

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEVADA

ROBERT SCOTLUND VAILE, Appellant,

vs.

CISILIE A. PORSBOLL, Respondent. Supreme Court Case No: 61415

Appeal from District Court Case No: 98D230385

APPELLANT'S OPENING BRIEF

Robert Scotlund Vaile 2201 McDowell Avenue Manhattan, KS 66502 (707) 633-4550 Appellant in Proper Person

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I. NRAP 26.1 DISCLOSURE

ROBERT SCOTLUND VAILE, Appellant,

VS.

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Supreme Court Case No: 61415 District Court Case No: 98D230385

CISILIE A. PORSBOLL, Respondent.

The undersigned proper person Appellant certifies that the following are persons and entities as described in NRAP 26.1(a), and must be disclosed. These representations are made in order that the judges of this court may evaluate possible disqualification or recusal.

- 1. Robert Scotlund Vaile, Appellant in proper person
- 2. Greta Muirhead, Esq. represented Appellant Vaile unbundled in proceedings in district court prior to 2009
- 3. Peter Angulo, Esq. of Rawlings, Olsen, Cannon, Gormley, Desruisseaux represented Appellant on appeal between 2000 and 2002
- 4. Joseph Dempsey, Esq. of Dempsey, Roberts, Smith, Ltd represented Appellant Vaile in proceeding in district court between 1999 and 2000
- 5. James E. Smith, Esq. represented Appellant Vaile in Divorce proceedings in district court prior in 1998
- 6. Cisilie A. Porsboll, fka Cisilie A. Vaile is Respondent

 Marshal S. Willick, Esq. of the Willick Law Group has been attorney for Respondent in all proceedings since 2000

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- 8. David A. Stephens, Esq. represented Respondent in divorce proceedings in 1998

Respectfully submitted this 11th day of December, 2012.

Robert Scotlund Vaile 2201 McDowell Avenue Manhattan, KS 66502 (707) 633-4550 Appellant in Proper Person

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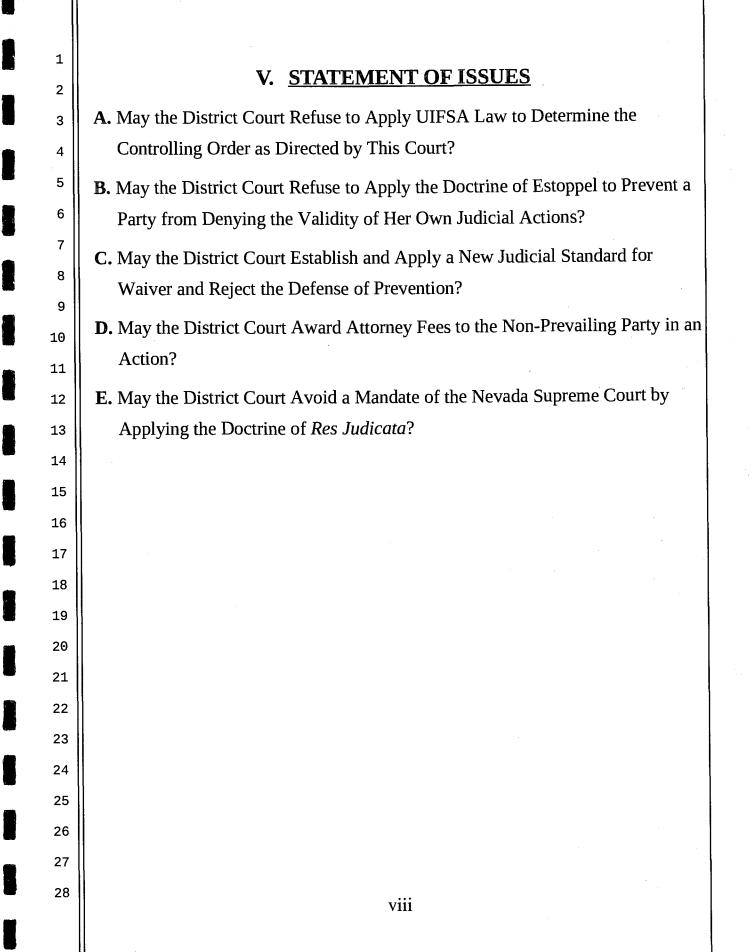
IV. JURISDICTIONAL STATEMENT

This appeal involves three related district court orders involving postdivorce child support. An order reducing child support arrearages and interest to judgment was issued by the district court on July 10, 2012.¹ A notice of appeal of the July 10, 2012 order was filed on July 30, 2012.² An order awarding attorneys fees and costs was entered on August 16, 2012,³ and an order reducing child support penalties to judgment was entered on August 17, 2012.⁴ Appellant's notice of appeal was amended in response to the August orders and resubmitted on August 27, 2012.⁵ This Court held in an order dated October 22, 2012 that the August 17, 2012 order of the district court perfected this Court's jurisdiction under NRAP 4(a)(6).⁶

¹ References to the Record on Appeal will be indicated hereinafter as ROA followed by the page numbers. The reference to this order is ROA4875-4887.

- ² ROA4902-4917
- ³ ROA4967-4968
- ⁴ ROA4969-4970
- ⁵ ROA4985-5004

⁶ References to Appellant's Appendix will be indicated hereinafter as RSV followed by the page numbers. The instant reference is RSV029.



VI. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

This case is an appeal from three related judgments from the Eighth Judicial District Court, family division, imposing child support principal, interest, penalties, sanctions and attorney's fees against Appellant concerning child support for two grown children living in Norway. These judgments followed hearings on April 9, and June 4, 2012, which were held to address the appropriate district court action following a reversal and remand of the case by this Court on January 26, 2012. The central issue on appeal lies in the district court's refusal to follow the mandates contained in this Court's January 26, 2012 decision.

