

JUL 1 1 2025 The Honorable Suzanne R. Parisien 1 SUPERIOR COURT CLERN oted for Hearing: Friday, July 11, 2025, 10 am 2 With Oral Argument BY Susan Bone DEPUTY 3 4 5 6 7 STATE OF WASHINGTON KING COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT 8 STATE OF WASHINGTON, NO. 25-2-04480-7 SEA 9 Plaintiff, FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS 10 OF LAW, AND ORDER GRANTING V. STATE'S MOTION FOR DEFAULT 11 **JUDGMENT** 12 JOHN ELLIOTT, individually; SHANELLE PROPOSED SUNDE, individually; BRADY HOWARD, 13 individually; GRACE KINNEY, individually; JULIE ELLIS, individually; PROBATE & 14 ADMINISTRATION SERVICES LLC, a Washington limited liability company; 15 SUNDE CONSULTING & ACCOUNTING LLC, a Washington Limited Liability 16 Company; ELLIS PROBATE SERVICES LLC, a Washington limited liability company; 17 AURORA CREEK RANCH LLC, a 18 Washington limited liability company; FOUNDATION ESCROW INC, a 19 Washington corporation; ROBERT BROUILLARD, ESQ., individually; and 20 DOUGLAS OWENS, ESQ., individually, 21 Defendants. 22 THIS MATTER came before the Court on Plaintiff State of Washington's Motion for 23 Default Judgment against Defendants John Elliott, Probate & Administration Services LLC, 24 Aurora Creek Ranch LLC, Shanelle Sunde, and Sunde Consulting & Accounting LLC. The 25

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Court reviewed the following documents and other evidence:

1	a.	State's Complaint for Injunctive and Other Relief (Dkt. 1);
2	b.	State's Motion for Default Judgment as to Defendants John Elliott, Probate
3		& Administration Services LLC, Aurora Creek Ranch LLC, Shanelle Sunde, and
4		Sunde Consulting & Accounting LLC;
5	c.	Declaration of Matt Geyman in Support of State's Motion for Default Judgment
6		and attached exhibits;
7	d.	Declaration of Michelle L. Bigos-Taylor in Support of State's Motion for Default
8		Judgment and attached exhibits;
9	e.	Declaration of Ben Carr in Support of State's Motion for Default Judgment and
10		attached exhibits;
11	f.	Declaration of Lauren Holzer in Support of State's Motion for Default Judgment
12		and attached exhibits;
13	g.	Declaration of Joan Frazier and attached exhibits;
14	h.	Declaration of Matt Geyman in Support of State's Motion for Temporary
15		Restraining Order and attached exhibits (Dkt. 18);
16	i.	Declaration of Michelle L. Bigos-Taylor in Support of State's Motion for
17		Temporary Restraining Order and attached exhibits (Dkt. 19);
18	j.	Declaration of Murray Weiks and attached exhibits (Dkt. 20);
19	k.	Declaration of David Brevik and attached exhibits (Dkt. 21);
20	1.	Declaration of Kittie Jo Carter and attached exhibits (Dkt. 22);
21	m.	Declaration of Sandra Allen and attached exhibits (Dkt. 23);
22	n.	Defendants' Response, if any; SRP
23	0.	State's Reply, if any; and
24	p.	Court's frior Order of Default
25		as to Sunde DK+ #76.
26	q.	as to Sunde
	LAW, AND O	ATTORNEY GENERAL OF WASHINGTON Consumer Protection Division 800 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000 Seattle, WA 98104-3188 (206) 464-7744

1	1.2.5 Sole member, governor, and manager of Seguros Pacific Real Estate, LLC
2	(Seguros Pacific);
3	1.2.6 Sole member, governor, and manager of 542LiveOak, LLC (542LiveOak)
4	which also did business as Destin Realty LLC (Destin);
5	1.2.7 De facto governor, manager, and agent of Ridgeback Real Estate, LLC
6	(Ridgeback); and
7	1.2.8 De facto governor, manager, and agent of Red Dawg Contracting, LLC
8	(Red Dawg).
9	1.3 Defendant Probate & Administration Services LLC (P&A Services) is a
10	Washington limited liability company with its principal place of business located at 5500 Olympic
11	Drive #H105-270, Gig Harbor, WA 98335. P&A Services was formed in October 2020 and is a
12	single-member LLC with Elliott as its sole member and governor.
13	1.4 Defendant Aurora Creek Ranch LLC (Aurora Creek) is a Washington limited
14	liability company with its principal place of business located at 2721 S 14th St,
15	Tacoma, WA 98405. Aurora Creek was formed in August 2023 and is a single-member LLC
16	with Elliott as its sole member and governor.
17	1.5 Defendant Shanelle Sunde (Sunde) is an individual residing at
18	2508 179th St Ct E, Tacoma WA 98445. At all times material hereto, Sunde was:
19	1.5.1 PR in 36 probates filed in Kitsap County, Spokane County, Skagit County,
20	Thurston County, and Pierce County from 2020 to 2021 acting under
21	Elliott's direct supervision and control;
22	1.5.2 An employee of Elliott's probate administration company, Defendant
23	P&A Services; and
24	1.5.3 Sole member, governor, and manager of Defendant Sunde Consulting &
25	Accounting LLC.
26	1.6 At all times material hereto, Defendant Sunde Consulting & Accounting LLC

(Sunde Consulting) was a Washington limited liability company with its principal place of business located at 2508 179th St Ct E, Tacoma, WA 98445. Sunde Consulting was formed in July 2020 and was a single-member LLC with Sunde as its sole member and governor. Sunde Consulting was administratively dissolved on December 3, 2024.

