



*United States Attorney
Southern District of New York*



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**MANHATTAN U.S. ATTORNEY PREET BHARARA
ANNOUNCES APPOINTMENTS IN CIVIL DIVISION**

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced today the following appointments to the senior staff of the Office's Civil Division:

Civil Frauds Unit

HEIDI A. WENDEL was appointed Chief of the Office's Civil Frauds Unit, which was established in March 2010.

Ms. WENDEL returns to the Office from the New York State Attorney General's Office, where she has served as Deputy Attorney General and Chief of the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit ("MFCU") since April 2007. In that capacity, Ms. WENDEL headed the bureau responsible for investigating and prosecuting criminal and civil Medicaid fraud by health care providers state-wide, as well as criminal abuse and neglect of patients in nursing homes and other facilities. As Chief of MFCU, Ms. WENDEL supervised a staff of 335, including attorneys, auditors, and investigators in seven regional offices around the state, with a docket of hundreds of criminal and civil cases. Under Ms. WENDEL's leadership, MFCU was named the best Medicaid Fraud Control Unit in the United States during the 2008 fiscal year by the Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Prior to joining the New York State Attorney General's Office, Ms. WENDEL served two tours as an Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Southern District of New York, first from 1997 to 2000, and then again from August 2005 to April 2007. During her second tour, Ms. WENDEL served as the Office's Health Care Fraud Coordinator, in which capacity she investigated allegations of fraud in government health care programs and obtained large scale civil recoveries against corporations and individuals. In 1999, Ms. WENDEL received a Director's Award for Superior Performance as an Assistant U.S. Attorney.

Ms. WENDEL has also worked as an associate at Arnold & Porter, LLP, and at Jones, Day, Reavis, & Pogue. Ms. WENDEL served as a federal law clerk for U.S. District Court Judge MILTON POLLACK in the Southern District of New York from 1991 to 1992.

Ms. WENDEL received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics with Distinction from Swarthmore College, where she was Phi Beta Kappa, and went on to study economics at Columbia University, where she earned a Master of Arts degree in 1987 and a Master of Philosophy degree in 1992. She was a Stone Scholar and earned her Juris Doctor from Columbia University Law School in 1991.

The Civil Frauds Unit was established as part of the Office's Civil Division and serves as the civil counterpart to the Complex Frauds Unit in the Office's Criminal Division. Like its Criminal Division counterpart, the Civil Frauds Unit combats large-scale and sophisticated financial frauds, including health care fraud, mortgage fraud, pharmaceutical fraud, bank fraud, procurement fraud, grant fraud, and fraud in connection with federal monies and spending allocated under various stimulus and economic recovery legislation, such as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the Troubled Asset Relief Program ("TARP").

As with the Office's Complex Frauds Unit, the Civil Frauds Unit works in coordination with President BARACK OBAMA's Financial Fraud Enforcement Task Force, on which Mr. BHARARA serves as a Co-Chair of the Securities and Commodities Fraud Working Group. President OBAMA established the interagency Financial Fraud Enforcement Task Force to wage an aggressive, coordinated, and proactive effort to investigate and prosecute financial crimes. The task force includes representatives from a broad range of federal agencies, regulatory authorities, inspectors general, and state and local law enforcement who, working together, bring to bear a powerful array of criminal and civil enforcement resources. The task force is working to improve efforts across the federal executive branch, and with state and local partners, to investigate and prosecute significant financial crimes, ensure just and effective punishment for those who perpetrate financial crimes, combat discrimination in the lending and financial markets, and recover proceeds for victims of financial crimes.

Tax and Bankruptcy Unit

JEANNETTE A. VARGAS, 37, was appointed Chief of the Tax and Bankruptcy Unit.

Ms. VARGAS, who joined the Office in October 2002, has served as Deputy Chief of the Tax and Bankruptcy Unit since 2009. Ms. VARGAS is a 2000 graduate of Yale Law School and graduated magna cum laude from Harvard University in 1995. From 2001 to 2002, Ms. VARGAS served as a law clerk to the Honorable SONIA SOTOMAYOR, who was at that time a Circuit Judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. Prior to joining the Office, Ms. VARGAS was an associate with Simpson, Thacher & Bartlett.

Ms. VARGAS succeeds SEAN H. LANE, who was sworn in on September 7, 2010, as a U.S. Bankruptcy Judge for the Southern District of New York. Judge LANE served in the Civil Division from 2000 to 2010, and served as Chief of the Tax and Bankruptcy Unit in that Division from March 2007 until his appointment to the bench earlier this week.

PIERRE G. ARMAND, 38, was appointed Deputy Chief of the Tax and Bankruptcy Unit. Mr. ARMAND, who joined the Office in 2004, is a 1999 cum laude graduate of Cornell Law School and a 1994 graduate of Columbia University. In 2008, Mr. ARMAND received the John Marshal Award, the highest honor conferred to attorneys by the Department of Justice. Prior to joining the Office, Mr. ARMAND was an associate at Weil, Gotshal & Manges, LLP.

The Southern District's Tax and Bankruptcy Unit represents the interests of the United States in the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of New York, and has represented the United States in some of the largest and most significant bankruptcies in history, including the bankruptcies of Enron, WorldCom, and Adelphia Communications. Most recently, the Tax and Bankruptcy Unit represented the Government in the bankruptcies filed by automakers Chrysler and General Motors, and financial giant Lehman Brothers. In addition to bankruptcy cases, the Unit also handles civil tax litigation on behalf of the IRS, such as affirmative cases seeking to collect taxes and defensive cases against refund suits.

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Mr. BHARARA stated: "It is my great pleasure to announce the appointment of these extraordinary individuals to their new leadership positions in the Office and to welcome Heidi

back to the Southern District of New York to head up the Civil Frauds Unit. They each possess the experience, integrity, talent, and commitment that are the ideals of public service. The leadership and energy that these talented professionals will bring to the Civil Division will benefit the public and advance our mission to pursue justice at the highest level of excellence."

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