IN THE SUPREME COURT OF NEVADA

CHRISTOPHER THOMAS and CHRISTOPHER CRAIG, , Individually and on behalf of others similarly situated,

Petitioners,

vs.

NEVADA YELLOW CAB CORPORATION, NEVADA CHECKER CAB CORPORATION, NEVADA STAR CAB CORPORATION,

Respondents,

Electronically Filed Nov 27 2012 08:20 a.m. Sup. Ct. No. 616 facie K. Lindeman Clerk of Supreme Court Dist. Ct No.:A-12-661726-C Dept. No. XXVIII

APPELLANTS' OPENING BRIEF

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1	JURISDICTIONAL STATEMENT
2	This Court has jurisdiction over this appeal because it is an appeal of a
3	final judgment.
4	The Order of Dismissal constituting a final judgment was entered by the
5	District Court in this case on August 30, 2012 and Notice of Entry of the same
6	served by mail and filed with the district court on September 4, 2012. The
7	Notice of Appeal was served and filed on September 6, 2012.
8	STATEMENT OF ISSUES PRESENTED
9	This appeal presents the following issues:
10	(1) Whether the Nevada Constitution, Article 15, Section 16, requires
11	the payment of an hourly minimum wage to employees working as taxi drivers
12	in Nevada even though such employees are exempted from Nevada's statutory
13	minimum wage requirement, NRS 608.250(1), by N.R.S. 608.250(2)(e).
14	STATEMENT OF THE CASE
15	This case was commenced on May 11, 2012 in the Eighth Judicial
16	District Court. The appellants, Christopher Thomas and Christopher Craig
17	(hereinafter "appellants" or "Taxi Drivers") allege the appellees, Nevada
18	Yellow Cab Corporation, Nevada Checker Cab Corporation, and Nevada Star
19	Cab Corporation (hereinafter "appellees" or "Yellow Checker Star") failed to
20	compensate them with the minimum hourly wage required by the Nevada
21	Constitution. Appellants' Class Action Complaint alleged Yellow Checker Star
22	failed to pay them and a class of similarly situated Taxi Drivers the minimum
23	hourly compensation required by Nevada's Constitution.
24	Yellow Checker Star moved the district court to dismiss this case
25	pursuant to Nev. R. Civ. P. 12(b)(1) and (5), for lack of subject matter
26	jurisdiction and failure to state a claim upon which relief could be granted. That
27	motion was argued before the district court on July 30, 2012 and, by an order
28	signed on August 30,2012, and entered by the clerk of the district court on
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August 31, 2012, such motion was granted. AA 04-06.¹

STATEMENT OF FACTS

Appellants are employed by Yellow Checker Star as taxi cab drivers in
Clark County, Nevada. They claim Yellow Checker Star has, at certain times,
failed to pay them the minimum hourly compensation required by Article 15,
Section 16 of the Nevada Constitution. AA 09-13. Yellow Check Star has not
disputed that it failed to pay the Taxi Drivers the minimum hourly compensation
specified by the Nevada Constitution.

SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

Article 15, Section 16 of the Nevada Constitution (the "Nevada 10 Constitutional Minimum Wage"), independently, and without reference to any 11 Nevada statute, mandates the payment of a specified minimum amount of hourly 12 compensation to all Nevada employees except those specifically identified in 13 that same section. Such mandate requires no "implicit repeal" of NRS 14 608.250(2)(e) which, by its own express language, only exempts taxi drivers 15 from the minimum wage provisions of NRS 608.250(1). Appellants assert no 16 claim under NRS 608.250(1) and their exclusion from the minimum wage 17 requirements imposed by that statute is irrelevant. Their claim is grounded 18 directly, and solely, upon the rights independently conferred to them by 19 Nevada's Constitution, which have not, and cannot, be abrogated by NRS 20 608.250(2)(e) or any other Nevada statute. 21

Even if an "implicit repeal" of NRS 608.250(2)(e) was required for
Appellants to be entitled to Nevada's Constitutional Minimum Wage, such an
implicit repeal has occurred. This is because Nevada's Constitution, by
conferring upon Nevada employees a broad and unqualified right to a minimum
wage, has effected a revision of the entire subject of minimum wages in Nevada.