B. Defendants' "Probates for Profit" Scheme

- 1.7 Prior to 2018, Elliott worked as a real estate investor or "flipper" buying distressed properties at foreclosure auctions or pre-foreclosure sales, sometimes repairing the properties, then selling them for a profit. During this timeframe, Eliott was a licensed real estate broker and agent, a licensed contractor, and a licensed insurance broker.
- 1.8 On October 22, 2014, the Washington Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC) revoked Elliott's insurance broker license based on his failure to maintain records, failure to reconcile and properly maintain premium accounts, and failure to provide records for inspection.
- 1.9 On December 27, 2018, the Washington Department of Licensing (DOL) revoked Elliott's real estate license based on his failure to deal honestly and in good faith in real estate transactions in which he was involved.
- 1.10 In late 2018, Elliott developed a new business scheme—administering third-party probates for profit. Elliott's scheme was to identify distressed real properties where the homeowners died intestate and no one had initiated probate proceedings, petition to be appointed as personal representative (PR) of the estates, and then, once appointed, engage in self-dealing transactions and distribute estate assets in a manner profitable to himself and his associates.
- 1.11 From March 8, 2019 to January 2, 2024, Elliott and his associates—Defendants Sunde, Howard, Kinney, and Ellis—opened a total of 213 probates statewide, 179 probates in Kitsap County, 11 in Spokane County, eight in Pierce County, eight in Skagit County, four in King County, and three in Thurston County.
 - 1.12 Elliott was the PR in 161 probates, Sunde was the PR in 36 probates, and

Defendants Howard, Kinney, and Ellis were PRs in the other 16. By using Sunde, Howard, Ellis and Kinney as the nominal PRs (hereafter Straw PRs), Elliott obscured his involvement in the other probates while still retaining control. In each case, it was Elliott who identified the real property and directed the probate.

- 1.14 Elliott and his Straw PRs exploited a provision in the probate law, RCW 11.28.120, that allows Washington courts to appoint a PR when a person dies intestate, i.e., without a will. Under the statute, surviving spouses receive priority to act as PR, followed by the decedent's children, parents, other enumerated family members, and creditors. However, if after 40 days no one else has been appointed as PR, the statute allows a court to appoint "any suitable person" to administer the probate estate. RCW 11.28.120(7).
- 1.15 In each probate, they presented themselves as a "suitable person" to administer the probate in accordance with the law. However, because they opened these probates as strangers with the intent to profit and self-deal at the expense of the heirs, they were never "suitable persons" to administer the estates.
- 1.16 Elliott and his associates also took advantage of another provision in the probate law, RCW 11.96A.050(4), which allows probates to be opened in any county in the state of Washington. This allowed them to file more than 80% of the probates in Kitsap County (179 out of 213, over 84%)—even though the estate properties, decedents, heirs, Elliott, and all but one of the Straw PRs (Kinney) were in other counties.

C. Elliott and Sunde Converted Millions of Dollars from Estate Trust Accounts and Elliott also Converted Vehicles, Firearms and Other Valuable Estate Assets

- 1.17 Elliott and Sunde, as his Straw PR, converted millions of dollars from dozens of estate trust accounts. Most of these funds were proceeds from sales of probate real property and had been put into the trust accounts for distributions to heirs. Elliott also converted and sold other valuable estate personal property and kept the proceeds for himself.
 - 1.18 According to records obtained from Umpqua Bank, Wells Fargo Bank, and

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- 1.25.3 Elliott took and kept a Ford Focus belonging to the *Estate of John Vagovic*, Spokane County #22-4-01667-32, estimated to be worth \$7,000 \$8,000;
- 1.25.4 Elliott sold a PT Cruiser belonging to the *Estate of Connie Hood*, Kitsap County #22-4-00463-18, to Richard Fisher, Elliott's handyman, for \$5,000. Elliott kept the \$5,000 and never deposited the money into the Hood trust account; and
- 1.25.5 Elliott gave a Mazda Miata belonging to the *Estate of Steven Sutherland*, Kitsap County 23-4-00439-18, to Richard Fisher, Elliott's handyman, as a favor to Fisher and as a matter of expediency for Elliott. The Miata was estimated to be worth \$6,000 \$7,000.
- 1.26 On other occasions, the estates included firearms which Elliott kept or gave away, without documenting their transfers. For example, Elliott took multiple guns and ammunition belonging to the *Estate of Robert Dell Jones*, Kitsap County #22-4-00135-18, estimated to be worth nearly \$1,000. The current whereabouts of the guns are unknown.
- 1.27 Elliott also took financial assets separate from his conversion of funds from estate trust accounts. For example, Elliott deposited a check for \$128,655 belonging to the *Estate of Ruth Richmond*, Kitsap County #23-4-00311-18, into his personal checking account, then kept and spent the money. In this way, he converted the *Richmond* estate funds before they were placed in a trust account.
- 1.28 Due to his lack of accounting and documentation, Elliott's conversion of estate personal property and other assets is difficult to quantify, but a conservative estimate would exceed \$150,000.
- D. Elliott Took Funds from Sales of Probate Properties in Self-Dealing Payments to Himself and His Affiliated Real Estate Broker and Contracting Companies
 - 1.29 Elliott took funds from sales of probate properties in self-dealing payments he

disbursed at the time of closing to himself and his affiliated real estate brokers and contracting companies.

