

# EXHIBIT A

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**IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEVADA**

NEVADA YELLOW CAB COMPANY; NEVADA  
CHECKER CAB CORPORATION; and NEVADA  
STAR CAB CORPORATION,

Petitioners,

vs.

EIGHTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT OF THE  
STATE OF NEVADA, in and for the COUNTY OF  
CLARK; and THE HONORABLE RONALD J.  
ISRAEL, DISTRICT JUDGE,

Respondents,

and

CHRISTOPHER THOMAS; AND  
CHRISTOPHER CRAIG,

Real Parties in Interest.

**Case No.: 74166**

District Court Case No. A-  
12-661726-C

**AMICI BRIEF OF WESTERN CAB COMPANY AND A CAB IN SUPPORT  
OF PETITIONERS' PETITION FOR WRIT OF MANDAMUS**

MALANI L. KOTCHKA, ESQ.  
Nevada Bar No. 283  
HEJMANOWSKI & McCREA, LLC  
520 S. Fourth St., Suite 320  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89101  
Telephone: (702)834-8777  
Facsimile: (702)834-5262  
Email: mlk@hmlawlv.com

*Attorneys for Amicus Curiae,  
Western Cab Company*

ESTHER C. RODRIGUEZ, ESQ.  
Nevada Bar No. 6473  
RODRIGUEZ LAW OFFICES, PC  
10161 Park Run Dr., Suite 150  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89145  
Telephone: (702)320-8400  
Facsimile: (702)320-8401  
Email: info@rodriguezlaw.com

*Attorneys for Amicus Curiae,  
A Cab*

**WESTERN CAB**  
**RULE 26.1 DISCLOSURE**

Pursuant to NRAP 26.1, the undersigned counsel of record certifies that Amicus Curiae Western Cab Company has no parent corporation and no publicly held company owns 10% or more of its stock.

The undersigned counsel of record further certifies that she is the only attorney who has appeared for Amicus Curiae Western Cab Company in related proceedings in the District Court and in this Court, and that she appeared since January 2105 through the law firm Hejmanowski & McCrea, LLC, and previously through the law firm Lionel Sawyer & Collins.

HEJMANOWSKI & McCREA, LLC

/s/ Malani L. Kotchka  
MALANI L. KOTCHKA  
Nevada Bar No. 283  
520 S. Fourth St., Suite 320  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89101  
Telephone: (702)834-8777  
Facsimile: (702)834-5262  
Email: mlk@hmlawlv.com

*Attorneys for Amicus Curiae,  
Western Cab Company*

**A CAB**  
**RULE 26.1 DISCLOSURE**

Pursuant to NRAP 26.1, the undersigned counsel of record certifies that the following are persons and entities as described in NRAP 26.1(a) and must be disclosed.

A Cab, LLC

A Cab, LLC Employee Leasing Company

Creighton J. Nady

Esther C. Rodriguez, Esq., or Rodriguez Law Offices, P.C.

RODRIGUEZ LAW OFFICES, P.C.

/s/ Esther C. Rodriguez  
Esther C. Rodriguez, Esq.  
Nevada Bar No. 6473  
10161 Park Run Drive, Suite 150  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89145  
Telephone: (702)320-8400  
Facsimile: (702)320-8401  
Email: info@rodriguezlaw.com

*Attorneys for Amicus Curiae, A Cab*

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## **BRIEF OF AMICI CURIAE**

### **IDENTITY OF AMICI AND ISSUES PRESENTED**

Amici Western Cab Company and A Cab, as Petitioners, have been affected by this Court's decisions on the Minimum Wage Amendment in *Thomas v. Nevada Yellow Cab Corporation*, 130 Nev. Adv. Op. 52, 327 P.3d 518 (2014), and in *Nevada Yellow Cab Corporation v. Thomas*, 132 Nev. Adv. Op. 77, 383 P.3d 246 (2016). The issues presented are whether Article 15, Section 16 of the 2006 Nevada Constitutional Minimum Wage Amendment ("MWA") imposes strict liability on Nevada employers, thereby precluding the employers from pleading and pursuing affirmative defenses, including for example, a plaintiff's lack of standing under the MWA, the employer's good faith reliance on the Nevada Labor Commissioner and other examples of the employer's reasonableness and good faith under the circumstances.

