapy and has continued in psychotherapy now for five years. According to his psychotherapist, it has been transformative for him. "He is like a different person." And it is his intent to continue at 4-6-week intervals because he finds it beneficial.

Attorney Doherty has never denied or minimized his conduct, and in that respect, I disagree with OLR's contention that he has refused to acknowledge the wrongfulness of his conduct.

Attorney Doherty has regarded his violence as serious from the start. He is genuinely remorseful, a mitigating factor recognized by the ABA Standard 9.32(1). He answered for his crimes in Ozaukee County Circuit Court. ABA Standard 9.32(k). He has changed how he spends his time with SMY and his family, and has changed his relationship with alcohol. He has done all that he can to prevent any violence in the future. Because of his long and effective rehabilitative work, I do not have concerns about the public, including SMY, needing protection from him in the future.

Yet the OLR, which delayed charging him for four years after opening an inquiry, now argues for a six-month suspension of his license. Such a suspension will require application for reinstatement, a process of that can take up to 18 months. Thus, from the date of the violence until presumed reinstatement would add up to eight years since the violent event. The OLR's delay should not be rewarded by a suspending Attorney Doherty's license to practice law so long after the fact of his violent act. That would be an unreasonable consequence.

Moreover, delay in a disciplinary proceeding is a mitigating factor favoring Attorney Doherty. ABA Standard 9.32(j).

I am not without understanding or sensitivity about domestic violence. During my tenure as a Circuit Court Judge in Milwaukee County, I served one year presiding over exclusively domestic violence cases. I was instrumental in obtaining a federal grant for Milwaukee County to assist victims of domestic violence who are involved in the court system. And before being elected to the bench I served on the board of directors of a domestic violence agency that assisted victims of domestic violence.

But when the perpetrator of domestic violence engages in such outstanding rehabilitative work such that one can conclude from his psychotherapist's assessments that the risk of further

violence is zero to *de minimis*, a six-month suspension of his license is excessive and unreasonable.

I find support for the sanction of a public reprimand in Public Reprimand of Robert M. Goode, 2014-OLR-08. Attorney Goode threatened his mother with a weapon which led to a conviction for misdemeanor menacing with a sentence of 18 months on probation. It should be noted that the reprimand also included additional offenses relating to trust account and communication problems. In contrast, Attorney Doherty has no prior or concurrent misconduct.

In the matter of Public Reprimand of John H. Wolf II, 2007-5, Attorney Wolf drank alcohol and used marijuana, became verbally and physically abusive to his girlfriend and kicked her in her ribs. His public reprimand was conditioned, *inter alia*, upon drug treatment. He had entered into a 12-month deferred prosecution agreement on a disorderly conduct charge but failed the DPA by committing additional crimes, including a weapons charge with a controlled substance in his blood.

Here, Attorney Doherty succeeded on his two-year DPA, and his five years of treatment with his psychotherapist included treatment related to his moderate alcoholism.

I conclude that a public reprimand is sufficient discipline in view of his successful rehabilitation combined with the length of time that has passed since the violence. It not only puts attorneys on notice that domestic violence is a crime that will negatively impact their licensure, but also that engaging in sincere rehabilitative work is highly valued.

COUNT II DISCUSSION

The OLR cited a 28-year-old case and a 32-year-old case in support of its position that Attorney Doherty violated the attorney's oath by his misconduct. Disciplinary Proceedings Against Blask, 216 Wis. 2d 129, 573 N.W.2d 835 (1998) and Disciplinary Proceedings Against Beaver, 189 Wis. 2d 12, 510 N.W. 2d 129 (1994).

Competing with the OLR's position is the testimony of Judge Todd Martens and prosecutor Mark Bensen about Attorney Doherty. From Judge Martens who was a judge in Washington County from 2010-2023:

So from those individuals, attorneys, judges, family attorneys, criminal attorneys, I have an opinion about his reputation in the Southeastern Wisconsin legal community, and I believe it's a positive one. I haven't heard people say anything bad about Attorney Doherty. He has a reputation in the legal community as being a competent attorney, a vigorous advocate for his clients. He has a reputation of being good to work with other attorneys. I think he's respected by his colleagues and works well with them, whether it's on an adversarial or non-adversarial basis.

(Nov. 4 Tr. 141:23-142:1; 149:10-21).

After listening to the portion of the 911 call when Attorney Doherty shouted to SMY who was in the bathroom, "Open the [expletive] door," Judge Martens commented:

In my professional career as a district attorney and as a judge, I have seen people who are in front of me or being prosecuted by me for things that they did probably on one of the worst times, dates, places in their lives. And I think if any of us -- if you put a microscope up to any human being, you're going to find that there are times when they say and do things that they will regret. Well, and also, I, you know, as a prosecutor for 19 years, I prosecuted hundreds, probably thousands of individuals for acts of domestic violence, including domestic violence homicides. So I am well aware of the dynamics of violence, the cycle

of violence, elements of power and control that can be associated with domestic violence. I am aware of all those things. But to take a statement that one person makes at one time -- as I said, if you put a microscope up to any of our lives, there will be times when you could find something that we said or did that we would regret intensely and for a long time. So based on that analysis of -- and my listening to the 911 tape, the answer to your question is, no, it does not change my opinion.

(Nov. 4 Tr. 157:15-158:13).

From Attorney Bensen's testimony:

[H]e has a reputation for having integrity and for being honest. When he said he was going to do something, he did it, and was a straight shooter with regard to negotiations in cases. I don't recall him ever bringing any frivolous motions. And when I saw him interact with judges and other individuals, I always observed him to have good character, and he was always truthful. (Nov. 4 Tr. 170:20-171:6).

Further:

[I]n my belief, it was a one-time incident. And while it certainly was a -- this serious incident in the sense that a felony charge was issued against him, there were no other incidents that I am aware of that predated that, and there are no other incidents that I'm aware of that postdated that incident. I'm also aware that he was able to successfully complete the deferred prosecution agreement. It addressed aspects of alcohol, and that there have been no other -- no other incidents of any sort of domestic violence or any other violent incidents that both

predate or postdate that incident. (Nov. 4 Tr. 172:24-173:12).

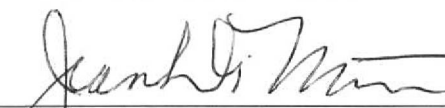
In weighing these testimonies against the two cited cases, I conclude that the OLR has not met its burden to prove a violation of the attorney's oath by offensive personality to the level of clear, satisfactory and convincing evidence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. I recommend that Count II be dismissed.
2. I recommend that Attorney Ryan V. Doherty be publicly reprimanded.
3. I recommend that Attorney Ryan V. Doherty pay the costs of this proceeding.

Dated this 28th day of February 2026.

SUPREME COURT OF WISCONSIN



HON. JEAN A. DIMOTTO
REFEREE