- 1.30 Elliott disguised these self-dealing payments by disbursing the funds to his affiliated companies, including (1) P&A Services (Elliott's probate administration firm); (2) Ridgeback (one of Elliott's real estate broker affiliates; (3) Seguros Pacific (another of his real estate broker affiliates); (4) 542LiveOak, d/b/a Destin (Elliott's general purpose company and sometimes real estate broker); (5) Red Dawg (one of Elliott's affiliated contracting companies), and (6) Aurora Creek (another of his contracting companies).
- 1.31 Once Elliott or one of his Straw PRs was appointed by the court, Elliott hired one of his affiliated contracting companies—Red Dawg, Aurora Creek, or 542LiveOak—to repair the property at inflated rates. Then Elliott, Sunde, or one of the other Straw PRs would retain one of Elliott's affiliated real estate broker firms—including Seguros Pacific, Ridgeback, and 542LiveOak, either under that name or its d/b/a, Destin—to list and sell the property for an inflated broker commission.
- 1.32 According to HUD-1 settlement statements submitted to the Court documenting the charges and credits in real property sales transactions involving 63 affected probates in which Elliott or one of his Straw PRs was the administrator of the probate estate, Elliott and his affiliated businesses received a total of \$851,194.68 in self-dealing payments from these probate property sales.
- 1.33 These self-dealing payments include a total of \$597,312.64 paid to Elliott's affiliated real estate broker firms Ridgeback, 542 Live Oak, d/b/a Destin, and Seguros Pacific, a total of \$193,090.24 paid to Elliott's affiliated contracting companies, Red Dawg, 542 Live Oak, and Aurora Creek, and a total of \$60,792.80 paid to Elliott and his probate administration company, P&A Services.
- 1.34 In the *Estate of George Custer*, Kitsap County #22-4-00308-18, the court found on November 18, 2022 that Elliott had engaged in self-dealing, halted the pending real property

sale, and ordered that no money be paid to Elliott or his affiliated companies, P&A Services, 542LiveOak, or Destin. Yet despite that order in *Custer* prohibiting Defendants from engaging in self-dealing, they continued to do so.

- 1.35 Elliott also paid himself a total of \$324,500 in PR fees for his purported services as administrator of the estates. Elliott paid himself these PR fees in round-number, flat fee amounts—typically \$5,000 or \$9,000.
- 1.36 Likewise, in the probates in which Sunde was the Straw PR, she paid herself a total of \$43,500 in PR fees for her purported services as administrator of the estates, again in round number, flat fee amounts.
- 1.37 Elliott also purchased estate real properties directly from probates he or one of his Straw PRs was administering. In doing so, he further enriched himself at the expense of heirs of the estates.
- 1.38 One example is the *Estate of James Ritzman*, Kitsap County #23-4-00489-18. In May 2023, after Elliott was appointed as PR, he cancelled a pending sale of the *Ritzman* property to a third party. The assessed value of the property at the time was \$293,980. Several months later, on October 5, 2023, Elliott acquired the property via quitclaim deed for \$60,000.
- 1.39 A second example is the *Estate of Mary Johanna Griffin*, Kitsap County #20-4-00780-18, in which Sunde was Elliott's Straw PR. In November 2020, Sunde sold the *Griffin* property to Elliott's company, 542LiveOak, without obtaining an appraisal of the property and without listing it publicly. Elliott purchased the property for \$100,000, including \$10,000 to the *Griffin* estate and a \$2,500 PR fee to Sunde. Elliott then "flipped" the *Griffin* property in February 2021 and sold it to a third party for nearly \$400,000.
- E. Defendants Misled Heirs and the Courts by Concealing the Nature of their Scheme in Form Letters to Heirs and Form Petitions for Appointment as "Suitable Persons" to Administer the Estates
- 1.40 Elliott, Sunde, and the other Straw PRs deceived heirs and the courts by concealing their scheme in form introduction letters they sent to heirs and in the petitions for

appointment as PR filed with the courts in which they claimed to be "suitable persons" to administer the probate estates.

- 1.41 Before petitioning to be appointed as PRs, they sent deceptive form introduction letters to heirs in which they described their services as "administrative assistance with the estate's inventory and distribution of assets" and assured heirs that "the process will create no risk or liability for you or your family."
- 1.42 In these letters, they concealed their intent to acquire PR powers so they could profit from the probate, including their plans to engage in self-dealing transactions and ultimately, in many cases, to convert and misappropriate the proceeds from sales of estate properties.
- 1.43 In each probate, Elliott, Sunde, and the other Straw PRs filed petitions for appointment as PRs of the estates in which they stated they were "suitable persons" to administer the estates under RCW 11.28.120(7) without disclosing that they intended to engage in self-dealing, divert estate assets, and administer the probates for personal gain.
- 1.44 They also filed an Oath of Administrator in each probate affirming that they would comply with their fiduciary duties as the PR, including their duty under RCW 11.48.010 to "settle the estate . . . as rapidly and as quickly as possible, without sacrifice to the probate . . . estate."
- 1.45 Elliott, Sunde, and the other Straw PRs misled the courts by representing that they were "suitable persons" qualified to administer the probates under RCW 11.28.120(7) and concealing their "probates for profit" scheme.
- F. Defendants Failed to Notify Heirs of Pending Probates Which Prevented Heirs from Discovering Defendants' Scheme and Protecting their Rights
- 1.46 Elliott, Sunde, and the other Straw PRs failed to notify heirs of pending probates. In some cases, they failed to provide notice to easily identifiable heirs. Other times they sent

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"notice" to persons unconnected to the estate which gave the appearance of providing notice without doing so.

1.47 They also misled the courts by claiming they provided notice to all heirs or potential heirs when in fact they did not.

II. CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

- 2.1 The State has subject matter jurisdiction in this matter under the Consumer Protection Act, RCW 19.86.080, RCW 19.86.140 (CPA), and Washington's probate and estate laws, RCW 11.96A.040, RCW 11.48.070, and Washington's escrow laws, RCW 18.44.490(4).
- 2.2 This Court has personal jurisdiction over Elliott, P&A Services, and Aurora Creek under RCW 19.86.080, because each of them did business in King County and elsewhere in the State by engaging in the conduct set forth in the State's Complaint, including opening multiple probate proceedings in King County and throughout the State.
- 2.3 Venue is proper in King County pursuant to RCW 4.12.020, RCW 4.12.025, and CR 82 because Elliott, P&A Services, and Aurora Creek transacted and continue to transact business in King County, including opening multiple probates in King County, many of which involve properties in King County, heirs in King County, and buyers those probate properties who reside in King County.
- 2.4 The State served Elliott, P&A Services, and Aurora Creek by publication notice pursuant to RCW 4.28.110, and each of them has been duly served in compliance with CR 55(b).
- 2.5 Having failed to respond to the State's Complaint after being duly served pursuant to RCW 4.28.110, Elliott, P&A Services, and Aurora Creek are now in default.
- 2.6 Default Judgment is appropriate under CR 55(b) and LCR 55(b), because the State's claims and the relief set forth herein are supported by sufficient evidence and are for specific amounts or amounts that have been and can by computation be made certain.