### **ARGUMENT**

"Strict liability" has been defined by this Court as the "imposition of ... liability without regard to what the [defendant] knew ... before the injury-producing event." *San Juan v. PSC Industrial Outsourcing, Inc.*, 126 Nev. 355, 365 n. 9, 240 P.3d 1026, 1032 n. 9 (2010) (in the context of a case brought by the estate of an employee killed in an industrial explosion). "Strict liability" is not a concept naturally or ordinarily associated with actions for breaches of contract, including

employees' suits for back wages. Indeed, as explained further below, subsections (B) and (C) of Nevada's MWA envision the resolution of claims for back wages in the State's courts in accord with the Nevada Rules of Civil Procedure, including its rules of pleading. In addition, a defendant employer's presentation of affirmative defenses, including reliance on a government official's interpretation of the law, is recognized under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act and thus is hardly a concept barred as contrary to the public policy associated with the adoption and enforcement of minimum wages. Finally, by outright precluding the presentation of an employer's affirmative defenses, a district court actually relieves plaintiffs of their burden of proof.

**I. THE MWA AUTHORIZES THE RESOLUTION OF DISPUTES IN NEVADA'S COURTS IN CONFORMITY WITH THE NEVADA RULES OF CIVIL PROCEDURE, WHICH AUTHORIZE DEFENDANTS TO RAISE AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSES**

Section (B) of the MWA authorizes employees to bring claims for its violation in the State's courts, stating in pertinent part:

An employer shall not discharge, reduce the compensation of or otherwise discriminate against any employee for using any civil remedies to enforce this section or otherwise asserting his or her rights under this section. An employee claiming violation of this section may bring an action against his or her employer in the courts of this State to enforce the provisions of this section and shall be entitled to all remedies available under the law or in equity appropriate to remedy any violation of this section, including but not limited to back pay, damages, reinstatement or injunctive relief. An employee who prevails in any action to enforce this section shall be awarded his or her reasonable attorney's fees and costs.



Section (C) of the MWA excepts certain persons from its scope, stating in part:

As used in this section, 'employee' means any person who is employed by an employer as defined herein but does not include an employee who is under eighteen (18) years of age, employed by a nonprofit organization for after school or summer employment or as a trainee for a period not longer than ninety (90) days.

These provisions obviously envision that a defendant employer is authorized to present and litigate defenses and denials of liability, including under NRCP 8(c):

In pleading to a preceding pleading, a party shall set forth affirmatively, accord and satisfaction, arbitration and award, assumption of the risk, contributory negligence, discharge in bankruptcy, duress, estoppel, failure of consideration, fraud, illegality, injury by fellow servant, laches, license, payment, release, res judicata, statute of frauds, statute of limitations, waiver, and any other matter constituting an avoidance or affirmative defense.

*See also*, NRCP 1 (“[T]hese rules govern the procedure in the district courts in all suits of a civil nature whether cognizable as cases at law or in equity, with the exceptions stated in Rule 81. They shall be construed and administered to secure the just, speedy, and inexpensive determination of every action.”).

## **II. RELIANCE ON PUBLIC AGENCIES RESPONSIBLE FOR INTERPRETING AND ENFORCING THE LAW AT ISSUE IS PROPERLY RAISED AS A GOOD FAITH DEFENSE**

In enacting the Fair Labor Standards Act (“FLSA”), the United State Congress authorized defendant employers to establish a good faith affirmative defense by showing that they “acted in: (1) reliance on; and (2) conformity with a [Wage and

Hour Division] regulation, Opinion Letter, or Administrator's Interpretation; and (3) in good faith." *Swigart v. Fifth Third Bank*, 870 F.Supp.2d 500, 509 (S.D. Ohio 2012), *citing* 29 U.S.C. §259(a), and further explaining the "good faith" defense on administrative interpretation requirement:

This Circuit has explained that in close cases, courts should consider 'the reasonableness of the employer's actions in light of the administrative interpretation in question.' *Marshall v. Baptist Hosp., Inc.*, 668 F.2d 234, 238 (6<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1981). However, this Court is also mindful that federal courts have noted that the 'burden of proof is a heavy one, since a defense under Section 259 would act as a bar to this proceeding, thereby absolving [the defendant] of liability and penalties for any past FLSA violations.' [Citation omitted.]

