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NEWS RELEASE

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January 25, 2006

EOIR Announces Latest Disciplinary Actions Under Rules of Professional Conduct *Three Attorneys Receive Final Orders, One Is 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. One attorney was reinstated. These 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attorneys are directed to notify promptly, in writing, their clients with pending immigration cases that they may no longer represent them before the BIA, the immigration courts, or the DHS.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.

Final Orders of Discipline

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

- **Claude Henry Kleefield:** A final order of Dec. 13, 2005, suspends him from practice before immigration tribunals for 3 months, effective Dec. 2, 2005, based on his 3-month suspension in New York for, among other things, neglect and failing to refund unearned fees.

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- **Rex B. Wingerter:** A final order of Dec. 14, 2005, expels him from practice before immigration tribunals, effective Nov. 14, 2005, based on his conviction in Virginia for misprision of a felony related to his immigration law practice.
- **Leroy Allen Martin:** An amended final order of Dec. 29, 2005, suspends him from practice before immigration tribunals for 60 days, effective June 18, 2005, based on his 60-day suspension in California for, among other things, incompetence and failure to promptly return unearned fees.

Reinstatement

The BIA reinstated the following attorney to practice before the immigration tribunals:

- **Hani Alex Azzam:** He was reinstated on Dec. 14, 2005, after he was reinstated to the practice of law in Massachusetts.

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 immediately suspend 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

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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>.*

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