



# FAX TRANSMITTAL FROM

**THE OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL  
U.S. OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT**

**TO:** Honorable William D. Spencer, Clerk of the Board  
of U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board  
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**FROM:** Darlene M. Carr  
Agency Representative  
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**DATE:** OCT 15 2009

**TOTAL NUMBER OF PAGES (including cover sheet):** 23

**COMMENTS:**

Re: James A. Scott v. OPM  
Docket No: CH-0731-09-0578-I-1

RECEIVED MSPB  
2009 OCT 16 PM 10:51  
CLERK OF THE BOARD

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD

JAMES A. SCOTT,

Appellant,

v.

OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT,

Agency.

DOCKET NO:  
CH-0731-09-0578-I-1

Before the Clerk of the Board

Date: OCT 15 2009

**AGENCY'S MOTION FOR AN EXTENSION OF THE TIME TO FILE A RESPONSE  
TO THE PETITION FOR REVIEW, AND STATEMENT OF GOOD CAUSE**

**I. Motion for an Extension of the Time to File a Response to the Petition for Review**

Pursuant to 5 C.F.R. 1201.114(e), the Office of Personnel Management (OPM or Agency) moves for the Clerk of the Board to grant the Agency an extension of time to respond to James A. Scott's (Appellant's) September 21, 2009 Petition for Review of the August 21, 2009 Initial Decision in the above-captioned appeal. The response is currently due on October 16, 2009. Specifically, the Agency moves for an extension until 30 days after the Merit Systems Protection Board (Board) rules on the Agency's October 6, 2009 Motions to Reopen in the related appeals of Aguzie v. Office of Personnel Management, No. DC-0731-09-0261-I-1, 2009 WL 2840720 (M.S.P.B. filed Sept. 3, 2009) and Barnes v. Office of Personnel Management, No. DC-0731-09-0260-I-1, 2009 WL 2840719 (M.S.P.B. filed Sept. 3, 2009), and adjudicates the unresolved issues of law presented in those appeals.

The Agency submits that this Motion should be granted because it is filed prior to October 16, 2009, the date on which the Agency's response to the Petition for Review is due, and because the Agency has shown good cause for the requested extension in its Sworn Statement of Good Cause, pt. II, infra.<sup>1</sup>

In particular, on October 6, 2009, OPM moved the Board to reopen Aguzie and Barnes on its own motion to speed adjudication of non-fact dependent issues of law in order to allay uncertainty caused by the Board's analysis. Specifically, OPM requested that the Board modify its orders to revoke its remands, request the parties to brief the issues presented before the Board itself within 60 days of the Board's granting of OPM's request, and invite the Director of OPM to intervene in the case in his discretion. Simultaneously, OPM moved the administrative judge who has been assigned to all Aguzie and Barnes-related cases, Judge Weiss, to stay proceedings pending resolution of OPM's motion to reopen.

The instant case presents the same issues that the Board remanded in Aguzie and Barnes: whether an appellant who has been removed by OPM under part 731, Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations is entitled to appeal his removal under 5 U.S.C. § 7513(d), and, if so, whether the other actions on appeal, i.e., debarment and cancellation of eligibilities, remain within the Board's jurisdiction under 5 C.F.R. § 731.501.

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<sup>1</sup> The Agency contacted the Appellant's representative, Jeffrey G. Letts, Esq., pursuant to 5 C.F.R. 1201.55(a) to determine whether there would be any objection to a motion to extend the deadline to respond to the Appellant's Petition for Review. The Appellant's representative advised on October 8, 2009 that he objects to the Agency's motion.

The Aguzie and Barnes appeals are pending at the initial level with Judge Weiss pursuant to the Board's remand orders, yet the Scott appeal, which cannot be decided until resolution of the Aguzie and Barnes appeals, has not been remanded, and is before the full Board on a petition for review. The current status of the appeals furnishes good cause for the Board to extend the time to file a response to the petition for review in Scott, while the Board resolves the threshold issues of law in Aguzie and Barnes.

Given the unsettled posture of all cases in which OPM has removed appellants under part 731, there is good cause for this extension to promote an orderly and coherent resolution to the significant Government-wide issues presented in these cases.