Were reliance on the administrative agency responsible for enforcing a set of laws in violation, the U.S. Congress and Federal Courts would not have authorized reliance on administrative interpretations as a good defense in FLSA cases. *See, Schneider v. City of Springfield*, 102 F.Supp.2d 827, 833 (S.D. Ohio 1999) ("The good-faith defense exists in order to protect an employer who 'innocently and to his detriment, followed the law as it was laid down to him by government agencies, without notice that such interpretations were claimed to be erroneous or invalid.'" [Citations omitted.] It operates as an 'estoppel defense to protect employers from particular agencies' mistaken interpretations of particular statutory requirements; it does not come into effect until after there has been a failure to comply with the relevant statute due to an erroneous agency interpretation.' [Citation omitted.]

### **III. THE DISTRICT COURT HAS WRONGFULLY DEPRIVED DEFENDANT EMPLOYERS OF THEIR DUE PROCESS RIGHTS**

As set forth above, Section B to the MWA authorizes employees to bring actions for its violation. To succeed as a plaintiff, the employee thereby bears the burden of demonstrating that the employer failed to pay the minimum wage, meaning the plaintiff bears the burden of proof. By casting the employer as strictly liable, the District Court has deprived defendants of their fundamental due process under the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and Article 1, Section 8 of the Nevada Constitution.

According to this Court, these due process clauses guarantee every individual's fundamental right to be heard. *Browning v. Dixon*, 114 Nev. 213, 217, 954 P.2d 741, 743 (1998), *quoting Mullane v. Central Hanover Bank & Trust Co.*, 339 U.S. 306, 314 (1949) ("This right to be heard has little reality or worth unless one is informed that the matter is pending and can choose for himself whether to appear or default, acquiesce or contest."). In this case, the District Court has informed the defendant of the proceedings, but literally deprived it of the ability to contest by miscasting the defendant as "strictly liable."

### **CONCLUSION**

Amici Western Cab and A Cab support Petitioners' request for writ relief clarifying that defendant employers in cases brought under the MWA are entitled to plead and proceed to present evidence at trial on affirmative defenses. This

clarification is necessary lest Nevada employers be unfairly burdened with the misinterpretation of the Nevada MWA as presenting a strict liability tort to which no defense is applicable.

DATED this 19<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2017.

HEJMANOWSKI & McCREA, LLC

RODRIGUEZ LAW OFFICES, PC

/s/ Malani L. Kotchka

Malani L. Kotchka, Esq.  
Nevada Bar No. 283  
520 S. Fourth St., Suite 320  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89101  
Telephone: (702)834-8777  
Facsimile: (702)834-5262  
Email: mlk@hmlawlv.com

*Attorneys for Amicus Curiae,  
Western Cab Company*

/s/ Esther C. Rodriguez

Esther C. Rodriguez, Esq.  
Nevada Bar No. 6473  
10161 Park Run Dr., Suite 150  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89145  
Telephone: (702)320-8400  
Facsimile: (702)320-8401  
Email: info@rodriguezlaw.com

*Attorneys for Amicus Curiae,  
A Cab*

### ATTORNEY'S CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE

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 Microsoft Word in Times New Roman and 14 point font size.

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 proportionally spaced, has a typeface of 14 points or more and contains 1,291 words excluding this certificate and 1,601 words with this certificate.

FINALLY, I HEREBY CERTIFY that I have read this BRIEF OF AMICI CURIAE and to the best of my knowledge, information and belief, it is not frivolous or interposed for any improper purpose. I further certify that this Brief complies with all applicable Nevada Rules of Appellate Procedure, in particular NRAP 28(e)(1), which requires every assertion in the brief regarding matters in the record to be supported by a reference to the page of the transcript or appendix where the matter relied on its to be found. I understand that I may be subject to sanctions in

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the event the accompanying brief is not in conformity with the requirements of the Nevada Rules of Appellate Procedure.

DATED this 19<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2017.

HEJMANOWSKI & McCREA, LLC

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Malani L. Kotchka", positioned above a horizontal line.

MALANI L. KOTCHKA

Nevada Bar No. 283

520 S. Fourth St., Suite 320

Las Vegas, Nevada 89101

Telephone: (702)834-8777

Facsimile: (702)834-5262

Email: [mlk@hmlawlv.com](mailto:mlk@hmlawlv.com)

*Attorneys for Amicus Curiae,  
Western Cab Company*

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CHRISTOPHER THOMAS; AND CHRISTOPHER  
CRAIG,

Real Parties in Interest.

