

Maryland Court Disbars Agnew

Annapolis

Describing Spiro T. Agnew as a man who consciously cheated the federal government, the Maryland Court of Appeals disbarred the former vice president yesterday.

In a unanimous 13 - page ruling that took away Agnew's right to practice law, the seven - judge court, Maryland's highest, termed Agnew "so morally obtuse that he consciously cheats for his own pecuniary gain."

Agnew pleaded no contest last October to federal income tax evasion charges, an action tantamount to conviction.

The court's decision affirmed a recommendation made in January by a three - judge Circuit Court panel.

Agnew was not available for comment on the decision in the disciplinary action brought by the state bar association.

The Court of Appeals ruling is not subject to appeal, although Agnew could petition the court at any time for reinstatement as a lawyer — his profession before entering politics full time in 1962.

Agnew was not a member of the federal bar, and his disbarment in Maryland prevents his practicing law elsewhere.

His lawyer, Leon H. A. Pierson, argued before the court in April that the former Maryland governor should only be suspended from the practice of law.

Previously, Agnew personally pleaded with the Circuit

Court judges not to deprive him of a means of earning a living. Since then, Agnew has announced he is writing a political novel, which publishing experts have predicted will earn him \$100,000 or more.

The high court said it considers tax evasion a crime involving moral turpitude, fraud and deceit and, as such, requires disbarment under state law, previous court decisions and the ethical rules of the American Bar Association.

"It is difficult to feel compassion for an attorney who" cheats the government "he has sworn to serve, completely disregards the words of the oath he uttered when first admitted to the bar and absolutely fails to perceive his professional duty to act honestly in all matters," the ruling said.

"To do other than disbar the respondent in this case, therefore, would constitute a travesty of our responsibility," said he ruling, written by Associate Judge J. Dudley Digges.

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