

**SUPREME COURT OF WISCONSIN**  
**OFFICE OF LAWYER REGULATION**

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Public Reprimand With Consent

2019-OLR - 3

William Norine, Attorney at Law

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William Norine is a Wisconsin attorney whose State Bar identification number is 1020681. Norine formerly practiced in Burnett County, Wisconsin. Norine was first licensed to practice law in Wisconsin on December 1, 1992.

Norine, while serving as the District Attorney for Burnett County, communicated via Facebook to multiple women who had pending criminal cases in Burnett County. In these communications, Norine sought lunch, dinner or drink dates, used personal endearments and made improper inducements.

In one matter, Norine offered to buy dinner and “compare notes” with a woman who had a pending Burnett County criminal case as well as a pending Child in Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS) case. The woman claimed she was desperate to get her children back and was in a vulnerable position.

In another matter, Norine became Facebook friends with a woman who had a pending Burnett County criminal case. Norine told the woman that she was a “wonderful beautiful person” who inspired him. He offered to pay her phone bill if she “had time to meet.” Norine repeatedly asked her out on dates. At one point, the woman, who was represented by counsel, missed a court date and Norine communicated with her through Facebook, even offering to pick her up after a bench warrant was issued and buy her lunch after the matter was resolved.

In another matter, Norine had lunch with one woman whom his office was prosecuting, although at the time he met with the woman she purportedly had no pending charges. In Facebook messages, he called the woman “Babe” and at one point paid for 3 Gigabytes of data on her cell phone. When she informed Norine that she was worried about a new pending charge and an anticipated sentence of probation, Norine advised her not to worry as “We usually take a non criminal ordinance plea on those No probation.” Norine also told her in a message that she was “lovely.” In other messages, the woman spoke of potential criminal matters and asked Norine for advice.

In some of the cases, Norine was not personally assigned to the prosecutions as the cases were being handled by an assistant district attorney. Nonetheless, as the Burnett County District Attorney, Norine was responsible for the subject prosecutions.

In his capacity as Burnett County District Attorney, by seeking dinner, lunch or drink dates with women facing criminal charges in Burnett County, coupled with the use of personal endearments such as “Babe” or calling the women “lovely” or “beautiful” or otherwise offering or paying personal expenses and communicating legal advice, Norine, in each instance, violated SCR 20:1.7(a)(2), which provides, “Except as provided in par. (b), a lawyer shall not represent a client if the representation involves a concurrent conflict of interest. A concurrent conflict of interest exists if: . . . (2) there is a significant risk that the representation of one or more clients will be materially limited by . . . a personal interest of the lawyer.”

In his capacity as Burnett County District Attorney, by failing to withdraw from criminal prosecutions in which had a conflict of interest stemming from his personal interest in the defendants, Norine, in each instance, violated SCR 20:1.16(a), which provides, in relevant part, “Except as stated in par. (c), a lawyer shall not represent a client or, where representation has

