

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF
KENTUCKY, OWENSBORO DIVISION

Kathryn Knight v. Peabody Energy, et al.

Knight v. Peabody Energy, No. 4:26-cv-101-BJB (W.D. Ky. May 19, 2026) · No. 4:26-cv-101-BJB · Decided
May 19, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Western District of Kentucky adopted a magistrate judge’s Report and Recommendation and entered the parties’ agreed order concerning attorneys’ fees and costs. The court ordered the defendants to pay \$5,285.00 to the plaintiff’s attorneys and directed the plaintiff to file a stipulation of dismissal or status report by June 19, 2026.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Western District of Kentucky, Owensboro Division
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Western District of Kentucky, Owensboro Division
DECIDED	May 19, 2026
DOCKET	4:26-cv-101-BJB
DISPOSITION	approved
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The district court reviewed a magistrate judge's report and recommendation concerning the parties' proposed agreed order for attorneys' fees and costs. No party objected, and the district court adopted the recommendation and entered the agreed order.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	When no party objects to a magistrate judge's report and recommendation under 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(B), the district court may adopt it without review; the court nevertheless reviewed the recommendation for error.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court order

TOPICS

- civil procedure
- attorney fees
- costs
- administrative law
- remedies

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the district court could adopt the magistrate judge's report and recommendation without de novo review when no party filed an objection.
2. Whether the court should adopt the parties' agreed order awarding \$5,285.00 in attorneys' fees and cost reimbursements.

HOLDINGS

1. Because no party objected to the magistrate judge's report and recommendation, the district court could adopt it without further review.
2. The court adopted the parties' agreed fee order and ordered the defendants to pay \$5,285.00 in attorneys' fees and cost reimbursements to Knight's attorneys.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"So the law allows this Court to adopt it without review."

"Accordingly, the Court adopts the Report and Recommendation (DN 11), incorporates it by reference as part of this order, adopts the parties' proposed agreed fee order (DN 7), and orders the Defendants to pay \$5,285.00 in attorneys' fees and cost reimbursements to the Plaintiff's attorneys."

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Kathryn Knight is the surviving spouse of a Kentucky coal miner who suffered from black-lung disease. An administrative law judge awarded Knight damages under the Black Lung Benefits Act in 2021, and a review board affirmed in 2023. Knight alleged that the defendants had not paid an additional \$14,120.88 compensation amount identified in a letter from the Director of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs. The parties subsequently agreed that the defendants would pay \$5,285.00 in attorneys' fees and costs.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

An administrative law judge awarded Knight black-lung benefits in 2021, and a review board affirmed in 2023. After the defendants appealed to the Sixth Circuit and later settled with the Director of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs, Knight filed this action alleging that the defendants had not paid additional compensation. Before the defendants responded to the complaint, the parties submitted an agreed fee order. The matter was referred to Magistrate Judge Brennenstuhl, who recommended adoption of the proposed order; the district court adopted the recommendation and ordered payment of \$5,285.00 in attorneys' fees and costs.

DISPOSITION

approved

CASES CITED

- Thomas v. Arn, 474 U.S. 140, 150 (1985)

OPINION

Knight

PER CURIAM.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

WESTERN DISTRICT OF KENTUCKY

OWENSBORO DIVISION

KATHRYN KNIGHT PLAINTIFF

v. No. 4:26-cv-101-BJB

PEABODY ENERGY, ET AL. DEFENDANTS

ORDER ADOPTING REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

AND ENTERING THE AGREED ORDER

Kathryn Knight is the surviving spouse of a Kentucky coal miner who suffered from black lung disease. According to her Complaint, an administrative law judge awarded Knight damages under the Black Lung Act in 2021 and a review board affirmed the award in 2023. Though the Defendants (Peabody Energy, Peabody Coal Company, Peabody Coal Company LLC, Heritage Coal Company, and Peabody Energy Corporation) appealed the review board's decision to the Sixth Circuit, the Defendants eventually moved to dismiss the appeal after reaching a settlement with the Director of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs, who administers the Black Lung Benefits Act. Complaint (DN 1) at 4–5. Knight alleges that the Director also issued a letter determining that the Defendants owed her \$14,120.88 in additional compensation. See Letter (DN 1-5). Knight's Complaint, filed in February 2026, alleges the Defendants have not paid this additional compensation. A little more than a month later, and before the Defendants filed any response to the Complaint, the parties filed a proposed agreed fee order. Agreed Order (DN 7). The proposed order stipulated that Defendants would pay attorneys' fees and costs of \$5,285.00. The Court referred the proposed agreed order to Magistrate Judge Brennenstuhl, who issued a report recommending the Court sign the proposed order. R&R (DN 11); 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(B). No party objected to the Report and Recommendation. So the law allows this Court to adopt it without review. See *Thomas v. Arn*, 474 U.S. 140, 150 (1985). Nevertheless, the Court has reviewed and finds no error in Judge Brennenstuhl's conclusions. Accordingly, the Court adopts the Report and Recommendation (DN 11), incorporates it by reference as part of this order, adopts the parties' proposed agreed fee order (DN 7), and orders the Defendants to pay \$5,285.00 in attorneys' fees and cost reimbursements to the Plaintiff's attorneys. The Defendants shall issue payment in that amount to Vowels Law PLC, P.O. Box 2082, Henderson, Kentucky 42419- 2082. Further, consistent with the Plaintiffs notice that she will voluntarily dismiss the case after the Court enters the agreed order (DN 9), the Court orders the Plaintiff to either file a stipulation of dismissal or an appropriate status report by June 19, 2026.

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