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NEWS RELEASE

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EOIR Announces Latest Disciplinary Actions Under Rules of Professional Conduct *Three Attorneys Immediately Suspended; Two are Reinstated*

FALLS CHURCH, Va. – The Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) has taken disciplinary action against three attorneys after charging them with violations of the Rules of Professional Conduct for immigration practitioners. Two other attorneys were reinstated. The Rules of Professional Conduct 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 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 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attorneys are directed to notify promptly, in writing, their clients with pending immigration cases that they may no longer represent them before the BIA, the immigration courts, or the DHS. 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:

- **Maria I. Gonzalez:** She was suspended from the practice of law for 90 days by the Supreme Court of New Jersey for multiple acts of wrongdoing, including failure to properly supervise non-lawyer assistants, sharing legal fees with a non-lawyer, and assisting a non-lawyer in the unauthorized practice of law. She was immediately suspended by the BIA on March 1, 2007, based on her suspension in New Jersey, pending final disposition of her case.

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- **Jorge Portugal:** He was placed on involuntary inactive enrollment for 180 days, effective Jan. 1, 2007, by the California State Bar Court, Hearing Department, for repeated failures to comply with the State Bar Court's orders. He was immediately suspended by the BIA on Feb. 5, 2007, based on his involuntary inactive status, pending final disposition of his case.

Reinstatement

- **Dalia R. Kejbou:** She was reinstated on Feb. 27, 2007, after she completed her suspension based on her criminal conviction for aiding and abetting the attempted improper entry by an alien, and was reinstated to the practice of law in Michigan.

Several orders were issued for the following attorney:

- **Justin Edward Gould:** He was suspended from the practice of law for 90 days, effective Nov. 12, 2006, by the Supreme Court of Florida for multiple acts of wrongdoing, including failure to adequately communicate with clients, failure to keep them reasonably apprized of the status of the cases, and failure to diligently and competently represent them. He was immediately suspended by the BIA on Feb. 5, 2007, based on his suspension in Florida, pending final disposition of his case. On Feb. 20, 2007, the BIA issued a final order suspending him for 90 days, effective Nov. 12, 2006, the effective date of his suspension in Florida. He was reinstated on March 7, 2007, after he completed his 90-day suspension and was reinstated to the practice of law in Florida.

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 federal or state 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 clients in any matter before an immigration tribunal. EOIR also posts a "List of Disciplined Practitioners" on its website at <http://www.usdoj.gov/eoir/profcond/chart.htm>. In an effort to provide more detailed information about individual attorney discipline cases, every new immediate suspension or final order issued beginning June 27, 2005, can be accessed through this list by clicking on the highlighted "date" link. Links to older orders, issued since July 2000, will be included gradually.

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.

Information about EOIR immigration proceedings is available on EOIR's website <http://www.usdoj.gov/eoir/press/subject.htm>.