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Lawyer Convicted of Forging Millionaire's Will Faces Disbarment

A West Texas lawyer who was convicted of forging a will to steal the estate of a multimillionaire now faces disbarment, while also seeking...

By **Angela Morris** | January 10, 2018



John Stacy Young of Sweetwater, Texas

A West Texas lawyer who was convicted of forging a will to steal the estate of a multimillionaire now faces disbarment, while also seeking a new trial in his criminal case.

John Stacy Young of Sweetwater, currently incarcerated in the Tom Green County Jail in San Angelo, is arguing in a motion for new trial that a new witness has come forward saying her ex-

husband, another Sweetwater lawyer, actually forged the multimillionaire's will. Young pleaded not guilty in the case.

As Young's lawyers and appointed prosecutors from the Texas attorney general's office hash out those new arguments in a hearing this week, Young is also facing new legal trouble in a different venue.

The Commission for Lawyer Discipline on Dec. 7 filed a compulsory discipline petition before the Texas Board of Disciplinary Appeals against Young, seeking to disbar him because he was convicted of four felonies.

Young was indicted for forgery, theft and money laundering in Tom Green County's 119th District Court. A jury convicted him Nov. 13 of two counts of forgery of a financial instrument, a state jail felony, and sentenced him for each count to two years in jail and a \$10,000 fine. The jury also convicted Young of theft of property in a value of \$200,000 or more, a first-degree felony, and sentenced him to 11 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. He received an identical sentence for his final conviction for money laundering in a value of \$100,000 to \$200,000, a second-degree felony. Young's sentences are all running concurrently.

The Commission for Lawyer Discipline alleged that Young's crimes are intentional and serious under the Texas Rules of Disciplinary Procedure and that Young should be disbarred.

The board of disciplinary appeals is set to hear the matter Jan. 25.

The Jan. 26, 2017, indictment in Young's criminal case provides more details about his crimes.

On June 4, 2014, Young meant to defraud or harm another person when he encouraged, directed or aided someone in writing a will, purportedly for John Sullivan. But Sullivan didn't authorize the writing of the will.

Then, sometime between June 5 to 16, 2014, Young passed or published the forged will before a probate judge. Young knew the will was forged and he knew Sullivan had not authorized it.

Next, on June 16, 2014, Young unlawfully appropriated money or real property with a value of \$200,000 or more from Sullivan's estate or from his heirs. The owner of the property didn't consent to it, and Young was intending to deprive the owner of the property.

Finally, on Aug. 6, 2014, Young transferred the proceeds of his criminal activity by writing a check for \$167,500 to Chris Hartman, who Young had hired to handle Sullivan's will. This was the proceeds from the theft from Sullivan's estate or his heirs.

The San Angelo Standard-Times covered Young's trial [in detail](http://www.gosanangelo.com/story/news/local/2017/11/06/john-young-found-guilty-forged-case/836352001/) (<http://www.gosanangelo.com/story/news/local/2017/11/06/john-young-found-guilty-forged-case/836352001/>). Sullivan was a multimillionaire with an estimated \$8 million estate. Young was a criminal-defense lawyer who defended Sullivan—a multimillionaire with an estimated \$8 million estate—in a criminal case for soliciting minors online and possession of child pornography. Local bail bondsman Ray Castro Zapata had bonded Sullivan out of jail and referred him to Young.

When Sullivan died, it was Zapata who found the body in Sullivan's home. Prosecutors alleged that Young and Zapata—who is appealing a conviction stemming from an earlier trial—conspired together to forge Sullivan's will. Prosecutors from the attorney general's office argued that Young masterminded the crime because he wanted to recoup \$900,000 in contingency fees that Sullivan had promised to Young in an unrelated lawsuit.

In his [motion for a new trial](http://www.gosanangelo.com/story/news/crime/2017/12/22/local-millionaires-forged-case-john-young-seeks-new-trial/977969001/) (<http://www.gosanangelo.com/story/news/crime/2017/12/22/local-millionaires-forged-case-john-young-seeks-new-trial/977969001/>), Young has argued, among other things, that there's new evidence in the case because a witness emerged saying she saw her ex-husband, wills-trusts-probate attorney Chris Hartman—who Young had hired to handle Sullivan's will—actually forge it.

Young's criminal-defense lawyers alleged that prosecutors from the attorney general's office failed to disclose to them that this witness contacted them during Young's trial. But prosecutor Shane Attaway testified (<http://www.gosanangelo.com/story/news/crime/2018/01/09/lawyers-attorney-generals-office-ignored-new-evidence-john-youngs-forged-trial/1017923001/>) that Zapata's handwriting matched the will and said prosecutors broke no rules.

Daniel W. Hurley, who represents Young, didn't return a call seeking comment before deadline. Neither did Attaway, assistant attorney general in the Texas Attorney General's Office.

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