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INS CLOSE TO REACHING H-1B VISA CAP

The Immigration and Naturalization Service has announced that it has enough pending petitions to reach the cap on visas available to nonimmigrant professional workers, referred to as "H-1B specialty workers," even while members of Congress, acknowledging the importance of foreign labor to the United States' competitiveness in the global economy, are moving forward on legislation to raise the number of H-1B visas.

On March 21, the INS published a notice in the Federal Register to announce that the number of petitions for new H-1B status that were pending before it were likely to be more than enough to exceed the statutory limit of 115,000 imposed for this fiscal year. The INS cannot guarantee that all petitions filed prior to March 21 will be approved within this year's cap, but those that cannot will automatically receive October 1, 2000 start dates. The notice provided that the INS will reject petitions filed on March 21 or after that request a start date prior to October 1, 2000. The notice also provided similar relief as that provided last year to students by extending the duration of stay for those

students who timely file petitions before October 1, 2000.

The cap raises many procedural issues for petitioners who filed near the cut-off date. Many petitioners who encountered problems obtaining approved Labor Condition Applications (LCAs) submitted the petition with proof that the LCA was filed rather than the actual certified LCA. The INS will issue a Request For Evidence (RFE) in these cases, but if the INS does not process the petitioner's response to the RFE before reaching the cap, then the case will not receive approval for FY2000.

The press release accompanying the INS notice also addressed a major unresolved issue precipitated by the INS last fall when it announced that it had over-issued as many as 20,000 visa numbers in FY1999 (see "Agency Update," Winter 1999). The agency, which sparked protest from Congress and employers alike by suggesting that

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AGENCY UPDATE

New Program to Expedite Employment Eligibility Verification

Employers in five states may now utilize a new program designed to efficiently verify the employment eligibility of foreign workers.

The Basic Pilot Employment Eligibility Confirmation Program is a free employment confirmation program conducted by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and the Social Security Administration (SSA) to verify Social Security Numbers and alien identification numbers ("A numbers") and to confirm the eligibility of newly hired employees to work in the United States.

Employers in the states of California, Florida, Illinois, Nebraska, and New York are eligible to participate. Once an employer has signed up to participate, they may elect to sign up other

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INS CLOSE TO REACHING H-1B VISA CAP

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it would reduce FY2000 to compensate for the overage, has decided that it will not reduce FY2000 H-1B numbers, but has not said it would not take such numbers from future years. The accounting firm KPMG is currently auditing visa numbers for FY1999, but have not yet released their findings.

Meanwhile, Congress is moving forward at full steam to address the issue of the H-1B cap. On February 9, Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Sen Spencer Abraham (R-MI) led a bipartisan coalition in introducing the "American Competitiveness in the 21st Century Act." S. 2045 seeks to raise the H-1B cap to 195,000 for fiscal years 2000, 2001 and 2002. While seeking to raise the H-1B cap over the next three fiscal years, the bill also exempts H-1B professionals from the cap so that individuals sponsored in H-1B status by institutions of higher education (or a related nonprofit entity), nonprofit research institutions, or for whom a petition is filed between 90 and 180 days after receiving a Master's degree or higher degree from an institute of higher education, will no longer be counted against the cap. The bill also would eliminate current discriminatory quota allocations for employment-based immigrants in limited circumstances. In addition, S. 2045 would permit the extension of H-1B status beyond the current six-year limit in one-year increments. This last provision would apply to persons who reach the end of their H-1B status while waiting for an approval on an EB petition or application for adjustment. Persons negatively impacted by per country quotas would also be eligible for such an extension.

S. 2045 was marked up in early March by the Senate Judiciary Committee, where a provision was added to address educational programs to train our nation's youth and lead them to enter technology areas. The bill could go to the Senate floor as soon as early April.

