# U.S.C.A. NO. 13-11720-AA <br> UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE ELEVENTH CIRCUIT 

JOHN HITHON, Appellant
v.

TYSON FOODS, INC., Appellee.

# ON APPEAL FROM THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ALABAMA MIDDLE DIVISION <br> DC Dkt. No. 4:96-cv-3257-RRA 

## BRIEF OF AMICUS CURIAE BY NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT LAWYERS ASSOCIATION IN SUPPORT OF REVERSAL

Richard R. Renner
Kalijarvi, Chuzi, Newman \& Fitch, P.C.
1901 L St. NW, Suite 610
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 466-8696 direct
(202) 331-9260 office
rrenner@kcnlaw.com
Margaret A. Harris
Butler \& Harris
1007 Heights Blvd.
Houston, Texas 77096
(713) 526-5677
margie@butlerharris.com

# Appeal No.: 13-11720-AA <br> JOHN HITHON v. TYSON FOODS, INC. <br> CORPORATE DISCLOSURE STATEMENT AND STATEMENT PURSUANT TO FRAP 29(C)(5) 

Pursuant to Federal Rule of Appellate Procedure 29(c), Amicus curiae hereby provide the following disclosure statements:

National Employment Lawyers Association is a professional association. It does not have any corporate parent. It does not have any stock, and therefore no publicly held company owns $10 \%$ or more of the stock of the association.

Pursuant to Eleventh Circuit Rules 26.1-1, 26.1-2, and 26.1-3, counsel for amicus certifies that, in addition to the persons and entities identified in the Certificate of Interested Persons and Corporate Disclosure Statement provided by Appellants/Plaintiffs in their initial brief, the following persons and entities have an interest in the outcome of this case.

Richard R. Renner, attorney for Amicus Curae
Margaret A. Harris, attorney for Amicus Curiae
National Employment Lawyers Association
Pursuant to Federal Rule of Appellate Procedure 29(c)(5), amicus state that no party's counsel authored the brief in whole or in part; no party's counsel contributed money that was intended to fund preparing or submitting the brief; and
no person other than amicus curiae or their counsel contributed money that was intended to fund preparing or submitting the brief.

Respectfully Submitted,
By: _ /s/ Margaret A. Harris
Margaret A. Harris, one of the attorneys for amicus

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CORPORATE DISCLOSURE STATEMENT AND STATEMENT
PURSUANT TO FRAP 29(C)(5) ..... ii
TABLE OF AUTHORITIES ..... vi
INTEREST OF AMICUS CURIAE. ..... X
STATEMENT OF ISSUES. ..... 1
SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT ..... 1
ARGUMENT ..... 2
A. The Guiding Standard for Fee Awards is "What is Necessary to Attract Capable Counsel Without Subsidizing the Legal Profession"?. 2
B. The Supreme Court Holds That the Loadstar Method is Presumptively
Reasonable, and Objectively Supportable ..... 5
C. The Fees Awarded Are Grossly Disproportionate to Those in Cases Requiring Far Less Time, and Far Fewer Years. ..... 9
D. A Failure to Compensate Plaintiffs' Counsel Adequately for Representing Individuals with Employment Cases Creates a Barrier to
Adequate Representation of Most Plaintiffs. ..... 11
E. The High Rate of Pro Se Case Filings in the District Courts Makes it Critical That Awards Be Sufficient to Attract Capable Counsel. ..... 14
CONCLUSION ..... 15
List of Attachments. ..... 17
CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE ..... 17
CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE ..... 17

## TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

## CASES

Bass v. Dellagicoma, 2013 WL 3336760 (D.N.J. June 28, 2013). ..... 10
Blanchard v. Bergeron, 489 U.S. 87 (1989) ..... 4
Blum v. Stenson, 465 U.S. 886 (1984) ..... 4, 5
Durham v. Jones, 2012 WL 3985224 (D. Md. Sept. 10, 2012). ..... 10
Gurung v. Malhotra, 851 F. Supp. 2d 583, 598 (S.D.N.Y. 2012) ..... 11
Hensley v. Eckerhart, 461 U.S. 424 (1983). ..... 3, 4
Hickey v. Columbus Consol. Gov't, 2011 WL 1314762 (M.D. Ga.
March 10, 2011). ..... 10
Hilburn v. New Jersey Dep't of Corr., 2012 WL 3864951 (D.N.J.
Sept. 5, 2012) ..... 11
Kent v. United States, 383 U.S. 541 (1966) ..... 13
Lambert v. Fulton County, 151 F.Supp.2d 1364 (N.D. Ga. 2000). ..... 10
Lewallen v. City of Beaumont, 2009 WL 2175637 (E.D. Tx. July 20, 2009), ..... 10
Newman v. Piggie Park Enterprises, Inc., 390 U.S. 400 (1968). ..... 3
Norman v. Hous. Auth. of City of Montgomery, 836 F.2d 1292 (11th Cir. 1988). ..... 5
Pennsylvania v. Delaware Valley Citizens' Council for Clean Air, 478 U.S. 546
(1986). ..... 3, 5
Perdue v. Kenny A., 559 U.S. 542 (2010) ..... 4, 5, 7-9
Pruett v. Harris County Bail Bond Bd., 593 F.Supp.2d 944 (S.D.Tex.2008) ..... 11
Reinforcing Ironworkers Union Local 416, 2013 WL 4506447 (D. Nev.
Aug. 23, 2013) ..... 10
Solomon v. City of Gainesville, 796 F.2d 1464 (11th Cir.1986) ..... 4
Villegas v. Metro. Gov't of Davidson County, 2012 WL 4329235 (M.D. Tenn.
Sept. 20, 2012) ..... 11
Yule v. Jones, 766 F.Supp.2d 1333 (N.D. Ga. 2010) ..... 4
STATUTES
42 U.S.C. Sec. 1988 ..... 3-5
Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, 42 U.S.C. Sec. 2000e,
et seq ..... 2, 3, 13
OTHER AUTHORITY
H.R. Rep. No. 94-1558 (1976) ..... 4
Judicial Conference of the United States, Committee on Court Administration and
Case Management, Civil Litigation Management Manual (2d ed. 2010),
Chapter 7, Part D (Pro Se Cases) ..... 15
S. Rept. No. 94-1011(1976), U.S. Code Cong. \& Admin. News 1976 ..... 4

