IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEVADA

NANYAH VEGAS, LLC, A Nevada limited liability company,

Petitioner,

v.

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CLARK COUNTY DISTRICT COURT, THE HONORABLE NANCY ALLF, DEPARTMENT 27,

Respondent,

SIG ROGICH aka SIGMUND ROGICH as Trustee of The Rogich Family Irrevocable Trust; ELDORADO HILLS, LLC, a Nevada limited liability company; TELD, LLC, a Nevada limited liability company; PETER ELIADES, individually and as Trustee of the The Eliades Survivor Trust of 10/30/08; IMITATIONS, LLC, a Nevada limited liability company DOES I-X; and/or ROE CORPORATIONS I-X, inclusive,

Real Parties in Interest.

Electronically Filed Jun 27 2019 11:22 a.m. Elizabeth A. Brown Clerk of Supreme Court

SUPREME COURT CASE

NO: _____

CASE NO. A-13-686303-C DEPT. NO.: XXVII

CONSOLIDATED WITH: CASE NO.: A-16-746239-C

PETITION FOR WRIT OF MANDAMUS, OR IN THE ALTERNATIVE, PROHIBITION

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Docket 79072 Document 2019-27710

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NRAP 26.1 DISCLOSURE

The undersigned counsel of record certifies 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.

- All parent corporations and publicly-held companies owning 10 1. percent or more of a petitioner's stock: None.
- 2. Names of all law firms whose attorneys have appeared for Petitioners in this case (including proceedings in the district court or before an administrative agency) or are expected to appear in this court: Mark G. Simons of SIMONS HALL JOHNSTON PC appears in these proceedings on behalf of Petitioner. Brandon B. McDonald of McDonald Law Offices, PLLC previously represented Petitioner.

Dated this 27 day of June, 2019.

MARK G. SIMONS, ESQ. SIMONS HALL JOHNSTON PC 6490 S. McCarran Blvd., Ste. F-46 Reno, Nevada 89509 Attorneys for Nanyah Vegas, LLC

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INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF WRIT PETITION¹

As found by the district court, it is undisputed that Petitioner Nanyah invested \$1.5 million in Eldorado Hills, LLC² (Eldorado); that Eldorado had an obligation to repay Nanyah its investment; and that the Rogich Trust specifically assumed responsibility to repay the investment on Eldorado's behalf as Eldorado's surety.³

This petition arises after years of litigation in the two (2) consolidated actions in which the Rogich Trust was a named defendant; after the Rogich Trust obtained judgment against various other parties; after the Rogich Trust made offers of judgment allowing judgment to be entered <u>against</u> the Rogich Trust; after holding Sigmund Rogich ("Rogich") out as the sole beneficiary of the Rogich Trust; after failing to identify any other alleged beneficiaries of the Rogich Trust as indispensable parties and/or witnesses pursuant to NRCP 16.1;

¹ For ease of reading, this introduction will omit appendix citations, but citations will be provided for factual statements in the body of the petition.

² Eldorado Hills is a 160-acre development near Boulder City, Nevada.

³ Westinghouse Credit Corp. v. Wolfer, 10 Cal. App. 3d 63, 67, 88 Cal. Rptr. 654, 656 (Cal. Ct. App. 1970) ("A surety is . . . one who promises to answer for the debt of another. . . .").

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and after extensively litigating Nanyah's motions for summary judgment against the Rogich Trust.

On the eve of trial, the Rogich Trust filed a notice requesting that the district court take judicial notice of NRS 163.120(2), in particular the provision that requires that the then beneficiaries to a trust be notified of the existence of the action proceeding against the trust before judgment can be entered against the trust. The district court erroneously concluded that the statute required that the notice to the beneficiaries be provided in the early stages of an action in order to permit the beneficiaries the opportunity to intervene.

Based on its entirely incorrect analysis of the statute, the district court: (1) denied Nanyah's request to either continue the trial to allow for notification pursuant to NRS 163.120, or to try the case and suspend entry of judgment in order to satisfy NRS 163.120. Instead, after denying Nanyah's 30-day continuance, the district court dismissed the action with respect to the Rogich Trust, with prejudice, on the eve of trial contending that because the district court denied the request to continue there was no time to provide notice to any alleged beneficiaries prior to trial. This court should issue a writ directing the district court to vacate its order.

ROUTING STATEMENT

This is not a matter which is presumptively assigned to the Nevada Court of Appeals. While the underlying issues involve a dismissal of claims based on breach of contract, this writ petition does not satisfy NRAP 17(b)(6), which assigns writ petitions challenging orders resolving certain contract disputes to the Nevada Court of Appeals, because the matter at hand involves an amount in controversy that exceeds \$75,000.

This petition raises a question of first impression in Nevada, specifically, whether NRS 163.120 requires that notice of a pending action be given to beneficiaries of a trust within a strict timeframe or whether the district court also has discretion to allow for notification of beneficiaries at any time during an action up to immediately prior to the formal act of entering judgment.

Accordingly, it would be appropriate for the Nevada Supreme Court to retain this case under NRAP 17(a)(10) (issues of first impression).

RELIEF SOUGHT

Petitioners seek a writ of mandamus or prohibition to compel the district court to vacate its order dated April 30, 2019, which dismissed this action against the Rogich Trust with prejudice.

ISSUES PRESENTED

- 1. Whether this court should exercise its discretion and entertain the writ.
- Whether the district court misinterpreted NRS 163.120(2) as a matter of law, and consequently erroneously dismissed claims against the Rogich Trust with prejudice.
- 3. Whether the district court failed to exercise the discretion granted to it by NRS 163.120, as a matter of law, thereby warranting extraordinary relief.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

A. UNDISPUTED FACTS, AS FOUND BY THE DISTRICT COURT.

The following undisputed facts are taken *verbatim* from the district court's order, dated October 5, 2018 (the "Order").