On March 16, Representatives David Dreier (R-CA) and Zoe Lofgren (D-CA) led a bipartisan coalition to introduce H.R. 3983, the "Helping to Improve Technology Education and Achievement Act of 2000." Similar in terms to the Senate bill, H.R. 3983 would increase the H-1B cap to 200,000 in 2001, 2002, and 2003 (up from 160,000 in 2000). Unlike the original Senate bill, from the start the House version included a provision to redirect training funds for education and training purposes,

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Dear Readers,

With the campaign season in full swing across the nation, several recent developments affecting business immigration policies will contribute to the national discourse in coming months. As in any presidential election, the economy will take center stage, with candidates discussing policies aimed at maintaining historic levels of economic growth. This issue of *Business Immigration Review* details recent events on Capitol Hill that have served to stress the importance of foreign labor to continued economic growth.

In February, Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan went on record as supporting increased immigration of foreign workers in order to meet labor shortages. Lawmakers who support increased immigration hope that Greenspan's comments will influence the passage of a bipartisan bill designed to increase the number of visas issued to foreign specialty workers. The bill (S.2045), proposed by a bipartisan coalition led by Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-UT), seeks to raise the cap on the number of H-1B specialty worker visas. The timing of such legislation should not be lost on employers. It comes just a week prior to the Immigration and Naturalization Service's announcement that it will reach the cap on H-1B visas in the near future. Meanwhile, hearings on Capitol Hill in February addressed the shortage of qualified American workers for both highly and lesser skilled jobs.

The outcome of many of these events will undoubtedly affect the business community and shape the progress of our nation's economy in the coming months and years. Greenberg Traurig's *Business Immigration Review* will continue to provide perspective on such events as a means of better serving your business's immigration needs. As always, please feel free to contact any member of our international business immigration practice with your immigration questions or concerns.

—**Sean Sedam**, Immigration Paralegal, Tysons Corner, VA

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GT LEADS EWIC: REPRESENTATIVE FOR CLIENT INGERSOLL-RAND GIVES HOUSE FIRST-HAND ACCOUNT OF WORKER SHORTAGES

A panel comprised of business leaders, labor economists and strategists met with lawmakers on Capitol Hill in February to discuss one of the downsides of an energized economy and the lowest unemployment rates in 30 years: worker shortages.

The hearing on “21st Century Worker Shortages,” held before a subcommittee of the House of Representatives’ Education and Workforce Committee, came about due to the efforts of the Essential Worker Immigration Coalition (EWIC). The EWIC is a committee comprised of 23 businesses, trade associations, and other organizations from across the industry spectrum,

concerned with shortages in both skilled and unskilled labor. The coalition, led in part by Greenberg Traurig immigration shareholder Laura Foote Reiff, supports Congressional action and the introduction of policies that enable companies to hire foreign workers to fill essential worker shortages.

“Congress must take action to address the problems associated with the unprecedented job growth, low unemployment and corresponding inability to

find domestic workers to meet the needs of American employers,” says the EWIC in its mission statement. “Failure to do so risks American prosperity and leadership in the global economy.”

Elizabeth Dickson, a client of Greenberg Traurig and a Human Resource Specialist for Ingersoll-Rand, a Fortune 200 company manufacturing industrial equipment and components, echoed these sentiments in her testimony before the committee. During her testimony, Dickson related her first-hand experience in searching for vitally needed workers to fill the needs of a company that employs 28,000 workers domestically and 47,000 worldwide. Dickson testified to the worker shortages, in both highly skilled and lesser skilled areas, experienced by many employers across the U.S. in recent months.

“We have a serious worker shortage issue in this country, and if it isn’t rectified somehow, the consequences will range from a downturn in the economy to companies seeking more often to move outside the boundaries of the U.S. borders,” Dickson said. “Companies like Ingersoll-Rand live this reality on a daily basis and when Human Resource Managers cannot fill the key positions, they are forced to look outside the U.S. to hire or out-source the work.”

Dickson testified to the problems of recruiting workers with the necessary skills. She noted through several examples how Ingersoll-Rand conducts extensive recruiting for skilled labor of all levels, first in the U.S. and then abroad. The company has performed exhaustive

INS CLOSE TO REACHING H-1B VISA CAP *-Continued from page 2*

focusing on developing the next generation of scientists, engineers, and technology workers. It would also acknowledge the efforts of an employer in using Internet recruitment for immigration-related benefits and attempt to add greater technology to agency processing of immigration benefits. Like the Senate bill, it would extend H-1B status for those who are near the end of green card processing.