VII. STATEMENT OF FACTS

In April 2002, this Court sent the parties' children to Norway with Respondent Porsboll for custody determinations to be made in that country based on the holding that Norway was the country of the children's habitual residence.⁷ At Respondent's request, a Norwegian tribunal entered both a custody order and a separate child support order in her favor with an effective date of April 1, 2002.⁸ Although Mr. Vaile was informed by Porsboll (and the Norwegian tribunal) that she would be seeking support through the Norwegian system, Mr. Vaile did not receive the child support order⁹ from Norway at that time, and Porsboll did not provide the order to him.¹⁰ In 2003, Porsboll informed Mr. Vaile that the Nevada divorce decree, which contains the child support provisions, was "void,"¹¹ and

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¹⁰ ROA4644

⁷ RSV010

⁸ ROA4246

⁹ Eventual communications from the relevant Norwegian agency indicate that the order was sent to a previous invalid address for Vaile and then returned undelivered.

¹¹ ROA3018 (p.60 of transcript), ROA3061 (p.103), ROA3076 (p.118), ROA3093 (p.135)

expressed an intent to seek child support exclusively through the Norwegian system.¹² However, at no point did Porsboll provide a copy of any Norwegian child support order to Mr. Vaile.¹³

In 2005, Porsboll sought and was granted a modification (an increase) to the Norwegian child support order in Norway, but again, did not provide Mr. Vaile with a copy of the order.¹⁴ In 2007, Porsboll authorized her Nevada attorney to revive the case in Nevada in an attempt to improve on her monetary award contained in the Norwegian child support order.¹⁵ The strategy deployed involved attempting to convince a Nevada district court to retroactively modify the Nevada decree to the benefit of both Porsboll and Nevada counsel.¹⁶ The district court reopened the matter in Nevada, instituted retroactive child support, and ordered interest, penalties and sanctions against Appellant Vaile.¹⁷ While the action was pending in Nevada, Porsboll sought and was granted a second modification (another increase) to the Norwegian child support order in Norway in 2008, still without disclosing the Norwegian child support orders to Mr. Vaile, or the district court in Nevada.¹⁸

After several years of conflict, Porsboll expelled the oldest child from her home in 2009 to live on her own, while the child was still a minor.¹⁹ The younger child, also a minor, followed shortly thereafter to live with her sibling in order to

¹² ROA3018 (p.60 of transcript), ROA3061 (p.103), ROA3076 (p.118), ROA3093 (p.135)

- ¹³ ROA4644
- ¹⁴ ROA4269-4274
- ¹⁵ ROA1087-1100
- ¹⁶ ROA4951
- ¹⁷ ROA1172-1173, ROA2198-2225
- ¹⁸ ROA4276-4280
 - ¹⁹ ROA4041

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avoid the strife at home.²⁰ Under the Norwegian child support system, a child who lives on her own shall receive the entirety of the child support, and when a child reaches the age of 18, the child is entitled to any arrearages or interest that may have accrued on that support.²¹ None of the child support Mr. Vaile has paid through the Nevada system flows to the Norwegian child support system and to the children, but rather is split 40/60 between Respondent's Nevada counsel and Porsboll, respectively.²²

On January 26, 2012, this Court determined that the district court's retroactive modifications made to the child support provisions of the parties' 1998 divorce decree were entered without jurisdiction.²³ This Court also directed the district court to determine whether a Norwegian child support order exists and to assess its bearing on the district court's enforcement of the 1998 decree using NRS 130.207.²⁴ This Court reversed the district court's decisions which had been in favor of Respondent and rejected every one of Respondent's arguments on appeal.²⁵

Because of the refusal of the district court to obey its temporary orders, this Court instituted a stay of the entire proceedings on July 20, 2010.²⁶ While the appeal was pending, Appellant inquired and received from the Norwegian authorities the Norwegian child support order with effective date of April 1, 2002, and the subsequent modifications entered in 2005 and 2008. Once this Court lifted the stay and issued its decision in January 2012, Mr. Vaile filed notice and

²⁰ ROA4828
²¹ ROA4041, ROA4827-28
²² ROA2327, ROA3424, ROA4251
²³ RSV024
²⁴ RSV023
²⁵ RSV018-028
²⁶ RSV016-017

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copies of the Norwegian orders with the district court on March 6, 2012.²⁷ Mr. 1 Vaile also filed a Notice of Address Change on March 6, 2012 since his address 2 changed while the case was stayed.²⁸ At the same time, Porsboll's attorneys 3 moved to hold Mr. Vaile in contempt of court for not paying the reversed attorney 4 fee awards, for not having paid the post-remand child support amounts (which 5 had not yet been determined), and to sanction Mr. Vaile for not filing his notice of 6 address change while the case was stayed.²⁹ 7 8 The district court held evidentiary hearings on April 9 and June 4, 2012 and 9 allowed supplemental briefing on the topic of the controlling effect of the 10 Norwegian order.³⁰ During the June evidentiary hearing, because Porsboll's 11 counsel had another appointment, the district court cut short and limited the

hearing primarily to the issues of the controlling effect of the Norwegian order. The district court communicated that once it determined the controlling effect of the Norwegian order, the Court would hold a follow-up hearing on the proper calculations of child support under the formula contained in the divorce decree.³¹

Without holding that follow-up hearing, the district court entered a decision and order on July 10, 2012, adopting Porsboll's proposed (and faulty) calculations without allowing argument or explanation relative to the calculations, providing

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³⁰ See ROA Minutes of April 9, 2012 and June 4, 2012.

²⁷ ROA4242-4248, ROA4261-4280

²⁸ Mr. Vaile informed Respondent's counsel of the address change, although he did not attempt to violate the stay by filing the notice with the district court until after the stay was lifted.

²⁹ ROA4048-4180

³¹ See ROA Minutes of June 4, 2012 which states in relevant part: "Once the Court has ISSUED a DECISION [on the controlling effect of the Norwegian order], the Judicial Executive Assistant for Department I shall CONTACT the parties to SCHEDULE a HEARING [on each parties' calculations required to compute child support under the decree]." (emphasis in context, clarifications in brackets added).