Eldorado was formed in 2005 for the purpose of owning and developing approximately 161 acres of land near Boulder City, Nevada. Eldorado was originally comprised of Go Global, Inc. (100% owned by Carlos Huerta) and the Rogich Trust. 1 PA 0073.

In 2007, Huerta contacted Nanyah to invest. In December of 2007, Nanyah wired \$1,500,000.00 which eventually was deposited into Eldorado's bank account. 1 PA 0073.

 In October of 2008, approximately ten months later, Teld purchased a 1/3 interest in Eldorado for \$3,000,000.00. Concurrently, The Flangas Trust also purchased a 1/3 interest in Eldorado for \$3,000,000.00, which was subsequently transferred to Teld when the Flangas Trust backed out of the deal. Because Teld ended up with a larger percentage of Eldorado than originally contemplated, it was later agreed that the Rogich Trust would re-acquire 6.67% of Eldorado from Teld. As a result of these transactions, Go Global (*i.e.*, Huerta) no longer owned an Eldorado membership interest, Teld owned 60% of Eldorado, and the Rogich Trust owned approximately 40% of Eldorado. 1 PA 0073.

These transactions were memorialized in various written agreements.

Nanyah was not included as a named signatory on the agreements, however, the agreements identified that The Rogich Trust specifically agreed to assume the obligation to pay Nanyah its percentage interest in Eldorado or to pay Nanyah its \$1,500,000 invested into Eldorado. 1 PA 0073-74 (emphasis added.)

The October 30, 2008, Purchase Agreement states at Section 4 the following: Seller [Go Global], however, will not be responsible to pay the Exhibit A Claimants their percentage or debt. This will be Buyer's [The Rogich

Trust's] obligation. . . ." The Exhibit A Claimants include Nanyah and its \$1,500,000.00 investment. 1 PA 0074.

The October 30, 2008, Membership Interest Purchase Agreement identifies Nanyah's \$1,500,000 investment into Eldorado at Exhibit D which clearly and unequivocally states the following: Seller [Rogich and the Rogich Trust] confirms that certain amounts have been advanced to or on behalf of the Company [Eldorado] by certain third-parties [including Nanyah], as referenced in Section 8 of the Agreement. Exhibit D also memorializes Nanyah's \$1,500,000 investment into Eldorado. 1 PA 0075.

B. PROCEDURAL HISTORY.

The first complaint in this matter was filed on July 31, 2013. 1 PA 0001-21. On October 21, 2013, the plaintiffs filed an amended complaint. 1 PA 0022-42. In the amended complaint, plaintiffs Carlos Huerta and Go Global alleged three claims for relief against Rogich; (1) breach of express contract; (2) breach of covenant of good faith and fair dealing; and (3) negligent misrepresentation. Plaintiff Nanyah alleged a claim of unjust enrichment against Eldorado. 1 PA 0022-42.

On October 1, 2014, the district court entered an order granting summary judgment on Nanyah's unjust enrichment claim, based on a determination that the

action was barred by the statute of limitations. 1 PA 0043-45. On appeal, this court reversed the district court's erroneous grant of summary judgment, holding that the district court's determination that the statute of limitations commenced to run on the date of Nanyah's original \$1.5 million investment into Eldorado was an incorrect statement of law (the "Decision"). 1 PA 0047. This Court also stated that from the record there appeared to be genuine issues of material fact with respect to when Nanyah discovered that Eldorado breached its obligation to repay it for its \$1.5 million investment. Id. This court then remanded the matter back to the district court for further proceedings to determine the date Eldorado breached its obligation to repay Nanyah.⁴

On November 4, 2016, Nanyah filed a separate complaint initiating a new action against a number of defendants other than Eldorado, specifically alleging:

(1) breach of contract against the Rogich Trust, Sig Rogich, Teld, and Peter

⁴ This Court's Decision is the law of the case relating to Nanyah's \$1.5 million investment into Eldorado. In the present case, Nanyah's \$1.5 million invested into Eldorado was established by the Decision and the parties are barred from contesting the existence of this \$1.5 million investment in the district court proceedings. LoBue v. State ex rel. Dep't of Highways, 92 Nev. 529, 532, 554 P.2d 258, 260 (1976) ("Where a judgment is reversed by an appellate court, the judgment of that court is final upon all questions decided and those questions are no longer open to consideration. The Court to which the cause is remanded can take only such proceedings as conform to the judgment of the appellate tribunal." (emphasis added)).

Eliades; (2) contractual breach of the implied covenant of good faith and fair dealing against the Rogich Trust, Sig Rogich, Teld, and Peter Eliades; (3) tortious breach of the implied covenant of good faith and fair dealing against the Rogich Trust, Rogich, Teld, and Peter Eliades; (4) intentional interference with contract against Rogich, Teld, Peter Eliades, the Eliades Trust, and Imitations; (5) constructive trust against the Eliades Trust; (6) conspiracy against all defendants; (7) fraudulent transfer; (8) declaratory relief; and (9) specific performance. 1 PA 0049-67. These additional claims were based on the Rogich Trust's specific contractual agreement to repay Nanyah its \$1.5 million investment on Eldorado's behalf, i.e., as Eldorado's surety.

On March 31, 2017, the parties agreed to consolidate the 2016 action with the remanded unjust enrichment case. 1 PA 0068-71.