H.R. 3983 is not the only bill pending in the House on H-1B visa issues. In February, Lamar Smith (R-TX), chair of the Immigration Subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee, introduced his own version of an H-1B visa bill. His bill, however, would provide extremely limited relief to the current shortage of options for hiring internationally, providing for only 45,000 additional visas for FY2000. These visas would only go to companies that show that: (1) they had more U.S. workers on the payroll at the end of the year than at the beginning; (2) there was a net increase in the total wages paid to U.S. workers; and, (3) there was a net increase in the median wage paid to U.S. workers. The Smith bill would also place additional restrictions on H-1B visa holders and H-1B employers that would make many start-ups unable to hire such workers.

These legislative initiatives and how they work their way through the legislative process could have an immediate impact on the surging U.S. economy. In a labor market experiencing the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, the current cap of 115,000 H-1B visas authorized by the INS will not meet the needs for workers in the information technology sector or indeed, in other sectors of the economy. Even Federal Reserve Board Chairman Alan Greenspan has weighed in on the need to increase the number of highly skilled workers allowed to immigrate to the U.S., making his first direct statement supporting increased immigration during his most recent appearance before the Senate Banking Committee (see “The DC Inner Loop”). Only the speed with which these bills move in Congress will reveal the government’s level of commitment to making this increase a reality. ■



Elizabeth Dickson of Ingersoll-Rand testifies about worker shortages.

The DC Inner Loop *News from the Nation's Capital*

GREATER WASHINGTON AREA EMPLOYERS INVEST IN RECRUITING EFFORTS

Companies in and around the nation's capital are joining together in an innovative program targeted at increasing the number of qualified technology professionals applying for jobs in the region.

In an attempt to give the Greater Washington area an edge in the ever-increasing competition for qualified tech workers, several business organizations from across the region have joined together to start Greater Washington TechMatch, a program which combines workforce recruitment and an image campaign in an effort to match investor businesses with experienced job candidates. Greenberg Traurig immigration shareholder Laura Foote Reiff plays a key role in one of the business organizations involved in this project, the Northern Virginia Technology Council.

Reiff serves as Co-Chair of the High-Tech Worker Recruitment Subcommittee of NVTC's Workforce Committee. NVTC represents the interests of over 1,300 member companies in the Northern Virginia technology industry, building recognition of the region as a global leader in technology development and application.

Washington's shortage of qualified tech workers mirrors the hiring difficulties faced by employers across the United States (see "GT Leads EWIC . . . Worker Shortages"). Efforts to lure qualified technology professionals into the area can prove both competitive and costly. NVTC estimates that employers spend \$8,000 per hire for qualified tech workers and often attempt to hire workers away from one another.

Companies interested in taking advantage of Greater Washington TechMatch may invest between \$2,000 and \$15,000 to become a member. The program uses a combination of marketing; promotions, public relations and relocation incentives to showcase the Washington area as the best place for technology professionals to build an exciting career in the technology industry.

A state-of-the-art web site will provide both job seekers and employers with important resources, including links to investor's web sites, information on job fairs and trade shows, information on living and working in the Washington area, and links to eJobs and other web site vendors offering discounted products and services through the "TechMatchCard." The TechMatchCard is one of the relocation resources offered by the program, which also include personalized needs assessments and neighborhood familiarization tours for recruits looking to relocate to the area. The TechMatchCard will offer tech workers a specialized Web-based relocation incentive package of discounted products and services.

The program will also coordinate external promotion events at technical trade shows and conferences and high tech job fairs. In 2000, the promotions effort will focus on six events in primary target markets with the greatest number of tech workers. Greater Washington TechMatch will also coordinate direct marketing efforts to promote the web site and external events, as well as launching a national public relations campaign designed to raise awareness of opportunities with technology companies in the Washington area.

The program, formerly known as Capital Move, represents a cooperative effort by NVTC, the Board of Trade, the High Technology Council of Maryland, and the District of Columbia Technology Council.

