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NEWS RELEASE

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EOIR Announces Latest Disciplinary Actions Under Rules of Professional Conduct

Three Attorneys Immediately Suspended; Four Receive Final Orders; One Is Reinstated

FALLS CHURCH, Va. – The Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) has taken disciplinary action against seven attorneys after charging them with violations of the Rules of Professional Conduct for immigration practitioners. The rules appear in Title 8 of the Code of Federal Regulations (8 CFR Parts 1003 and 1292). In most cases, the disciplinary action is initiated as a result of sanctions imposed by other jurisdictions or a criminal conviction.

Although the disciplinary process may vary according to the specific circumstances of each case, generally it includes the following steps:

Disciplinary proceedings begin with a Notice of Intent to Discipline filed with the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) by the Office of the General Counsel of either EOIR or the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The BIA requires the attorney to respond to the alleged violations. In some cases, a Petition for Immediate Suspension also is filed and the BIA orders the attorney to be suspended immediately from practice before the immigration courts, the BIA, and the DHS. (DHS joins EOIR in taking the disciplinary action.) Disciplined attorneys are directed to notify promptly, in writing, any clients with cases currently pending before the BIA, the immigration courts, or the DHS that they may no longer represent clients before these tribunals. Disciplined attorneys must petition and be reinstated by the BIA before they can resume the practice of law before the BIA, the immigration courts, and the DHS.

Immediate Suspension

The BIA ordered the immediate suspension of the following attorneys:

- **Gricel S. Echavarria:** She was suspended from the practice of law by the Wisconsin Supreme Court for 2 years based on her criminal conviction in Wisconsin for conspiracy to produce false identification documents, counterfeit green cards, and counterfeit social security cards. She was immediately suspended by the BIA on March 28, 2005, pending final disposition of her case.

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- **Linda Irene Perez:** She was suspended from the practice of law by the State Bar of Texas for 2 years for numerous violations of the state bar rules of professional conduct — including neglect, failure to communicate, and failure to take steps to protect a client's interest upon termination of representation. She was immediately suspended by the BIA on March 28, 2005, pending final disposition of her case.
- **Jesus C. Sandoval:** He was indefinitely suspended from the practice of law by the Supreme Court of New Mexico for violating the state bar rules of professional conduct. He was immediately suspended by the BIA on March 28, 2005, pending final disposition of his case.

Final Orders of Discipline

The BIA issued Final Orders of Discipline against the following attorneys:

- **Marcia Jean Brinkley:** She was suspended from the practice of law by the State Bar of Texas for 5 years for neglecting her clients and abandoning their cases. She was immediately suspended by the BIA on Feb. 17, 2005, pending final disposition of her case. The final order of March 28, 2005, suspends her from practice before the immigration tribunals for 5 years, effective Feb. 17, 2005.
- **Paul White aka Krishan Kumar:** He was disbarred from the practice of law by the Supreme Court of Washington for submitting false or incomplete information on applications for admission to two other state bars. He was immediately suspended by the BIA on Feb. 11, 2005, pending final disposition of his case. The final order of March 28, 2005, suspends him from practice before the immigration tribunals for 5 years, effective Feb. 11, 2005.
- **Maritza Regalado:** She was disbarred from the practice of law by the Supreme Court of Florida for neglect and engaging in acts involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation. She was immediately suspended by the BIA on Feb. 7, 2005, pending final disposition of her case. The final order of March 31, 2005, suspends her from practice before the immigration tribunals for 5 years, effective Feb. 7, 2005.
- **Alex M. Sonson:** He was suspended from the practice of law for 90 days by the Supreme Court of Hawaii for misappropriation of funds. He was immediately suspended by the BIA on Feb. 11, 2005, pending final disposition of his case. The final order of March 31, 2005, suspends him from practice before the immigration tribunals for 90 days, effective Feb. 11, 2005.

Reinstatement

The BIA reinstated the following attorney to practice before the immigration tribunals after he had completed his period of suspension:

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- **Paul Alan Schelly:** He was reinstated on March 31, 2005, after he had completed his 60-day suspension, effective Jan. 11, 2005, which was imposed on Feb. 14, 2005.

Background

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 BIA to suspend immediately a practitioner who has been subject to disbarment, suspension, or resignation with an admission of misconduct as imposed by a state or federal court, or who has been convicted of a serious crime, pending a summary proceeding and final sanction. They are available on the EOIR website at http://www.usdoj.gov/eoir/vll/fedreg/2000_2001/fr27jn00R.pdf.

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 website at <http://www.usdoj.gov/eoir> (near the bottom of EOIR’s home page).

Additional information about the Attorney Discipline Program can be found at <http://www.usdoj.gov/eoir/press/00/profcond.htm> and <http://www.usdoj.gov/eoir/press/00/profcondfaks.htm> on the EOIR website.

EOIR is responsible for adjudicating immigration cases. Specifically, under delegated authority from the Attorney General, EOIR interprets and administers federal immigration laws by conducting immigration court proceedings, appellate reviews, and administrative hearings. EOIR consists of three components: the Office of the Chief Immigration Judge, which is responsible for managing the numerous immigration courts located throughout the United States where immigration judges adjudicate individual cases; the Board of Immigration Appeals, which primarily conducts appellate reviews of immigration judge decisions; and the Office of the Chief Administrative Hearing Officer, which adjudicates immigration-related employment cases. EOIR is committed to providing fair, expeditious, and uniform application of the nation's immigration laws in all cases.

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