

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Before the
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

SECURITIES ACT OF 1933

Release No. 11364 / February 4, 2025

SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934

Release No. 102332 / February 4, 2025

ACCOUNTING AND AUDITING ENFORCEMENT

Release No. 4562 / February 4, 2025

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEEDING

File No. 3-22448

In the Matter of

KAREN J. SMITH, CPA

Respondent.

**ORDER INSTITUTING PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEEDINGS
PURSUANT TO RULE 102(e) OF THE
COMMISSION'S RULES OF PRACTICE,
MAKING FINDINGS, AND IMPOSING
REMEDIAL SANCTIONS**

I.

The Securities and Exchange Commission ("Commission") deems it appropriate and in the public interest that public administrative proceedings be, and hereby are, instituted against Karen J. Smith ("Respondent" or "Smith") pursuant to Rule 102(e)(3)(i) of the Commission's Rules of Practice.¹

II.

In anticipation of the institution of these proceedings, Respondent has submitted an Offer of Settlement (the "Offer") which the Commission has determined to accept. Solely for the purpose of these proceedings and any other proceedings brought by or on behalf of the Commission, or to which the Commission is a party, and without admitting or denying the findings herein, except as to the Commission's jurisdiction over her and the subject matter of

¹ Rule 102(e)(3)(i) provides, in relevant part, that:

The Commission, with due regard to the public interest and without preliminary hearing, may, by order, . . . suspend from appearing or practicing before it any . . . accountant . . . who has been by name . . . permanently enjoined by any court of competent jurisdiction, by reason of his or her misconduct in an action brought by the Commission, from violating or aiding and abetting the violation of any provision of the Federal securities laws or of the rules and regulations thereunder.

these proceedings and the findings contained in paragraph III.2. below, which are admitted, Respondent consents to the entry of this Order Instituting Public Administrative Proceedings Pursuant to Rule 102(e) of the Commission's Rules of Practice, Making Findings, and Imposing Remedial Sanctions ("Order"), as set forth below.

III.

On the basis of this Order and Respondent's Offer, the Commission finds that:

1. Karen J. Smith, age 48, is a resident of Newburyport, Massachusetts. She was a certified public accountant in Massachusetts from 2004 to approximately 2022. Between 2007 and August 2018, she was the Controller of American Renal Associates Holdings, Inc. ("ARA"). Smith was promoted to Vice President of Finance in September 2018 and served in that role until April 2019, when she resigned from ARA. After working at ARA, Smith worked as the Controller of a private medical services company.

2. On January 21, 2025, a final judgment was entered by consent against Smith, permanently enjoining her from future violations of Sections 17(a)(2) and (3) of the Securities Act of 1933, Section 13(b)(5) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, and Rules 13b2-1 and 13b2-2 thereunder, as set forth in the judgment entered in the civil action entitled Securities and Exchange Commission v. American Renal Associates Holdings, Inc., et al., Civil Action Number 1:22-cv-10651-NMG, in the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts. The final judgment also orders Smith to pay \$43,348.59 in disgorgement, \$17,106.82 in prejudgment interest, and a \$35,000 civil money penalty, and bars her for a period of one year from serving as an officer or director of a public company.

3. The Commission's complaint alleged, among other things, that from January 2017 through the third quarter of 2018, Smith, as Controller of ARA, and later Vice President of Finance, engaged in accounting practices that operated as a fraud and resulted in ARA improperly recognizing revenue and reporting materially false revenue amounts in its financial statements filed with the Commission. The Amended Complaint alleged that Smith participated in improper adjustments to revenue, called "topside adjustments," that targeted ARA's desired financial metrics, rather than being based on ARA's actual collections experience. The Amended Complaint further alleged that Smith made misleading statements or omissions to ARA's auditors, falsified or caused to be falsified ARA's financial books and records, and failed to maintain or implement internal controls relating to its topside adjustment practices that would have ensured that ARA was properly recording revenue.

IV.

In view of the foregoing, the Commission deems it appropriate and in the public interest to impose the sanctions agreed to in Respondent Smith's Offer.

Accordingly, it is hereby ORDERED, effective immediately, that:

A. Smith is suspended from appearing or practicing before the Commission as an accountant.

B. After one year from the date of the Order, Smith may request that the Commission

consider Smith's reinstatement by submitting an application to the attention of the Office of the Chief Accountant.

C. In support of any application for reinstatement to appear and practice before the Commission as a preparer or reviewer, or a person responsible for the preparation or review, of financial statements of a public company to be filed with the Commission, other than as a member of an audit committee, as that term is defined in Section 3(a)(58) of the Exchange Act, Respondent shall submit a written statement attesting to an undertaking to have Respondent's work reviewed by the independent audit committee of any public company for which Respondent works or in some other manner acceptable to the Commission, as long as Respondent practices before the Commission in this capacity and will comply with any Commission or other requirements related to the appearance and practice before the Commission as an accountant.

D. In support of any application for reinstatement to appear and practice before the Commission as a member of an audit committee, as that term is defined in Section 3(a)(58) of the Exchange Act, as a preparer or reviewer, or as a person responsible for the preparation or review, of any public company's financial statements that are filed with the Commission, Respondent shall submit a statement prepared by the audit committee(s) with which Respondent will be associated, including the following information:

1. A summary of the responsibilities and duties of the specific audit committee(s) with which Respondent will be associated;
2. A description of Respondent's role on the specific audit committee(s) with which Respondent will be associated;
3. A description of any policies, procedures, or controls designed to mitigate any potential risk to the Commission by such service;
4. A description relating to the necessity of Respondent's service on the specific audit committee; and
5. A statement noting whether Respondent will be able to act unilaterally on behalf of the Audit Committee as a whole.