GREENSPAN SPEAKS OUT IN FAVOR OF INCREASED IMMIGRATION

As the U.S. economy races into the 21st century, Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan, the man many give credit to for the largest peacetime economic boom in generations, has lent his support to increased immigration.

Speaking during his most recent appearance before the Senate Banking Committee, Greenspan emphasized the benefits of the "internationalization" of the U.S. economy. Calling the national labor shortage the single greatest threat to the nation's recent economic boom, Greenspan said that foreign skilled workers represent a necessary safety valve in case the economy becomes "overheated."

"As we are creating an even more complex, sophisticated, accelerating economy, the necessity to have the ability to bring in resources and people from abroad to keep it functioning in the most effective manner, increasingly strikes me as relevant policy," Greenspan said.

The direct nature of Greenspan's comments cleared up months of disagreement over where he stood on the issue of immigration. Several groups opposed to increased immigration have dismissed previous comments in which Greenspan spoke of the importance of immigration to the economy. The groups said that such comments were taken out of context, and did not show support for increased immigration. But this recent statement leaves no doubt about Greenspan's stance on the issue.

Greenspan warned against the prevalence of anti-globalization sentiments, citing the protests at the World Trade Organization meetings in Seattle last year as evidence of such opposition to a world market. He said that such sentiments could kill the thriving economy.

Greenspan's statement gives hope to supporters of the "American Competitiveness in the 21st Century Act" (see "INS CLOSE TO REACHING H-1B VISA CAP"). Proponents of the bill hope that support from a man so well-respected by both parties in Congress will lead to passage of the bill, which seeks to raise the number of skilled foreign workers admitted to the U.S. over the next three years. ■

REVIEW

AGENCY UPDATE

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company hiring sites located outside of these five states. This program removes much of the guesswork from document review during the Form I-9 process and gives an employer credible verification of an employee's employment eligibility.

An employer participates in this program by signing an agreement with the INS and the SSA called a Memorandum of Understanding (or MOU), which sets out the responsibilities of the employer, the INS and the SSA under the program. Once an employer is participating in the program, it can use the program to verify the employment eligibility of all new hires.

Under the program, the employer must conduct an automated employment verification query within three business days of hire. Using a modem, the employer provides the required information, taken from the completed I-9, and sends it to the SSA database to verify that the Social Security Number and name provided by the employee matches the information contained in its records, as well as whether or not the employee is authorized to work in the United States.

Controversy Continues Over EEOC's Guidance on Undocumented Workers

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission enforcement guidance issued in the fall has left employers with new issues to consider when acting in regard to undocumented workers.

According to current EEOC enforcement guidance, undocumented workers are entitled to the same discrimination protection and remedies as all other workers (see "THE DC INNER LOOP," Winter 1999). The issuance of this enforcement guidance has led to some unfortunate side-effects for employers. Under the guidance, employers who comply with the INS and dismiss undocumented workers could potentially

face an anti-discrimination lawsuit brought against them by the fired employee.

At the heart of the matter lies EEOC guidance that conflicts with INS regulations pertaining to I-9 worker authorization requirements. The EEOC guidance needs clarification on several issues. First, it states that workers must meet employment authorization requirements, as specified by the I-9, within an indeterminate "reasonable time." In contrast, INS regulations require that workers fulfill I-9 requirements within three days of hire. The guidance also seemingly implies that an employer may be required to rehire undocumented workers who are dismissed, who may in turn be eligible for back pay and damages.

In issuing this guidance, the EEOC quotes case law that states that workers "not lawfully entitled to be present and employed" are not eligible for back pay. However, the EEOC still concludes that the back pay and reinstatement remedies should be available to undocumented workers and should only be suspended while the worker is out of the country. As of press time for this issue of *Business Immigration Review*, the EEOC had not yet clarified its position on this matter.

Social Security Administration Addresses Mismatched Employee Numbers

Another situation where employers may find themselves torn between a government agency and immigration laws, involves the Social Security Administration's (SSA's) practice of sending letters to employers who list employee Social Security Numbers (SSN's) that do not match the SSA database.

