# [***Law & Order: SVU Reveals 'Emotional' Nature of Barba's January Return***](https://tvline.com/2020/12/28/law-and-order-svu-barba-returns-season-22-episode-4/)

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Courtesy of NBC

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[*Law & Order: SVU*](http://tvline.com/tag/law-and-order-svu) is bringing back former ADA Rafael Barba for an “emotional courtroom battle,” NBC revealed on Monday.

Series vet Raúl Esparza’s return had been touted earlier this month by the network, which shared on Instagram, “We’ve already got something for you to look forward to. Barba returns to #SVU in 2021.”

Now, the official synopsis for Esparza’s encore has been released. In the episode “Sightless in a Savage Land” — which marks the procedural’s post-holiday comeback, airing Thursday, Jan. 7 — “The squad spends New Year’s Eve tracking down an Amber Alert, and Carisi faces off against Counselor Rafael Barba in an emotional courtroom battle.”

Hmm, Barba vs. Carisi — who is *your* money on?

Also guest-starring in the fourth episode of Season 22 are Bhavesh Patel (*The Good Wife*), Brett Parks (*The Punisher*) and teenage actress Vanessa Carrasco.

Esparza joined the lonnnng-running crime drama early in Season 14 and exited midway through Season 19, when DA Jack McCoy tried Barba for murder (after he disconnected the life support for a comatose infant with indecisive parents). Though Barba was found not guilty, the experience prompted him to quit his job; he was replaced by former Chicago ASA Peter Stone.

Esparza made a cameo midway through last season, when Barba Skyped with Benson from his new gig: investigating voter fraud in Iowa.

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