## INTEREST OF AMICUS CURIAE

The National Employment Lawyers Association ("NELA") is the largest professional membership organization in the country comprised of lawyers who represent workers in labor, employment, and civil rights disputes. Founded in 1985, NELA advances employee rights and serves lawyers who advocate for equality and justice in the American workplace. NELA and its 68 circuit, state, and local affiliates have a membership of over 3,000 attorneys who are committed to working on behalf of those who have been treated illegally in the workplace. To ensure that the rights of working people are protected, NELA has filed numerous amicus curiae briefs before the U.S. Supreme Court and other federal appellate courts. NELA's amicus briefs address the proper interpretation of federal civil rights and worker protection laws. NELA also undertakes continuing legal education programs and advocacy on behalf of workers throughout the United States.

Amicus has filed amicus briefs in the U.S. Supreme Court on many occasions, including those filed in Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church \& Sch. v. E.E.O.C., 565 U.S. ----, 132 S. Ct. 694 (2012); Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire \& Rubber Co., 550 U.S. 618 (2007); National Railroad Passenger Corp. v. Morgan, 536 U.S. 101 (2002); Burlington Northern \& Santa Fe Railway Co. v. White, 126 S. Ct. 1671 (2006); Pennsylvania State Police v. Suders, 542 U.S. 129
(2004); Desert Palace, Inc. v. Costa, 539 U.S. 90 (2003); Swierkiewicz v. Sorema N.A., 534 U.S. 506 (2002); Reeves v. Sanderson Plumbing Products, Inc., 530 U.S. 133 (2000); and Faragher v. City of Boca Raton, 524 U.S. 775 (1998). It has also filed amicus briefs in this Court, including those in Scantland v. Jeffry Knight, Inc., 721 F.3d 1308 (11th Cir. 2013) and Strong v. KIMC Investments, Inc., 472 Fed. Appx. 886 (11th Cir. July 3, 2012).

The attorney fees provisions of statutes such as Title VII are essential to ensuring that low-wage workers with relatively small claims can enforce their rights. These provisions allow counsel, especially solo practitioners or small firm attorneys, to take cases they could not afford to do on a contingency basis where the potential recovery is so limited. Attorneys' fees provisions aid clients in obtaining experienced counsel in complex and lengthy litigation. NELA has an interest in this case because of its implications for individuals who seek meaningful access to justice in employment cases.

NELA seeks to participate in this appeal because its members and staff screen large numbers of potential administrative and judicial cases per year. Both potential clients and the potential attorneys they contact know that civil rights litigation requires a multi-year commitment. And, the vast majority of potential clients are unable to pay anything resembling a commercial fee. In making decisions whether to continue representing employees confronting workplace
discrimination or retaliation, and which employees they can represent, plaintiffs' attorneys need a clear understanding of what courts will award if they prevail. A rate that discounts their time to an increasing degree the longer the matter drags on provides a built-in headwind to potential clients seeking counsel, a built-in disincentive for the attorneys Congress sought to encourage, and a built-in subsidy for civil rights violators from plaintiffs' attorneys.

## STATEMENT OF ISSUES

1. Whether the district court's decision is contrary to the Congressional mandate that fee awards in civil rights cases be such as to attract capable counsel.
2. Whether the district court violated its obligation under the law to base its decision on a meaningful, objective basis.
3. Whether the district court's decision is facially unjust and constitutes an abuse of discretion.
4. Whether the district court's decision will operate to discourage competent counsel from undertaking the representation of individuals seeking to vindicate their civil rights without the ability to pay those attorneys, and thereby increase the likelihood of significantly multiplying the number of pro se plaintiffs seeking relief in the federal judicial system.

## SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

In order to attract competent counsel to represent individuals aggrieved by unlawful discrimination in employment - whether it be under Title VII or other civil rights laws - prevailing plaintiffs must be awarded attorneys' fees in an amount that is sufficient to induce capable attorneys to undertake their
representation. The district court abused its discretion by reducing the fees requested by $80 \%$ and provides no meaningful, objective reason for that decision. The award is vastly disproportionate to the number of hours other courts found both reasonable and compensable in other civil rights cases, which involved much less time to complete.