Employers and employees alike have incorrectly speculated that the SSA is working with the INS on immigration enforcement, viewing these "no-match" or "mismatch" letters as notification of undocumented employment (which would require the employer to terminate the worker). Some employers have even used the letters as a means of retaliating against union activities in the workplace.

The SSA warned employers against engaging in discrimination practices in a meeting last fall. SSA officials have reiterated to employers that they must use any means necessary to obtain accurate information for earnings reporting, but warned employers that they cannot require employees to produce their Social Security cards, which would violate the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. This law initiated the employer verification program, and also made it illegal to ask individuals to produce more or different documents than necessary to prove employment eligibility.

In reaction to calls for clarification from employers and immigrants' rights advocates, the SSA began reviewing its policies toward the end of 1999. As a result, the SSA has indicated that it will change the language in the letters to clear up misconceptions about such discrimination practices. A Department of Justice official also noted that such no-match letters do not indicate constructive knowledge of undocumented employment. The SSA has stated repeatedly that it is not working with INS in proactive enforcement efforts.

The American Immigration Lawyers' Association has encouraged employers who find themselves torn between "their obligations to correctly report Social Security information and verify employment eligibility and the strictures meant to prohibit discrimination in carrying out these obligations" to urge Congress "to repeal the employers sanctions provisions of the law." ■

This Greenberg Traurig newsletter is issued for general purposes only and is not intended to be construed or used as legal advice. Greenberg Traurig attorneys provide practical, result-oriented strategies and solutions tailored to meet our clients' individual legal needs. The firm's responsive approach to client service often cuts across legal subject matter, applying the right experience and resources to provide cost-effective solutions.

REVIEW

IOWA VOTERS BELIEVE CANDIDATES SHOULD ADDRESS IMMIGRATION

A poll of Iowa voters found that 70 percent believe that immigration issues should receive attention from presidential candidates. The poll of 1005 Iowa voters, taken prior to the Iowa caucus, was sponsored by the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), Americans for Immigration Control, Negative Populations Growth, Populations Environment Balance, and NumbersUSA, all groups which favor decreased immigration. In addition, 62 percent of those polled believe immigration should be reduced from its current levels, and 65 percent believe that the projected U.S. population of 400 million by 2050 is too large.

The groups sponsoring the poll also ran ads in Iowa advocating a decrease in immigration. An Iowa TV station pulled one series of ads, sponsored by FAIR, calling them “inflammatory.” One of the ads depicted the town of Storm Lake, Iowa, and featured a narrator saying “quality of life is but a memory,” in the town, over scenes of a business closing, a neighborhood of decrepit buildings, and people being arrested. However, the footage used was not actually shot in Storm Lake. Storm Lake Mayor Jon Kruse has demanded a public apology from the groups, calling them “inconsiderate, uninformed, out-of-state, political, special interest groups.”

This is not the first time FAIR has caused controversy through a media campaign. In August, 1999, New York City pulled three billboards from spots along major roadways due to their attacks on immigrants. The billboards were sponsored by an organization receiving support from FAIR.

PARTIES LOOKING TO LEVERAGE THE HISPANIC VOTE

The Republican and Democratic parties alike are hoping to win some very important votes from the Hispanic population this election year. Hispanics not only comprise the nation’s fastest growing ethnic population, but also reside heavily in states carrying many of the electoral votes needed to capture the presidency. Eighty percent of the nation’s Hispanic votes are concentrated in Arizona, California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Texas, and Utah—states which hold 179 of the 270 electoral votes needed to win the presidential election.

Republican strategists stress the importance of the Hispanic vote, comparing the impact Hispanics will have on the 2000 election to the impact that “soccer moms”—middle-class, suburban, working mothers—had on the 1996 election. The Democratic party has also made a focused effort to campaign in Hispanic communities, and has challenged Republicans on their campaign practices.

In a recent meeting between Democratic National Committee co-chair Rep. Loretta Sanchez (D-CA) and Republican National Committee chairman Jim Nicholson, Sanchez addressed Texas Gov. George W. Bush’s campaign, saying Democrats “will not allow Latinos to be used as props at events or as photo opportunities by your presidential candidates during this election cycle.” In respect to the Hispanic vote, the Republican party hopes Bush wins its nomination, as he enjoys wide popularity with Hispanics in his home state.

