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**DISBARRED LAWYER SENTENCED  
FOR BANKRUPTCY FRAUD CHARGES**

GREENBELT, Maryland - Allen F. Loucks, United States Attorney for the District of Maryland, announced that today United States District Court Judge Peter J. Messitte sentenced Bridgette M. Harris, age 46, of Bowie, Maryland, a former bankruptcy lawyer, to 18 months in prison followed by three years of supervised release in connection with her guilty plea on March 26, 2004 to four counts of bankruptcy fraud and fraudulent transfer of property in bankruptcy. Harris was also ordered to pay \$8,765 in restitution to former clients and to cooperate with creditors who hold civil judgments against her. Harris was also ordered to pay \$8,765 in restitution to former clients and to cooperate with creditors who hold civil judgments against her.

In a Statement of Facts provided to the court as part of the plea agreement, Harris admitted that she practiced bankruptcy law in Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia. In June 1999, the bankruptcy court in Alexandria, Virginia barred her from practice before that court, and the bankruptcy court in Greenbelt suspended her right to practice before that court. The Maryland suspension order cited "a course of continuing conduct by [Harris] of misfeasance and nonfeasance

observed by Judges of this court” which “appeared to put her clients’ affairs in jeopardy.” The Maryland federal district court and other courts in the District of Columbia, Pennsylvania and Virginia also entered orders which suspended Harris from the practice of law and required her to disgorge fees paid by certain former clients.

Harris acknowledged that during 2000, she devised a scheme to defraud the Maryland bankruptcy court and clients when, despite her suspensions, she continued to solicit clients, request and receive fees, and file cases in the Maryland bankruptcy court. Harris is alleged to have filed bankruptcy petitions which omitted the client’s true address and substituted her address in order to improperly bring the cases in the Greenbelt court, and that she concealed her role in the cases by causing clients to file the petitions pro se or by filing the petitions in the name of another attorney, without the permission and knowledge of such attorney.

Harris also admitted to devising a separate scheme in which, because she was subject to a substantial judgment for legal malpractice held by Maryland creditors, she filed her own personal bankruptcy petition in the bankruptcy court in Brooklyn, New York. During that proceeding, Harris made numerous false statements under oath, including false representations about her social security number, address, income, personal property, and debts. During the proceedings, Harris presented altered documents, and made telephone calls to the Chapter 7 trustee falsely identifying herself as a representative of the NAACP, a judge, and judicial law clerk. After the case was transferred to the bankruptcy court in Maryland, Harris fraudulently transferred two parcels of real estate belonging to the bankruptcy estate by executing quitclaim deeds which transferred the properties to relatives. The documents contained false representations about Harris’s family members and contained a forged signature of the attorney who supposedly prepared them.

In the Statement of Facts, Harris also admitted that in 2002, she solicited bankruptcy clients

under the business name “Foreclosure Prevention Network” whose advertisements stated in part, “The Foreclosure Prevention Network/Save your Home From Foreclosure – Your Auction Has Been Scheduled/Free/Foreclosure Prevention Networking Services in Maryland, DC and Virginia/1-877-KEEP YOUR HOME....” Harris subscribed to this phone number; solicited bankruptcy clients; caused agents to meet with potential bankruptcy clients and obtained fees from them; and prepared and caused to be filed bankruptcy petitions for clients which indicated that the attorney for the debtor was an attorney in Landover, Maryland, without the attorney’s knowledge or consent.

At sentencing, United States District Judge Deborah K. Chasanow observed that Harris committed a “serious offense” that was “not victimless” and that Harris was “not terribly accepting responsibility for her own behavior.” Harris committed crimes in which she “set out to lure people who were vulnerable because of their financial situation” and “earn[ed] money in a way that was totally inappropriate,” Judge Chasanow added. The court further stated that when Harris filed her own fraudulent bankruptcy petition in New York, she “tried to circumvent the court that knew her best.”

The case is a result of an investigation conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation following a criminal referral from the Office of the United States Trustee. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Stuart A. Berman and Michael Leotta.