the payment were an overpayment of tax, without consideration of any period of limitations.

(e) *Verification of information furnished by taxpayer*—(1) *In general*. For purposes of section 6694(a) and section 6694(b), the preparer generally may rely in good faith without verification upon information furnished by the taxpayer. Thus, the preparer is not required to audit, examine or review books and records, business operations, or documents or other evidence in order to verify independently the taxpayer's information. However, the preparer may not ignore the implications of information furnished to the preparer or actually known by the preparer. The preparer must make reasonable inquiries if the information as furnished appears to be incorrect or incomplete. Additionally, some provisions of the Code or regulations require that specific facts and circumstances exist— for example, that the taxpayer maintain specific documents, before a deduction may be claimed. The preparer must make appropriate inquiries to determine the existence of facts and circumstances required by a Code section or regulation as a condition to the claiming of a deduction.

(2) *Example*. The provisions of paragraph (e) of this section are illustrated by the following example:

Example. A taxpayer, during an interview conducted by the preparer, stated that he had paid $6,500 in doctor bills and $5,000 in deductible travel and entertainment expenses during the tax year, when in fact he had paid smaller amounts. On the basis of this information, the preparer properly calculated deductions for medical expenses and for travel and entertainment expenses which resulted in an understatement of liability for tax. The preparer had no reason to believe that the medical expense and travel and entertainment expense information presented was incorrect or incomplete. The preparer did not ask for underlying documentation of the medical expenses but inquired about the existence of travel and entertainment expense records. The preparer was reasonably satisfied by the taxpayer's representations that the taxpayer had adequate records (or other sufficient corroborative evidence) for the deduction of $5,000 for travel and entertainment expenses. The preparer is not subject to a penalty under section 6694.

(f) *Effective date*. Sections 1.6694–1 through 1.6694–3 are generally effective for documents prepared and advice given after December 31, 1991. However, § 1.6694–3(c)(3) (which provides that a preparer is not considered to have recklessly or intentionally disregarded a revenue ruling or notice if the position contrary to the ruling or notice has a realistic possibility of being sustained on its merits) is effective for documents prepared and advice given after December 31, 1989. Except as provided in the preceding sentence, section 6694 and the existing rules and regulations thereunder (to the extent not inconsistent with the statute as amended by the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1989), and Notice 90–20, 1990–1 C.B. 328, apply to documents prepared and advice given on or before December 31, 1991. For the effective date of § 1.6694–4, see § 1.6694–4(d).

[T.D. 8382, 56 FR 67514, Dec. 31, 1991; T.D. 8382, 57 FR 6061, Feb. 19, 1992]

§ 1.6694–2 Penalty for understatement due to an unrealistic position.

(a) *In general*—(1) *Proscribed conduct*. Except as otherwise provided in this section, if any part of an understatement of liability relating to a return of tax under subtitle A of the Internal Revenue Code or claim for refund of tax under subtitle A of the Internal Revenue Code is due to a position for which there was not a realistic possibility of being sustained on its merits, any person who is a preparer with respect to such return or claim for refund who knew or reasonably should have known of such position is subject to a penalty of $250 with respect to such return or claim for refund.

(2) *Special rule for employers and partnerships*. An employer or partnership of a preparer subject to penalty under section 6694(a) is also subject to penalty only if—

(i) One or more members of the principal management (or principal officers) of the firm or a branch office participated in or knew of the conduct proscribed by section 6694(a);

(ii) The employer or partnership failed to provide reasonable and appropriate procedures for review of the position for which the penalty is imposed; or

(iii) Such review procedures were disregarded in the formulation of the advice, or the preparation of the return or claim for refund, that included the position for which the penalty is imposed.

(b) *Realistic possibility of being sustained on its merits*—(1) *In general*. A position is considered to have a realistic possibility of being sustained on its merits if a reasonable and well-informed analysis by a person knowledgeable in the tax law would lead such a person to conclude that the position has approximately a one in three, or greater, likelihood of being sustained on its merits (realistic possibility standard). In making this determination, the possibility that the position will not be challenged by the Internal Revenue Service (e.g., because the taxpayer's return may not be audited or because the issue may not be raised on audit) is not to be taken into account. The analysis prescribed by §1.6662–4(d)(3)(ii) for purposes of determining whether substantial authority is present applies for purposes of determining whether the realistic possibility standard is satisfied.

(2) *Authorities*. The authorities considered in determining whether a position satisfies the realistic possibility standard are those authorities provided in §1.6662–4(d)(3)(iii).

