

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Saranay Sonny Ballungay v. Ricoh USA, Inc.

Ballungay v. Ricoh USA, Inc. · No. 2:24-cv-10785-JLS-AGR · Decided March 24, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Central District of California denied Plaintiff Saranay Sonny Ballungay’s motion to remand a putative wage-and-hour class action against Ricoh USA, Inc. The court held that CAFA minimal diversity was satisfied and that Defendant demonstrated by a preponderance of the evidence that the amount in controversy exceeded \$5 million. The court relied on allegations concerning unpaid travel time and unreimbursed mileage, together with evidence regarding the proposed class size and workweeks.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Central District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Josephine L. Staton
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Central District of California
DECIDED	March 24, 2025
DOCKET	2:24-cv-10785-JLS-AGR
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff filed a putative wage-and-hour class action in California state court. Defendant removed under the Class Action Fairness Act, and Plaintiff moved to remand, arguing that minimal diversity and CAFA's amount-in-controversy requirement were not established.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The removing defendant bears the burden of establishing by a preponderance of the evidence that the aggregate amount in controversy exceeds \$5 million when the amount is not evident from the complaint. The court evaluates the complaint and may consider summary-judgment-type evidence, while rejecting speculation, conjecture, and unreasonable assumptions.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court order; persuasive only
PARTIES	Saranay Sonny Ballungay v. Ricoh USA, Inc.

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QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether CAFA's minimal-diversity requirement was satisfied.
2. Whether Defendant established by a preponderance of the evidence that the aggregate amount in controversy exceeded CAFA's \$5 million threshold.
3. Whether the assumptions underlying Defendant's wage and mileage calculations were sufficiently tethered to the allegations of the complaint to establish the amount in controversy.

HOLDINGS

1. CAFA's minimal-diversity requirement was satisfied because Plaintiff was a California citizen and Ricoh was a citizen of Delaware, where it was incorporated, and Pennsylvania, where its principal place of business was located.
2. Defendant established by a preponderance of the evidence that the amount in controversy exceeded \$5 million.
3. Ricoh's assumptions that each class member worked one hour of unpaid overtime per week and incurred 150 unreimbursed miles per week were reasonable because they were sufficiently tethered to the complaint's systemic allegations.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“ “[N]o antiremoval presumption attends cases invoking CAFA, which Congress enacted to facilitate adjudication of certain class actions in federal court.” ” (4)

“A corporation’s principal place of business is its “nerve center”—the place where the corporation’s “high level officers direct, control, and coordinate the corporation’s activities.” ” (5)

“The Perez court went on to clarify that the assumptions underlying a removing defendant’s violation rates “do not necessarily need to be supported by evidence” if the assumptions are “founded on the allegations of the complaint.” ” (8)

“While “equally valid assumptions” could be made that would lower the amount in controversy below the jurisdictional threshold, the Court finds that Defendant’s assumptions are sufficiently tethered to the systemic allegations of the Complaint.” (9)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Ballungay brought a putative California wage-and-hour class action against his former employer, Ricoh USA, Inc., alleging that service technicians were required to drive personal vehicles between their homes and customer sites while transporting work equipment. He alleged that Ricoh failed to pay for certain travel time, overtime,

and mileage and sought statutory penalties, restitution, and other relief. Ricoh submitted employment data showing 258 California nonexempt service technicians and 41,406 class workweeks, and calculated more than \$5 million in alleged wage and mileage exposure using violation-rate assumptions based on the complaint.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed suit in Los Angeles County Superior Court on November 5, 2024. Defendant removed the action to the Central District of California on December 13, 2024, invoking CAFA jurisdiction. The district court denied Plaintiff's motion to remand.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- *Mortley v. Express Pipe & Supply Co.*, 2018 WL 708115, at *1 (C.D. Cal. Feb. 5, 2018)
- *Dart Cherokee Basin Operating Co., LLC v. Owens*, 135 S. Ct. 547, 554 (2014)
- *Ibarra v. Manheim Investments, Inc.*, 775 F.3d 1193, 1197–99 (9th Cir. 2015)
- *Moe v. GEICO Indem. Co.*, 73 F.4th 757, 761 (9th Cir. 2023)
- *Singer v. State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co.*, 116 F.3d 373, 377 (9th Cir. 1997)
- *Hertz Corp. v. Friend*, 559 U.S. 77, 80–81 (2010)
- *Altamirano v. Shaw Indus., Inc.*, 2013 WL 2950600, at *3 (N.D. Cal. June 14, 2013)
- *Cohn v. Petsmart, Inc.*, 281 F.3d 837, 840 n.1 (9th Cir. 2002)
- *Perez v. Rose Hills Co.*, 2025 WL 811096, at *3–5 (9th Cir. Mar. 14, 2025)
- *Dudley v. Eli Lilly & Co.*, 778 F.3d 909, 917 (11th Cir. 2014)
- *Alvarado v. Scholle IPN Packaging, Inc.*, 2020 WL 6537652, at *4 (E.D. Cal. Nov. 6, 2020)
- *Del Thibodeau v. ADT LLC*, 2019 WL 1746141, at *4 (S.D. Cal. Apr. 18, 2019)
- *Gattuso v. Harte-Hanks Shoppers, Inc.*, 42 Cal. 4th 554, 569 (2007)

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