



NEWS RELEASE



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EOIR Announces Latest Disciplinary Actions Under Rules of Professional Conduct *Two Attorneys Immediately Suspended; Two Receive Final Orders*

The Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) has taken disciplinary action against four attorneys after charging them with violations of the rules of professional conduct for immigration practitioners. These rules appear in Title 8 of the Code of Federal Regulations (8 CFR Parts 3 and 292). In each of the first three disciplinary matters cited below, violations arose out of sanctions imposed by other jurisdictions.

Disciplinary proceedings began in each case with a Notice of Intent to Discipline filed with the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) by the Office of the General Counsel of EOIR or of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). In each of the first three disciplinary matters cited below, the BIA ordered each attorney to be suspended immediately from practice before the Immigration Courts, the BIA, and the DHS. The BIA also required these attorneys to respond to the alleged violations.

Immediate Suspension

The BIA ordered the immediate suspensions of the following attorneys:

- **Ernesto Valdes:** He was disbarred from practice by the State Bar of Texas, and was immediately suspended by the BIA on May 29, 2003, pending final disposition of his case.
- **Richard A. Williams:** He was temporarily suspended from the practice of law by the Connecticut Superior Court, and was immediately suspended by the BIA on May 29, 2003, pending final disposition of his case.

Final Orders of Discipline

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

- **Michael Louis Leavitt:** He was suspended for 18 months from the practice of law in New York, and was immediately suspended by the BIA on April 8, 2003, pending final disposition of his case. The Final Order of May 28, 2003, suspends him from practice before the immigration tribunals for 18 months, effective as of March 21, 2002.

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- **Jose Quinones:** He engaged in “egregious conduct..[that] constituted ineffective assistance [of counsel]” while representing a client in a deportation hearing. The Final Order of June 16, 2003, imposes a public censure for his egregious actions at the deportation hearing and orders him to refrain from such actions in the future.

Summary

In each of the first three disciplinary matters cited above, the suspended attorney was directed to notify promptly, in writing, any clients with cases currently pending before the BIA, the Immigration Courts, or the DHS 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 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.

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 <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 Web site.

EOIR is a component of the Department of Justice which, on behalf of the Attorney General, adjudicates cases involving aliens who are charged with immigration violations. EOIR has more than 220 Immigration Judges located in 52 Immigration Courts nationwide to conduct proceedings and decide cases, the 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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