¹ Referenced page numbers of Appellant's Appendix are referred to as "AA."

See, State ex rel. Nevada Orphan Asylum v. Hallock, 16 Nev. 373, 378 (1882) 1 (constitutional amendment that addresses subject displaces prior statute) and 2 Western Realty Co. v. Reno, 172 P.2d 158, 165 (Nev. Sup. Ct. 1946) (later 3 enactment that "revises the whole subject-matter" at issue will repeal a prior 4 statute). See, also, Board of Retirement v. Superior Court, 101 Cal. App. 4th 5 1062, 1068 (Cal. Ct. App. 2002) (holding a statute is implicitly repealed by a 6 7 constitutional amendment when the latter "constitute[s] a revision of the entire subject."). 8 **APPLICABLE STANDARD OF REVIEW** 9 This Court reviews a decision by the district court to dismiss under Nev. 10 R. Civ. P. 12(b)(5) under a "rigorous appellate review" standard. See, Sanchez 11 v. Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., 221 P.3d 1276, 1280 (Nev. 2009). The plaintiff's 12 factual allegations must be accepted as true and dismissal is improper if those 13 allegations sufficiently allege the elements of the claims asserted. *Id.* In 14 reviewing the district court's dismissal order, every reasonable inference is 15 drawn in the plaintiff's favor. Id. 16 ARGUMENT 17 I. **NEVADA'S CONSTITUTION SETS FORTH AN INDEPENDENT** 18 LEGAL REQUIREMENT FOR THE PAYMENT OF MINIMUM WAGES TO WHICH NRS 608.250(2)(E) IS INAPPLICABLE 19 Appellants' Claim for Minimum Wages was Brought Directly Under Nevada's Constitution, Not NRS 608.250, and Such Statute Was Not Implicated Under the Facts Pleaded in the A. 20 21 Complaint 22 The district court conducted no independent analysis and instead adopted 23 the holding of an unreported federal district court decision, Lucas v. Bell 24 Transportation, 2009 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 72549, (D. Nev. June 23, 2009). Lucas 25 never discusses the express language of Nevada's Constitutional Minimum 26 Wage stating that it is imposing upon each employer an obligation "to pay a 27 wage to each employee of not less than the hourly rates set forth in this 28

1 section." (Emphasis provided). Lucas simply assumed, without discussion of such language or any analysis of whether the Nevada Constitution imposes its 2 own freestanding minimum wage requirement, that "[t]he focus of the 3 Amendment was the actual minimum wage." Id. p. 23. It then went on to 4 conduct only an "implied repeal" analysis and erroneously concludes no such 5 repeal was established because "...this Court cannot conclude that there is no 6 other reasonable construction of the Amendment than that it repealed NRS 7 608.250." Id. 8

Lucas ignores the express and unambiguous language of both the Nevada 9 Constitution and NRS 608.250(2). The Nevada Constitution makes no 10 reference to NRS 608.250 and expressly imposes its own self contained and 11 specified minimum wage obligation. The exemptions set forth in NRS 12 608.250(2) are expressly limited to the minimum wage obligations imposed by 13 NRS 608.250(1).² Lucas transformed Nevada's Constitutional Minimum Wage 14 into a mere modification of NRS 608.250(1), which in turn was subject to the 15 limitations imposed by NRS 608.250(2). In doing so *Lucas* acted in derogation 16 of a fundamental principle of law: that a constitutional provision supercedes, 17 and cannot be modified by, any legislative enactment, except when the 18 constitutional provision itself confers that power upon the legislature. No such 19 power is granted to the Nevada Legislature by the Nevada Constitutional 20 provision at issue in this case. 21

Lucas also engaged solely in an "implied repeal" analysis, and an
erroneous one at that, without considering how NRS 608.250 and the Nevada
Constitution are not in conflict and act in tandem within their defined spheres of
authority, as discussed, *infra. Lucas* assumes either NRS 608.250 was repealed

 ² The relevant limiting language of NRS 608.250(2) states: "The provisions of subsection 1 [NRS 608.250(1)] do not apply to..."