If allowed to stand, the decision below will make counsel harder to obtain for victims of civil rights violations with meritorious claims, and the difficulties will be greatest for those-even those with claims of great merit-who are poor and cannot afford to pay much as the case goes along. If this court were to affirm, then civil rights enforcement could easily be relegated to those young lawyers who have not yet figured out that the promise of a reasonable fee award means something substantially less than the prevailing market rate times the hours reasonably expended.

## ARGUMENT

## A. The Guiding Standard for Fee Awards is "What is Necessary to Attract Capable Counsel Without Subsidizing the Legal Profession"?

Citing to the legislative history of Title VII, the Supreme Court noted in 1968 that "it was evident that enforcement [of Title VII's prohibition against employment discrimination] would prove difficult and that the Nation would have to rely in part upon private litigation as a means of securing broad compliance with
the law." Newman v. Piggie Park Enterprises, Inc., 390 U.S. 400, 401 (1968). And it was thus necessary to encourage the private bar to undertake these cases. After all, a successful plaintiff achieves a goal that both serves individual justice and vindicates a policy that Congress considered "of the highest priority." Id. at 402. To encourage individuals to avail themselves of the remedies established in Title VII and seek judicial relief so as to bring an end to racist practices in the workplace, Congress enacted a provision to allow for an award of counsel fees against the law-breaking parties. Id.

The purpose of § 1988 is to ensure effective access to the judicial process for people with civil rights grievances. Hensley v. Eckerhart, 461 U.S. 424, 429 (1983). To facilitate those individuals' effective access to the judicial system, it is necessary that they be represented by competent counsel. The primary means by which that goal can be met, of course, is that counsel be compensated sufficiently for their work. The very touchstone of fee awards is to compensate those who prevail in an amount necessary to attract capable counsel. As noted in 1986, "[A] 'reasonable' fee is a fee that is sufficient to induce a capable attorney to undertake the representation of a meritorious civil rights case." Pennsylvania v. Delaware Valley Citizens' Council for Clean Air, 478 U.S. 546, 565 (1986). "[I]f plaintiffs ... find it possible to engage a lawyer based on the statutory assurance that he will be
paid a 'reasonable fee,' the purpose behind the fee-shifting statute has been satisfied. Perdue v. Kenny A., 559 U.S. 542, 552 (2010) (citations omitted).

While the statute itself does not provide a specific definition of what constitutes a "reasonable" fee, opinions by the Supreme Court, as well as the legislative history of the statute, provide that guidance. In Blum v. Stenson, for example, the Court rejected an argument that attorney's fees for nonprofit legal service organizations should be based on cost. 465 U.S. 886, 895 (1984). It noted that the amount to be awarded under § 1988 should be governed by the same standards that prevail "in other types of equally complex Federal litigation, such as antitrust cases...." Id. at 893-894 (citing S. Rept. No. 94-1011, p. 6 (1976), U.S. Code Cong. \& Admin. News 1976, pp. 5908, 5913); see also H.R. Rep. No. 941558, p. 8 (1976).

While the district court does have discretion in determining the amount to award as a reasonable fee, that discretion is not limitless - and "the prevailing party 'should ordinarily recover an attorney's fee unless special circumstances would render such an award unjust.'" Blanchard v. Bergeron, 489 U.S. 87, 89 n. 1 (1989) (citing Hensley v. Eckerhart, 461 U.S. 424, 429 (1983)). See also Yule v. Jones, 766 F.Supp.2d 1333 (N.D. Ga. 2010) (citing Solomon v. City of Gainesville, 796 F.2d 1464, 1466 (11th Cir.1986)).

## B. The Supreme Court Holds That the Loadstar Method is Presumptively Reasonable, and Objectively Supportable

The Supreme Court has long advised that the lodestar - the "product of reasonable hours times a reasonable rate" - "is presumed to be the reasonable fee contemplated by [42 U.S.C.] § 1988." Blum, 465 U.S. at 897. There is, in fact, "[a] strong presumption that the lodestar figure ... represents a 'reasonable' fee," which "is wholly consistent with the rationale behind the usual fee-shifting statute." Delaware Valley, 478 U.S. at 565.

Although the lodestar method is not perfect, it has, in the Supreme Court's words, "several important virtues." Perdue v. Kenney A., 559 U.S. 542, 551-552 (2010). One advantage is that it relies upon "the prevailing market rates in the relevant community." Id. (citing Blum v. Stenson, 465 U.S. 886, 895 (1984)). This aspect of the lodestar method "produces an award that roughly approximates the fee that the prevailing attorney would have received if he or she had been representing a paying client who was billed by the hour in a comparable rate." Id. The second virtue of the lodestar method is that it is "readily administrable" and "objective," and thus "cabins the discretion of trial judges, permits meaningful judicial review, and produces reasonably predictable results." Id. (internal quotations and citations omitted). See also Norman v. Hous. Auth. of City of Montgomery, 836 F.2d 1292, 1299 (11th Cir. 1988) (the advantage of the lodestar
approach is that "it produces a more objective estimate and [thus] ought to be a better assurance of more even results.").

