

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF
FLORIDA, OCALA DIVISION

Joseph A. Rodriguez v. Trulieve, Inc.

Rodriguez v. Trulieve · No. 5:25-cv-488-RBD-PRL · Decided December 11, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida denied without prejudice the parties’ joint motion for approval of an FLSA settlement and dismissal with prejudice. The court found that the proposed agreement’s broad, non-severable release was unsupported by independent consideration and extended to unidentified nonparties. The parties were permitted to file a renewed motion with a revised settlement agreement or other appropriate dismissal documents by January 2, 2026.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida, Ocala Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Philip R. Lammens
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida, Ocala Division
DECIDED	December 11, 2025
DOCKET	5:25-cv-488-RBD-PRL
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff brought an FLSA overtime action in state court. Defendant removed the action to federal court, and the parties jointly moved for court approval of an FLSA settlement and dismissal with prejudice.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court scrutinized the proposed FLSA settlement to determine whether it constituted a fair and reasonable resolution of a bona fide dispute and whether the release provisions were permissible.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential

TOPICS

- flsa
- employment law
- civil procedure
- damages
- remedies

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the proposed FLSA settlement was a fair and reasonable resolution of a bona fide dispute warranting court approval.
2. Whether the proposed broad, non-severable release was permissible where the parties did not show independent consideration or explain the benefit to the plaintiff.
3. Whether the release could extend to unidentified nonparties in an FLSA settlement agreement.
4. What procedural relief was appropriate after the settlement-approval motion was denied.

HOLDINGS

1. The court could not approve the proposed FLSA settlement because the agreement's broad general release was not shown to be fair and reasonable and the parties did not adequately explain the consideration supporting it.
2. The court would not approve an FLSA release extending to various unidentified nonparties where the parties supplied no adequate explanation or supporting authority for releasing those persons and entities.
3. If the parties resolved the matter without compromise, they could file a stipulation of dismissal under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 41; otherwise, they could submit a renewed settlement-approval motion addressing the identified defects.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"To approve the settlement of FLSA claims, the Court must determine whether the settlement agreement is a 'fair and reasonable res[o]lution of a bona fide dispute' of the claims raised pursuant to the FLSA."
(Section II)

"Accordingly, the parties' Joint Motion for Court Approval of Settlement of FLSA Claim and Dismissal with Prejudice (Doc. 21) is DENIED without prejudice." (Section IV)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Rodriguez alleged that Trulieve failed to pay him overtime wages during his employment from December 2021 through July 2024. The proposed settlement required Trulieve to pay \$15,000, consisting of \$7,500 in alleged unpaid overtime and \$7,500 in liquidated damages, plus \$8,500 in attorney's fees and costs. The agreement also contained a broad, non-severable release covering claims against Trulieve, affiliated entities, unnamed individuals, and other nonparties.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Rodriguez sued Trulieve in state court for unpaid overtime compensation accruing from December 2021 through July 2024. Trulieve removed the case on August 6, 2025. After the parties reported reaching a settlement, they filed a joint motion seeking approval under Lynn's Food Stores and dismissal with prejudice. The court denied

the motion without prejudice and allowed the parties to file a renewed motion, a revised settlement agreement, or other appropriate dismissal documents.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- *Lynn's Food Stores, Inc. v. United States*, 679 F.2d 1350, 1352-55 (11th Cir. 1982)
- *Bonetti v. Embarq Mgmt. Co.*, 715 F. Supp. 2d 1222, 1228 (M.D. Fla. 2009)
- *Shearer v. Estep Const., Inc.*, No. 6:14-cv-1658-ORL-41G, 2015 WL 2399952, at *3 (M.D. Fla. Apr. 1, 2015)
- *Moreno v. Regions Bank*, 729 F. Supp. 2d 1346, 1351-53 (M.D. Fla. 2010)
- *Davis v. JP Sports Collectibles Inc.*, No. 2:16-cv-154-FTM-CM, 2016 WL 7474571, at *2 (M.D. Fla. Dec. 29, 2016)
- *Bright v. Mental Health Res. Ctr., Inc.*, No. 3:10-cv-427-J-37TEM, 2012 WL 868804, at *4 (M.D. Fla. Mar. 14, 2012)
- *Weldon v. Backwoods Steakhouse, Inc.*, No. 6:14-cv-79-ORL-37TBS, 2014 WL 4385593, at *4 (M.D. Fla. Sept. 4, 2014)
- *Buntin v. Square Foot Mgmt. Co., LLC*, No. 6:14-cv-1394-ORL-37GJK, 2015 WL 3407866, at *3 (M.D. Fla. May 27, 2015)
- *Raynon v. RHA/Fern Park Mr., Inc.*, No. 6:14-cv-1112-ORL-37TBS, 2014 WL 5454395, at *3 (M.D. Fla. Oct. 27, 2014)
- *Prieto v. Scheeler's Cafe De Marco, Inc.*, No. 2:16-cv-139-FTM-99CM, 2017 WL 359220, at *3 (M.D. Fla. Jan. 9, 2017)
- *Capers v. Noah's Ark Repair Serv., Inc.*, No. 6:11-cv-457-ORL-28TB, 2013 WL 3153974, at *3 (M.D. Fla. June 19, 2013)
- *Vergara v. Delicias Bakery & Rest., Inc.*, No. 6:12-cv-150-ORL-36KRS, 2012 WL 2191299, at *2-3 (M.D. Fla. May 31, 2012)
- *Erling v. Am. Grille*, No. 2:17cv-350-FTM-29MRM, 2019 WL 3240749, at *6 (M.D. Fla. July 2, 2019)
- *Lavin v. Pierhouse-Ft Myers Beach LTD*, No. 2:18-cv-801-FTM-99MRM, 2019 WL 2178295, at *3 (M.D. Fla. Apr. 30, 2019)
- *Rivera v. U.S.A. Transporter Servs., Inc.*, No. 6:16-cv-2158-ORL-37TBS, 2017 WL 11049718, at *2 (M.D. Fla. Apr. 7, 2017)
- *Correa v. House of Glass, Inc.*, No. 6:17-cv-676-ORL-28TBS, 2017 WL 8794847, at *4-5 (M.D. Fla. Oct. 19, 2017)
- *Schultz v. Tartini at Rock Springs Ridge, LLC*, No. 6:17-cv-815-ORL-37KRS, 2017 WL 11062615, at *2 (M.D. Fla. Sept. 22, 2017)
- *Lanier v. Exec. Garden Titusville Hotel, LLC*, No. 6:18-cv-927-ORL-40KRS, 2018 WL 4762976, at *3 (M.D. Fla. Sept. 17, 2018)

- Turner v. HJB Express Freight, Inc., No. 6:17-cv-655-ORL-37KRS, 2018 WL 3151680, at *4 (M.D. Fla. Apr. 20, 2018)
- Bragg v. Marriott Int'l, Inc., No. 6:22-cv-265-WWB-EJK, 2022 WL 17082043, at *4 (M.D. Fla. Nov. 18, 2022)

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