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NEWS RELEASE

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EOIR Announces Latest Disciplinary Actions Under Rules of Professional Conduct *One Attorney Reinstated; Five Others Receive Final Orders*

The Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) has reinstated one previously suspended attorney and taken disciplinary action against six others after charging them with violations of the rules of professional conduct for immigration practitioners provided in Title 8 of the Code of Federal Regulations (8 CFR Parts 3 and 292). The attorneys' rule violations arose out of sanctions imposed by other jurisdictions.

Disciplinary proceedings began in each case with a Petition for Immediate Suspension and Notice of Intent to Discipline filed with the Board of Immigration Appeals (the Board) by EOIR's Office of the General Counsel. The Board then ordered each attorney's immediate suspension from practice before the Immigration Courts, the Board, and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (the Service) and required the attorney to respond to the alleged violations.

Reinstatement

The Board granted a motion filed by the following attorney to be reinstated to practice before the immigration tribunals after having completed his period of suspension.

! **Alexander C. Vrbanoff** was reinstated July 2, 2002, after he offered evidence asserting that he has been reinstated to practice in Illinois.

Final Orders of Discipline

The Board issued Final Orders of Discipline against the following attorneys after they failed to respond as required to the Notice of Intent to Discipline:

! **Sharon Bartu**, suspended for 6 months from the practice of law in the state of Washington, was immediately suspended by the Board on June 15, 2002. The Final Order of August 19, 2002, suspends her from practice before the immigration tribunals for six months.

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! **Martha L. Burns**, suspended indefinitely from the practice of law for a minimum period of nine

months by the Minnesota Supreme Court, was immediately suspended by the Board on December 7, 2001. The Final Order of August 20, 2002, suspends her from practice before the immigration tribunals for nine months.

- ! **Charles Allen Grutman**, pled guilty to one count of stealing government money in the United States District Court, Southern District of Florida, and was disbarred from the practice of law by order of the New York Supreme Court, Appellate Division, First Judicial Department. He was immediately suspended by the Board on June 6, 2002. The Final Order of August 20, 2002, suspends him from practice before the immigration tribunals for seven years.
- ! **Johnny P. Ragasa**, disbarred from the practice of law by order of the Supreme Court of Hawaii, was immediately suspended by the Board on July 10, 2002. The Final Order of August 20, 2002, suspends him from practice before the immigration tribunals for five years.

An Immigration Judge issued a Final Order of Discipline against the following attorney:

- ! **Harnam S. Arneja**, suspended for one year from the practice of law by the District of Columbia Court of Appeals, was immediately suspended by the Board on May 6, 2002. The Final Order of July 10, 2002, suspends him for one year, until March 3, 2003, from practicing before the immigration tribunals.

Summary

In each of the disciplinary matters cited above, the suspended attorney was directed “to promptly notify, in writing, any clients with cases currently pending before the Board, the Immigration Courts, or the Service” that he or she may no longer represent clients before these tribunals.

The rules of professional conduct include provisions specifying grounds for disciplinary action, requirements for receiving and investigating complaints, and procedures for conducting hearings. The rules also authorize the Board to immediately suspend a practitioner who has been subject to disbarment, suspension, or resignation with an admission of misconduct as imposed by a State or Federal court, pending a summary proceeding and final sanction.

EOIR announces these disciplinary actions to inform the public about practitioners who are not authorized to represent any matter before an immigration tribunal. EOIR also posts a list of suspended and expelled practitioners on its Web site at www.usdoj.gov/eoir.

Additional information about the Attorney Discipline Program can be found at www.usdoj.gov/eoir/press/00/profcond.htm and www.usdoj.gov/eoir/press/00/profcondfaks.htm on the EOIR Web site.

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EOIR, a component of the Department of Justice, is responsible for providing due process to individuals who are charged with immigration law violations. EOIR has more than 220 Immigration

Judges located in 51 Immigration Courts nationwide to conduct proceedings and decide individual cases. The agency also includes the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) to hear appeals of Immigration Judge decisions and the Office of the Chief Administrative Hearing Officer to handle employment-related immigration matters.

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