In its fee award to Hithon's counsel, the district court acknowledged that it was to be guided by applicable Supreme Court law, and the law of this Circuit, and apply the lodestar method so as to reach a reasonable fee. Dkt. 478 at 9-10. But, in calculating what would have been the presumptively reasonable award of fees by following the lodestar method, it seriously departed from its acknowledged duty to "give principled reasons" for its decisions. Id. Its analysis began as one would anticipate. It reviewed Hithon's fee petition and, after considering Tyson's response in opposition, it identified specific, identifiable time entries that it found problematic. See id. at 28-41. It criticized Hithon's counsel for, for example, seeking an award of fees for what it characterized as "numerous hours ... spent on interviews and depositions of the other plaintiffs and on hours concerning unsuccessful claims." Id. at 28-32. ${ }^{1}$ The district court also prepared a four-page list of time entries it found to be insufficiently detailed. Id. at 33-36. And it prepared a three-page list of tasks that it identified as being improperly clerical. Id. at 36-38.

Despite its apparent ability to identify the time entries it found objectionable, it

[^0]nonetheless made a global cut of all hours submitted for all professional services by eighty percent $(80 \%)$. Id. at 28 . It did not explain how it arrived at this figure, or how it chose this figure over various alternative numbers such as $10 \%, 25 \%$, or even $40 \%$.

This is the very type of ill-advised judgment the Supreme Court rejected in Perdue. There, the Supreme Court considered and rejected the district court's decision to enhance the fees calculated in accordance with the lodestar method by a magnitude approximating the number the district court in the instant case used to cut the plaintiff's recoverable hours. That enhancement was seventy-five percent ( $75 \%$ ) (as compared to an $80 \%$ reduction by this district court). The Court rejected the enhancement because that court failed to provide a fact-based, objective justification for that large enhancement:

The court increased the lodestar award by $75 \%$ but, as far as the court's opinion reveals, this figure appears to have been essentially arbitrary. Why, for example, did the court grant a $75 \%$ enhancement instead of the $100 \%$ increase that respondents sought? And why $75 \%$ rather than $50 \%$ or $25 \%$ or $10 \%$ ?

559 U.S. at 557. The district court made the same error when deciding to reduce Hithon's counsel's fees by an arbitrary $80 \%$.

In Perdue, the effect of the enhancement awarded increased the top rate for the attorneys to more than $\$ 866$ an hour. The district court, however, failed to
explain why this rate should be awarded, much less point to anything in the record that showed that this rate was appropriate for the relevant market. Id.

Showing a similar lack of objectivity, and going in the opposite direction, the district court in the instant case issued an opinion that decreased the top rate for Hithon's lead counsel, Alicia Haynes, to $\$ 60.25$ ! As shown in the plaintiff's revised summary of hours, he sought compensation for a total of 2,687.50 hours that Ms. Haynes spent on the litigation (after she excluded altogether 1,500 hours for work on unsuccessful claims and unsuccessful plaintiffs, Dkt. 431-8 at 7, and after post-submission deletions of 82.75 hours). Dkt. 477-1 at 27. But, it then awarded, without any objective justification, only 434.37 hours for Ms. Haynes services. Dkt. 478 at 45. This was an $84 \%$ reduction in the hours sought for lead counsel's time in a case that spanned 17 years!

The abuse of discretion is further demonstrated by an analysis of the effective hourly rate awarded to lead counsel. Given the dollar amount that the district court found appropriate to award for Ms. Haynes' services over the 17-year history of this case, its decision effectively cut lead counsel's hourly rate to $\$ 60.60 .{ }^{2}$ Nowhere in the district court's Order is there any explanation as to why this rate should be awarded, much less any citation to any evidence in the record

[^1]that showed that this rate was appropriate for the relevant market. Cf. Perdue, 559 U.S. at 557 (no explanation for why the fee was enhanced by $75 \%$ as opposed to any other number).

## C. The Fees Awarded Are Grossly Disproportionate to Those in Cases Requiring Far Less Time, and Far Fewer Years

The district court's abuse of discretion, and the injustice of its fee award, is further demonstrated by a comparison to fee awards in other civil rights cases. In total, the district court decided to compensate Hithon's successful counsel for only 490.92 hours. Dkt. 478 at 45-46. The period of time for which this award was rendered litigation spanned 17 years - from the filing of the case on December 16, 1996, (Dkt. 1), to the date of its Order, March 19, 2013 - or 196 months. An analysis of decisions when other courts have determined the number of hours reasonably necessary and compensable in civil rights cases puts this district court's decision in stark perspective.