Appellant no opportunity to be heard on that matter, and providing no record on the topic.³² In its order, the district court refused to make a determination under NRS 130.207, as directed by this Court, found the statute "inapplicable," and struck the Norwegian orders from the record.³³ The district court adopted Respondent's defense to Appellant's registration of the Norwegian order, which defense has no precedent or support under Nevada law.³⁴

The district court also refused to overturn the attorneys fees it awarded (prereversal) to Respondent, the non-prevailing party below, and in fact awarded more than \$57,000 in additional attorneys fees.³⁵ The district court refused to overturn the \$16,000 contempt sanctions which the district court previously imposed against Mr. Vaile for not retroactively adhering to the modifications which this Court reversed.³⁶ The court refused to give credit to Mr. Vaile for child support payments that he made to Porsboll directly when no salary intercept was in place,³⁷ and then levied additional sanctions against him in the amount of \$38,500.³⁸ The district court also held Mr. Vaile in contempt of court and sanctioned him for not filing his notice of change of address while the case was stayed by this Court.³⁹

The district court's July 10, 2012 order implemented very significant modifications to the 1998 divorce decree as to both duration and child support amount. Specifically, it imposes a child support obligation on him *while the children lived with him* and requires payment far in excess of the amount that the

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- ³⁴ ROA4876-77
- ³⁵ ROA4886-87, ROA4967-68
- ³⁶ ROA4885
- ³⁷ ROA4878-79
- ³⁸ ROA4884-85
 - ³⁹ ROA4881

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³² ROA4875-4887

³³ ROA4877

formula in the decree provides.⁴⁰ Finally, the district court refused to apply the legal doctrines of waiver, prevention and estoppel to the facts of the case, and instead replaced the waiver standard created by this Court with a standard which would require an attorney-sanctioned written agreement in order for waiver to apply.⁴¹

⁴⁰ ROA4883
⁴¹ ROA4878, ROA4883

VIII. SUMMARY OF THE ARGUMENT

The district court has simply refused to follow mandates contained in this Court's January 26, 2012 decision. Instead of applying NRS 130.207 to determine the controlling order as directed by this Court, the district court determined that NRS 130.207 did not apply. The lower court refused to honor the Norwegian orders based on a defense that is unsupported by Nevada law and which federal preemption prohibits. Furthermore, Respondent's challenge to the validity of her own judicial actions in Norway in seeking the child support orders is prohibited by judicial estoppel.

The district court's retroactive imposition of child support on Appellant between 2000 and 2002, when the children lived with him full-time, is contrary to the law, and a significant (and impermissible) modification to the parties' agreement. Even if Norway had not issued a controlling order which began in 2002, Respondent waived child support through her direct verbal claims and her inaction between 2002 and 2007. Furthermore, Porsboll prevented Mr. Vaile from calculating child support in accordance with the parties' agreement by refusing to provide income information required under the decree.

The district court's refusal to follow this Court's mandates include the rejection of NRS 130.207 as directed, the ongoing modification of the parties' agreement, and the direct refusal to reverse its judgments based on this Court overturning the lower court's judgments. Finally, the district court has determined to uphold the attorney fee awards in favor of Respondent despite the fact that she is the non-prevailing party in the litigation thus far.

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A. THE DISTRICT COURT REFUSED TO APPLY UIFSA LAW TO DETERMINE THE CONTROLLING ORDER AS DIRECTED BY THIS COURT

This Court noted in its January 26, 2012 decision in this case that although the appellate record alluded to a possible child support order issued by Norway, the order was not contained in the appellate record. The reason that the controlling Norwegian order was not contained in the record is because the district court denied Mr. Vaile's several requests to require Porsboll to disclose the Norwegian orders. Mr. Vaile attempted to resolve the matter (while the case was on appeal) by writing to the Norwegian authorities, obtaining certified copies of the Norwegian order and modifications, and filing the order with the district court on March 6, 2012.

This Court's January, 2012 decision provided a detailed mandate to the district court on this matter, stating that "the district court must determine whether such an [Norwegian] order exists and assess its bearing, if any, on the district court's enforcement of the Nevada support order." The Court also provided explanation on how to assess the Norwegian order's bearing, through application of NRS 130.207. This Court explained:

To facilitate this single-order system, UIFSA provides a procedure for identifying the sole viable order, referred to as the controlling order, required for UIFSA to function. See NRS 130.207 (addressing the recognition and determination of the controlling child support order); Unif. Interstate Family Support Act § 207 cmt. (2001), 9/IB U.L.A. 198-99 (2005).

<u>Vaile v. Porsboll</u>, 128 Nev. ____, 268 P.3d 1272, 1274 (2012).⁴²

⁴² RSV021-022

Despite the clear directive from this Court, on remand, the district court held that, "The Court finds that NRS 130.207 is inapplicable."⁴³ The district court's holding is in error, and in direct defiance of this Court's mandate.

1. NRS 130.207 Does Not Apply Exclusively to Simultaneously Issued Orders

The district court's explanation as to why NRS 130.207 does not apply is astonishingly vacant of reason. The district court's explanation states that "At the time of the 1998 divorce decree, there was only one child support order issued in Nevada which is the controlling order. There were no multiple competing orders. Therefore, NRS 130.207 does not apply in this case."⁴⁴ Although it is virtually impossible to find any legal logic in the district court's statement, the district court appears to be stating that when the first child support order was issued as a part of the 1998 divorce decree, the second order had not yet been issued?! The only time that one order does not necessarily precede another is when two orders are issued by jurisdictions simultaneously.⁴⁵ The district court appears to hold that NRS 130.207 applies only to simultaneously issued orders. Because one order preceded the other order in time (as has taken place in every known UIFSA case), the district court held that NRS 130.207 does not apply.

Section 207 of UIFSA was not intended to apply exclusively to simultaneously issued orders. The text of NRS 130.207(1) is clear that the statute applies when "two or more child-support orders have been issued by tribunals of this State or another state with regard to the same obligor and same child." There is, of course, no support in the wording of the statute or the comments by the

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⁴³ ROA4877

⁴⁴ ROA4877

⁴⁵ The district court basically judicially modified the UIFSA statutory test to a "first in time" test, a concept specifically rejected by the Uniform Law Commission in the production of UIFSA.

Uniform Law Commission to support the district court's distortion of the law. If section 207 of UIFSA applied only to simultaneously issued orders, the comprehensive statutory scheme adopted by every jurisdiction in the United States would be critically flawed indeed as it would virtually never apply.