1 or if it was not repealed it controls the otherwise clear and unambiguous language of the Nevada Constitution. Contrary to the conclusion of Lucas, a 2 failure by the Nevada Constitution to expressly or implicitly repeal NRS 3 608.250(2) is irrelevant. The Nevada Constitution requires all employers pay 4 the minimum wage specified by that "section" of the Nevada Constitution to all 5 employees as specified therein. It also grants employees a broad right to seek 6 relief for its violations. It is entirely self-executing and refers to no Nevada 7 statutes. The most "reasonable construction" of the Nevada Constitution, one 8 not even considered by *Lucas*, is that it imposes its own independent minimum 9 wage obligations pursuant to its express and unambiguous language, 10 irrespective of whether it effectuated a repeal of NRS 608.250(2) and is, in any 11 event, not subject to such statute. 12

Appellants' complaint makes no claim for minimum wages under NRS 13 608.250 and their exemption from that statute's minimum wage requirements is 14 wholly irrelevant. The only claim for relief made in this case is pursuant to 15 Nevada's Constitution, which sets forth its own specified minimum wage rates. 16 That same provision of Nevada's Constitution, at subsection B thereof, confers 17 upon an employee a right to "bring an action against his or her employer in the 18 courts of this State" for "all remedies available under the law or in equity" that 19 are "appropriate to remedy any violation" of such constitutional provision. The 20 Taxi Drivers' claim for relief, both substantively and procedurally, is 21 completely derived from, and controlled by, the terms of Nevada's Constitution. 22 It has no relationship whatsoever to NRS 608.250. 23

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Rather than recognize the issue is not what Nevada's *statutes* impose as a minimum wage obligation, but what its *constitution* requires, the district court, 25 and Lucas, examined the wrong issue, and found the Nevada Constitution 26 imposes no separate, independent, minimum wage obligation. Such an 27 assumption was clearly erroneous and contrary to the language of the Nevada 28

Constitution.

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The Nevada Constitution Creates Minimum Wage Requirements That are Independent of, and Unconcerned With, the Requirements Of NRS 608.250(1) and its B. Exemptions

4 The district court's decision was also erroneous because it adopted the 5 view that the *only* thing the Nevada Constitution commanded in respect to the 6 minimum wage was an increase in its amount. The district court found, relying upon Lucas, that "[t]he focus of the Minimum Wage Amendment was the actual minimum wage." AA 05. The district court provided no support for this 9 finding, which is clearly contrary to the express language of the Nevada 10 Constitution, which does not refer anywhere to raising the amount of the 11 minimum wage *otherwise required* under Nevada law. Instead it expressly 12 imposes its own independent minimum wage requirements in its very first 13 sentence: 14

Nevada Constitution, Article 15, Section 16

Payment of minimum compensation to employees.

A. Each employer shall pay a wage to each employee of not less than the hourly rates *set forth in this section*. (Emphasis provided)

The Nevada Constitution does not reference the pre-existing minimum 18 wage set forth in NRS 608.250(1), much less discuss how it is merely "raising" 19 such minimum wage as *Lucas* and the district court found. It refers solely to the 20 requirements *of this section* meaning the minimum wage expressly set forth in 21 Nevada's Constitution, such minimum wage being specified at \$5.15 or \$6.15 22 an hour and subject to a number of requirements and future increases as set forth 23 in that same constitutional section. 24

The Nevada Legislature had the power to address minimum wage issues, 25 both before and after the Nevada Constitution's amendment imposed certain 26 minimum wage requirements. The legislature exercised that power and enacted 27 certain minimum wage standards (NRS 608.250(1)) and exceptions thereto 28

(NRS 608.250(2)) prior to the Nevada Constitutional Minimum Wage's creation. The Nevada Legislature's decision to do so is irrelevant to this case. There is no support in the law, or otherwise, that the Nevada Legislature can now, by the enactment of a mere statute, override any of the provisions of 4 Nevada's Constitution. Nor can statutes it has passed prior to the Nevada Constitution's minimum wage amendment, such as NRS 608.250(2), create exceptions to the minimum wage otherwise required by such constitutional amendment.