The district court granted summary judgment as to the Eliades defendants in an order entered on October 5, 2018. That order is the source of the undisputed facts recited above. The district court granted summary judgment as to the Eliades defendants based, in pertinent part, on the district court's finding as a matter of law, that the Rogich Trust "specifically agreed to assume the obligation to pay Nanyah its...debt." 1 PA 0078 (emphasis added). Further, the district court found that the October 30, 2008, purchase agreement confirmed

that the "Eliades Defendants would not be responsible for the Rogich Trust's obligation to Nanyah." 1 PA 0078 (emphasis added). Accordingly, because the "Eliades Defendants did not specifically assume[] the Rogich Trust's obligation to repay Nanyah its \$1,500,000.00 investment into Eldorado," the Eliades Defendants were all dismissed from the litigation. 1 PA 0078.

C. THE ORDER AT ISSUE IN THIS WRIT PETITION.

This matter was set for a five-day trial, to commence on April 22, 2019. 2 PA 0141. The claims which remained, and were to be tried, were: (1) breach of contract against the Rogich Trust and Rogich; (2) contractual breach of the implied covenant of good faith and fair dealing, against the Rogich Trust and Rogich; (3) tortious breach of the implied covenant of good faith and fair dealing against the Rogich Trust and Rogich; (4) conspiracy against the Rogich Trust, Rogich, and Imitations; (5) breach of implied in fact contract against Eldorado; and (6) unjust enrichment against Eldorado. 2 PA 0147-148.

One week before trial was to begin, Rogich and the Rogich Trust filed a request for judicial notice, specifically requesting that the district court take notice of NRS 163.120, which provides, in pertinent part:

A judgment may not be entered in favor of the plaintiff in the action unless the plaintiff proves that within 30 days after filing the action, or within 30 days after the filing of a report of an early case conference if one is required, whichever is longer, or within such other time as the

court may fix, and more than 30 days before obtaining the judgment, the plaintiff notified each of the beneficiaries known to the trustee who then had a present interest . . . of the existence and nature of the action.

1 PA 0091-94.

The next day, (and still a week prior to trial) Nanyah filed an emergency motion to address the notice and/or continue the trial. 1 PA 0095-0139. The Rogich Defendants (Rogich, the Rogich Trust and Imitations) filed an opposition to Nanyah's emergency motion on April 18, 2019. 2 PA 0270-280. **Prior to trial**, the district court held a hearing on the emergency motion on April 18, 2019, and ordered the parties to file additional briefing with respect to the scope of the district court's discretion. 2 PA 0281-300.

Nanyah and the Rogich Defendants each filed supplemental briefs on April 21, 2019, and the district court held a hearing on April 22, 2019. The district judge ruled from the bench that "The whole point of that statute is to allow intervention. . . . There's no way those beneficiaries can seek to intervene at this point. So I am going to dismiss the trust." 2 PA 0328-344. The parties all agreed to a suspension of the trial to allow Nanyah to file the instant writ. 2 PA 0341. The Court also refused to allow the claims against the Rogich Trust to be tried to the jury and the entry of judgment suspended pending compliance with NRS 163.120's provisions. 2 PA 340:13-15.

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The court entered an order on April 30, 2019, memorializing the ruling and dismissing the Rogich Trust with prejudice. 2 PA 0345-348.

ARGUMENT

A. WRIT RELIEF IS THE ONLY MEANS OF REDRESS FOR PETITIONERS.

A writ of mandamus is available "to compel the performance of an act that the law requires as a duty resulting from an office, trust, or station; or to compel the admission of a party to the use and enjoyment of a right or office to which the party is entitled and from which the party is unlawfully precluded by such inferior tribunal, corporation, board or person." NRS 34.160. Mandamus is appropriate when discretion is manifestly abused or is exercised arbitrarily or capriciously. Round Hill Gen. Improvement Dist. v. Newman, 97 Nev. 601, 637 P.2d 534 (1981). Writs of mandamus are utilized to control a manifest abuse of or arbitrary or capricious exercise of discretion, or to clarify an important issue of law. Bennett v. Eighth Judicial Dist. Ct., 121 Nev. 802, 806, 121 P.3d 605, 608 (2005). A writ of prohibition is available to arrest the "proceedings of any tribunal, corporation, board or person exercising judicial functions, which such proceedings are without or in excess of the jurisdiction of such tribunal, corporation, board or person." NRS 34.320.

"Writ relief is an available remedy, where . . . petitioners have no plain, speedy and adequate remedy at law other than to petition this court." Albany v. Arcata Associates, 106 Nev. 688, 799 P.2d 566 (1990). In the instant matter, the district court order being challenged is not one that permits an appeal pursuant to NRAP 3A, and aside from a writ, Petitioners do not have a plain, speedy, and adequate remedy. See De Luca Importing Co. v. Buckingham Corp., 90 Nev. 158, 159, 520 P.2d 1365, 1366 (1974) ("An order dismissing a claim where more than one claim for relief is presented without an express determination by the district court, that there is no just reason for delay, is not a final order appealable under NRAP 3A(b)").

Although Nanyah could file an appeal from a final order in this case, there are compelling reasons why this court should intervene at this juncture, as it has done in similar cases. For instance, this court has held:

In this case, although an appeal from a final judgment appears to be an adequate and speedy remedy for the individual parties, resolving this writ petition could affect the course of the litigation and thus promote sound judicial economy and administration. Moreover, this petition raises an important legal issue in need of clarification involving public policy, which could resolve or mitigate related or future litigation. Accordingly, we exercise our discretion to entertain Dr. Tam's petition for writ of mandamus."

Tam v. Eighth Judicial Dist. Court, 131 Nev. 792, 796, 358 P.3d 234, 237 (2015).

This court has elected to intervene where: (1) judicial economy requires consideration of the writ petition; (2) there are substantial issues of legal importance: (3) entertaining the petition is necessary to clarify the law; and (4) there is no question of fact, and a clear question of law is presented. All four of those factors are present in the instant case, and this court should therefore exercise its discretion to entertain the writ.