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A. Legal Standards Under the CPA

- 2.7 The CPA broadly prohibits unfair or deceptive acts or practices in the conduct of any trade or commerce. RCW 19.86.020.
- 2.8 To prevail under the CPA, the State must prove: (1) an unfair or deceptive act or practice, (2) in trade or commerce, (3) that affects the public interest. *State v. Mandatory Poster Agency*, 199 Wn. App. 506, 518, 398 P.3d 1271 (2017), *review denied*, 189 Wn.2d 1021, 404 P.3d 496 (2017; *State v. Kaiser*, 161 Wn. App. 705, 719, 254 P.3d 850 (2011).
- 2.9 The State is not required to prove causation or injury. *State v. LA Investors, LLC*, 2 Wn. App. 2d 524, 544, 410 P.3d 1183 (2018), *review denied*, 190 Wn.2d 1023, 418 P.3d 796 (2018); *Kaiser*, 161 Wn. App. at 719. A challenged act or practice is deceptive under the CPA if it has a "capacity to deceive" a substantial portion of the public. *Klem v. Wash. Mut. Bank*, 176 Wn.2d 771, 787, 295 P.3d 1179 (2013).
- 2.10 Unfair acts or practices may also violate the CPA even if they are not deceptive. *Klem*, 176 Wn.2d at 787. Thus, an act may be "unfair" if it offends public policy as established by statutes or common law, is immoral, unethical, oppressive, or unscrupulous, or causes substantial injury to consumers. *Rush v. Blackburn*, 190 Wn. App. 945, 962-63, 361 P.3d 217 (2015). Whether a particular act or practice is unfair or deceptive is a question of law for the Court to determine. *Panag v. Farmers Ins. Co. of Wash.*, 166 Wn.2d 27, 47, 204 P.3d 885 (2009).

B. Legal Standards Under Washington Probate Law

- 2.11 The PR of a probate estate stands in a fiduciary relationship to heirs of the estate and owes an overarching duty to act in the best interests of the heirs. RCW 11.48.010; *In re Estate of Larson*, 103 Wn.2d 517, 694 P.2d 1051 (1985).
- 2.12 As a fiduciary, the PR owes heirs the highest degree of good faith, care, loyalty, candor, and integrity. RCW 11.98.072(1); *In re Estate of Little*, 127 Wn. App. 915, 920, 113 P.3d 505 (2005) (citing *Hesthagen v. Harby*, 78 Wn.2d 934, 942, 481 P.2d 438 (1971)).
 - 2.13 This includes a duty to notify heirs of all facts necessary for them to protect their

interests. *Id.* The failure to give due notice to heirs is a denial of procedural due process. *In re Estate of Little*, 127 Wn. App. at 920-21.

- 2.14 As a fiduciary of the heirs, the PR of a probate estate is required to administer the estate for the benefit of the heirs and is prohibited from engaging in self-dealing transactions. RCW 11.98.078; *Tucker v. Brown*, 20 Wn.2d 740, 768, 150 P.2d 604 (1944).
- 2.15 The PR is also an officer of the court and, as such, is required to disclose to the court all facts relevant to the court's determination of whether the PR is a "suitable person" to administer a probate under RCW 11.28.120(7). *Hesthagen*, 78 Wn.2d at 942.
- 2.16 Under Washington law, when a PR administers an intestate estate the PR fee is limited to such compensation as the court deems just and reasonable. RCW 11.48.210. PRs are not allowed to pay themselves flat-fee PR fees without court approval. A PR who breaches his or her fiduciary duties to the heirs may be denied compensation altogether. *In re Carlson's Guardianship*, 162 Wash. 20, 29, 297 P. 764 (1931).
- 2.17 In deciding the appropriate sanctions to apply to a fiduciary who has violated his or her duty of loyalty, the court may consider the deterrent effect of sanctions and fashion the relief with the intent of deterring other fiduciaries from engaging in similar misconduct in the future. *In re Guardianship of Eisenberg*, 43 Wn. App. 761, 719 P.2d 187 (1986).

C. Defendants' "Probates for Profit" Scheme Was Unfair and Deceptive

2.18 In carrying out their "probates for profit" scheme, Defendants committed numerous unfair and deceptive acts including (1) Elliott's and Sunde's conversion of millions of dollars from estate trust accounts; (2) Elliott's self-dealing payments to himself and his affiliated companies disbursed from sales of probate properties without court approval while concealing their self-dealing scheme from heirs and the courts; (3) Elliott's and Sunde's payments to themselves of flat-fee PR fees again disbursed without court approval; (4) Elliott's, Sunde's, and the other Straw PRs' concealment of the "probates for profit" scheme from heirs and the courts, including their deceptive letters to heirs and deceptive petitions filed with the courts in which

they represented that they were "suitable persons" to administer the estates under RCW 11.28.120(7); and (5) documentation including court orders and sworn declarations from heirs confirming Elliott's and Sunde's failure to provide due notice to heirs in specific probates.