In this case, the proper application of NRS 130.207 leads to only a single result – that the Norwegian child support order is indeed controlling. Specifically, NRS 130.207(2) requires that priority be given to the order from the tribunal with continuing and exclusive jurisdiction, which only Norway possesses.⁴⁶ Even if Nevada also had continuing and exclusive jurisdiction, priority goes to the tribunal in the home state of the children (Norway) or secondarily, to the tribunal which most recently issued a child support order (Norway). The only legal result of the just application of NRS 130.207 is that the Norwegian child support order with an effective date of April 1, 2002 is controlling over the child support agreement contained in the parties' 1998 Nevada decree of divorce. Appellant requests that this Court direct (again) the district court to apply the law, or alternatively, determine as a matter of law that the Norwegian order is indeed controlling.

2. Norway's Alleged Failure to Follow Nevada Law is Not a Defense to Recognition of Norway's Child Support Order

Under Nevada law, there are a number of defenses to recognition of a foreign child support order. These defenses are limited to those enumerated under NRS 130.607(1).⁴⁷ According to NRS 130.607(3), when "the contesting party does not establish a defense under subsection 1 to the validity or

⁴⁶ This Court previously held that Nevada did not have continuing and exclusive (modification) jurisdiction. Norway became the home state of the children when this Court ordered they be sent to Norway in April 2002. It is undisputed that the Norwegian tribunals have had continuing and exclusive jurisdiction since that time.

enforcement of the order, the registering tribunal shall issue an order confirming the order."

Respondent did not raise even a *prima facie* defense to registration of the Norwegian order under NRS 130.607(1). Instead, Respondent invented a new defense. Specifically, since a Nevada court is required to follow NRS 130.611⁴⁸ when that court modifies a foreign child support order, Respondent argued that the recognition of the Norwegian child support order should also be conditioned on whether the Norwegian court followed the same Nevada statutory law provision when it issued its controlling order. Respondent reasoned that since *she* sought and was granted a modification of the Nevada decree in Norway, not Mr. Vaile (the out-of-state party in the matter), Norway violated Nevada's implementation of UIFSA as contained in NRS 130.611 when it granted Porsboll's request.⁴⁹ The district court adopted Respondent's argument and held that since the Norwegian tribunal did not follow Nevada law, then Norway's modification order "is not enforceable in Nevada under UIFSA laws."⁵⁰

Failure of a foreign court to follow Nevada law is not an enumerated defense to registration of a foreign child support order under NRS 130.607(1). The defense is, therefore, invalid under NRS 130.607(3). The district court's acceptance of this defense to registration of the Norwegian order is invalid on this basis alone.

 ⁴⁹ Although it is difficult at this juncture to overlook the clear incongruity of Porsboll's argument that her own deliberate actions should be judicially ignored, Appellant's estoppel argument is contained in a section below.

⁵⁰ ROA4877

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⁴⁷ None of these defenses apply, primarily, because it was Porsboll herself who petitioned and who was granted the issuance of the child support order, and subsequent modifications, in Norway.

⁴⁸ NRS 130.611 and UIFSA generally require that the out-of-state party seek modification within the jurisdiction where the other party resides, although statutory exceptions exist as discussed below.

3. FEDERAL LAW PREEMPTS THE DISTRICT COURT'S REJECTION OF THE CHILD SUPPORT ORDER ISSUED BY A FOREIGN RECIPROCATING COUNTRY

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Even if the district court had found justification for mandating that Norwegian tribunals follow Nevada statute, federal law preempts this result because Norway is a federally-declared Reciprocating Foreign Country.⁵¹ As such, Norway's orders are entitled to recognition as if they were a U.S. State. Federal courts appear to review issues of federal preemption *de novo*. In Re Korean Air Lines Co., Ltd., 642 F.3d 685, 691 (9th Cir. 2011).

Section 459A of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 659A) authorizes the Secretary of State with the concurrence of the Secretary of Health and Human Services to declare foreign countries or their political subdivisions to be reciprocating countries for the purpose of the enforcement of family support obligations if the country has established or has undertaken to establish procedures for the establishment and enforcement of duties of support for residents of the United States. These procedures must be in *substantial conformity* with the standards set forth in the statute.

73 Fed.Reg. 72555 (emphasis added). See also 42 U.S.C. 659A.

As long as these [standard] elements are satisfied, there is no requirement that the FRC make changes in its procedures for obtaining, recognizing, or enforcing orders for support. *It is important to note that an FRC does not have to have identical procedures, tools or mechanisms as a U.S. State.*

Office of Child Support Enforcement, <u>A Caseworker's Guide to</u> <u>Processing Cases with Foreign Reciprocating Countries</u> http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/css/resource/a-caseworkers-guidefor-cases-with-foreign-reciprocating-countries (Last visited Dec. 9, 2012) (emphasis added).

Once such a declaration is made, support agencies in jurisdictions of the United States participating in the program established by Title IV–

⁵¹ The parties and the district court agree that Norway is an FRC: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/international/index.html. ROA4876.

D of the Social Security Act (the IV–D program) must provide enforcement services under that program to such reciprocating countries as if the request for service came from a U.S. State.

73 Fed.Reg. 72555

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"The law also permits individual states of the United States to establish or continue existing reciprocating arrangements with foreign countries *when there has been no Federal declaration*.⁵²" *Id.* (emphasis added).

The doctrine of federal preemption is rooted in the Supremacy Clause, which provides that "the Laws of the United States . . . shall be the supreme Law of the Land; and the Judges in every State shall be bound thereby, any thing in the Constitution or Laws of any State to the Contrary notwithstanding." U.S. Const. art. VI, cl. 2. Federal statutes and the regulations adopted thereunder have equal preemptive effect. Fid. Fed. Sav. & Loan Ass'n v. de la Cuesta, 458 U.S. 141, 153, 102 S.Ct. 3014 (1982). A federal statute or regulation may preempt a state regulatory scheme under the doctrine of field preemption when Congress enacts a regulatory scheme "so pervasive as to make reasonable the inference that Congress left no room for the States to supplement it," <u>Barnett Bank of Marion County, N.A. v. Nelson</u>, 517 U.S. 31, 116 S.Ct. 1103 (1996). In such a case, any state regulation on the topic will be invalid even if it does not directly conflict with federal laws or regulations.