(3) *Examples*. The provisions of paragraphs (b)(1) and (b)(2) of this section are illustrated by the following examples:

Example 1. A new statute is unclear as to whether a certain transaction that a taxpayer has engaged in will result in favorable tax treatment. Prior law, however, supported the taxpayer's position. There are no regulations under the new statute and no authority other than the statutory language and committee reports. The committee reports state that the intent was not to adversely affect transactions similar to the taxpayer's transaction. The taxpayer's position satisfies the realistic possibility standard.

Example 2. A taxpayer has engaged in a transaction that is adversely affected by a new statutory provision. Prior law supported a position favorable to the taxpayer. The preparer believes that the new statute is inequitable as applied to the taxpayer's situation. The statutory language is unambiguous as it applies to the transaction (e.g., it applies to all manufacturers and the taxpayer is a manufacturer of widgets). The committee reports do not specifically address the taxpayer's situation. A position contrary to the statute does not satisfy the realistic possibility standard.

Example 3. The facts are the same as in *Example 2*, except the committee reports indicate that Congress did not intend to apply the new statutory provision to the taxpayer's transaction (e.g., to a manufacturer of widgets). Thus, there is a conflict between the general language of the statute, which adversely affects the taxpayer's transaction, and a specific statement in the committee reports that transactions such as the taxpayer's are not adversely affected. A position consistent with either the statute or the committee reports satisfies the realistic possibility standard. However, a position consistent with the committee reports constitutes a disregard of a rule or regulation and, therefore, must be adequately disclosed in order to avoid the section 6694(b) penalty.

Example 4. The instructions to an item on a tax form published by the Internal Revenue Service are incorrect and are clearly contrary to the regulations. Before the return is prepared, the Internal Revenue Service publishes an announcement acknowledging the error and providing the correct instruction. Under these facts, a position taken on a return which is consistent with the regulations satisfies the realistic possibility standard. On the other hand, a position taken on a return which is consistent with the incorrect instructions does not satisfy the realistic possibility standard. However, if the preparer relied on the incorrect instructions and was not aware of the announcement or the regulations, the reasonable cause and good faith exception may apply depending on all facts and circumstances. See §1.6694–2(d).

Example 5. A statute is silent as to whether a taxpayer may take a certain position on the taxpayer's 1991 Federal income tax return. Three private letter rulings issued to other taxpayers in 1987 and 1988 support the taxpayer's position. However, proposed regulations issued in 1990 are clearly contrary to the taxpayer's position. After the issuance of the proposed regulations, the earlier private letter rulings cease to be authorities and are not taken into account in determining whether the taxpayer's position satisfies the realistic possibility standard. See §1.6694–2(b)(2) and §1.6662–4(d)(3)(iii). The taxpayer's position may or may not satisfy the realistic possibility standard, depending on an analysis of all the relevant authorities.

Example 6. In the course of researching whether a particular position has a realistic possibility of being sustained on its merits, a preparer discovers that a taxpayer took the same position on a return several years ago and that the return was audited by the Service. The taxpayer tells the preparer that the revenue agent who conducted the audit was

aware of the position and decided that the treatment on the return was correct. The revenue agent's report, however, made no mention of the position. The determination by the revenue agent is not authority for purposes of the realistic possibility standard. However, the preparer's reliance on the revenue agent's determination in the audit may qualify for the reasonable cause and good faith exception depending on all facts and circumstances. See §1.6694–2(d). Also see §1.6694–2(b)(4) and §1.6662–4(d)(3)(iv)(A) regarding affirmative statements in a revenue agent's report.

Example 7. In the course of researching whether an interpretation of a phrase incorporated in the Internal Revenue Code has a realistic possibility of being sustained on its merits, a preparer discovers that identical language in the taxing statute of another jurisdiction (e.g., a state or foreign country) has been authoritatively construed by a court of that jurisdiction in a manner which would be favorable to the taxpayer, if the same interpretation were applied to the phrase applicable to the taxpayer's situation. The construction of the statute of the other jurisdiction is not authority for purposes of determining whether the position satisfies the realistic possibility standard. See §1.6694–2(b)(2) and §1.6662–4(d)(3)(iii). However, as in the case of conclusions reached in treatises and legal periodicals, the authorities underlying the court's opinion, if relevant to the taxpayer's situation, may give a position favorable to the taxpayer a realistic possibility of being sustained on its merits. See §1.6694–2(b)(2) and §1.6662–4(d)(3)(iii).