The district court's findings would be correct if Nevada's Constitution 9 read "Each employer shall pay a wage to each employee [to whom the minimum 10 wage statutes of Nevada are applicable] of not less than the hourly rates set 11 forth in this section." The foregoing bracketed language, if it were actually 12 present in the Nevada Constitution, would have, as the district court found, 13 merely raised the minimum wage for those employees already subject to NRS 14 608.250(1). Such words, being absent, mandates an application of Nevada's 15 Constitution by its express language, which requires payment of "a wage to 16 each employee of not less than the hourly rates set forth in this section." The 17 only exceptions to the required payment set forth in "this section" of Nevada's 18 Constitution are in subparts B and C thereof. Those exceptions are for certain 19 employees subject to union negotiated collective bargaining agreements, or who 20 are under 18 years of age and are trainees or employed by a non-profit, 21 circumstances not relevant to this case. 22

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Then Nevada Attorney General, later United States District Court Judge, and current Nevada Governor, Brian Sandavol, also concluded the minimum 24 wages required by Nevada's Constitution are not limited by NRS 608.250(2). 25 See, Nevada Attorney General Opinion 2005-04. AA14-24. The analysis 26 utilized in that opinion looked to the precise language of the Nevada 27 Constitution, specifically its imposition of a minimum wage as specified in that 28

"section" of the Nevada Constitution and its failure to make any mention of
 NRS 608.250.

The conclusion reached by the Attorney General in Opinion 2005-04 is 3 well supported by precedent. There is no ambiguity in the Nevada 4 5 Constitution's directive that "each employer shall pay to each employee a wage of not less than the hourly rates set forth in this section" of the Constitution. 6 7 Absent ambiguity, the Nevada Constitution's language must be applied pursuant to its plain meaning. See, Nevadans for Nevada v. Beers, 142 P.3d 339, 347 8 (Sup. Ct. Nev. 2006). The command that every employer "shall pay" to "each 9 employee" at least the wage specified by such section must be given mandatory 10 application by this Court to every employee except those the Nevada 11 Constitution, itself, excludes. See, State ex rel. State Bd. of Equalization v. 12 Baks, 148 P.3d 717, 724 (Nev. Sup. Ct. 2006) ("By using the mandatory term 13 'shall,' the Constitution clearly and unambiguously requires that the methods 14 used for assessing taxes throughout the state must be 'uniform.'") See, also 15 Nevada Mining Association v. Erdoes, 26 P.3d 753, 759 (2001)(Sup. Ct. Nev. 16 2001)(Nevada Supreme Court is "not free to presume" Constitutional provision 17 means "anything other" than what it says). 18

The Nevada Constitution creates its own wholly independent minimum
wage requirements that exist in tandem with the requirements of NRS
608.250(1). There is no conflict between the two schemes. Nevada's minimum
wage statute, NRS 608.250(1), requires certain minimum wage payments and
provides, at NRS 608.250(2), for certain exceptions to NRS 608.250(1)'s
requirements. Nevada's Constitution requires a different, and potentially
higher,³ minimum wage payment and subjects such requirement to a different

 ³ Nevada's Constitution only assures an increased minimum wage for the
 ^a mployees it specifies who are *not* provided access to health insurance. For
 ^b employees receiving such health insurance, the minimum wage currently

group of exceptions. An employee may be covered by just the Nevada Constitution, as are Yellow Checker Star's taxi cab drivers, by both NRS 608.250(1) and the Nevada Constitution, or neither.

