UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

Richardson v. Sunbelt Staffing, LLC

No. 2:25-cv-00403-DJC-JDP (E.D. Cal. June 18, 2025) · No. 2:25-cv-00403-DJC-JDP · Decided June 20, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California grants Sunbelt Staffing, LLC’s motion to compel arbitration, dismiss class claims, and stay litigation. The court finds that the parties entered into a valid arbitration agreement covering Richardson’s employment-related claims and that the agreement is not unconscionable. The court requires arbitration on an individual basis, stays the case, and directs administrative closure pending arbitration.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Daniel J. Calabretta
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	June 20, 2025
DOCKET	2:25-cv-00403-DJC-JDP
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Defendant moved to compel arbitration, dismiss Plaintiff's class claims, and stay the litigation under an arbitration agreement signed during Plaintiff's employment onboarding.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	A motion to compel arbitration is evaluated under a standard similar to summary judgment. The court determines whether a valid arbitration agreement exists and whether it encompasses the dispute; the party opposing arbitration receives the benefit of reasonable doubts, and arbitration must be compelled when no genuine dispute of material fact exists regarding the agreement's existence and applicability.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential

TOPICS

employment arbitration · arbitration · unconscionability · class actions · civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

employment law · civil procedure · arbitration · contracts

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the parties formed a valid arbitration agreement.
2. Whether Richardson's employment-related claims fall within the scope of the arbitration agreement.
3. Whether the arbitration agreement is unenforceable as unconscionable.
4. Whether the agreement validly requires Richardson to pursue her claims individually rather than on a class or collective basis.
5. Whether the action should be stayed pending arbitration and administratively closed.

HOLDINGS

1. A valid arbitration agreement exists because the parties stipulated that Richardson signed the agreement and that her electronic signature is authentic.
2. Richardson's claims fall within the scope of the arbitration agreement because they arise out of or relate to the employment relationship and its termination.
3. The arbitration agreement is enforceable because it is not procedurally unconscionable and therefore is not unconscionable as a whole.
4. The arbitration agreement unambiguously requires Richardson to pursue her claims only in her individual capacity and prohibits class and collective claims.
5. The action must be stayed while the parties proceed to arbitration.

KEY QUOTATIONS

> *"For the reasons discussed below, the Court finds that the parties signed an Arbitration Agreement and that Plaintiff's claims fall under the scope of that Agreement. The Court further finds that the Arbitration Agreement is not unconscionable and is therefore enforceable."* (at 1)

> *"In weighing a motion to compel arbitration, a court must determine: (1) whether a valid agreement to arbitrate exists and, if it does, (2) whether the agreement encompasses the dispute at issue."* (at 3)

> *"Accordingly, the Agreement requires Plaintiff to arbitrate her claims on an individual basis, and the Court will stay the case pending the resolution of the arbitration proceedings."* (at 8)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Rebecca Richardson applied for and was hired by Sunbelt Staffing, LLC, which assigned her to work as a behavioral technician for a school district. During onboarding, she completed a drug screening, tuberculosis test, background check, and work-authorization verification, allegedly incurring unreimbursed costs. Sunbelt terminated her approximately two weeks later after a background check disclosed a 2001 misdemeanor. Richardson asserted individual and class claims concerning employment-screening disclosures, unreimbursed screening and examination expenses, and unfair competition, while the parties agreed that she had electronically signed an arbitration agreement.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed employment-related individual and class claims in Sacramento Superior Court on December 16, 2024. Defendant removed the action to the Eastern District of California on January 29, 2025, and moved to compel arbitration, dismiss the class claims, and stay the case. The parties ultimately agreed that they had signed a valid arbitration agreement, and the court granted Defendant's motion.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Boardman v. Pac. Seafood Grp., 822 F.3d 1011, 1017 (9th Cir. 2016)
- AT&T Mobility LLC v. Concepcion, AT&T Mobility LLC v. Concepcion, 563 U.S. 333, 351 (2011)
- Concat LP v. Unilever, PLC, 350 F. Supp. 2d 796, 804 (N.D. Cal. 2004)
- Cox v. Ocean View Hotel Corp., 533 F.3d 1114, 1119 (9th Cir. 2008)
- Three Valleys Mun. Water Dist. v. E.F. Hutton & Co., Inc., 925 F.2d 1136, 1141 (9th Cir. 1991)
- Dean Witter Reynolds, Inc. v. Byrd, 470 U.S. 213, 218 (1985)
- Knutson v. Sirius XM Radio Inc., 771 F.3d 559, 565 (9th Cir. 2014)
- Baltazar v. Forever 21, Inc., 62 Cal. 4th 1237, 1243 (2016)
- Ramirez v. Charter Commc'ns, Inc., 16 Cal. 5th 478, 492 (2024)
- Pinnacle Museum Tower Assn. v. Pinnacle Mkt. Dev. (US), LLC, 55 Cal. 4th 223, 246 (2012)
- Yeng Sue Chow v. Levi Strauss & Co., 49 Cal. App. 3d 315, 325 (1975)
- Armendariz v. Found. Health Psychcare Servs., Inc., 24 Cal. 4th 83, 114 (2000)