Example 8. In the course of researching whether an interpretation of a statutory phrase has a realistic possibility of being sustained on its merits, a preparer discovers that identical language appearing in another place in the Internal Revenue Code has consistently been interpreted by the courts and by the Service in a manner which would be favorable to the taxpayer, if the same interpretation were applied to the phrase applicable to the taxpayer's situation. No authority has interpreted the phrase applicable to the taxpayer's situation. The interpretations of the identical language are relevant in arriving at a well reasoned construction of the language at issue, but the context in which the language arises also must be taken into account in determining whether the realistic possibility standard is satisfied.

Example 9. A new statutory provision is silent on the tax treatment of an item under the provision. However, the committee reports explaining the provision direct the Treasury to issue regulations interpreting the provision in a specified way. No regulations have been issued at the time the preparer must recommend a position on the tax treatment of the item, and no other authorities exist. The position supported by the committee reports satisfies the realistic possibility standard.

(4) *Written determinations.* To the extent a position has substantial authority with respect to the taxpayer by virtue of a ''written determination'' as provided in §1.6662–4(d)(3)(iv)(A), such position will be considered to satisfy the realistic possibility standard with respect to the taxpayer's preparer for purposes of section 6694(a).

(5) *When ''realistic possibility'' determined.* For purposes of this section, the requirement that a position satisfy the realistic possibility standard must be satisfied on the date prescribed by paragraph (b)(5)(i) or (b)(5)(ii) of this section, whichever is applicable.

(i) *Signing preparers*—(A) In the case of a signing preparer, the relevant date is the date the preparer signs and dates the return or claim for refund.

(B) If the preparer did not date the return or claim for refund, the relevant date is the date the taxpayer signed and dated the return or claim for refund. If the taxpayer also did not date the return or claim for refund, the relevant date is the date the return or claim for refund was filed.

(ii) *Nonsigning preparers.* In the case of a nonsigning preparer, the relevant date is the date the preparer provides the advice. That date will be determined based on all the facts and circumstances.

(c) *Exception for adequate disclosure of nonfrivolous positions*—(1) *In general.* The section 6694(a) penalty will not be imposed on a preparer if the position taken is not frivolous and is adequately disclosed. For an exception to the section 6694(a) penalty for reasonable cause and good faith, see paragraph (d) of this section.

(2) *Frivolous.* For purposes of this section, a ''frivolous'' position with respect to an item is one that is patently improper.

(3) *Adequate disclosure*—(i) *Signing preparers.* In the case of a signing preparer, disclosure of a position that does not satisfy the realistic possibility standard is adequate only if the disclosure is made in accordance with §1.6662–4(f) (which permits disclosure on a properly completed and filed Form 8275 or 8275–R, as appropriate, or on the

return in accordance with an annual revenue procedure).

(ii) *Nonsigning preparers.* In the case of a nonsigning preparer, disclosure of a position that does not satisfy the realistic possibility standard is adequate if the position is disclosed in accordance with §1.6662–4(f) (which permits disclosure on a properly completed and filed Form 8275 or 8275–R, as appropriate, or on the return in accordance with an annual revenue procedure). In addition, disclosure of a position is adequate in the case of a nonsigning preparer if, with respect to that position, the preparer complies with the provisions of paragraph (c)(3)(ii)(A) or (B) of this section, whichever is applicable.

(A) *Advice to taxpayers.* If a nonsigning preparer provides advice to the taxpayer with respect to a position that does not satisfy the realistic possibility standard, disclosure of that position is adequate if the advice includes a statement that the position lacks substantial authority and, therefore, may be subject to penalty under section 6662(d) unless adequately disclosed in the manner provided in §1.6662–4(f) (or in the case of a tax shelter item, that the position lacks substantial authority and, therefore, may be subject to penalty under section 6662(d) regardless of disclosure). If the advice with respect to the position is in writing, the statement concerning disclosure (or the statement regarding possible penalty under section 6662(d)) also must be in writing. If the advice with respect to the position is oral, advice to the taxpayer concerning the need to disclose (or the advice regarding possible penalty under section 6662(d)) also may be oral. The determination as to whether oral advice as to disclosure (or the oral advice regarding possible penalty under section 6662(d)) was in fact given is based on all facts and circumstances. Contemporaneously prepared documentation of the oral advice regarding disclosure (or the oral advice regarding possible penalty under section 6662(d)) generally is sufficient to establish that the advice was given to the taxpayer.

(B) *Advice to another preparer.* If a nonsigning preparer provides advice to another preparer with respect to a position that does not satisfy the realistic possibility standard, disclosure of that position is adequate if the advice includes a statement that disclosure under section 6694(a) is required. If the advice with respect to the position is in writing, the statement concerning disclosure also must be in writing. If the advice with respect to the position is oral, advice to the preparer concerning the need to disclose also may be oral. The determination as to whether oral advice as to disclosure was in fact given is based on all facts and circumstances. Contemporaneously prepared documentation of the oral advice regarding disclosure generally is sufficient to establish that the advice regarding disclosure was given to the other preparer.