1. THIS COURT SHOULD ENTERTAIN THE WRIT IN THE INTEREST OF JUDICIAL ECONOMY.

This court has recognized that considerations of judicial economy are important in deciding whether to entertain a writ petition before a final judgment has been entered. Renown Reg'l Med. Ctr. v. Second Judicial Dist. Court, 130 Nev. 824, 828, 335 P.3d 199, 202 (2014); Helfstein v. Eighth Judicial Dist.

Court of Nev., 131 Nev. 909, 912-13, 362 P.3d 91, 94 (2015). Here, judicial economy would be thwarted if Nanyah was forced to proceed to trial against the remaining defendants, only to have this court find on appeal that the district court erred by dismissing the Rogich Trust. At that point, a second trial would be required, on the identical issues and contracts, as opposed to resolving the issue now, and if Nanyah prevails, a single trial can be held with all the defendants. It is clear that considerations of judicial economy and the avoidance of multiple

jury trials (and the costs, judicial resources, and time associated therewith) are best served by consideration of the issue here.

2. THIS WRIT PETITION RAISES SUBSTANTIAL LEGAL ISSUES OF GENERAL IMPORTANCE.

The instant writ petition also raises a substantial legal issue of general importance, namely, the application of NRS 163.120(2) and whether the phrase "or within such other time as the court may fix" should be ascribed its plain meaning, thereby allowing the district court the discretion to set a time for notifying the beneficiaries of a trust of a pending legal action, so long as it is done at least 30 days before "the entry" of the judgment. Consideration of this issue clearly comports with this court's desire "to limit our discretion to those cases which presented serious issues of substantial public policy, or which involved important precedential questions of statewide interest." Poulos v. Eighth Judicial Dist. Court, 98 Nev. 453, 455, 652 P.2d 1177, 1178 (1982).

Further, the issue of statutory interpretation is an issue of law. Therefore, this Court's review of the district court's order and interpretation of NRS 163.120 is a matter of law reviewed de novo. <u>Barbara Ann Hollier Tr. v. Shack</u>, 131 Nev. Adv. Op. 59, 356 P.3d 1085, 1089 (2015) ("Statutory interpretation is a question of law that we review de novo." (internal quotations omitted)).

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CLARIFICATION OF THE LAW IS REQUIRED.

"Additionally, we may exercise our discretion where, as here, an important issue of law requires clarification." Smith v. Eighth Judicial Dist. Court, 113 Nev. 1343, 1345, 950 P.2d 280, 281 (1997). It is apparent that the application of NRS 163.120(2) requires clarification, as demonstrated by the district court's obvious confusion in this case and the district court's clear refusal to recognize that the term "or" creates disjunctive avenues to provide notice as long as it is merely done prior to "the entry" of judgment.

4. THE ISSUES RAISED IN THIS WRIT PETITION ARE PURELY LEGAL.

"We have consistently attempted to reserve our discretion for those cases in which there was no question of fact, and in which a clear question of law, dispositive of the suit, was presented for our review. See Bottorff v. O'Donnell, 96 Nev. 606, 614 P.2d 7 (1980)." Poulos v. Eighth Judicial Dist. Court, 98 Nev. 453, 455, 652 P.2d 1177, 1178 (1982). Resolution of the instant writ petition depends entirely on a legal issue, specifically whether the plain language of NRS 163.120(2) should be given effect.

Based on the foregoing, it is clear that this court should exercise its discretion and entertain the writ. Turning next to the merits of the writ petition, it becomes clear that the relief requested should be granted.

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B. THE PLAIN LANGUAGE OF NRS 163.120 PROVIDES THAT THE COURT MAY ALLOW NOTICE TO BENEFICIARIES "WITHIN SUCH OTHER TIME AS THE COURT MAY FIX".

The district court indicated that it believed its "hands were tied" with regard to allowing Nanyah to proceed with providing notice to any alleged "other" beneficiaries of the Rogich Trust. 2 PA 0290. Specifically, the district court claimed that it could not continue the trial and could not suspend entry of judgment under the rule because it was only limited to consideration of subsection (1) and (2) of NRS 163.120. Contrary to the district court's perception, the district court's hands are not "tied".

The clear and unambiguous language of the statute provides three (3) separate times when notice can be provided to beneficiaries: (1) "within 30 days after filing the action", (2) "or within 30 days after the filing of a report of an early case conference if one is required, (3) "or within such other time as the Court may fix, and more than 30 days before obtaining the judgment" (emphasis added). In this case, notice was not provided to the beneficiaries within 30 days after filing the action, nor was notice provided within 30 days after the filing of the early case conference report. Nonetheless, notice could still be timely provided under the third provision, so long as the district court set a time that was 30 days before the entry of the judgment.

1. "OR" IS DISJUNCTIVE.

"When construing a statute, this court looks to the words in the statute to determine the plain meaning of the statute" Nevada v. Daniel, 129 Nev. 692, 309 P.3d 1041, 1043 (2013) (citation omitted). "The plain and ordinary meaning of the word 'or' is well established. When used in a statute, the word 'or' indicates an intention to designate separate, disjunctive categories." Eddie E. v. Superior Court, 234 Cal. App. 4th 319, 327, 183 Cal. Rptr. 3d 773, 779 (Cal. Ct. App. 2015). NRS 163.120 plainly states that there are 3 separate timing situations to provide notice to beneficiaries—1 or 2 or 3. The Court's hands are not "tied" solely to considering situation 1 or 2. The district court erred, as a matter of law, by deciding not to address the "or 3" at all.