1. Defendants' multiple acts of conversion of estate trust funds and other estate assets were unfair and deceptive

- 2.19 Conversion is the unjustified, willful interference with property which deprives a person of possession of property to which that person is entitled. *Potter v. Washington State Patrol*, 165 Wn.2d 67, 78, 196 P.3d 691, 696 (2008). Wrongful taking of money or other personal property belonging to another is a form of conversion. *Westview Invs., Ltd. v. U.S. Bank Nat. Ass'n*, 133 Wn. App. 835, 852, 138 P.3d 638, 646 (2006).
- 2.20 Conversion of money and other personal property is unfair and deceptive under the CPA. *Rush v. Blackburn*, 190 Wn. App. 945, 976, 361 P.3d 217, 227 (2015); *Edmonds v. John L. Scott Real Est.*, *Inc.*, 87 Wn. App. 834, 848, 942 P.2d 1072, 1079 (1997).
- 2.21 Elliott's conversion of a total of \$2,230,175.49 in estate funds from the trust accounts of 50 estates was unfair and deceptive.
- 2.22 Sunde's conversion of a total of \$541,076.88 in estate funds from the trust accounts of 12 estates was unfair and deceptive.
- 2.23 Elliott's conversion of a check for \$128,655 belonging to the *Estate of Ruth Richmond*, Kitsap County #23-4-00311-18, by depositing it into his personal checking account, and keeping of those funds, was unfair and deceptive.
- 2.24 Elliott's conversion of a Rolex, jewelry, furs, and furniture belonging to the *Estate of M. Pearl Bennett*, Kitsap County #23-4-00550-18, worth thousands of dollars, was unfair and deceptive.
- 2.25 Elliott's conversion of a Jaguar sedan from the *Estate of M. Pearl Bennett*, Kitsap County #23-4-00550-18, a Nissan Sentra from the *Estate of Gene Hart*, King County #22-4-06322-7, a Ford Focus from the *Estate of John Vagovic*, Spokane County

#22-4-01667-32, a PT Cruiser from the *Estate of Connie Hood*, Kitsap County #22-4-00946-18, and a Mazda Miata from the *Estate of Steven Sutherland*, Kitsap County #23-4-00439-18, and sale of those vehicles for a total of \$5,500 was unfair and deceptive.

- 2.26 Elliott's conversion of firearms from the *Estate of Robert Dell Jones*, Kitsap County #22-4-00135-18, including two rifles, two pistols, carrying cases, and ammunition, worth more than \$1,000 in total value, was unfair and deceptive.
 - 2. Defendants' misrepresentations and non-disclosures in form letters sent to heirs were unfair and deceptive
- 2.27 Elliott's and his Straw PRs' form introduction letters to heirs had the capacity to deceive heirs by representing that the offered probate administration services would create "no risk or liability" for heirs while concealing Defendants' intentions to engage in self-dealing and the nature of their "probates for profit" scheme, and were unfair and deceptive.
 - 3. Defendants' misrepresentations and non-disclosures in form petitions for appointment as PRs were unfair and deceptive
- 2.28 Elliott's and his Straw PRs' form petitions requesting appointment as PRs also had the capacity to deceive courts by representing to courts that the proposed PR was a "suitable person" to administer the probate while failing to disclose Defendants' intent to engage in self-dealing and the predatory nature of their "probates for profit" scheme, and were unfair and deceptive.
 - 4. Defendants' self-dealing payments from sales of estate real property were unfair and deceptive
- 2.29 As the PR in 161 probates and the controlling force behind 52 additional probates in which he acted through Straw PRs, Elliott had a fiduciary duty to administer the probates for the benefit of the heirs and was prohibited from engaging in self-dealing transactions using estate assets for his own personal gain.
 - 2.30 Because these were *not* non-intervention probates, Elliott and his Straw PRs were

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required to obtain court approval before selling estate real property and before distributing broker fees, contractor fees, and other disbursements from sale proceeds to Elliott and his affiliates. RCW 11.56.265.

- 2.31 Elliott and his Straw PRs unfairly and deceptively concealed Elliott's self-dealing scheme in their form introduction letters sent to heirs at the outset of each probate, and in their form petitions for appointment as PRs in which they claimed to be "suitable persons" to administer the probate estates.
- 2.32 Elliott and his Straw PRs' disbursement of a total of \$851,194.68 in undisclosed self-dealing payments to Elliott and his affiliated companies from proceeds of sales of estate real property, without disclosure to the heirs and without required court approval, were unfair and deceptive.

5. Defendants' disbursements of flat-fee PR fees were unfair and deceptive

- 2.33 The compensation Elliott and Sunde received for their services as PRs of the probates estates was required to be just and reasonable under the circumstances of each probate, and required court approval. RCW 11.48.210.
- 2.34 As such, Elliott's and Sunde's payments to themselves of flat-fee PR fees disbursed at the time of sale of estate properties without court approval and without notice to heirs were unlawful under Washington law and had the capacity to deceive both the courts and the heirs whom the courts would otherwise be in a position to protect.
- 2.35 The \$324,500 in flat-fee PR fees that Elliott disbursed to himself and P&A Services from the proceeds of sales of estate real property without notice to heirs or the courts and without prior court approval were unfair and deceptive.
- 2.36 Likewise, the \$43,500 in flat-fee PR fees that Sunde disbursed to herself and Sunde Consulting from the proceeds of sales of estate real property without notice to heirs or the courts and without prior court approval were unfair and deceptive.

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FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW, AND ORDER GRANTING STATE'S

MOTION FOR DEFAULT JUDGMENT - 18

D. Defendants' CPA Violations Occurred in Trade or Commerce

2.37 Elliott and his Straw PRs were and are engaged in trade or commerce within the meaning of RCW 19.86.010(2) because each of these unfair and deceptive acts involved the provision of probate administration services for compensation, and purchase and sale transactions with buyers or potential buyers of estate properties and other transactions involving the probate estates.