(d) *Exception for reasonable cause and good faith.* The penalty under section 6694(a) will not be imposed if considering all the facts and circumstances, it is determined that the understatement was due to reasonable cause and that the preparer acted in good faith. Factors to consider include:

(1) *Nature of the error causing the understatement.* Whether the error resulted from a provision that was so complex, uncommon, or highly technical that a competent preparer of returns or claims of the type at issue reasonably could have made the error. The reasonable cause and good faith exception does not apply to an error that would have been apparent from a general review of the return or claim for refund by the preparer.

(2) *Frequency of errors.* Whether the understatement was the result of an isolated error (such as an inadvertent mathematical or clerical error) rather than a number of errors. Although the reasonable cause and good faith exception generally applies to an isolated error, it does not apply if the isolated error is so obvious, flagrant or material that it should have been discovered during a review of the return or claim. Furthermore, the reasonable cause and good faith exception does not apply if there is a pattern of errors on a return or claim for refund even though any one error, in isolation, would have qualified for the reasonable cause and good faith exception.

(3) *Materiality of errors.* Whether the understatement was material in relation to the correct tax liability. The reasonable cause and good faith exception generally applies if the understatement is of a relatively immaterial amount. Nevertheless, even an immaterial understatement may not qualify for the reasonable cause and good faith exception if the error or errors creating the understatement are sufficiently obvious or numerous.

(4) *Preparer's normal office practice.* Whether the preparer's normal office practice, when considered together with other facts and circumstances such as the knowledge of the preparer, indicates that the error in question would rarely occur and the normal office practice was followed in preparing the return or claim in question. Such a normal office practice must be a system for promoting accuracy and consistency in the preparation of returns or claims and generally would include, in the case of a signing preparer, checklists, methods for obtaining necessary information from the taxpayer, a review of the prior year's return, and review procedures. Notwithstanding the above, the reasonable cause and good faith exception does not apply if there is a flagrant error on a return or claim for refund, a pattern of errors on a return or claim for refund, or a repetition of the same or similar errors on numerous returns or claims.

(5) *Reliance on advice of another preparer.* Whether the preparer relied on the advice of or schedules prepared by (''advice'') another preparer as defined in §1.6694–1(b). The reasonable cause and good faith exception applies if the preparer relied in good faith on the advice of another preparer (or a person who would be considered a preparer under §1.6694–1(b) had the advice constituted preparation of a substantial portion of the return or claim for refund) who the preparer had reason to believe was competent to render such advice. A preparer is not considered to have relied in good faith if—

(i) The advice is unreasonable on its face;

(ii) The preparer knew or should have known that the other preparer was not aware of all relevant facts; or

(iii) The preparer knew or should have known (given the nature of the preparer's practice), at the time the return or claim for refund was prepared, that the advice was no longer reliable due to developments in the law since the time the advice was given.

The advice may be written or oral, but in either case the burden of establishing that the advice was received is on the preparer.

(e) *Burden of proof.* In any proceeding with respect to the penalty imposed by section 6694(a), the issues on which the preparer bears the burden of proof include whether—

(1) The preparer knew or reasonably should have known that the questioned position was taken on the return;

(2) There is reasonable cause and good faith with respect to such position; and

(3) The position was disclosed adequately in accordance with paragraph (c) of this section.

[T.D. 8382, 56 FR 67516, Dec. 31, 1991; T.D. 8382, 57 FR 6061, Feb. 19, 1992]

§ 1.6694–3 Penalty for understatement due to willful, reckless, or intentional conduct.

(a) *In general*—(1) *Proscribed conduct.* If any part of an understatement of liability relating to a return of tax under subtitle A of the Internal Revenue Code or claim for refund of tax under subtitle A of the Internal Revenue Code is due to—

(i) A willful attempt in any manner to understate the liability for tax by a preparer of the return or claim for refund; or

(ii) Any reckless or intentional disregard of rules or regulations by any such person,

such preparer is subject to a penalty of $1,000 with respect to such return or claim for refund.

(2) *Special rule for employers and partnerships.* An employer or partnership of a preparer subject to penalty under section 6694(b) is also subject to penalty only if—

(i) One or more members of the principal management (or principal officers) of the firm or a branch office participated in or knew of the conduct proscribed by section 6694(b);