The standard established under federal law for the establishment of a bilateral agreement between the U.S. and a foreign country mandates "substantial conformity" with the standard laid out in 42 U.S.C. 659A. The federal program

⁵² Prior to the State Department designating Norway as a FRC, the Nevada Attorney General's office also established a reciprocity agreement with Norway, which demonstrates that Norway's procedures meet the standard of "substantially similar" as contained in NRS 130.10179(2). The AG provided verification of this agreement and Appellant filed it with the court below. See ROA4852-54.

was designed such that the experts within the Department of State make the determination as to whether the country's procedures are in "substantial conformity" based on that agency's investigation. The federal statutory scheme does not require foreign countries to adhere to any particular state law, or even to UIFSA as a whole. Most importantly, the federal program does not provide for state court judges to second-guess or overrule the federal determinations. In short, the regulatory scheme adopted by the federal government and mandated on the states prohibits a state court's determination that Norway's child support order is not entitled to recognition.

4. Norway Actually Did Follow UIFSA Precisely

Even though it was not required to do so, Norway followed the tenets of UIFSA with exactness in issuing its controlling order, because a statutory exception to the application of NRS 130.611 applies in this matter. The version of NRS 130.6115 currently in effect creates the very clear exception to the application of 130.611:

1. If a foreign country or political subdivision that is a state will not or may not modify its order pursuant to its laws, a tribunal of this State may assume jurisdiction to modify the child-support order and bind all natural persons subject to the personal jurisdiction of the tribunal whether or not the consent to modification of a child-support order otherwise required of the natural person pursuant to NRS 130.611 has been given or *whether the natural person seeking modification is a resident of this State or of the foreign country or political subdivision.*

2. An order issued pursuant to this section is the controlling order.(Emphasis added).

This Court has already held that Nevada does not have continuing and exclusive jurisdiction, and therefore, cannot modify the 1998 child support order under UIFSA law. Under NRS 130.6115, when a state (Nevada) "may not modify its order pursuant to its laws," another tribunal with jurisdiction (Norway)

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may modify regardless of whether the person seeking modification (Porsboll) is within the jurisdiction or not. The strictures of NRS 130.611 which Respondent attempts to use to challenge her own judicial actions in Norway do not apply since Nevada may not modify the 1998 decree and the exception to NRS 130.6115 applies. Even though Norway was not required to follow UIFSA law as contained in the NRS, it has done so precisely.

The district court below conditioned recognition of the Norwegian order on whether Norway followed one section of Nevada law, specifically NRS 130.611, but then rejected the applicability of the statutory exception to that law as applied to Norway because "Nevada is not a foreign country."⁵³ Again, it is difficult to read any logic into the district court's decision. The district court held that "this statute [NRS 130.6115] specifically refers to modification of a child support order of a foreign country. Here, the child support order sought to be modified was issued in Nevada. Nevada is not a foreign country." *Id*.

The district court's reasoning is fatally flawed for at least two reasons. Firstly, the statutory exception specifically refers to not just a foreign country as the district court noted, but also "a political subdivision that is a state." Nevada is a political subdivision of a country, known as a state. Secondly, Nevada's implementation of UIFSA contained in Nevada Revised Statutes was intended to apply to Nevada, not Norway. The district court imposed one part of Nevada's statute on Norway as a condition for recognition because it was the only way the court could rule in favor of Respondent. If Norway's tribunal is a foreign country's tribunal to Nevada, Nevada is certainly a foreign country's tribunal to Norway. If all applicable tenets of Nevada law had been mandated on Norway's tribunal, then Norway would have been found to have followed the tenets of

⁵³ ROA4877

UIFSA precisely when it allowed Porsboll to modify the Nevada child support order, because Nevada courts lacked jurisdiction to do so under UIFSA.

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As an FRC, Norway's order is to be treated as an order from a sister state. In the same manner that Nevada's procedural law cannot be imposed on sister states, it likewise cannot be imposed on Norway. On equal footing with a sister state, Norway is entitled to have its orders recognized according to the Full Faith and Credit of Child Support Orders provisions of 28 U.S.C. 1738B which in section (a)(1), generally requires that "[t]he appropriate authorities of each State *shall enforce* according to its terms a child support order made consistently with this section by a court of another State." (Emphasis added). The district court should be required to enforce the Norwegian order from its effective date based on federal fiat.

B. ESTOPPEL PREVENTS RESPONDENT FROM DENVING THE VALIDITY OF HER OWN JUDICIAL ACTIONS

The application of judicial estoppel is a question of law which this Court reviews de novo. <u>Marcuse v. Del Webb Communities, Inc.</u>, 163 P.3d 462, 468, 123 Nev. 278 (2007). Judicial estoppel applies when the following five criteria are met: (1) the same party has taken two positions; (2) the positions were taken in judicial or quasi-judicial administrative proceedings; (3) the party was successful in asserting the first position (i.e., the tribunal adopted the position or accepted it as true); (4) the two positions are totally inconsistent; and (5) the first position was not taken as a result of ignorance, fraud, or mistake. *Id*. at 468-469. In 2002, in this very case,⁵⁴ this Court noted that "one of the rule's purposes is to prevent parties from deliberately shifting their position to suit the requirements of

⁵⁴ This Court's pronouncement ten years ago was also in response to Porsboll's attempt to invalidate her judicial actions when she thought she might improve her legal position later.

another case concerning the same subject matter. "<u>Vaile v. Vaile</u>, 118 Nev. 262, 273 (2002).⁵⁵ In the district court below, Mr. Vaile argued the applicability of the doctrine of judicial estoppel to this matter, but the district court's orders do not reflect any ruling on this topic.⁵⁶

In this case, Respondent argued that although the Norwegian court granted Porsboll's request to issue a new controlling order effective April 1, 2002, and then granted Porsboll's request to modify that order, in 2005 and 2008, the child support order should be ignored in Nevada. In the proceedings in Norway, Porsboll petitioned for child support, requesting Norway to take jurisdiction of the matter. Porsboll asked for modification of the Norwegian order in Norway *even after* she set her Nevada counsel on convincing the Nevada district court to take jurisdiction in the matter.⁵⁷ Clearly, Porsboll has taken inconsistent positions in the two judicial proceedings. Her efforts in Nevada have been deliberately aimed at attempting to improve upon the child support judgments she was granted in Norway. Because Porsboll was successful in convincing the Norwegian tribunal to adopt her position, all criteria for applying the doctrine of judicial estoppel are met.