Hispanics represent such a swing vote in this election year, because as a segment of the population, Hispanics have never adhered to strict party lines. Political researchers cite voting trends in California where Hispanics are credited with supporting several prominent Republicans in recent years, including Ronald Reagan, Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan, and even Gov. Pete Wilson, during Wilson’s first gubernatorial victory. However, Hispanic voters also played an important role in the election of Democrat Barbara Boxer, who won an important Senate seat in the 1988 election. ■

GT Leads EWIC...Worker Shortages

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searches for workers in occupations as diverse as welding and software engineering only to discover that when they finally locate qualified workers in foreign countries, the process of obtaining work visas for them proves too costly and time consuming.

Dickson cited a “skills gap” in the U.S. that forces companies to move their projects overseas. Human Resource Managers report that when advertising for information technology (IT) positions, foreign nationals make up 90 percent of the applicants who respond—if any respond at all, Dickson said. In terms of skilled IT workers, the U.S. falls behind India, China, and some ex-Soviet Bloc countries, who produce the most advanced programmers and engineers, she said. “When we recruit for particular skills such as Oracle database, UNIX and C++ programming, or experienced programmers with web-based applications, few Americans qualify,” Dickson said. The necessity of hiring foreign workers leads to frequent job turnover rates, as foreign employees must renew their work visas or leave the U.S. every few years as their work visas expire.

“Through the media and other sources, the business community hears the mantra—train U.S. workers; invest in the domestic workforce,” she said. “We at Ingersoll-Rand do just this and more.”

Dickson discussed the steps Ingersoll-Rand has taken in order to remedy the shortage of American workers, including training centers at almost all of its manufacturing facilities, collaborations with community colleges and technical schools to sponsor certification and degree programs, tuition reimbursement programs for employees, and cultural exchanges with facilities abroad to enhance diversity. ■

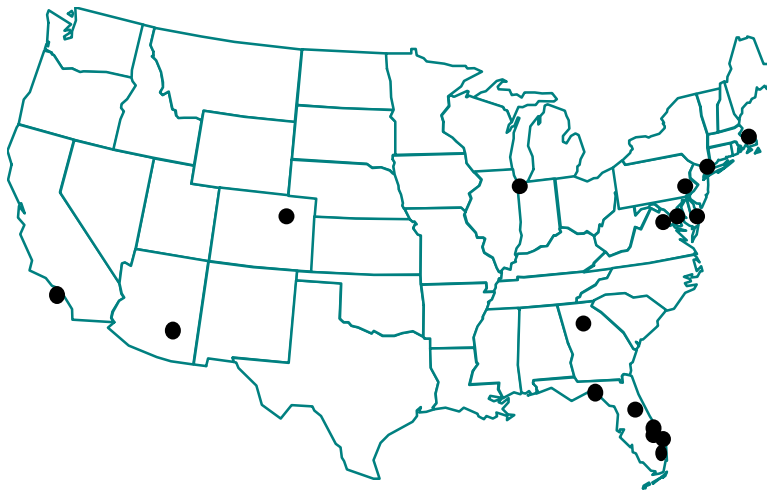
GREENBERG TRAURIG: COAST TO COAST

Greenberg Traurig rang in the new year with several announcements marking the international firm's ever-expanding scope. The firm announced the opening of new offices in Los Angeles and Denver, as well as the addition of 25 attorneys to its Atlanta office. "Greenberg Traurig will now have a truly national scope," said **Cesar L. Alvarez**, firm President and CEO. Greenberg Traurig was named by American Lawyer magazine as one of the fastest growing firms in the country, with more than 600 attorneys and eight new offices opened within the last 18 months.

