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### **Employers Should Prepare for Increase in I-9 Audits**

As part of the Obama administration's continuing focus on workplace enforcement, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced on February 17, 2011 that it is auditing the I-9 records of 1,000 employers. ICE did not identify the companies, but said they are of all sizes and in every state.

This is in contrast to the agency's prior focus on auditing industries historically known for using illegal workers. In addition, ICE, which in the past had been criticized for auditing mostly small businesses, announced that it has directed agents to pursue large companies, if they receive tips about possible unauthorized workers at those companies.

Strategic audits have been widely used by the Obama administration to combat employers hiring illegal workers. In October 2010, the Department of Homeland Security and ICE announced record-breaking immigration enforcement statistics under the Obama administration. Since January 2009, ICE has audited more than 3,200 employers suspected of hiring illegal labor, debarred 225 companies and individuals, and imposed approximately \$50 million in financial sanctions – more audits and debarments than during the entire previous administration.

Now that ICE has confirmed that no industry or company is immune from its audits, all companies would benefit from proactive, internal audits. Our immigration lawyers have experience in assisting clients with internal audits as well as ICE audits.

#### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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