In a case litigated for 44 months from the time of filing until the award of fees after a successful jury verdict in a lawsuit challenging the police department's failure to offer the female officer a detective's position because of her gender, for example, the district court found that $1,780.20$ hours of counsel's time were
reasonable and compensable. Lewallen v. City of Beaumont, 2009 WL 2175637
(E.D. Tx. July 20, 2009), aff'd, 394 Fed. App'x 38 (5th Cir. 2010). ${ }^{3}$

Here is an abbreviated table of other, select cases identifying the number of months between the dates on which each was filed to the date of the district court's decision as to the number of hours spent by plaintiff's counsel that were reasonably spent and thus compensable:

| Case: | No. Months | No. Hours |
| :--- | :---: | :---: |
| Hithon v. Tyson | 196 months | 490.92 |
| Reinforcing Ironworkers Union <br> Local 416, 2013 WL 4506447 (D. <br> Nev. Aug. 23, 2013) | 28 months | 391.75 |
| Bass v. Dellagicoma, 2013 WL <br> 3336760 (D.N.J. June 28, 2013) | 39 months | 627.65 |
| Lambert v. Fulton County, 151 <br> F.Supp.2d 1364 (N.D. Ga. 2000), <br> aff'd, 253 F.3d 588 (11th Cir. | 44 months | $2,299.50^{3}$ |
| 2000), cert. denied, 122 S.Ct. 2361 <br> (2002) |  |  |
| Durham v. Jones, 2012 WL <br> 3985224 (D. Md. Sept. 10, 2012) | 20 months | 429.60 |
| Hickey v. Columbus Consol. Gov't, <br> 2011 WL 1314762 (M.D. Ga. <br> March 10, 2011) | 45 months | $739.17^{4}$ |

[^2]| Hilburn v. New Jersey Dep't of Corr., 2012 WL 3864951 (D.N.J. Sept. 5, 2012) | 56 months | 1,041.50 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Gurung v. Malhotra, 851 F. Supp. 2d 583, 598 (S.D.N.Y. 2012). | 20 months | 818.82 |
| Villegas v. Metro. Gov't of Davidson County, 2012 WL 4329235 (M.D. Tenn. Sept. 20, 2012) | 42 months | 1,653.27 |
| Pruett v. Harris County Bail Bond Bd., 593 F.Supp.2d 944, 948 (S.D.Tex.2008) | 63 months | 1,317 ${ }^{5}$ |

Further details about these decisions are provided in the table attached hereto as Attachment A.

## D. A Failure to Compensate Plaintiffs' Counsel Adequately for Representing Individuals with Employment Cases Creates a Barrier to Adequate Representation of Most Plaintiffs.

Amicus believes that plaintiffs will face increased difficulty in obtaining capable counsel if counsel will receive compensation that does not adequately compensate them for the years of professional services spent in the representation of individuals who are without means to pay attorneys' fees on an hourly basis. The operation of a law office is expensive, with regular outlays for rent, utilities, libraries, access to WestLaw or LEXIS, salaries for staff, and something on which the attorney can live. These must be paid, or the attorney will also have to borrow

[^3]in order to finance the continuation of his or her cases until those cases are resolved and result in fee awards. The position taken by the district court, and advocated by Tyson, creates two barriers to adequate representation of employment plaintiffs.

First, the practice of employment law is complex enough to be a specialty of its own, and counsel who devote their professional services to this field can provide services more efficiently, and with more value, than counsel who simply dabble in the field. If plaintiffs' counsel are not compensated adequately for the time spent during the inherently lengthy course of litigation, with the objectively derived loadstar as the presumptively appropriate fee award, this area of practice will not retain the capable counsel it now has, victims of discrimination and retaliation will find it even more difficult to retain capable counsel, and defendants will, ironically, have to pay even larger fee awards as the remaining less capable counsel have to re-invent the wheel time after time. It might be thought that counsel can support cases that will bear long-delayed fruit by taking on other work. However, that is only practical if the other work is not similarly handicapped, i.e., outside the area of employment law. Diversification of this kind would necessarily diminish the level of expertise brought to the field by plaintiffs' counsel, a loss that cannot be of benefit either to their clients or to the courts who must adjudicate these cases. And, even assuming all this could be accomplished, this would simply
take what should be an expense to discriminating and retaliatory defendants who have lost on the merits, and transfer this expense to the other clients of plaintiff's counsel, who would then have to pay higher hourly fee rates in order to support this subsidy to discriminating and retaliatory defendants. No policy in reason or law supports such a result.

Second, the knowledge that the plaintiff and his or her counsel's economic hardship will increase with delay may encourage some defendants to refuse early and reasonable settlement offers and demand that their counsel engage in "Stalingrad defenses" in the hope that financial exhaustion will force acceptance of an unreasonable settlement or even abandonment of the cause.
"The right to representation by counsel is not a formality. . . . It is of the essence of justice." Kent v. United States, 383 U.S. 541, 561 (1966). With a case that has as much notoriety as this one - especially with the notable, the fee award will resonate widely among lawyers who might take up the cause of enforcing Title VII and other Civil Rights Laws. If this Court were to affirm, then civil rights enforcement will be relegated to those young lawyers who have not yet figured out that the statutory promise of a reasonable fee is illusory in this Circuit. The consequence of this reputation will be an increase in pro se litigation.

## E. The High Rate of Pro Se Case Filings in the District Courts Makes it Critical That Awards Be Sufficient to Attract Capable Counsel.

The attached statistical charts were downloaded from the web site of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts on October 8, 2013. Table C-13 ${ }^{6}$ shows that, in the district courts of the Eleventh Circuit, there were 25,038 civil, non-prisoner cases filed in the year preceding September 30, 2012 (the latest table publicly available), and that 3,624 of them - 14.5 percent of the total - were filed pro se. This is greater than the national average of 12 percent.

