

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF MARYLAND

Cledin Emilson Arredondo Esquivel v. East Coast Tree Care, Inc.,
Sharon Catherine Schmitt, and Michelle Marie Sheckells

Civil No. RDB-24-304 · No. Civil No. RDB-24-304 · Decided March 9, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Maryland reconsidered its prior award of attorneys’ fees and costs in a settled Fair Labor Standards Act and Maryland Wage and Hour Law action. Applying Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 59(e) and the Fourth Circuit’s decision in *De Paredes v. Zen Nails Studio LLC*, the court held that it had erred by treating the district’s fee matrix as presumptively reasonable. The court recalculated the award, increasing attorneys’ fees from \$22,330.98 to \$25,192.30 and changing costs from \$1,252.12 to \$1,126.90.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Maryland
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Richard D. Bennett
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Maryland
DECIDED	March 9, 2026
DOCKET	Civil No. RDB-24-304
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff moved under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 59(e) for reconsideration of the court's prior award of attorneys' fees and costs following approval of a settlement in a Fair Labor Standards Act and Maryland Wage and Hour Law action.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	A Rule 59(e) motion may be granted to accommodate an intervening change in controlling law, account for newly available evidence, or correct a clear error of law or prevent manifest injustice. The court has broad discretion in awarding, denying, or altering attorneys' fees and costs.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished district court memorandum opinion; precedential status unknown
PARTIES	Cledin Emilson Arredondo Esquivel v. East Coast Tree Care, Inc., Sharon Catherine Schmitt, Michelle Marie Sheckells

TOPICS

wage and hour

flsa

attorney fees

motion for reconsideration

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

employment law

wage and hour

civil procedure

remedies

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the court's prior attorneys' fee award should be reconsidered under Rule 59(e) because the court had treated a local-rule fee matrix as presumptively reasonable.
2. Whether the reasonable lodestar amount should be recalculated using reasonable hourly rates and hours reasonably expended.
3. Whether the recalculated lodestar should be further reduced based on the simplicity of the case, billing practices, and the court's overall assessment of the litigation.

HOLDINGS

1. Reconsideration was warranted because the prior decision committed clear error by treating the District of Maryland's former fee matrix as presumptively reasonable.
2. The court may consider a fee matrix as one piece of evidence or a useful guideline, but may not give it a presumption of reasonableness; all relevant evidence must be considered.
3. The reasonable fee is calculated by multiplying reasonable hourly rates by the hours reasonably expended, considering the Johnson factors, and then exercising discretion to adjust the result.
4. A further ten-percent reduction in the fee award was appropriate based on the case's simplicity, lack of novelty, and evidence bearing on counsel's billing practices.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“a district court, when discharging its “duty” to “calculat[e] reasonable attorney’s fees,” cannot “treat a matrix as ‘presumptively reasonable’ and require special justification to deviate from it—even when that matrix is contained in the district court’s local rules.”” (at 4)

“In determining whether an hourly rate is reasonable, the Court may look to, but not find presumptively reasonable, a fee matrix set out in its Local Rules.” (at 5)

“The essential goal in shifting fees (to either party) is to do “rough justice,” not to achieve auditing perfection.” (at 17)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Esquivel alleged that his employers failed to pay overtime in violation of the Fair Labor Standards Act and Maryland Wage and Hour Law. The parties settled the damages portion of the case for \$38,000, but could not agree on attorneys' fees and costs. Esquivel sought \$37,256.50 in fees and \$1,252.12 in costs. The case involved one plaintiff, one overtime claim, no formal discovery, and early settlement negotiations.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Esquivel filed a three-count wage-and-hour action on January 30, 2024. The parties settled the underlying damages claim for \$38,000, and the court approved the settlement on December 2, 2024, leaving attorneys' fees and costs unresolved. The court awarded \$22,330.98 in attorneys' fees and \$1,252.12 in costs on July 29, 2025. Esquivel then moved for reconsideration, arguing that the court had committed clear error by treating the District of Maryland's former fee matrix as presumptively reasonable. The court granted reconsideration and amended the award to \$25,192.30 in fees and \$1,126.90 in costs.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Johnson v. Ga. Highway Express, Inc., 488 F.2d 714, 717-19 (5th Cir. 1974)
- Barber v. Kimbrell's, Inc., 577 F.2d 216, 226 n.28 (4th Cir. 1978)
- De Paredes v. Zen Nails Studio LLC, 134 F.4th 750, 753-54 (4th Cir. 2025)
- Vogel v. Harbor Plaza Ctr., LLC, 893 F.3d 1153, 1159-60 (9th Cir. 2018)
- Pac. Ins. Co. v. Am. Nat'l Fire Ins. Co., 148 F.3d 396, 403 (4th Cir. 1998)
- Hammons v. Univ. of Md. Med. Sys. Corp., 2021 WL 4951921, at *1 (D. Md. Oct. 25, 2021)
- In re Sinclair Broadcast Grp., Inc. Sec. Litig., 473 F. Supp. 3d 529, 535 (D. Md. 2020)
- U.S. Tobacco Coop. Inc. v. Big S. Wholesale of Va., LLC, 899 F.3d 236, 258 (4th Cir. 2018)
- Fox v. Vice, 563 U.S. 826, 838 (2011)
- Haywood v. Am. Airlines, Inc., 37 F.4th 954, 960 (4th Cir. 2022)
- Burnley v. Short, 730 P.2d 136, 141 (4th Cir. 1984)
- Bluefield Gas Co., 210 F.2d 620, 622 (4th Cir. 1954)
- Grissom v. The Mills Corp., 549 F.3d 313, 320-21 (4th Cir. 2008)
- McAfee v. Boczar, 738 F.3d 81, 88 (4th Cir. 2013)
- Hensley v. Eckerhart, 461 U.S. 424, 434 (1983)
- Xiao-Yue Gu v. Hughes STX Corp., 127 F. Supp. 2d 751, 763-64 (D. Md. 2001)
- EEOC v. Serv. News Co., 898 F.2d 958, 965 (4th Cir. 1990)
- Ramos v. Digit. Prosthodontics, LLC, 2025 WL 3523116, at *4-5 (D. Md. Dec. 8, 2025)
- Acker v. Craig Testing Labs. of Md., 2025 WL 254800, at *4 (D. Md. Jan. 21, 2025)
- Guillen v. Armour Home Improvement, Inc., 2024 WL 1346838, at *1-2, *12, *17 (D. Md. Mar. 29, 2024)
- Camara v. Black Diamond Rest. LLC, 2024 WL 4644635, at *3 (D. Md. Oct. 31, 2024)
- Guzman v. KP Stoneymill, Inc., 2025 WL 756645, at *1 (D. Md. Mar. 11, 2025)
- Zuniga v. Chino Mkt., LLC, 2025 WL 241000, at *1 (D. Md. Jan. 17, 2025)
- Munoz v. Telligent Masonry LLC, No. 21-2780, 2024 WL 6389129, at *1 (D.D.C. Oct. 2, 2024)