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The Nevada Constitutional Minimum Wage, at subpart B, provides that 4 "All of the [minimum wage pay] provisions of this section, or any part hereof, 5 may be waived in a bona fide collective bargaining agreement [a "CBA"]...." 6 7 The Nevada minimum wage statute contains no such exemption at NRS 8 608.250(2) in respect to the minimum wage requirements of NRS 608.250(1). This means Yellow Checker Star's taxi cab drivers, if they were employed 9 under a CBA waiving the Nevada Constitution's minimum wage requirements, 10 would also be exempt from the Nevada statutory minimum wage by virtue of 11 NRS 608.250(2). Yet other Nevada workers, who may work under a CBA 12 waiving Nevada's Constitutional Minimum Wage, are still entitled to Nevada's 13 statutory minimum wage, as neither NRS 608.250(2) nor any other statute 14 provides for a waiver of Nevada's statutory minimum wage by a CBA. 15

Subpart "C" of the Nevada Constitutional Minimum Wage also creates a 16 minimum wage standard that does not completely overlap with the minimum 17 wage standards created by NRS 608.250. Such subpart expressly exempts from 18 the Nevada Constitution's minimum wage requirements certain persons under 19 18 years of age employed by non-profits and trainees. Those persons are not 20 exempted from the requirements of NRS 608.250(1) by NRS 608.250(2) and as 21 a result possess a statutory, but not Nevada Constitutional, minimum wage right. 22 The existence of dual, non-conflicting, and independent, duties imposed 23 by both a statute and a state constitution covering the same subject matter, has 24

been found proper. See, Kaysser v. McNaughton, 57 P.2d 927, 930 (Sup. Ct.

 ²⁷ required by Nevada's Constitution is the same as the federal minimum wage,
 28 such federal minimum wage also being the wage set by the Nevada Labor
 28 Commissioner for the purposes of NRS 608.250(1).

Cal. 1936) (finding that repeal of constitutional amendment did not 2 automatically repeal statute covering same subject matter as both a statute and constitution can, and do, impose independent liabilities over the same subject 3 4 matter).

The Nevada Constitution Has Implicitly Repealed the Taxi Driver Minimum Wage Exemption in NRS 608.250(2)(e) **C**.

1. An Implicit Repeal Has Occurred Because the Nevada Constitution has Revised the "Whole Subject Matter" of Minimum Wages in Nevada

9 The district court, in its order dismissing plaintiff's complaint, also found 10 that the "Minimum Wage Amendment did not repeal N.R.S. 608.250 by 11 'implication.'" AA 05. As explained *supra*, such an "implied repeal" finding is 12 unnecessary. A proper "implicit repeal" analysis of NRS 608.250(2) also results 13 in an implicit repeal having been effectuated by the Nevada Constitution. As 14 held by the Attorney General in Opinion 2005-04, voters are presumed to have 15 known the status of Nevada's existing minimum wage law when they approved 16 the Nevada Constitutional Amendment and "it is ordinarily presumed that 17 'where a statute is amended, provisions of the former statute omitted from the 18 amended statute are repealed." 2005 Nev. AG LEXIS 4, *12, citing McKay v. 19 *Board of Supervisors*, 730 P.2d 438, 442 (1986), AA 18.⁴ Attorney General 20 Opinion 2005-04 expressly holds the Nevada Constitution has implicitly 21 repealed all of the occupational exemptions contained in NRS 608.250(2). Id. 22 See, also, State ex rel. Nevada Orphan Asylum, 16 Nev. at 378 (constitutional 23 amendment that addresses subject displaces prior statute). 24 The conclusion of the Nevada Attorney General that Nevada's

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⁴ The same rules are utilized to determine whether statutes or 27 constitutional amendments repeal previously enacted statutes. Nevada Mining 28 Association, 26 P.3d at 753.