Table C-13 does not break down the subject matter of the suits in question, but Table C-3 ${ }^{7}$ shows that there were 21,235 private civil cases (excluding 5,296 prisoner petitions) filed in this Circuit's district courts in the twelve months ending September 30, 2012 (the latest table publicly available). Of these, 4,879 were civil rights cases and 4,129 were labor cases, a category including the Fair Labor Standards Act, 29 U.S.C. §§ 201 et seq. Thus, 9,008 of the 21,285 non-prisoner private civil cases were civil rights or labor cases. This is 42.3 percent - over 4 in 10 of the total private civil non-prisoner cases. It seems reasonable to conclude that a substantial number of the civil rights and labor cases are filed pro se.

[^4]Pro se filings consume disproportionately large amounts of judicial resources, and are growing. Judicial Conference of the United States, Committee on Court Administration and Case Management, Civil Litigation Management Manual (2d ed. 2010), Chapter 7, Part D (Pro Se Cases), states at 136:

Cases involving a pro se litigant present special challenges for several reasons, not the least of which is your obligation to ensure equal justice for litigants who may have little understanding of legal procedure or the law. At each stage in the case, you may need to take actions not required in cases in which all parties are represented by counsel.

Pro se employment discrimination cases are unfortunately common. Thus the reduction of a fee request by an exorbitant 80 percent does not serve the statutory purpose of making competent counsel available. It instead deters competent counsel from taking employment discrimination cases, thus exacerbating the existing problem the courts face in the high numbers of pro se litigants.

## CONCLUSION

The district court's fee award constitutes an abuse of discretion. It fails to achieve the goal of reasonably compensating counsel who represent those who seek to enforce their civil rights. It stands, not to ensure effective access to the judicial process for people with civil rights grievances, but instead to discourage competent counsel from assisting those individuals - thus presenting the risk of a
further increase of pro se plaintiffs presenting their civil rights cases to the judiciary.

Respectfully submitted,

# NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT LAWYERS ASSOCIATION 

/s/ Richard R. Renner

Richard R. Renner<br>Kalijarvi, Chuzi, Newman \& Fitch, P.C.<br>1901 L St. NW, Suite 610<br>Washington, DC 20036<br>(202) 466-8696 direct<br>(202) 331-9260 office<br>rrenner@kcnlaw.com<br>Margaret A. Harris<br>Butler \& Harris<br>1007 Heights Blvd.<br>Houston, Texas 77096<br>(713) 526-5677

## List of Attachments

A. Spreadsheet Analysis of Selected District Court Cases Awarding Fees
B. Table C-13, Administrative Office of the United States Courts
C. Table C-3, Administrative Office of the United States Courts

## CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE

1. This brief complies with the type-volume limitation of Fed. R. App. P. 29 and Fed. R. App. P. 32(a)(7)(B) because this brief contains 3,976 words, excluding the parts of the brief exempted by Fed. R. App. P. 32(a)(7)(B)(iii).
2.This brief complies with the typeface requirements of Fed. R. App. P. 32(a)(5) and the type style requirements of Fed. R. App. P. 32(a)(6) because the brief has been prepared in a proportionally spaced typeface using Corel WordPerfect X3 in 14 point Times New Roman.
/s / Margaret A. Harris
Attorney for Amicus Curiae, National
Employment Lawyers Association

## CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on this 8th day of October 2013, the foregoing Brief of the National Employment Lawyers Association As Amicus Curiae in Support of Plaintiff-appellant was filed electronically pursuant to Circuit Rule 25 and that service was thereby effected electronically upon counsel of record.
/s/ Richard R. Renner

Case: 13-11720 Date Filed: 10/29/2013 Page: 28 of 37


AMICUS CURIAE
Table C－13．
Civil Pro Se

|  |  | $\begin{aligned} & \stackrel{\sim}{N} \\ & \stackrel{\sim}{\sigma} \end{aligned}$ | $\underset{\sim}{\text { N }}$ | $\frac{0}{0} \underset{\sim}{\infty} \underset{\sim}{\underset{\sim}{N}} \underset{\sim}{N} \stackrel{O}{N}$ |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  |  | $\begin{aligned} & \text { O్م } \\ & \text { N } \\ & \text { No } \end{aligned}$ | ¢ | $\stackrel{\circ}{n} \text { 았 }$ |  | 청 |  |
|  |  | $\begin{aligned} & \text { N } \\ & \underset{\sim}{\mathcal{N}} \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { N్N } \\ & \hline \end{aligned}$ |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | $\begin{aligned} & \text { Op } \\ & \text { ¢ } \end{aligned}$ | $\stackrel{\Im}{\square}$ |  | ¢ |  |  |
| б |  | $\begin{aligned} & \mathbb{G} \\ & \text { © } \\ & \text { in } \end{aligned}$ | ¢ | ¢ ¢ ${ }_{\circ}^{\circ}$ |  |  |  |
|  | ㄷ．． | $\begin{aligned} & \text { O} \\ & \text { M } \\ & \text { Hi } \end{aligned}$ | － |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | ले ले ì | $\begin{aligned} & \text { R } \\ & \\ & \hline \end{aligned}$ | $\underset{\sim}{\sim}$ |  |  |  |
|  | $\begin{aligned} & \mathscr{N} \text { © } \\ & \text { © } \\ & \text { oin © } \\ & 0 \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 야 } \\ & \stackrel{y}{n} \end{aligned}$ | $\stackrel{9}{6}$ |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | N $\stackrel{\text { N }}{\sim}$ | ＋ |  |  | が $-\infty \times N \sim$ |  |
|  |  |  | O | $\stackrel{\text { ¢ }}{\stackrel{\text { n }}{\text { a }}}$ | $\underset{\sim}{2}$ | $\stackrel{\stackrel{\sim}{c}}{\stackrel{\circ}{\circ}}$ |  |