E. Defendants' CPA Violations Affect the Public Interest

- 2.38 Elliott's and his Straw PRs' unfair and deceptive acts affected and continue to affect the public interest because they opened 213 probates in Washington between March 2019 and January 2024, they engaged in a generalized pattern of unfair and deceptive conduct that has impacted hundreds of Washingtonians and the courts, and absent injunctive relief prohibiting them from engaging in these unfair and deceptive acts in the future there is a real and substantial likelihood that they could continue this conduct in the future.
- 2.39 Under the CPA, acts or practices impact the public interest if there is a likelihood that the conduct has affected or will affect more than one consumer in the same fashion. Hangman Ridge Ridge Training Stables v. Safeco Title Ins. Co., 105 Wn.2d 778, 790, 719 P.2d 531 (1986); Eng v. Specialized Loan Servicing, 20 Wn. App. 2d 435, 451, 500 P.3d 171 (2021).
- 2.40 In private CPA actions, unfair or deceptive conduct affects the public interest under RCW 19.86.020 if it injures other persons, had the capacity to injure other persons, or has the capacity to injure other persons. RCW 19.86.093(3). The State meets these criteria here.
- 2.41 Further, public interest impact is established here because this is an action by the Attorney General, brought in the name of the State of Washington, pursuant to RCW 19.86.080. Unlike a private plaintiff, the State was not directly involved in the acts and practices at issue herein; instead, the Attorney General brings this action on behalf of the State to enforce state laws thus satisfying the public interest requirement.

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F. Restitution

- 2.42 The CPA provides that "[t]he court may make such additional orders or judgments as may be necessary to restore to any person in interest any moneys ... which may have been acquired by means of any act herein prohibited or declared to be unlawful." RCW 19.86.080(2).
- 2.43 The Court's broad, equitable power to direct restitution exists to make consumers whole. *See e.g.*, *Mandatory Poster*, 199 Wn. App. at 517; *LA Investors*, 2 Wn. App.2d at 536.

1. Restitution for Elliott's conversion of funds from trust accounts

2.44 Elliott converted \$2,230,175.49 in estate funds from the trust accounts of 50 probates without court authorization. Elliott, P&A Services, and Aurora Creek, jointly and severally, must pay \$2,230,175.49 in restitution for these converted funds.

2. Restitution for Elliott's conversion of check for \$128,655

2.45 Elliott converted a check for \$128,655 by depositing it into his personal checking account and keeping the funds. Elliott, P&A Services, and Aurora Creek, jointly and severally, must pay \$128,655 in restitution for these converted funds.

3. Restitution for Elliott's conversion of vehicles

2.46 Elliott converted five vehicles from probate estates (a Jaguar sedan, a Nissan Sentra, a Ford Focus, a PT Cruiser, and a Mazda Miata) and received \$5,500 from the sale of two of these vehicles to third parties. Elliott, P&A Services, and Aurora Creek, jointly and severally, must pay \$5,500 in restitution for these converted vehicles.

4. Restitution for Elliott's conversion of firearms and related items

2.47 Elliott converted two rifles, two pistols, carrying cases, and ammunition and from a probate estate which were collectively worth more than \$1,000. Elliott, P&A Services, and Aurora Creek, jointly and severally, must pay \$1,000 in restitution for these converted firearms and gun-related items.

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5. Restitution for Elliott's self-dealing payments

2.48 Elliott paid himself and his affiliated companies a total of \$851,194.68 in self-dealing payments to himself and his affiliated companies from the proceeds of sales of estate real property, without disclosure to the heirs, and without required prior court approval. Elliott, P&A Services, and Aurora Creek, jointly and severally, must pay \$851,194.68 in restitution and equitable disgorgement of these ill-gotten gains.

6. Restitution for Elliott's flat-fee PR fees

2.49 Elliott also paid himself \$324,500 in flat-fee PR fees as compensation for services in these probates without required prior court approval and despite his numerous breaches of fiduciary duty and other acts of misconduct. Elliott, P&A Services, and Aurora Creek, jointly and severally, must pay \$324,500 in restitution for these PR fees.

7. Restitution for Sunde's conversion of funds from trust accounts

2.50 Sunde converted \$541,076.88 in estate funds from the trust accounts of 12 probates without court authorization. Sunde and Sunde Consulting, jointly and severally, must pay \$541,076.88 in restitution for these converted funds.

8. Restitution for Sunde's flat-fee PR fees

2.51 Sunde also paid herself \$43,500 in flat-fee PR fees as compensation for services in these probates without prior court approval and despite her numerous breaches of fiduciary duty and other acts of misconduct. Sunde and Sunde Consulting, jointly and severally, must pay \$43,500 in restitution for these PR fees.

9. Total Restitution

2.52 In total, the Court orders \$3,541,025.49 in restitution against Elliott, P&A Services, and Aurora Creek, jointly and severally, for restitution and disgorgement of moneys they acquired through their unfair and deceptive conduct.

2.53 In total, the Court orders \$584,576.88 in restitution against Sunde and Sunde Consulting, jointly and severally, for restitution and disgorgement of moneys they acquired through their unfair and deceptive conduct.

G. Civil Penalties

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- 2.54 The CPA mandates that "[e]very person who violates RCW 19.86.020 shall forfeit and pay a civil penalty of not more than \$7,500 for each violation." RCW 19.86.140. While the imposition of penalties is mandatory, the amount of the appropriate penalties for each violation up to the statutory limit of \$7,500 per violation is subject to the discretion of the Court. *Mandatory Poster*, 199 Wn. App. at 525 (trial court's assessment of civil penalties reviewed for abuse of discretion).
- 2.55 Penalties are imposed for "each violation," rather than for each consumer subjected to violations of the CPA. *Ralph Williams N.W. Chrysler Plymouth, Inc.*, 87 Wn.2d at 317; *LA Investors*, 2 Wn. App. 2d at 547.
- 2.56 In determining the appropriate penalty per violation, the Court may consider, among other factors: (1) whether defendants acted in good faith, (2) injury to the public, (3) the defendant's ability to pay, (4) desire to eliminate any benefits derived by the defendant from the violation at issue, and (5) necessity of vindicating the authority of the law enforcement agency. *LA Investors*, 2 Wn. App. 2d at 546 (citing *United States v. Reader's Digest Ass'n, Inc.*, 662 F.2d 955, 967 (3d Cir. 1981)).
- 2.57 Four of these factors (all but ability to pay) support imposing substantial penalties against these Defendants: the bad faith conduct; the extent of the injuries they have caused to the public; the need to ensure that they do not profit from their unlawful conduct; and the necessity of vindicating the State's authority as the law enforcement agency in this case.
- 2.58 The Court is also mindful that the penalties imposed should be sufficiently large to deter future violations by others who may otherwise engage in similar misconduct. *See State v. Living Essentials, LLC*, 8 Wn. App. 2d 1, 36, 436 P.3d 857 (2019) (holding that CPA penalties

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"should be large enough to deter future violations and to ensure that defendants do not profit from the deceptive advertising").