Statutory construction of the use of the term "or" in NRS 163.120(2) clearly means that Nanyah's motion seeking to proceed with notice to the beneficiaries after the jury verdict and before entry of judgment is entirely appropriate and warranted in this case. To artificially claim that the Court's hands are "tied" and that the district court can only consider situation 1 or 2 as a basis to deny Nanyah's requested relief is clear error and is a total disregard for the legislature's use of the term "or" repeatedly in the statute to define disjunctive and separate events. *See e.g.*, State v. Catanio, 120 Nev. 1030, 1033, 102 P.3d

588, 591 (2004) ("By using the disjunctive 'or, the statute clearly indicates" alternative activities); Jensen v. Sheriff, White Pine Cty., 89 Nev. 123, 125, 508 P.2d 4, 5 (1973) (use of word "or" in the statute "spells out the several specific acts in the disjunctive, and any one of them is sufficient"); Shell Petroleum Corp. v. Royal Petroleum Corp., 135 Tex. 12, 21, 137 S.W.2d 753, 758 (Comm'n App. 1940) ("In its ordinary use the term 'or' is disjunctive, and alternative in its effect."); 154 ALR 866 ("The word 'or' when used in a statute, is almost always disjunctive").

2. NOTICE DOES NOT HAVE TO OCCUR PRIOR TO TRIAL.

As Nanyah has consistently pointed out, the NRS 163 notice does not have to occur prior to trial and, instead, the case could be tried to verdict and, thereafter, the district court could suspend entry of judgment pending notice to any designated beneficiary. The statute does not preclude Nanyah's claims against the Rogich Trust from being tried to the jury and does not prevent a jury from rendering a verdict either for or against the Rogich Trust.

This exact issue was addressed by the Texas Supreme Court in

<u>Transamerican Leasing Co. v. Three Bears, Inc.</u>, 586 S.W.2d 472, 476–77 (Tex.

requirement after judgment had already been entered. Invoking the authority granted to it under subsection (3), the trial court vacated the judgment and then allowed the prevailing party to proceed with 163's notice requirements. In holding that the district court had the authority to vacate the judgment, suspend entry of the judgment and allow the plaintiff to provide 163 notice to the beneficiaries, the Texas Supreme Court stated:

1979).⁵ The Texas Supreme Court addressed the notice to beneficiaries

The requirement for a notice does not always require notice in time for trial, since the statute places some discretion with the court to require the notice "within such other time as the court may fix" so long as it is thirty days before judgment.

<u>Id.</u> (emphasis added). Allowing a plaintiff to notice beneficiaries of a trust <u>after</u> a trial has been completed against a trustee has been repeatedly held to be a proper exercise of the Court's discretion.⁶

⁵ Authority from other states is compelling and persuasive because NRS 163.120 is a part of the Uniform Trust Act. Like Nevada, other states have adopted the Uniform Trust Act.

⁶ In re Pfizer's Estate, 33 N.J. Super. 242, 265, 110 A.2d 40, 53 (Ch. Div.), aff'd, 17 N.J. 40, 110 A.2d 54 (N.J. 1954) ("inasmuch as the cause has been fully heard and argued without the Attorney-General having been joined as a party, an order may be entered joining the Attorney-General of the State as a party, process should be served upon him, and if he shall be satisfied that a correct conclusion has been reached, he may file a formal answer and submit to the judgment of the court without further hearing or proceedings. However, no

Clearly the Texas Supreme Court in <u>Transamerican</u> did not consider the trial court's hands to be "tied". Instead, the Texas Supreme Court found that the district court acted properly in vacating the judgment and allowing the plaintiff the opportunity to comply with 163's requirements.⁷

judgment will be entered until the Attorney-General has been made a party and has been afforded an opportunity to be heard.").

⁷ The Court in <u>Transamerican</u> addressed the notice to beneficiaries requirement after judgment had already been rendered but during the period the Court was capable of vacating the judgment and stated:

When this matter was first called to the attention of the trial court, it vacated the original judgment while it still had jurisdiction to do so. . . . After the judgment was vacated, Transamerican caused notice of the suit to be sent to the beneficiaries, and the court also appointed a guardian ad litem to represent the two minor contingent beneficiaries. The trial court also ordered the beneficiaries to show cause why judgment should not be rendered in the case. The beneficiaries' response to the show cause order was that a new trial was mandatory since the notice was not sent until after the jury had returned its verdict. On August 17, 1976, the trial court again rendered judgment for Transamerican against both Three Bears and the McCreless Trust.

The beneficiaries acknowledge that the notices complied with the statutory requirement that they be sent "more than thirty (30) days prior to obtaining the judgment," but insist that the technical compliance did not allow the beneficiaries the opportunity to participate in the trial of the case.

The beneficiaries in this instance have not been able to show anything they would have done differently or in addition to what was done in defense of the Trust liability if they had actually participated in the trial. Prior to the court's judgment on August 17, 1976, the beneficiaries presented nothing to the court to suggest any beneficiary had been prejudiced by a failure to receive an earlier notice, or that

The Texas Supreme Court did not seek to prejudice the plaintiff in that action by refusing to grant appropriate and warranted relief—even after judgment had already been rendered against the trust in that case. In Transamerican the jury had already rendered a verdict against the trust. The court entered judgment on the verdict. When the issue of notice to beneficiaries was brought to the court's attention, the court vacated the judgment and allowed the 30-day notice to be sent to the beneficiaries. The court then entered an order to show cause to the beneficiaries to explain why the judgment should not be rendered. The trustee who was overseeing the entire litigation was also the primary beneficiary of the trust. The court held that the trustee/beneficiary "ably participated in the defense of the case" therefor 163's provisions were fully satisfied. The Texas Supreme Court held that the district court's actions in vacating judgment and

the trial would have been conducted any differently if all beneficiaries had participated. The trustees were also the principal beneficiaries, and they answered and ably participated in the defense of the case. None of the beneficiaries who did not participate in the trial have ever asserted any conflict between their *477 interests and the trustee-beneficiaries or that their interests were not adequately represented by the trustees. In the absence of a conflict of interest or of a pleading that they were inadequately represented, the beneficiaries who did not participate in the trial were not necessary parties to the case. . . .