The Los Angeles office will expand the firm's fast-growing corporate, entertainment, information technology, intellectual property, litigation, trust, estate planning, wealth preservation and real estate practices, while creating synergy between both coasts. "We are fortunate to have attracted a group of extremely talented attorneys who will complement our firm's entrepreneurial spirit and business philosophy," Alvarez said. The Los

Angeles office comprises the practices of the following shareholders: **Carol Perrin**, Managing Shareholder, Tax, Trusts & Estates, and Corporate & Securities; **George M. Belfield**, Litigation; **Steven M. Goldberg**, Los Angeles Office Litigation Department Chair; **Marcia Z. Gordon**, Real Estate; **Jeff E. Scott**, Litigation; and **Matthew S. Steinberg**, Litigation. Also joining the firm's Los Angeles office as of counsel are **Rex J. Beaber**, Litigation; and **Stephen M. Crane**, Corporate & Securities. They are joined by the following associates: **Deborah S. Fox**, Corporate & Securities; **Raymond B. Kim**, Litigation; **Gregory A. Nylen**, Litigation; and **Joanna Sobol**, Litigation; and **Jennifer L. Sostrin**, Corporate & Securities.

The business law firm of **Minkin & Snyder** joined Greenberg Traurig's Atlanta office on January 1, expanding the office to more than 40 attorneys. The increased staff in Greenberg Traurig's Atlanta office will enable the firm to offer the complete spectrum of legal services to the business community in the region. The office will serve the entertainment, corporate and securities, commercial real estate, litigation, media and technology, international, and trust and estate planning needs of its clients. "The entrepreneurial spirit shared by the attorneys at Greenberg Traurig, as well as the firm's national platform, makes this an ideal fit," said David Minkin, co-managing shareholder of the Atlanta office and former managing partner of Minkin and Snyder.



The firm welcomes shareholders: **David N. Minkin**, Commercial Real Estate, Corporate & Securities, Governmental & Administrative; **Gary E. Snyder**, co-founder of Minkin & Snyder, Corporate & Securities, Trusts & Estates, Mergers & Acquisition; **James S. Altenbach**, Corporate & Securities; **Karen McDade Cutler**, Corporate & Securities, Real Estate; **Ronald W. Eisenman**, Corporate & Securities; **Jon R. Erickson**, Real Estate; **Patricia D. Friedman**, Trusts and Estates; **Stacey Orr Gallant**, Corporate and Securities; **Ernest LaMont Greer**, Litigation, Governmental & Administrative; **Michael J. King**, Litigation; **Sheri S. Labovitz**, Real Estate, Governmental & Administrative; **Robert A. Portnoy**, Corporate & Securities; **Timothy G. Werner**, Corporate & Securities; and **Andrew C. Williams**, Real Estate. **Aaron Watson** joins Atlanta's Corporate & Securities group as of counsel. Also, the following associates join the Atlanta office: **Joseph H. Akers**, Litigation; **Kenneth J. Clayman**, Real Estate; **Justin S. Daniels**, Corporate & Securities; **Mark J. Long**, Corporate & Securities; **David M. Pedley**, Corporate & Securities; **Jonathan M. Perry**, Real Estate; **Matthew J. Sours**, Real Estate; **Robert E. Spears**, Litigation; and **Thomas F. Tallmadge**, Intellectual Property.

Greenberg Traurig announced the opening of its Denver office on February 1. The Denver office expands the firm's national corporate and securities and information technology practices. The firm welcomes shareholders **Kenneth S. Witt**, Denver Office Managing Shareholder, Corporate & Securities, Finance and Information Technology; **Josiah (Jo) Hatch**, Corporate & Securities, Finance, Insurance, and International; and **Mark L. Heimlich**, Corporate & Securities. The firm also welcomes new of counsel **Robin Bambach**, Corporate & Securities. Also joining the firm as associates are **Tiffany S. Griggs**, Corporate & Securities; **Kelly N. Matthews**, Corporate & Securities; and **Christopher M. McManus**, Corporate & Securities.

"Denver has become a significant area for high-tech and information technology businesses," Alvarez said. "Opening an office in Denver is the next logical step in the growth of our practice areas that are essential for businesses participating in the New Economy. Through our corporate and securities and information technology practices, we will bring national and international access to the emerging business community in Denver and the surrounding areas." ■

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