## II. Sworn Statement of Good Cause

I, Robert J. Girouard and I, Darlene M. Carr, hereby declare:

That for the following reasons, there is good cause for the Clerk of the Board to grant the Agency an extension of the time to respond to the Appellant's Petition for Review in the above-captioned appeal, until such time as the Board rules on the Agency's October 6, 2009 Motions to Reopen in the related cases of Aguzie v. Office of Personnel Management, No. DC-0731-09-0261-I-1, 2009 WL 2840720 (M.S.P.B. filed Sept. 3, 2009) and Barnes v. Office of Personnel Management, No. DC-0731-09-0260-I-1, 2009 WL 2840719 (M.S.P.B. filed Sept. 3, 2009), and decides the unresolved issues of law presented in those appeals.

¶ 1 In an August 21, 2009 Initial Decision in the above-captioned appeal, the presiding Administrative Judge affirmed the Agency's negative suitability determination, which resulted in the Appellant's removal, on grounds that "[a]n analysis of applicable statutes and Executive Order 10577 shows OPM has the authority to direct agencies to separate employees," that "[t]he suitability regulations issued by OPM specifically cover actions against current employees," and that "a suitability action under Part 731 includes a removal from employment." Scott v. Office of Per. Mgmt., No. CH-0731-09-0578-I-1, at 5-6 (M.S.P.B. filed Aug. 21, 2009) (Init. Dec.). The Administrative Judge acknowledged that the Board was "currently considering" the Aguzie and Barnes appeals on petitions for review. Init. Dec. at 7 n.3.

¶ 2 Thirteen days later, the full Board, in Aguzie, vacated an initial decision that affirmed the Agency's negative suitability determination which, as in the Scott appeal, had resulted in an incumbent employee's removal. The Board remanded the case for a decision on the issue of whether the appellant had a right to appeal his removal as an adverse action, notwithstanding 5 C.F.R. part 731, which prescribes suitability procedures distinct from and exclusive of the adverse action procedures in 5 C.F.R. part 752; and the issue of whether, if so, the other actions on appeal, i.e., debarment and cancellation of eligibilities, remain within the Board's jurisdiction under part 731. Aguzie, 2009 WL 2840720, at \*1-2. The Board noted that if the Agency's suitability action were subject to an adverse action appeal, OPM would not be the responding party, and the penalty of removal could potentially be mitigated. Id. at \*2. The Board vacated the initial decision and remanded for further proceedings in Barnes on the same reasoning.

¶ 3 The Appellant in the above-captioned Appeal, James Scott, was initially appointed in schedule B of the excepted service on January 23, 2006. (Standard Form (SF) 50, in Agency File, tab 2r at 1.) He converted to a career appointment in the competitive service on January 23, 2008. (SF 50, in Agency File, tab 2q at 1.) DFAS removed him by order of OPM on April 13, 2009. (SF 50, in Agency File, tab 2a at 1.) Had his removal been an adverse action, rather than a suitability action, he would have met the definition of an "employee" in 5 U.S.C. 7511(a)(1)(A)(i), based on his status as a non-probationary employee in the competitive service. The Appellant concedes that he would have met this definition. (Appellant's Pet. for Review 3, Sept. 21, 2009.)

¶ 4 Accordingly, the threshold issues of law presented in Aguzie and Barnes -- first, whether OPM may order a removal as a suitability action under procedures distinct from and exclusive of adverse action procedures, or whether the person removed is entitled to an adverse action appeal, and second, whether the Board retains jurisdiction over the other actions on appeal -- are also the threshold issues of law in the Scott appeal.

¶ 5 The Appellant states that it is "hopefully unnecessary" for the Board to address these threshold issues of law in adjudicating his appeal. (Appellant's Pet. for Review 3 & Transmittal Ltr.) The Agency respectfully submits that the issues are unavoidable.

¶ 6 On September 28, 2009, the Board's Washington Regional Office filed Notices of Reassignment, reassigning the remanded Aguzie and Barnes appeals to Administrative Judge Ronald J. Weiss of the Board's Office of Regional Operations. (Ex. 1, infra.)