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**WESTERN CAB COMPANY'S AND A CAB'S MOTION FOR LEAVE TO  
FILE AMICI BRIEF IN SUPPORT OF PETITIONERS' PETITION FOR  
WRIT OF MANDAMUS**

Amici Curiae, Western Cab Company ("Western Cab") and A Cab ("A Cab")  
hereby seek the Court's leave pursuant to NRAP 29(a) and (c) to file their Amici Brief  
in Support of Petitioner's Petition for Writ of Mandamus. That Brief, which includes  
counsels' NRAP 26.1 Disclosure Statements, is attached hereto as Exhibit A.

Western Cab and A Cab are cab companies doing business in Las Vegas. They are affected in their business by the operation and application of Nevada's Minimum Wage Amendment ("MWA") and its related regulations.

At issue in this dispute is the District Court's decision to treat an employer's potential liability for back wages under Article 15, Section 16 of the 2006 Nevada Constitutional Minimum Wage Amendment ("MWA") as imposing strict liability on employers, thereby precluding them from pleading and pursuing affirmative defenses, including for example, a plaintiff's lack of standing under the MWA, the employer's good faith reliance on the Nevada Labor Commissioner and other examples of the employer's reasonableness and good faith under the circumstances.

Given the importance of the issue to the State's employers and employees, this Court should grant leave to Western Cab to file the attached Amici Brief in support of

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Petitioners' request for writ relief vacating or otherwise correcting the District Court's interpretation and application of the MWA.

Dated this 19th day of October, 2017.

HEJMANOWSKI & McCREA, LLC

RODRIGUEZ LAW OFFICES, PC

/s/ Malani L. Kotchka

Malani L. Kotchka, Esq.  
Nevada Bar No. 283  
520 S. Fourth St., Suite 320  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89101  
Telephone: (702)834-8777  
Facsimile: (702)834-5262  
Email: mlk@hmlawlv.com

*Attorneys for Amicus Curiae,  
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/s/ Esther C. Rodriguez

Esther C. Rodriguez, Esq.  
Nevada Bar No. 6473  
10161 Park Run Dr., Suite 150  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89145  
Telephone: (702)320-8400  
Facsimile: (702)320-8401  
Email: info@rodriguezlaw.com

*Attorneys for Amicus Curiae,  
A Cab*

### CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

The undersigned does hereby certify that pursuant to NRAP 25(c), a true and correct copy of the foregoing **WESTERN CAB COMPANY'S AND A CAB'S MOTION FOR LEAVE TO FILE AMICI BRIEF IN SUPPORT OF PETITIONERS' PETITION FOR WRIT OF MANDAMUS** was filed electronically with the Nevada Supreme Court Electronic Filing System, and a copy was served electronically on this 19th day of October, 2017, to the following:

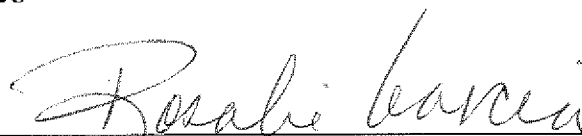
Leon Greenberg, Esq.  
Dana Sniegocki, Esq.  
GREENBERG, P.C.  
2965 S. Jones Blvd., Suite E-3  
Las Vegas, NV 89146  
leongreenberg@overtimelaw.com  
dana@overtimelaw.com

Don Springmeyer, Esq.  
Bradley Schrager, Esq.  
Royi Moas, Esq.  
Wolf, Rifkin, Shapiro, Schulman &  
Rabkin, LLP  
3556 E. Russell Road, Second Floor  
Las Vegas, NV 89120  
dspringmeyer@wrslawyers.com  
bschrager@wrslawyers.com  
rmoas@wrslawyers.com

Tamer Botros, Esq.  
Marc C. Gordon, Esq.  
Yellow Checker Star Transportation  
Co. Legal Department  
5225 W. Post Road  
Las Vegas, NV 89118  
TBotros@ycstrans.com

And a true and correct copy of the foregoing **WESTERN CAB COMPANY'S AND A CAB'S MOTION FOR LEAVE TO FILE AMICI BRIEF IN SUPPORT OF PETITIONERS' PETITION FOR WRIT OF MANDAMUS** was served via first class, postage-paid U.S. Mail on this 19th day of October, 2017, to the following:

The Honorable Ronald J. Israel  
Regional Justice Center -- Dept. 28  
200 Lewis Avenue  
Las Vegas, NV 89101



An Employee of Hejmanowski & McCrea LLC