While Porsboll's Nevada counsel was arguing that the district court had jurisdiction in 2007, he well knew that Porsboll had already successfully procured a child support order in Norway and even had it further modified in her favor. Through counsel, Respondent intentionally withheld these facts and the Norwegian orders from the district court in order to further her guise. Clearly, there is no mistake involved here, but rather an intentional deception to further unjust monetary gain by Porsboll and her Nevada counsel. Appellant requests

⁵⁵ RSV006

⁵⁶ ROA4842, ROA4257

⁵⁷ Porsboll's latest modification in Norway was done in 2008, while her most recent action in Nevada to convince the district court to take jurisdiction of the matter began in November 2007.

that the Court justly apply the doctrine of judicial estoppel to prevent Porsboll from challenging her own legal actions in Norway.

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C. THE DISTRICT COURT REWROTE THE STANDARD FOR WAIVER, AND WRONGLY REJECTED THE DEFENSE OF PREVENTION

Even without the intervention of a controlling Norwegian child support order, Porsboll waived child support between April 2002 and November 2007.⁵⁸

This Court has held that "while a waiver may be the subject of express agreement, it may also be implied from conduct which evidences an intention to waive a right, or by conduct which is inconsistent with any other intention than to waive a right." <u>Parkinson v. Parkinson</u>, 106 Nev. 481, 796 P.2d 229, 231 (1990). See also, <u>State of Montana v. Lopez</u>, 112 Nev. 1213, 925 P.2d 880 (1996) (enforcing child support waiver by conduct). On the issue of prevention, this Court has held:

[A]ny acts, conduct, or declarations of the party, evincing a clear intention to repudiate the contract, and to treat it as no longer binding, is a legal prevention of performance by the other party. It seems clear both upon principle and by authority, that where one party to an executory contract refuses to treat it as subsisting and binding upon him, or, by his act and conduct, shows that he has renounced it, and no longer considers himself bound by it, there is, in legal effect, a prevention of performance by the other party.

<u>Cladianos v. Friedhoff</u>, 69 Nev. 41, 240 P.2d 208, 210 (1952).

⁵⁸ The issue of waiver came before this Court on appeal previously. Because the Court ruled that the district court had improperly modified the child support provisions contained in the parties' 1998 divorce decree, the Court did not reach a decision on the waiver defense.

During the April 9, 2012 hearing, Mr. Vaile again⁵⁹ provided testimony that Respondent directly and clearly communicated that she would pursue child support through the Norwegian system because the Nevada child support provisions were "void" according to her belief.⁶⁰ Porsboll made these assertions to Vaile in the presence of her current counsel.⁶¹ After disclaiming the validity of the Norwegian decree, Porsboll focused her efforts exclusively on obtaining child support through the Norwegian system. She never so much as mentioned child support under the 1998 decree to Mr. Vaile (let alone request payment in accordance with the agreement) for over nine years until her Nevada counsel initiated action in November 2007, claiming that Nevada was the only jurisdiction that had entered valid child support orders.

In September 2008, Mr. Vaile provided evidence to the district court (and resubmitted it during the April 9, 2012 hearing),⁶² that he had communicated a willingness to follow the Nevada decree if Porsboll would simply provide the tax information required. Porsboll testified that she refused Mr. Vaile's request to continue to honor the 1998 decree and refused to provide her income information,⁶³ effectively preventing Mr. Vaile from calculating support under the decree.⁶⁴

In neither the previous nor the recent proceedings did Respondent offer any evidence to counter prevention and waiver of child support under the Nevada

- ⁶¹ ROA3084 (p.127 of transcript)
- 62 ROA4647

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⁵⁹ Both Mr. Vaile and Ms. Porsboll provided testimony on this topic in the September 2008 hearing, which evidence was previously presented to this Court, and is not in dispute. Porsboll has not appeared for any hearing held since 2008.

⁶⁰ ROA3018 (p.60 of transcript), ROA3061(p.103), ROA3076 (p.118), ROA3093 (p.135)

⁶³ ROA3085-3086 (p.128-129 of transcript), ROA3110-3111 (p.153-154)

decree. Because Porsboll's waiver was clear and unequivocal, the district court changed the waiver standard. The court refused to find that Porsboll had waived support because "Mrs. Porsboll signed no written agreements for waiver of child support."⁶⁵ Of course, this is an incorrect legal standard. Signed written agreements are not required in order for waiver to be effective as *Parkinson* holds.

In this case, Porsboll went well beyond implication; she verbally acknowledged that she *would not* seek child support under the Nevada order, took no action to seek child support under the Nevada system, and then refused to provide the income information as required in the decree. Porsboll's active prevention tactics exist on the opposite end of the spectrum from the standard of "mere implication," which is sufficient to support a waiver defense. Porsboll's actions are much more than sufficient to support Mr. Vaile's defense that Porsboll waived child support during this period. Again, the district court avoided the just application of the law by changing the legal standard to reach a particular result and in so doing abused the discretion of the court.

D. THE DISTRICT COURT REFUSED TO OVERTURN ATTORNEY FEES PREVIOUSLY AWARDED TO THE NON-PREVAILING PARTY

"The effect of a general and unqualified reversal of a judgment, order or decree is to nullify it completely and to leave the case standing as if such judgment, order or decree had never been rendered, except as restricted by the opinion of the appellate court." <u>Odlum v. Duffy</u>, 219 P.2d 785 (Cal. 1950); <u>Hall</u>

⁶⁵ ROA4884

⁶⁴ Porsboll did not provide this income information until 2012 after this Court's remand. When she did provide it, she submitted documents in the Norwegian language (unreadable), which were based on her *net* income (not gross as required in the separation agreement) and which did not cover all applicable periods (she submitted mere representative records). ROA4257, ROA4048-4180.