1. Penalties for conversion of funds from estate trust accounts

- 2.59 Considering all the above factors, the Court imposes penalties in the amount of \$525,000 against Elliott, P&A Services, and Aurora Creek, jointly and severally, for their conversion of funds from estate trust accounts. This constitutes a penalty of \$7,500 per violation for each of the 70 times for which Elliott converted funds from 50 estate trust accounts.
- 2.60 Likewise, considering all the above factors, the Court imposes penalties in the amount of \$1,087,500 against Sunde and Sunde Consulting, jointly and severally, for their conversion of funds from estate trust accounts. This constitutes a penalty of \$7,500 per violation for each of the 145 times for which Sunde converted funds from 12 estate trust accounts.
 - 2. Penalties for conversion of vehicles, firearms, other estate funds, a Rolex, jewelry, furs, furniture, and other valuable personal property
- 2.61 Considering all the above factors, the Court imposes penalties in the amount of \$52,500 against Elliott, P&A Services, and Aurora Creek, jointly and severally, for their conversion of vehicles, firearms, other estate funds (not in trust accounts), a Rolex, jewelry, furs, furniture, and other valuable personal property from probate estates. This constitutes a penalty of \$7,500 per violation for each of the 7 estates from which they converted these valuable items of estate personal property.

3. Penalties for Elliott's self-dealing payments

2.62 Considering all the above factors, the Court imposes total penalties in the amount of \$472,500 against Elliott, P&A Services, and Aurora Creek, jointly and severally, for their self-dealing payments from proceeds of probate sales. This constitutes a penalty of \$7,500 per violation for each of the 63 probates in which Elliott, P&A Services, and Aurora Creek failed to notify heirs.

4. Total Civil Penalties

2.63 In total, the Court orders \$1,050,000 in civil penalties against Elliott, P&A Services, and Aurora Creek, jointly and severally, for these unlawful, unfair, and deceptive acts in violation of the CPA.

2.64 In total, Court orders \$1,087,000 in civil penalties against Sunde and Sunde Consulting, jointly and severally, for these unlawful, unfair, and deceptive acts in violation of the CPA.

H. Injunctive Relief

2.65 The CPA empowers the Attorney General to bring an action "against any person to restrain and prevent the doing of any act herein prohibited or declared to be unlawful." RCW 19.86.080(1). An injunction is inappropriate only when "it is *absolutely clear* that behavior will not reoccur." *Ralph Williams' N.W. Chrysler Plymouth*, 87 Wn.2d at 312.

2.66 The Court previously issued a TRO freezing the 75 identified estate accounts controlled by these Defendants, along with 11 identified non-fiduciary accounts into which they transferred estate funds. Dkt. 26. To permanently protect these funds, the Court now converts the previously issued TRO to a permanent injunction.¹

2.67 Defendants have engaged in a continued pattern of unlawful probate and real estate transactions, and Elliott, P&A Services, and Aurora Creek failed to stop even after court orders prohibiting such conduct.

2.68 Given this, a permanent injunction against Defendants prohibiting them from violating the CPA, and from acting as professional administrators in future probate matters in Washington, is appropriate and necessary to ensure their violations do not reoccur, and shall be issued.

¹ The Court makes no ruling herein regarding the method by which funds in the enjoined trust accounts should be distributed to appropriate heirs in the affected probates.

The State Is the Prevailing Party under RCW 19.86.080(1)

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accounts controlled by Defendants, along with 11 identified non-fiduciary accounts into which Defendants transferred estate funds, is hereby converted to a permanent injunction, as follows:

- 1. The holders and authorized users of the estate accounts identified in **Exhibit A** hereto (previously Exhibit A to the TRO, the Enjoined Estate Accounts), along with the financial institutions holding such accounts that receive actual notice of this Order by service of process or otherwise, are hereby PERMANENTLY ENJOINED, without prior approval of the Court, from distributing, withdrawing, transferring, disposing of, converting, secreting any money, negotiating funds, allowing distributions, allowing withdrawals, allowing transfers, and allowing negotiation funds in or from the Enjoined Estate Accounts; and
- 2. The holders and authorized users of the non-fiduciary accounts identified in **Exhibit B** hereto (previously Exhibit B to the TRO, the Enjoined Non-Fiduciary Accounts), along with the financial institutions holding such accounts that receive actual notice of this Order by service of process or otherwise, are hereby PERMANENTLY ENJOINED, without prior approval of the Court, from distributing, withdrawing, transferring, disposing of, converting, secreting any money, negotiating funds, allowing distributions, allowing withdrawals, allowing transfers, and allowing negotiation funds in or from the Enjoined Non-Fiduciary Estate Accounts.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that pursuant to RCW 19.86.080(1), the State is entitled to an award of its reasonable attorney's fees and costs and shall submit a petition for fees and costs within thirty (30) days of this Order.

DATED this day of July , 2025.