Constitution has implicitly repealed the provisions of N.R.S. 608.250(2) is strongly supported by precedent from both Nevada and other jurisdictions. As stated in Eureka County Bank Habeas Corpus Cases, 126 P. 655, 676 (Nev. Sup. Ct. 1912): In the case of *Bartlet et al. v. King, Executor*, 12 Mass. 537, 7 Am. Dec. 99, the rule applicable to this case was stated as follows: A subsequent statute, revising the whole subject-matter of a former one, and evidently intended as a substitute for it, although it contains no express words to that effect, must, on the principles of law, as well as in reason and common sense, operate to repeal the former.' This court has heretofore twice quoted with approval the rule as above declared in the *Bartlet* case, and it is supported by abundant authority from other courts. *Thorpe v. Schooling*, 7 Nev. 15; *State v. Rogers*, 10 Nev. 319; *Mack v. Jastro*, 126 Cal. 130, 58 P. 372; *State Board of Health v. Ross*, 191 Ill. 87, 60 N.E. 811.) *See, also*, 26 Am. & Eng. Ency. Law, 2d ed. 731, and authorities cited in note 4." (*Union Trust Co. v. Trumbull*, 137 Ill. 146, 27 N.E. 24) 24.) In the event an "implicit repeal" of NRS 608.250(2)(e) is necessary for the Taxi Drivers to proceed on their claim under the Nevada Constitution, such a repeal has been effectuated. The Nevada Constitution indisputably acted to revise "the whole subject matter" of minimum wages in Nevada. It did so by creating minimum wage standards that were beyond the legislature's power to modify. Its provisions, not being subject to limitation by the legislature after their approval by the electorate, must also have operated as a matter of "reason and common sense" to repeal any claimed limitations on their scope set forth in Nevada's previously existing minimum wage statute.

1	CONCLUSION
2	Wherefore, for all the foregoing reasons, the Order and Judgment
3	appealed from should be reversed in its entirety.
4	Dated: November 26, 2012
5	Respectfully submitted,
6	/g/Loon Groonbong
7	<u>/s/ Leon Greenberg</u> Leon Greenberg, Esq. (Bar # 8094) A Professional Corporation 2965 S. Jones Blvd., Suite E-4 Las Vegas, Nevada 89146 (702) 383-6085 Attorney for Appellant
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Certificate of Compliance With N.R.A.P Rule 28.2

I hereby certify that this brief complies with the formatting requirements of NRAP 32(a)(4), the typeface requirements of NRAP 32(a)(5) and the type style requirements of NRAP 32(a)(6) because this brief has been prepared in a proportionally spaced typeface using 14 point Times New Roman typeface in wordperfect.

I further certify that this brief complies with the page- or type-volume
limitations of NRAP 32(a)(7) because, excluding the parts of the brief exempted
by NRAP 32(a)(7)(C), it is proportionately spaced, has a typeface of 14 points
or more and contains 3338 words.

Finally, I hereby certify that I have read this brief, and to the best of my 11 knowledge, information, and belief, it is not frivolous or interposed for any 12 improper purpose. I further certify that this brief complies with all applicable 13 Nevada Rules of Appellate Procedure, in particular NRAP 28(e)(1), which 14 requires every assertion in the brief regarding matters in the record to be 15 supported by a reference to the page and volume number, if any, of the 16 transcript or appendix where the matter relied on is to be found. I understand 17 that I may be subject to sanctions in the event that the accompanying brief is not 18 in conformity with the requirements of the Nevada Rules of Appellate 19 Procedure. 20

²¹ Dated this 26th day of November, 2012.

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/s/ Leon Greenberg Leon Greenberg, Esq. (Bar # 8094) A Professional Corporation 2965 S. Jones Blvd., Suite E-4 Las Vegas, Nevada 89146 (702) 383-6085 Attorney for Appellant

CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

The undersigned certifies that on the November 26, 2012, she served the within:

APPELLANTS' OPENING BRIEF AND APPENDIX

by depositing the same in the U.S. mail, first class postage, prepaid, addressed as follows:

TO:

Marc C. Gordon, Esq. General Counsel Yellow Checker Star Transportation Co. Legal Dept. 5225 W. Post Road Las Vegas, NV 89118

Sydney Saucier

Sydney Saucier