v. Superior Court, 289 P.2d 431 (Cal. 1955). Upon the hearing of an appeal, the supreme court may reverse, affirm, or modify a judgment, or affirm it as to some issues and reverse as to others. Sorge v. Sierra Auto Supply Company, 47 Nev. 222, 224 (1924). Once a judgment is voided by action of the Nevada Supreme Court, no act by the parties or court may render it valid; it remains without force or effect. Mortimer v. Pacific States Sav. & Loan Co., 62 Nev. 147, 163 (1944). Attorneys fees are not recoverable otherwise except when authorized by

statute or rule. <u>Sun Realty v. Eighth Judicial Dist. Ct. Cty of Clark</u>, 91 Nev. 774, 542 P.2d 1072, 1074 (1975). NRS 18.010 allows attorney's fees to be granted only to a prevailing party unless the parties have agreed to the contrary. NRS 130.313 allows a UIFSA court to assess fees only "[i]f an obligee prevails . . . " in the relevant litigation. This Court reviews a District Court's award of attorney's fees for an abuse of discretion. See <u>County of Clark v. Blanchard Constr. Co., et al.</u>, 98 Nev. 488, 492, 653 P.2d 1217, 1220 (1982).

Porsboll initiated this round of litigation over five years ago in an effort to convince the district court to stray far from the relevant law by granting Porsboll significant (and retroactive) modifications to the parties' separation agreement as contained in the 1998 divorce decree. At all times, she and her Nevada counsel concealed the fact that she had already sought and been granted a child support order in Norway, as well as two subsequent modifications in her favor there. Because Porsboll's Nevada counsel earned no legal fees from Porsboll's undisclosed legal forays in Norway, she authorized her Nevada counsel to improve on Norway's judgment if he could in order to benefit them both.⁶⁶ In the litigation over the last five years, Porsboll's counsel has been awarded over

⁶⁶ Clearly, the the Norwegian child support system would directly benefit the USborn children of whom Porsboll has rid herself in Norway. Contrarily, the primary objective of Porsboll and Nevada counsel in maintaining the action in Nevada is to avoid the Norwegian system for their personal monetary gain.

\$200,000 in attorneys fees, in addition to intercepting 40% of all child support payments that the district court has ordered over the same time frame.⁶⁷

On March 31, 2008, Mr. Vaile filed a Motion for Reconsideration and to Amend Order or Alternatively, for a New Hearing and Request to Enter Objections and Motion to Stay Enforcement of the March 3, 2008 Order,⁶⁸ wherein:

... Mr. Vaile requests discovery to investigate the type and extent with which the Norwegian system has instituted child support orders (as Ms. Porsboll claims), so that the Court can make a determination under NRS 130.204 and 130.207 relative to whether it can enter a controlling order.⁶⁹

The district court denied Mr. Vaile's request. Following Porsboll's testimony during the hearing on September 18, 2008 which revealed the existence of the Norwegian child support orders, Mr. Vaile twice asked the district court to take judicial notice of the existence of the Norwegian orders. The court refused to do so.⁷⁰ Had Porsboll been willing to follow the parties' 1998 agreement *or* to produce the Norwegian child support orders,⁷¹ the entire litigation from 2007 to present (together with the associated attorneys fees) would have been avoided.

In January 2012, this Court made an unqualified reversal of the district court's judgment and denied Respondent each and every claim for relief on her appeal. This Court overturned all relief previously granted to Respondent through the district court's unlawful modification of the decree and vacated the lower court's order. This Court's decision required the lower court to take the

⁷⁰ ROA3087-3090, 3093 (pp.130-133, 137 of transcript)

⁷¹ Respondent's attorney is a self-proclaimed expert in UIFSA. As such, there can be little doubt that he has, at all times, recognized the materiality of the Norwegian child support orders.

⁶⁷ ROA4967-4968

⁶⁸ ROA1352-1380

⁶⁹ ROA1359

action that Mr. Vaile advocated in the lower court almost five years prior, effectively moving the child support dispute back to square one. At the point that this Court issued its decision on January 26, 2012, Respondent became the nonprevailing party in this litigation.

On remand, however, the district court refused to give effect to this Court's decision and let stand the district court's previous orders on virtually every point.⁷² From a monetary standpoint, the most significant impact of the district court's rejection of this Court's decision on Mr. Vaile is the refusal of the district court to overturn the attorney fees awarded to Respondent in those previous proceedings, even though Respondent's position was legally unsupportable and her conduct fully culpable. The district court held that despite this Court's reversal, the district court's prior awards of attorneys fees and costs were already reduced to judgment and collectible by all lawful means.⁷³ The district court then awarded Respondent another \$57,483.38 post-remand for their request to enforce the judgment (including attorney fees awards contained in temporary orders of the district court) vacated by this Court.⁷⁴

As the non-prevailing party, Respondent is not entitled to attorneys fees in the litigation. Awarding fees to the non-prevailing party is contrary to the statutory law, and in this case, rewards the party who has significantly and needlessly drawn out this litigation through intentionally deceptive conduct. Appellant requests that the Court remedy the district court's abuse of discretion by explicitly overturning all attorney fee awards in favor of Respondent below.

⁷² The only change that the district court made after this Court's decision was to increase Appellant's child support amount from \$1,300 to over \$2,800 a month based on Porsboll's flawed interpretation of the formula contained in the divorce decree.

⁷³ ROA4886-87

⁷⁴ ROA4967-68

E. THE DISTRICT COURT CONTINUED TO MODIFY THE PARTIES' AGREEMENT AFTER BEING PROHIBITED BY THIS COURT

This Court's January 2012 decision provided history, case law, thorough analysis and reasoning to assist the district court to understand that "since the parties and children do not reside in Nevada and the parties have not consented to the district court's exercise of jurisdiction, the district court lacks subject matter jurisdiction to modify the support order."⁷⁵ Nevertheless, in continued defiance of this Court, the district court maintained the significant modifications it made to the parties' decree. Most significantly, the district court imposed retroactive child support on Mr. Vaile while the children lived with him 100% of the time.

The parties' agreement, in Article IV(2)(c) defines the child support percentage to be incorporated into the child support formula.