THE HONORABLE SUZANNE PARISIEN King County Superior Court Judge

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1	Presented by: NICHOLAS W. BROWN
2	Attorney General
3	s/ Matt Geyman
4	MATT GEYMAN, WSBA #17544 BEN CARR, WSBA #40778 LAUREN HOLZER, WSBA #59242
5	LAUREN HOLZER, WSBA #59242
6	Attorneys for Plaintiff State of Washington
7	Assistant Attorneys General Attorneys for Plaintiff State of Washington 800 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000 Seattle, WA 98104
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EXHIBIT A

	Enjoined	Estate Accoun	ts
Row	Estate Account	Authorized User	Financial Institution and Account No.
1	Estate of Wilmer A Stilwell	Shanelle Sunde	Umpqua Bank x4072
2	Estate of Laurence Pratt	Shanelle Sunde	Umpqua Bank x3801
3	Estate of Ruth C Rose	Shanelle Sunde	Umpqua Bank x4064
4	Estate of Judy C Bass	Shanelle Sunde	Umpqua Bank x4049
5	Estate of Gail Marie Pohlot	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x9304
6	Estate of Kris Matteson	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x2385
7	Estate of Phillip Wayne Emler	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x 2264
8	Estate of Mary Johanna Griffin	Shanelle Sunde	Umpqua Bank x0312
9	Estate of Carolyn E Graves	Shanelle Sunde	Umpqua Bank x4080
10	Estate of Virginia Agda Hussey	Shanelle Sunde	Umpqua Bank x4056
11	Estate of Theodore Stanley Edwards	Shanelle Sunde	Umpqua Bank x4122
12	Estate of Lilalee E Fleming	Shanelle Sunde	Umpqua Bank x0262
13	Estate of Brendan Murray Weiks	Shanelle Sunde	Umpqua Bank x4148
14	Estate of Margaret Dehaven	Shanelle Sunde	Upmqua Bank x0254
15	Estate of Sherri Lynn Cutino	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x2223
16	Estate of Don Earl Brevik Jr	Shanelle Sunde	Umpqua Bank x0304
17	Estate of Jim A Triggs	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x2009
18	Estate of Sonja L Tilton	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x1866
19	Estate of Doris Jeanette Parker	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x1724
20	Estate of Cheryl A Rosen	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x1740
21	Estate of Daniel P Erwin	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x2041
22	Estate of Richard A Donaldson Sr	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x1708
23	Estate of Theodore Aaron Snyder	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x1936
24	Estate of Richard William Weightman	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x1928
25	Estate of Samuel D Kalka	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x2066

26	Estate of Glenn A Coppes Jr	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x9189
27	Estate of William G Richards	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x9171
28	Estate of Donald Lee Rogers	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x2074
29	Estate of Katie D Hatcher	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x2124
30	Estate of Linda Diane Slaton	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x2082
31	Estate of Elizabeth Sioda	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x2272
32	Estate of John Lloyd Bloemsma	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x0169
33	Estate of Marvin Darryl Engelhardt	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x2108
34	Estate of Robert Clarence McDaniel	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x2167
35	Estate of Gwendolyn C McAdams	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x9296
36	Estate of Natalie A McMahon	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x2207
37	Estate of Natalie A McMahon	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x8219
38	Estate of Nigel Birley	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x2280
39	Estate of Jeffery Lane Lopez	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x9296
40	Estate of Freddie E Ashley	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x 2256
41	Estate of Orville Kenneth Stevens	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x2181
42	Estate of Robert Dell Jones	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x2199
43	Estate of Mable L Walker	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x2025
44	Estate of Royce Lester Parrish	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x9478
45	Estate of Idella Ruth Hele	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x2298
46	Estate of Bert Audway Bidwell	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x9460
47	Estate of George Alexander Custer	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x2231
48	Estate of Larry L Burch	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x2306
49	Estate of Kevin Ray Rimpila	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x9127
50	Estate of David Andrew Heathers	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x1421
51	Estate of Patricia H Howe	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x9346
52	Estate of John J Vagovic	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x9338

53	Estate of Constance F Hood	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x2520
54	Estate of Gene David Hart	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x5371
55	Estate of James Edward Icke	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x8851
56	Estate of William E Holly	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x2652
57	Estate of Margaret Hiner	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x9584
58	Estate of Lolita Ingrida Velmer	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x9053
59	Estate of Floyd David Peres	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x9098
60	Estate of Lawrence A Quindica Jr	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x7646
61	Estate of Helen M Roulst	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x3088
62	Estate of Mark A Pray	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x4492
63	Estate of Joan Sweet Brown	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x3018
64	Estate of Françoise Germaine Lau	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x5611
65	Estate of Carlton Bernard Heard	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x3068
66	Estate of Kaumil J Patel	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x0114
67	Estate of Steven Shannon Sutherland	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x2850
68	Estate of Pauline R Rogers	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x7940
69	Estate of Tim Byron Keely	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x5269
70	Estate of Hiram Smith	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x2044
71	Estate of Chet Eugene Haus	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x0725
72	Estate of Judith Lea Fox	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x4300
73	Estate of Diane Judith Brock	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x3419
74	Estate of Diane Judith Brock	John Elliott	JP Morgan Chase Bank x3859
75	Estate of Richard C Jeffries	John Elliott	Umpqua Bank x5564



Enjoined Non-Fiduciary Accounts Row Account **Authorized User** Financial Institution & Account No. Probate & Administrative Services, LLC John Elliott Umpqua Bank x5875 2 Red Dawg Contracting, LLC John Elliott, Billie Brown Umpqua Bank x1372 3 542 Live Oak LLC John Elliott Umpqua Bank x1518 John Elliott John Elliott Umpqua Bank x6124 5 John Elliott John Elliott Umpqua Bank x6214 John Elliott P&A Services, LLC Wells Fargo Bank, N.A. x0052 7 Probate & Administrative Services, LLC John Elliott Wells Fargo Bank, N.A. x6205 8 Aurora Creek Ranch, LLC John Elliott, Jessie Early Wells Fargo Bank, N.A. x6546 John Elliott, Jessie Early John Elliott, Jessie Early Wells Fargo Bank, N.A. x0045 10 John Elliott John Elliott Wells Fargo Bank, N.A. x5641 Sunde Consulting & Accounting, LLC 11 Shanelle Sunde Umpqua Bank x3819