Table C-13. (September 30, 2012—Continued)

| Circuit and District | Total Civil Cases | Pro Se Cases | Non-Pro Se Cases | Prisoner Petitions |  |  | Nonprisoner Petitions |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  |  |  |  | Total <br> Cases | Pro Se Cases | Non-Pro Se Cases | Total Cases | Pro Se Cases | Non-Pro Se Cases |
| 5TH | 29,377 | 8,943 | 20,434 | 6,911 | 6,651 | 260 | 22,466 | 2,292 | 20,174 |
| LA, E | 3,050 | 646 | 2,404 | 517 | 488 | 29 | 2,533 | 158 | 2,375 |
| LA, M | 865 | 337 | 528 | 272 | 266 | 6 | 593 | 71 | 522 |
| LA, W | 3,125 | 872 | 2,253 | 751 | 731 | 20 | 2,374 | 141 | 2,233 |
| MS,N | 780 | 242 | 538 | 202 | 200 | 2 | 578 | 42 | 536 |
| MS,S | 1,994 | 696 | 1,298 | 570 | 559 | 11 | 1,424 | 137 | 1,287 |
| TX,N | 6,776 | 1,863 | 4,913 | 1,366 | 1,320 | 46 | 5,410 | 543 | 4,867 |
| TX, E | 3,480 | 1,176 | 2,304 | 981 | 958 | 23 | 2,499 | 218 | 2,281 |
| TX, S | 5,887 | 1,847 | 4,040 | 1,228 | 1,162 | 66 | 4,659 | 685 | 3,974 |
| TX,W | 3,420 | 1,264 | 2,156 | 1,024 | 967 | 57 | 2,396 | 297 | 2,099 |
| 6TH | 26,027 | 5,979 | 20,048 | 4,319 | 3,967 | 352 | 21,708 | 2,012 | 19,696 |
| KY,E | 1,445 | 351 | 1,094 | 300 | 290 | 10 | 1,145 | 61 | 1,084 |
| KY,W | 1,399 | 322 | 1,077 | 237 | 228 | 9 | 1,162 | 94 | 1,068 |
| MI, E | 5,789 | 1,394 | 4,395 | 952 | 860 | 92 | 4,837 | 534 | 4,303 |
| MI, W | 1,954 | 932 | 1,022 | 814 | 739 | 75 | 1,140 | 193 | 947 |
| $\mathrm{OH}, \mathrm{N}$ | 7,993 | 792 | 7,201 | 532 | 496 | 36 | 7,461 | 296 | 7,165 |
| $\mathrm{OH}, \mathrm{S}$ | 2,674 | 636 | 2,038 | 379 | 325 | 54 | 2,295 | 311 | 1,984 |
| TN, E | 1,673 | 415 | 1,258 | 328 | 308 | 20 | 1,345 | 107 | 1,238 |
| TN, M | 1,626 | 539 | 1,087 | 391 | 358 | 33 | 1,235 | 181 | 1,054 |
| TN, W | 1,474 | 598 | 876 | 386 | 363 | 23 | 1,088 | 235 | 853 |
| 7TH | 22,158 | 5,363 | 16,795 | 3,823 | 3,531 | 292 | 18,335 | 1,832 | 16,503 |
| IL,N | 10,654 | 2,068 | 8,586 | 1,286 | 1,120 | 166 | 9,368 | 948 | 8,420 |
| IL, C | 1,341 | 616 | 725 | 513 | 492 | 21 | 828 | 124 | 704 |
| IL, S | 3,615 | 459 | 3,156 | 421 | 401 | 20 | 3,194 | 58 | 3,136 |
| IN,N | 1,720 | 494 | 1,226 | 336 | 315 | 21 | 1,384 | 179 | 1,205 |
| IN,S | 2,585 | 857 | 1,728 | 682 | 654 | 28 | 1,903 | 203 | 1,700 |
| WI,E | 1,319 | 469 | 850 | 314 | 293 | 21 | 1,005 | 176 | 829 |
| WI,W | 924 | 400 | 524 | 271 | 256 | 15 | 653 | 144 | 509 |
| 8TH | 14,762 | 4,446 | 10,316 | 3,085 | 2,814 | 271 | 11,677 | 1,632 | 10,045 |
| AR,E | 2,011 | 886 | 1,125 | 797 | 759 | 38 | 1,214 | 127 | 1,087 |
| AR,W | 1,168 | 787 | 381 | 223 | 219 | 4 | 945 | 568 | 377 |
| IA,N | 522 | 142 | 380 | 140 | 115 | 25 | 382 | 27 | 355 |
| IA, S | 777 | 285 | 492 | 254 | 220 | 34 | 523 | 65 | 458 |
| MN | 3,406 | 549 | 2,857 | 320 | 304 | 16 | 3,086 | 245 | 2,841 |
| MO,E | 2,678 | 702 | 1,976 | 507 | 472 | 35 | 2,171 | 230 | 1,941 |
| MO,W | 2,828 | 697 | 2,131 | 509 | 490 | 19 | 2,319 | 207 | 2,112 |
| NE | 733 | 172 | 561 | 179 | 86 | 93 | 554 | 86 | 468 |
| ND | 265 | 73 | 192 | 53 | 52 | 1 | 212 | 21 | 191 |
| SD | 374 | 153 | 221 | 103 | 97 | 6 | 271 | 56 | 215 |