The term "**Appropriate Child Support Percentage**" shall mean (i) twenty-five percent (25%) for any period during which Cisilie is the Residential Parent for two-unemancipated Children, (ii) eighteen percent (18%) for any period during which Cisilie is the Residential Parent for one unemancipated Child but clause ([i]) is not satisfied and (iii) zero percent (0%) for any period during which neither clause (i) nor clause (ii) is satisfied.⁷⁶

The term "Residential Parent" is defined in section Article IV(2) of the agreement as "the party with whom the such Child has primary residence." There is no dispute that between May 2000⁷⁷ and April 2002, Mr. Vaile was the Residential Parent for the children. During that period, under the unambiguous terms of the agreement, Mr. Vaile should have paid zero child support. This is also the logical result given that Mr. Vaile provided 100% of the children's care during this period with zero contribution from Porsboll.

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⁷⁶ ROA37-63

⁷⁷ There is no dispute that Mr. Vaile paid full child support in accordance with agreement between the parties from 1998 to May 2000.

⁷⁵ RSV019

Instead of enforcing the decree of divorce unmodified as directed by this Court, the district court refused to overturn its previous modification of decree. The court reasoned that "[a]t the hearing on July 21, 2008, the court denied Mr. Vaile's request. . . . Accordingly, the court's decision is res judicata⁷⁸ (sic)."⁷⁹ It is undisputed that the children lived with Mr. Vaile between May 2000 and April 2002 in accordance with the custody order of the previous district court. However, as a punishment for Mr. Vaile's custody decree eventually being overturned by this Court, the district court found justification to impose a child support obligation of 25% (along with interest, penalties, and sanctions⁸⁰) during the period when his children actually lived *with him*.⁸¹

The district court continues to defy this Court by implementing significant modifications⁸² to the child support provisions contained in the parties' divorce decree. Not only is this modification precisely the type of alteration which this Court informed the district court was impermissible under the law, it is also contrary to public policy. To allow a court to impose child support as a punitive measure wholly unrelated to ensuring the best interests of the child fundamentally changes the purpose and focus of the law. No legal doctrine (including *res*

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⁸⁰ The district court actually found Mr. Vaile *in contempt* retroactively for not paying child support to Porsboll *while the children lived with him*. ROA4883-84.

⁸¹ Even if the district court could find justification for sanctioning Mr. Vaile for following a 2000 district court order which was eventually overturned in 2002, it is particularly unjust to impose retroactive child support where none was due as that sanction because of the compounding effect of principal, interest, penalties, sanctions and attorneys fees which the district court attached to that punitive child support requirement.

⁷⁸ ROA4878

⁷⁹ Appellant could find no case law where a lower court asserted that the doctrine of *"res judicata"* prevails over an appellate court's reversal of an issue. Even if the doctrine could be applied to avoid this Court's mandate, Mr. Vaile has asserted and maintained his position on this issue at all relevant times, and the issue has not yet been addressed on appeal.

judicata) or other excuse justifies the district court's disobedience of this Court's mandates. Appellant requests that the Court hold as a matter of law that child support may not be used as a punitive measure against residential parents.

X. <u>CONCLUSION</u>

The parties were divorced in Nevada in August 1998. Between 1998 and May 2000, Appellant paid child support in full as agreed between the parties. Between May 2000 and April 2002, the parties' children lived full-time with Appellant. On April 1, 2002, the Norwegian child support order which Respondent sought in Norway became the controlling child support order. Appellant requests the Court to explicitly find these facts and, as such, to hold as a matter of law that Appellant has fulfilled his child support obligations under Nevada law. Appellant requests that the Court prohibit the district court from enforcing the child support provisions contained in the 1998 divorce decree. Appellant further requests that attorneys fees, sanctions, awards or judgments in favor of Respondent be overturned. In the event that any issues require remand, Appellant requests remand to an alternate district court judge in the Eighth Judicial District Court with explicit directions to vacate all orders, judgments, and

⁸² The district court implemented a number of additional modifications to the parties' agreement post-remand as well, including refusing to modify downward Mr. Vaile's child support percentage to 18% upon emancipation of the oldest child, allowing the use of Porsboll's net as opposed to gross income in the calculations, implementing interest and penalties contrary to the provisions in the agreement, and adopting Porsboll's "interpretation" of the calculations without an opportunity to be heard on the matter, which interpretation results in child support principal significantly higher than that provided for in the agreement itself. Because the district court's attitude of defiance in continuing to modify the decree is obvious based on the lower court's decision on the point raised above, Mr. Vaile does not offer extensive argument on every minor point of modification. Any pronouncement by this Court that modification is still impermissible would presumably apply to all modifications made by the district court. ROA4875-4887.

awards previously entered by the district court after April 2002. Lastly, Appellant requests that the Court direct the Clark County District Attorney to cease withholding of Mr. Vaile's salary and to remove any related tax return or other federal intercepts in place.

Respectfully submitted this 11th day of December, 2012.

Robert Scotlund Vaile 2201 McDowell Avenue Manhattan, KS 66502 (707) 633-4550 Appellant in Proper Person

XI. STATEMENT IN COMPLIANCE WITH NRAP 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(a)(6) because it has been prepared in a proportionally spaced typeface using LibreOffice in 14-point size Times New Roman type style.
- I further certify that this brief complies with the page limitations of NRAP32(a)(7) because, excluding the parts of the brief exempted by NRAP32 (a)(7)(C), it is proportionately spaced, has a typeface of 14 points or more, and does not exceed 30 pages.
- 3. Finally, I hereby certify that I have read this appellate brief, 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 number, if any, of the record on appeal or to the appendix where the matter relied on is to be found. I understand that I may be subject to sanctions in the event that the accompanying brief is not in conformity with the requirements of the Nevada Rules of Appellate Procedure.

Robert Scotlund Vaile 2201 McDowell Avenue Manhattan, KS 66502 (707) 633-4550 Appellant in Proper Person

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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that on December 11, 2012, I deposited in the United States Mail, postage prepaid, at Manhattan, KS, a true and correct copy of *Appellant's Opening Brief*, together with *Appellant's Appendix*, addressed as follows:

Marshal S. Willick, Esq. Willick Law Group 3591 E. Bonanza Road, Suite 200 Las Vegas, NV 89110-2101

Attorney for Respondent

Dated this 11th day of December, 2012.

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