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suspending entry of judgment to address NRS 163's notice requirements was a proper and appropriate exercise of the court's discretion.

Similarly, the district court asserted that the alleged beneficiaries of the Rogich Trust were not able to be provided the opportunity to intervene, therefore, the Rogich Trust had to be dismissed. However, the district court undertook no analysis to determine if the alleged beneficiaries had any rights to intervene, had any legal basis supporting intervention and had any legal separate and distinct legal defenses to the district court's prior October 5, 2018, Order holding the Rogich Trust liable for repayment of Nanyah's \$1.5 million investment into Eldorado. Again, the district court held as a matter of law that the Rogich Trust contractually agreed to repay Nanyah its \$1.5 million investment. As the district court further found, the Rogich Trust's liability to repay Nanyah its \$1.5 million is clear and unambiguous. As the Texas Supreme Court noted, beneficiaries do not have an automatic right to intervene and are not indispensable parties.

3. NEVADA CASE LAW ALLOWS PARTIES TO INTERVENE AT ANY TIME PRIOR TO THE ENTRY OF JUDGMENT.

In the order at issue, the district court specifically stated, "NRS 12.130 provides that an interested person **must** intervene in an action '[b]efore the trial." 2 PA 0347 (emphasis added). The district court's interpretation of NRS

12.130 was again in total error as the statute does not require that intervention *must* happen before trial.

Rather, the complete phrase from NRS 12.130(1)(a) is: "Before the trial, any person *may* intervene in an action or proceeding" (emphasis added).⁸ "May" is discretionary, not mandatory, and the district court again wrongfully interpreted this statute to achieve its prejudicial objective of dismissing the Rogich Trust from this action.⁹

This is not the end of the analysis, however, because NRS 12.130(1)(c) provides: "Intervention is made as provided by the Nevada Rules of Civil Procedure." NRCP 24 is the rule pertaining to intervention, and it is also not so rigid as the district court in this case would like to believe.

⁸ Due to the "suspension" of the trial in this action, the beneficiaries remain fully capable of intervening if such action is warranted "prior to" trial in this action. This is because the use of the phrase "suspension" of the trial is a misnomer. The trial was never actually started. Other than the ruling addressed herein, no other action occurred on April 22, 2019; no jury was empaneled, no evidentiary stipulations were placed on the record and no exhibits were marked. Further, there is no record of any jury panel even being called for the case.

⁹ Supreme Court Rule 2(9) ("'may' is permissive."); <u>Ewing v. Fahey</u>, 86 Nev. 604, 607, 472 P.2d 347, 349 (1970) ("the rule is best expressed in this manner: 'Generally in construing statutes, 'may' is construed as permissive . . .""); <u>Sierra Club v. Johnson</u>, 614 F. Supp. 2d 998, 1001 (N.D. Cal. 2008) (court "cannot ignore the plain, permissive meaning of the word may.").

The only requirement in NRCP 24 is that intervention must be "timely." This court has observed that, "[o]ur cases generally reflect that intervention is timely if the procedural posture of the action allows the intervenor to protect its interest." LoMastro v. Am. Family Ins. Grp. (Estate of LoMastro), 124 Nev. 1060, 1070 n.29, 195 P.3d 339, 347 (2008). Further, "[t]imeliness is a determination that lies within the sound discretion of the trial court." Cleland v. Eighth Judicial Dist. Court, 92 Nev. 454, 456, 552 P.2d 488, 490 (1976).

Even if the sole purpose of NRS 163.120 was to allow the beneficiaries to intervene, a proposition for which neither the Rogich Trust nor the district court has provided any authority, the beneficiaries could be allowed to intervene now and/or even after a jury verdict, so long as judgment has not been entered. In fact, Nanyah specifically requested a short 60 day continuance to allow it to notify the beneficiaries and to proceed to trial, but the district court denied the request, then strangely used its denial to conclude that the beneficiaries could not be notified in time to allow them to intervene prior to trial. Stated another way, the district court denied a short continuance to allow the beneficiaries to intervene (if warranted) then used its denial of a continuance to penalize Nanyah and say the beneficiaries had no opportunity to intervene prior to trial. The district court's prejudice towards Nanyah in this instance is clear.

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Concededly, "[t]he plain language of NRS 12.130 does not permit intervention subsequent to the entry of a final judgment." Lopez v. Merit Ins. Co., 109 Nev. 553, 556, 853 P.2d 1266, 1267-68 (1993). However, "entry" of a judgment is a unique event. See e.g., NRAP 4(a)(4) (written notice of entry triggers appeal period). But clearly NRS 12.130 contemplates that intervention can happen any time prior to "the entry of a final judgment"; even after the jury has reached a verdict, so long as judgment has not been entered.

In the instant case, there is still time for the beneficiaries to be notified, and if they wish to intervene, the district court clearly has the ability to allow them to do so. To allow notification of the beneficiaries at this point (or even later, so long as judgment has not been entered), is consistent with and does not run afoul of NRS 12.130, NRCP 24, or this court's jurisprudence. As the Texas Supreme Court held in Transamerican Leasing Co. v. Three Bears, Inc., 586 S.W.2d 472, (Tex. 1979) the beneficiaries could not show any basis to intervene so they were not necessary parties and intervention by the beneficiaries was rejected. Id. at 476-477 ("None of the beneficiaries who did not participate in the trial have ever asserted any conflict between their *477 interests and the trustee-beneficiaries or that their interests were not adequately represented by the trustees. In the absence of a conflict of interest or of a pleading that they were inadequately

represented, the beneficiaries who did not participate in the trial were not necessary parties to the case. . . . ").