¶ 7 On October 6, 2009, the Agency filed its Motions to Reopen the Board's orders in Aguzie and Barnes, asking the Board to modify its orders to revoke its remands; to request the parties to brief the issues presented before the Board itself; to invite the Director of OPM to intervene; and to adjudicate the pure issues of law presented without the superfluous intermediate step of an initial decision by Judge Weiss. (Ex. 2, infra.) The Agency concurrently filed Motions for Stay with Judge Weiss. (Ex. 3, infra, enclosures excluded)

¶ 8 The Aguzie and Barnes appeals are pending at the initial level with Judge Weiss pursuant to the Board's remand orders, yet the Scott appeal, which cannot be decided until resolution of the Aguzie and Barnes appeals, has not been remanded, and is before the full Board on a petition for review. The procedural posture of the appeals furnishes good cause for the Board to extend the time to file a response to the petition for review in Scott, while the Board resolves the threshold issue of law in Aguzie and Barnes. The procedural posture of the appeals incidentally also furnishes additional good cause for the Board to grant the Agency's October 6, 2009 Motions to Reopen so that all three appeals may be expeditiously resolved.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on

10/15/2009  
Date

10/15/2009  
Date

*Robert J. Girouard*  
Signature

*Darlene M. Carr*  
Signature

**Robert J. Girouard and Darlene M. Carr**  
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Enclosures

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD  
WASHINGTON REGIONAL OFFICE**

**HYGINUS U. AGUZIE,**  
Appellant,

**DOCKET NUMBER**  
DC-0731-09-0261-B-1

v.

**OFFICE OF PERSONNEL  
MANAGEMENT,**  
Agency.

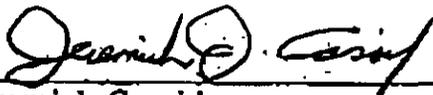
**DATE: September 28, 2009**

**NOTICE OF REASSIGNMENT**

The above-captioned case has been reassigned to Administrative Judge Ronald J. Weiss of the Office of Regional Operations. Any and all submissions filed by the parties in this matter must be directed to Administrative Judge Ronald J. Weiss.

U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board  
Office of Regional Operations  
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FOR THE BOARD:

  
Jeremiah Cassidy  
Regional Director

Agency Ex. 1

0000001

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD  
WASHINGTON REGIONAL OFFICE**

**HOLLEY C. BARNES,**  
Appellant,

**DOCKET NUMBER**  
**DC-0731-09-0260-B-1**

v.

**OFFICE OF PERSONNEL  
MANAGEMENT,**  
Agency.

**DATE: September 28, 2009**

**NOTICE OF REASSIGNMENT**

The above-captioned case has been reassigned to Administrative Judge Ronald J. Weiss of the Office of Regional Operations. Any and all submissions filed by the parties in this matter must be directed to Administrative Judge Ronald J. Weiss.

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**FOR THE BOARD:**



**Jeremiah Cassidy  
Regional Director**

**Agency Ex. 1**

**0000002**



were entitled to appeal their removal under 5 U.S.C. § 7513(d), and 2) if so, whether the other actions on appeal, that is, debarment and cancellation of eligibilities, remain within the Board's jurisdiction under 5 C.F.R. § 731.501.

The analysis preceding the Board's orders in both cases raises for the first time issues casting doubt on the authority of OPM, as well as the many agencies that take suitability actions under authority delegated by OPM, to take removal actions under 5 C.F.R. Part 731. Because these issues are not dependent in any way on specific factual determinations, including credibility determinations that are routinely made by the Board's administrative judges in the first instance, and because they raise legal issues of first impression, it is most appropriate for the Board itself to decide these issues in the first instance, subject to review by the Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit. Remanding these decisions is an unnecessary step that will only delay resolution of these important legal issues. It is appropriate – indeed necessary – that these questions that the Board itself has interposed be decided expeditiously to prevent a long period of uncertainty during which OPM, agencies, and appellants and their representatives will not know how to proceed or react.

Indeed, it is not even clear that administrative judges may answer the first question posed in the affirmative without overruling Board precedent – something that is entirely beyond their authority. Administrative and judicial efficiency, as well as the uninterrupted efficient operation of the Government's vital suitability program require the Board to adjudicate these matters without superfluous intermediate steps.

Agency Ex. 2

0000002

Ordinarily, when a party to litigation requests the Board to reopen a case to modify an order, the Board will balance "the desirability of finality and the public interest in reaching what ultimately appears to be the right result." *Payne v. United States Postal Service*, 69 M.S.P.R. 503 (1996). Here considerations of both assuring finality and promoting the public interest argue in favor of the Board reopening these matters to (i) modify its order to revoke its remand; (ii) request the parties to brief the issues presented within 60 days of the Board's granting of OPM's request; and (iii) invite the Director of OPM to intervene in the case in his discretion.

