



U.S. Department of Justice
Executive Office for Immigration Review
Office of the Director
5107 Leesburg Pike, Suite 2600
Falls Church, Virginia 22041

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Public Affairs Office
(703)305-0289, Fax: (703)605-0365
Internet: www.usdoj.gov/eoir

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EOIR Announces Latest Disciplinary Actions Under Rules of Professional Conduct *Five Attorneys Immediately Suspended; One Receives Final Orders*

The Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) has taken disciplinary action against six 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). The attorneys' violations arose out of sanctions imposed by other jurisdictions.

In each of the first five cases, disciplinary proceedings began with a Petition for Immediate Suspension and 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 then ordered each attorney to be suspended immediately from practice before the Immigration Courts, the BIA, and the DHS (DHS joined EOIR in taking the disciplinary action). The BIA also required these attorneys to respond to the alleged violations.

Immediate Suspension

The BIA ordered the immediate suspensions of the following attorneys:

- ! **Paul Howard Curtis:** He was suspended from the practice of law for 6 months and placed on probation for 4 years by the Supreme Court of California because he "intentionally, recklessly or repeatedly failed to perform legal services with competence." He was immediately suspended by the BIA on July 16, 2003, pending final disposition of his case.
- ! **Ira Sylvester Brackens:** He was suspended from the practice of law for 18 months, placed on probation for 4 years by the Supreme Court of California, and was immediately suspended by the BIA on July 24, 2003, pending final disposition of his case.
- ! **Armando Javier Mendez:** He was suspended from the practice of law for 90 days and placed on probation, subject to other conditions, by the Supreme Court of California for providing inadequate assistance in immigration cases. He was immediately suspended by the BIA on July 24, 2003, pending final disposition of his case.
- ! **Ramon R. Pizzini:** He was suspended indefinitely from the practice of law by the Supreme Court for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and was immediately suspended by the BIA on July 24, 2003, pending final disposition of his case.

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- ! **James Robert Valinoti:** He was suspended from the practice of law for 3 years by the Supreme Court of California for “habitual, reckless and intentional failures to competently perform legal services.” He was immediately suspended by the BIA on July 24, 2003, pending final disposition of his case.

Final Order of Discipline

The BIA issued a Final Order of Discipline against the following attorney:

- ! **Wilma Nadine Brennan:** She was administratively suspended from the practice of law in Texas for failure to pay occupation taxes and bar dues. The Final Order of July 24, 2003, suspends her from practice before the immigration tribunals for 30 days, effective August 1, 2003.

Summary

In each of the first five disciplinary matters cited above, the disciplined 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 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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