C. THE DISTRICT COURT FAILED TO EXERCISE THE CLEAR DISCRETION IT HAS PURSUANT TO NRS 163.120, AND MANDAMUS IS THE APPROPRIATE REMEDY.

"[M]andamus may lie to compel a court to exercise discretion that it unquestionably has, when it fails to do so." <u>Lund v. Eighth Judicial Dist. Court</u>, 127 Nev. 358, 363, 255 P.3d 280, 284 (2011). "Indeed, when, as here, legal error leads the district court to decline to exercise discretion that it indisputably has ... mandamus may lie, in the discretion of this court, to avert further avoidable error." <u>Id.</u>

As discussed above, NRS 163.120 gives the district court discretion to extend the time within which the plaintiff must provide notice to the beneficiaries, and the district court made an error of law which led the court to utterly fail to exercise that discretion. This court should grant the instant petition for writ of mandamus in order to avert further avoidable error.

The district court's error in misinterpreting the statute is compounded by the fact that if the district court had exercised its discretion, the district court should have allowed additional time in which to notify the purported

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beneficiaries. ¹⁰ The Rogich Trust waited until the eve of trial to even allude to any beneficiaries. Until that point, Mr. Rogich was the only individual who had ever been identified in connection with the trust. Mr. Rogich and the Rogich Trust have never produced a copy of the trust documents, never disclosed any beneficiaries, nor have they ever identified any indispensable parties or asserted the lack of indispensable parties as a defense. The Rogich Trust never identified any alleged beneficiaries as potential witnesses pursuant to NRCP 16.1, and never asserted any affirmative defense that an "indispensable party" had not been

¹⁰ The egregiousness of the district court's action, and its clear prejudicial intent and application against Nanyah, is demonstrated by the district court's granting of the Rogich Trust's request for a continuance of the trial earlier in the proceedings. The Rogich Trust's request for a continuance was made by oral motion during the calendar call for the trial when the trial was set to commence on November, 2018. 1 PA 0085. One of the Rogich Trust's attorneys requested a continuance for purely "personal reasons". The attorney requesting the continuance was not even the lead trial counsel. Over objection, the district court granted the oral request for continuance. 1 PA 0087. In granting the continuance, the district court undertook no considerations of the prejudice to Nanyah or that the continuance was unrelated to any issue in the case. Instead, the district court granted the Rogich Trust's request for a continunce for purely personal reasons which was clearly prejudicial to Nanyah. Then, when Nanyah requested a short continuance of the trial to comply with NRS 163, the district court again ruled against Nanyah, denied the request and ruled that because the trial was not continued, the beneficiaries could not receive notice prior to trial pursuant to NRS 163 so the claims against the Rogich Trust were dismissed. The district court's prejudicial rulings and cannot be overlooked.

named.¹¹ In addition, the Rogich Trust never once asserted in the proceedings that NRS 163 was applicable or that notice needed to be provided to any alleged beneficiaries even though the Rogich Trust opposed two (2) separate summary judgment motions filed by Nanyah.

Further, Rogich, on two separate occasions, as an individual and in his capacity as Trustee of the Rogich Trust, made offers of judgment agreeing to allow judgment to be entered in Nanyah's favor **against** the Rogich Trust (the "Offers of Judgment"). 1 PA 0082-83 (Offer of Judgment 10/29/18) and 1 PA 0088-90 (Offer of Judgment 4/1/19). These Offers of Judgment must be treated as judicial admissions admitting that Rogich was acting as the sole beneficiary and/or had full authority from the beneficiaries (assuming any other than Rogich actually exist) to allow judgment to be entered **against** the Rogich Trust.

It is incongruous to believe that the Rogich Trust never asserted in opposition to summary judgment NRS 163's provisions and also formally extended two (2) separate Offers of Judgment pursuant to NRCP 68, authorizing judgment to be entered against the Rogich Trust, then on the eve of trial claim that a judgment could not be entered against the Rogich Trust because of NRS

[&]quot;See e.g., 1 California Affirmative Defense 2d, §6:33 (2nd ed. 1995) (failure to join indispensable party an affirmative defense).

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163's provisions. It is certain this Court can see the disingenuous nature of the Rogich Trust's conduct.

D. JUDICIAL ESTOPPEL BARS THE ROGICH TRUST'S **INVOCATION OF NRS 163'S PROVISIONS.**

Judicial estoppel applies in a proceeding when a party undertakes affirmative actions and/or admits certain facts and prevents the party from subsequently seeking to disavow those actions and/or facts. Sterling Builders, Inc. v. Fuhrman, 80 Nev. 543, 549, 396 P.2d 850, 854 (1964) (quoting 31 C.J.S. Estoppel § 121 at 649) (" 'Under the doctrine of judicial estoppel a party may be estopped merely by the fact of having alleged or admitted in his pleadings in a former proceeding the contrary of the assertion sought to be made.'").

Judicial estoppel bars a party from playing "fast and loose" with the legal system. In the present case, the Rogich Trust made affirmations of fact and law offering to allow Nanyah to obtain "judgment" against the Rogich Trust. 1 PA 0082-83; 88-90. The Rogich Trust undertook this activity pursuant to NRCP 68. The Rogich Trust extended the Offers of Judgment on two (2) separate occasions.