Respectfully submitted,

10/16/09

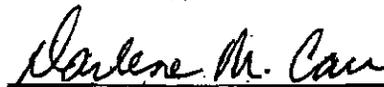
Date



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General Counsel



STEVEN E. ABOW  
Assistant General Counsel  
Merit Systems and  
Accountability Group



DARLENE M. CARR  
Agency Representative

Agency Ex. 2

0000003

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD

HOLLEY C. BARNES,  
Appellant,

v.

OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT,  
Agency.

DOCKET NUMBER  
DC-0731-09-0260-B-1

DATE: OCT - 6 2009

MOTION TO REOPEN

The Office of Personnel Management moves the Board to reopen its orders in *Aguzie v. Office of Personnel Management*, No. DC-0731-09-0261-I-1 (Sept. 3, 2009) and *Barnes v. Office of Personnel Management*, No. DC-0731-09-0260-I-1 (Sept. 3, 2009), two appeals of OPM actions removing appellants from their positions, debarring them from competition, and canceling their eligibilities under 5 C.F.R. Part 731. This action is warranted in the Board's discretion to speed adjudication of these non-fact dependent issues of law in order to allay uncertainty caused by the Board's analysis. Specifically, OPM requests that the Board modify its orders to revoke its remands, request the parties to brief the issues presented before the Board itself within 60 days of the Board's granting of OPM's request, and invite the Director of OPM to intervene in the case in his discretion.

In those orders the Board vacated the initial decisions in both cases and remanded the cases to the administrative judge to obtain briefing on two pure issues of law that were not raised below. They are 1) whether the appellants

were entitled to appeal their removal under 5 U.S.C. § 7513(d), and 2) if so, whether the other actions on appeal, that is, debarment and cancellation of eligibilities, remain within the Board's jurisdiction under 5 C.F.R. § 731.501.

The analysis preceding the Board's orders in both cases raises for the first time issues casting doubt on the authority of OPM, as well as the many agencies that take suitability actions under authority delegated by OPM, to take removal actions under 5 C.F.R. Part 731. Because these issues are not dependent in any way on specific factual determinations, including credibility determinations that are routinely made by the Board's administrative judges in the first instance, and because they raise legal issues of first impression, it is most appropriate for the Board itself to decide these issues in the first instance, subject to review by the Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit. Remanding these decisions is an unnecessary step that will only delay resolution of these important legal issues. It is appropriate – indeed necessary – that these that questions the Board itself has interposed be decided expeditiously to prevent a long period of uncertainty during which OPM, agencies, and appellants and their representatives will not know how to proceed or react.

Indeed, it is not even clear that administrative judges may answer the first question posed in the affirmative without overruling Board precedent – something that is entirely beyond their authority. Administrative and judicial efficiency, as well as the uninterrupted efficient operation of the Government's vital suitability program require the Board to adjudicate these matters without superfluous intermediate steps.

Agency Ex. 2

0000006

Ordinarily, when a party to litigation requests the Board to reopen a case to modify an order, the Board will balance "the desirability of finality and the public interest in reaching what ultimately appears to be the right result." *Payne v. United States Postal Service*, 69 M.S.P.R. 503 (1996). Here considerations of both assuring finality and promoting the public interest argue in favor of the Board reopening these matters to (i) modify its order to revoke its remand; (ii) request the parties to brief the issues presented within 60 days of the Board's granting of OPM's request; and (iii) invite the Director of OPM to intervene in the case in his discretion.

Respectfully submitted,

10/16/09

Date



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Assistant General Counsel  
Merit Systems and  
Accountability Group



DARLENE M. CARR  
Agency Representative

Agency Ex. 2

0000007

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
 MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD

HYGINUS U. AGUZIE,  
 Appellant,

v.

OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT,  
 Agency.

DOCKET NUMBER  
 DC-0731-09-0261-B-1

DATE: OCT - 6 2009

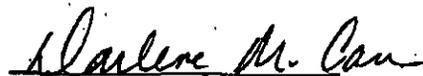
MOTION FOR STAY

The Office of Personnel Management requests that the Administrative Judge stay proceedings in the above-captioned case until the Board rules on the attached Motion to Reopen. OPM's Motion to Reopen asks the Board to revoke its remand orders in the above-captioned matter and to adjudicate itself the pure issues of law raised in its opinions and orders in these matters. Granting this motion will conserve the resources of the Board and the parties to these cases.

Respectfully submitted,



Steven E. Abow  
 Assistant General Counsel  
 Agency Representative



Darlene M. Carr  
 Agency Representative

Attachment

Agency Ex. 3

0000001