E. In support of any application for reinstatement to appear and practice before the Commission as an independent accountant (auditor) before the Commission, Respondent must be associated with a public accounting firm registered with the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (the "PCAOB") and Respondent shall submit the following additional information:

1. A statement from the public accounting firm (the "Firm") with which Respondent is associated, stating that the firm is registered with the PCAOB in accordance with the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002;
2. A statement from the Firm with which the Respondent is associated that the Firm has been inspected by the PCAOB and that the PCAOB did not identify any criticisms of or potential defects in the Firm's quality control system that would indicate that Respondent will not receive appropriate supervision; and

3. A statement from Respondent indicating that the PCAOB has taken no disciplinary actions against Respondent since seven (7) years prior to the date of the Order other than for the conduct that was the basis for the Order.

F. If Respondent is licensed as a certified public accountant (“CPA”), then in support of any application for reinstatement, Respondent shall provide documentation showing that Respondent’s license is current and that Respondent has resolved all other disciplinary issues with any applicable state boards of accountancy. If Respondent’s CPA licensure is dependent upon reinstatement by the Commission, then Respondent shall provide documents reflecting this requirement. If Respondent has never been licensed as a CPA, then Respondent shall submit a signed affidavit truthfully stating under penalty of perjury that Respondent has never been licensed as a CPA.

G. In support of any application for reinstatement, Respondent shall also submit a signed affidavit truthfully stating, under penalty of perjury:

1. That Respondent has complied with the Commission suspension Order, and with any related orders and undertakings, including any orders in Securities and Exchange Commission v. American Renal Associates Holdings, Inc., et al., or any related Commission proceedings, including any orders requiring payment of disgorgement or penalties;
2. That Respondent undertakes to notify the Office of the Chief Accountant immediately in writing if any information submitted in support of the application for reinstatement becomes materially false or misleading or otherwise changes in any material way while the application is pending;
3. That Respondent, since the entry of the Order, has not been convicted of a felony or a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude that would constitute a basis for a forthwith suspension from appearing or practicing before the Commission pursuant to Rule 102(e)(2);
4. That Respondent, since the entry of the Order:
 - a. has not been charged with a felony or a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude as set forth in Rule 102(e)(2) of the Commission’s Rules of Practice, except for any charge concerning the conduct that was the basis for the Order;
 - b. has not been found by the Commission or a court of the United States to have committed a violation of the federal securities laws, and has not been enjoined from violating the federal securities laws, except for any finding or injunction concerning the conduct that was the basis for the Order;

- c. has not been charged by the Commission or the United States with a violation of the federal securities laws, except for any charge concerning the conduct that was the basis for the Order;
- d. has not been found by a court of the United States (or any agency of the United States) or any state, territory, district, commonwealth, or possession, or any bar thereof to have committed an offense (civil or criminal) involving moral turpitude, except for any finding concerning the conduct that was the basis for the Order; and
- e. has not been charged by the United States (or any agency of the United States) or any state, territory, district, commonwealth, or possession, civilly or criminally, with having committed an act of moral turpitude, except for any charge concerning the conduct that was the basis for the Order.

- 5. That Respondent's conduct is not at issue in any pending investigation of the Commission's Division of Enforcement, the PCAOB's Division of Enforcement and Investigations, any criminal law enforcement investigation, or any pending proceeding of a State Board of Accountancy, except to the extent that such conduct concerns that which was the basis for the Order.
- 6. That Respondent has complied with any and all orders, undertakings, or other remedial, disciplinary, or punitive sanctions resulting from any action taken by any State Board of Accountancy, or other regulatory body.

H. Respondent shall also provide a detailed description of:

- 1. Respondent's professional history since the imposition of the Order, including
 - a. all job titles, responsibilities and role at any employer;
 - b. the identification and description of any work performed for entities regulated by the Commission, and the persons to whom Respondent reported for such work; and
- 2. Respondent's plans for any future appearance or practice before the Commission.

I. The Commission may conduct its own investigation to determine if the foregoing attestations are accurate.

J. If Respondent provides the documentation and attestations required in this Order and the Commission (1) discovers no contrary information therein, and (2) determines that Respondent truthfully and accurately attested to each of the items required in Respondent's affidavit, and the Commission discovers no information, including under Paragraph I, indicating that Respondent has violated a federal securities law, rule or regulation or rule of professional conduct applicable to Respondent since entry of the Order (other than by conduct underlying

Respondent's original Rule 102(e) suspension), then, unless the Commission determines that reinstatement would not be in the public interest, the Commission shall reinstate the respondent for cause shown.

K. If Respondent is not able to provide the documentation and truthful and accurate attestations required in this Order or if the Commission has discovered contrary information, including under Paragraph I, the burden shall be on the Respondent to provide an explanation as to the facts and circumstances pertaining to the matter setting forth why Respondent believes cause for reinstatement nonetheless exists and reinstatement would not be contrary to the public interest. The Commission may then, in its discretion, reinstate the Respondent for cause shown.

L. If the Commission declines to reinstate Respondent pursuant to Paragraphs J and K, it may, at Respondent's request, hold a hearing to determine whether cause has been shown to permit Respondent to resume appearing and practicing before the Commission as an accountant.

By the Commission.

Vanessa A. Countryman
Secretary