

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Benny Hamilton, Anthony Killion, Kristopher Kaczanowski, Leroy Coker, and Darrel Brown v. Knight Transportation Inc. dba Arizona Knight Transportation Inc.; Knight Port Services, LLC; and Does 1 through 25, inclusive

Case No. 5:21-cv-01859-MEMF-SP (C.D. Cal. June 3, 2025) · No. 5:21-cv-01859-MEMF-SP · Decided June 3, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Central District of California partially granted Plaintiffs’ motion for class certification and granted their request for judicial notice in a wage-and-hour action against Knight Transportation Inc. and Knight Port Services, LLC. The court certified the proposed class and Subclass A concerning unpaid wages, while addressing Rule 23 requirements, choice-of-law issues, and evidentiary objections. The excerpt does not include the complete disposition of all proposed subclasses.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Central District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Maame Ewusi-Mensah Frimpong
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Central District of California
DECIDED	June 3, 2025
DOCKET	5:21-cv-01859-MEMF-SP
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiffs moved for class certification under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23 and requested judicial notice of two documents concerning electronic wage statements. The district court granted the request for judicial notice and granted class certification in part.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The district court has broad discretion in class-certification decisions, but must exercise that discretion within the framework of Rule 23. The party seeking certification bears the burden of establishing Rule 23’s requirements by a preponderance of the evidence, and the court must

	conduct a rigorous analysis, considering merits issues only to the extent relevant to Rule 23.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Nonprecedential district-court order; persuasive only
PARTIES	Benny Hamilton, Anthony Killion, Kristopher Kaczanowski, Leroy Coker, Darrel Brown v. Knight Transportation Inc. dba Arizona Knight Transportation Inc., Knight Port Services, LLC, Does 1 through 25, inclusive

TOPICS

class actions wage and hour evidence civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

class actions employment law wage and hour evidence civil procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the court should take judicial notice of the existence and contents of two public documents concerning electronic wage statements.
2. Whether the proposed class of California drivers satisfied the numerosity, commonality, typicality, adequacy, predominance, and superiority requirements of Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23.
3. Whether California choice-of-law principles prevented certification of a class containing drivers with varying work locations and residences.
4. Whether Subclass A, concerning drivers allegedly not paid for all hours worked, satisfied Rule 23.
5. Whether Subclass B, concerning drivers reimbursed no more than \$5 per month for cell-phone expenses, satisfied Rule 23.
6. Whether Subclass C, concerning inaccurate or unavailable written wage statements, satisfied Rule 23, and whether certification should be limited to inaccurate wage statements.

HOLDINGS

1. The court may take judicial notice of the existence and authenticity of the two Boise-DLSE letters and their contents, but not of disputed factual assertions contained in them.
2. The proposed class of current and former California drivers satisfied Rule 23(a)'s numerosity, commonality, typicality, and adequacy requirements and satisfied Rule 23(b)(3)'s predominance and superiority requirements.
3. Choice-of-law issues did not defeat certification because plaintiffs showed significant California contacts and defendants failed to establish that foreign law should apply.
4. Subclass A was certifiable because plaintiffs established Rule 23(a) and Rule 23(b)(3) requirements for claims that California drivers were not paid for all hours worked.

5. Subclass B was not certifiable because plaintiffs failed to show a common unlawful reimbursement policy and individualized questions about necessity, usage, sufficiency of the \$5 payment, and individual reimbursement requests would predominate.
6. Subclass C was certifiable only as to alleged inaccurate wage statements; certification was not warranted for the separate theory that defendants failed to provide paper wage statements upon request.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Rule 23 does not set forth a mere pleading standard.” (at 5)

“Moreover, the predominance test does not require that there be no individual issues—rather, the Court must weigh the prevalence and importance of these questions compared to the common questions identified previously.” (at 15)

“A court may judicially notice facts that: “(1) [are] generally known within the trial court’s territorial jurisdiction; or (2) can be accurately and readily determined from sources whose accuracy cannot reasonably be questioned.”” (at 5)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiffs are current or former California drivers employed by Knight Transportation or Knight Port who allege California wage-and-hour violations involving unpaid work time, expense reimbursement, wage deductions, rest and meal periods, and inaccurate wage statements. Plaintiffs proposed a class of California drivers and three subclasses concerning unpaid wages, cell-phone reimbursement, and wage statements. The evidence concerned defendants' compensation system, production pay, pay adjustments, driver qualification work, cell-phone use, and the form and accuracy of wage statements.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Hamilton filed the class action on November 2, 2021, and plaintiffs subsequently filed four amended complaints, with the other named plaintiffs joining in the Fourth Amended Complaint. The action was stayed while a related class settlement was considered in the Martinez action; after final approval of that settlement was denied, the stay was lifted. Plaintiffs then moved for class certification, which defendants opposed.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Raul Martinez et al. v. Knight Transportation, Inc. et al., Case No. 5:21-cv-00572 (C.D. Cal.)
- Lee v. City of Los Angeles, 250 F.3d 668, 690 (9th Cir. 2001)
- Galbraith v. County of Santa Clara, 307 F.3d 1119, 1125-26 (9th Cir. 2002)
- Navellier v. Sletten, 262 F.3d 923, 941 (9th Cir. 2001)
- Reiter v. Sonotone Corp., 442 U.S. 330, 345 (1979)

- Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. v. Dukes, 564 U.S. 338, 349-51, 359 (2011)
- Olean Wholesale Grocery Cooperative, Inc. v. Bumble Bee Foods LLC, 31 F.4th 651, 664-69 (9th Cir. 2022)
- Consolidated Rail Corp. v. Town of Hyde Park, 47 F.3d 473, 483 (2d Cir. 1995)
- Hanon v. Dataproducts Corp., 976 F.2d 497, 508 (9th Cir. 1992)
- Ellis v. Costco Wholesale Corporation, 657 F.3d 970, 985 (9th Cir. 2011)
- Mazza v. American Honda Motor Co., 666 F.3d 581, 589 (9th Cir. 2012)
- Olean Wholesale Grocery Cooperative, Inc. v. Bumble Bee Foods LLC, 31 F.4th 651 (9th Cir. 2022)
- Ward v. United Airlines, Inc., 986 F.3d 1234, 1240 (9th Cir. 2021)
- Felicia Vidrio et al. v. United Airlines, Inc., 2017 WL 1034200 (C.D. Cal. 2017)
- Loaiza v. Kinkisharyo International, L.L.C., 2022 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 198116, at *14-15
- Oman v. Delta Air Lines, Inc., 9 Cal. 5th 762, 781-83 (2020)
- Edwards v. First American Corp., 798 F.3d 1172, 1177 (9th Cir. 2015)
- Stockwell v. City & County of San Francisco, 749 F.3d 1107, 1111 (9th Cir. 2014)
- Amgen Inc. v. Connecticut Retirement Plans & Trust Funds, 568 U.S. 455, 466 (2013)

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