Table C-13. (September 30, 2012—Continued)

Table C-3.
U.S. District Courts-Civil Cases Commenced, by Nature of Suit and District,
During the 12-Month Period Ending September 30, 2012

Table C-3. (September 30, 2012-Continued)


## Table C－3．（September 30，2012－Continued）

| Circuit and District | Total Civil Cases | U．S．Cases |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Prisoner Petitions |  |  |  |  |  | Habeas <br> Corpus <br> Alien <br> Detainee | Forfeitures and Penalties | LaborSuits | Social <br> Security | All Other |
|  |  | Total U．S． Civil Cases | Contract | Real Property | Tort Action | Civil Rights | Motions to Vacate Sentence | Habeas Corpus General | Death <br> Penalty | Prison Civil Rights | Prison Condition | Mandamus and Other |  |  |  |  |  |














$\infty \quad 0$
Page 3 of 6
のー＇m＇rのनーm
のー＇N＇mm＇＇＇
득


が ${ }_{\mathrm{N}}{ }^{-1}$
아
커Nー＇ㅇN＇＇
ถ゚ ㄱㄱ＇＇ナ＇ㄱㄱ＇＇＇

$\stackrel{8}{6}$





욱 육















$\stackrel{N}{N}$


NO
ๆ̧
No



$\begin{array}{lr} & \text { LA，E }\end{array} \begin{array}{r}\text { 29，377 } \\ 3,050\end{array}$
$\begin{array}{lr} & \text { LA，E }\end{array} \begin{array}{r}\text { 29，377 } \\ 3,050\end{array}$
Circuit
and
District



$\stackrel{\infty}{\infty}$



## I



## Table C-3. (September 30, 2012-Continued)



## Table C－3．（September 30，2012—Continued）

| Circuit and District | Total Civil Cases | U．S．Cases |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Prisoner Petitions |  |  |  |  |  | Habeas Corpus Alien Detainee | Forfeitures and Penalties | Labor Suits | Social Security | $\begin{aligned} & \text { All } \\ & \text { Othe } \end{aligned}$ |
|  |  | Total U．S． Civil Cases | Contract | Real Property | Tort Action | $\begin{aligned} & \text { Civil } \\ & \text { Rights } \end{aligned}$ | Motions to Vacate Sentence | Habeas Corpus Genera | Death Penalty | Prison Civil Rights | Prison Condition | Mandamus and Other |  |  |  |  |  |


|  |
| :---: |
|  |
| бのナ |







が
ず $\sim_{\sim}^{\sim} \sim \sim_{n}^{n}$



 $\qquad$
 © 





 ペーナナナ $\underset{\sim}{\infty} \underset{\sim}{\infty}$ n m m

ヘั○



 $\underset{\sim}{\text { Nom }}$


ㅗㅗㅇ


## 동


Table C-3. (September 30, 2012-Continued)


[^5]
[^0]:    ${ }^{1}$ While the district court stated that the itemized time slips it listed in this category of improper charges were but "a small sampling of the improper/inappropriate time entries claimed by the plaintiff," $i d$. at 28 n .13 , the fact that the list extended to four pages of the Order belies that conclusory assessment.

[^1]:    ${ }^{2}$ This figure begins with the fee awarded for Ms. Haynes' services - $\$ 162,888.75$ (Dkt. 478 at 45 ) which is divided by the total hours Hithon sought to recover for her services - 2,687.50 (Dkt. 477-1 at 27.) The hours sought excluded the 1,500 hours Ms. Haynes identified and excluded as time spent on unsuccessful claims, and claims of unsuccessful plaintiffs. (Dkt. 328-1 at 7.)

[^2]:    ${ }^{3}$ As is evident by the date of the district court's award, the number of hours found compensable did not include any time counsel spent successfully defending the verdict on appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals.
    ${ }^{4}$ The number of hours excludes time spent when the matter was appealed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit. Due to the mostly adverse ruling by this Court, the plaintiff deleted billing for the time spent on appeal.

[^3]:    ${ }^{5}$ The number of hours awarded includes one appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.

[^4]:    ${ }^{6}$ Table C-13 is attached as Attachment B.
    ${ }^{7}$ Table C-3 is attached as Attachment C.

[^5]:    ${ }^{1}$ FELA = Federal Employers Liability Act.
    ${ }^{2}$ Includes cases filed in previous years as consolidated cases that thereafter were severed into individual cases.