The Rogich Trust is now precluded in these proceedings from contending that NRS 163's provision bar judgment against it when the Rogich Trust specifically authorized and represented pursuant to NRCP 68 that judgment could in fact be entered against it. It is in this very situation that the doctrine of judicial

("Judicial estoppel, also known as the doctrine of inconsistent positions, 'is intended to protect against a litigant playing fast and loose with the courts,' gaining an advantage by taking one position, then seeking to gain a second advantage by taking an incompatible position."); Rissetto v. Plumbers & Steamfitters Local 343, 94 F.3d 597, 600-01 (9th Cir. 1996) ("Judicial estoppel, sometimes also known as the doctrine of preclusion of inconsistent positions, precludes a party from gaining an advantage by taking one position, and then seeking a second advantage by taking an incompatible position. . . . Judicial estoppel is intended to protect against a litigant playing fast and loose with the courts.").

estoppel is applied. Bradley v. Harcourt, 104 F.3d 267, 272 (9th Cir. 1996)

The Rogich Trust's affirmative conduct in this case demonstrates that Rogich was either the only beneficiary and/or the participation of the beneficiaries was irrelevant and/or the beneficiaries had authorized Rogich to full authority to proceed in this action to protect their interests. Supporting this, the Rogich Trust obtained judgment in its favor and received \$240,000 in fees and costs. 2 PA 0307. Throughout this litigation, Rogich has failed to identify any other beneficiaries of the Rogich Trust, despite requests from Nanyah pursuant to NRS 163.120(2), leading one to the conclusion that Rogich is in fact the sole

163.120(2).

E. THE COURT MUST EXERCISE ITS DISCRETION TO DECIDE NANYAH'S CLAIMS AND RIGHT TO RECOVERY ON "THE MERITS".

The Nevada Supreme Court has stated that it is clear public policy for district courts to exercise their discretion to decide disputes on the merits. As stated by the Nevada Supreme Court in Franklin v. Bartsas Realty, Inc., 95 Nev. 559, 563, 598 P.2d 1147, 1149 (1979): "One of the proper guides to the exercise of discretion is: The basic underlying policy to have each case decided upon its merits. In the normal course of events, justice is best served by such a policy." Id.; Christy v. Carlisle, 94 Nev. 651, 654, 584 P.2d 697 (1978) ("It is our underlying policy to have each case decided upon its merits."). By dismissing the claims against the Rogich Trust based on an alleged failure to notify

¹² Unfortunately, due to the Rogich Trust's ambush tactics, it is quite possible for the Rogich Trust to alter who the beneficiaries are under the trust so as to artificially attempt to create who will claim they did not know of the litigation that has been proceeding between multiple parties, with multiple attorneys and in multiple courts.

beneficiaries (the existence of which Nanyah had not even been informed), the district court totally thwarts this public policy. Further, the district court undertook no efforts to determine if in fact the beneficiaries had actual and/or constructive knowledge of the extensive litigation that had been proceeding for years.

The better approach would be to allow the case to go to trial including the claims against the Rogich Trust. If the jury finds in favor of the Rogich Trust, then there is no issue under NRS 163.120(2), which requires that a judgment may not be entered in favor of "the plaintiff" without notice to the beneficiaries of the trust. If, on the other hand, the jury finds in favor or Nanyah, the Court must exercise its discretion as requested by Nanyah to allow Nanyah to give NRS 163.120 notice to the Rogich Trust beneficiaries after jury verdict and prior to entry of judgment. Only in such fashion is this Court complying with Nevada public policy. Id; see also United States v. Hosteen Tse-Kesi, 191 F.2d 518, 520 (10th Cir. 1951) ("[court] is under a duty to decide cases upon their merits and may not arbitrarily refuse to exercise its jurisdiction when invoked by appropriate proceedings.").

F. RULES OF STATUTORY CONSTRUCTION SUPPORT NANYAH'S REQUEST.

Nevada law is clear that the Court should construe a statute to avoid absurd results. Las Vegas Sun v. District Court, 104 Nev. 508, 511, 761 P.2d 849, 851 (1988) ("statutes should be interpreted so as to effect the intent of the legislature in enacting them; the interpretation should be reasonable and avoid absurd results."); Moody v. Manny's Auto Repair, 110 Nev. 320, 325, 871 P.2d 935, 938 (1994) (a statute should always be construed so as to avoid absurd results). To the extent the Court is under the impression that its "hands are tied" to only allow notice under situation 1 or 2, the Court's impression is incorrect and would constitute an absurd result. The statute plainly and clearly identifies alternative time periods to conduct notice to beneficiaries including prior to, during and even after trial, i.e., situation 3. To disregard situation number 3 would constitute an absurd interpretation of the statute given that this provision would be entirely ignored.

CONCLUSION

The district court in this matter erroneously concluded that it had no discretion with respect to the timing of the notice to the beneficiaries. This legal error resulted in the dismissal of the claims against the Rogich Trust with

prejudice. In the interest of judicial economy, and because there are important legal issues that are generally applicable and should be resolved, this Court should entertain the writ and grant the relief requested. To decide otherwise is to promote and reward the Rogich Trust's gamesmanship and requires that this Court ignore the district court's October 5, 2018 Order finding as a matter of law that the Rogich Trust contractually agreed to assume Eldorado's obligation to repay Nanyah its \$1.5 million investment.

Respectfully submitted this 27 day of June, 2019.

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SIMONS HALL JOHNSTON PC

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Reno, Nevada 89509

Attorneys for Nanyah Vegas, LLC

AFFIDAVIT OF MARK G. SIMONS IN SUPPORT OF PETITION FOR WRIT OF MANDAMUS, OR IN THE ALTERNATIVE, PROHIBITION

STATE OF NEVADA)
	: SS
COUNTY OF WASHOE)

MARK G. SIMONS, being first duly sworn depose and state under penalty of perjury, as follows:

- 1. I am over the age of 18 years and have personal knowledge of the facts stated herein, except for those stated upon information and belief, and as to those, I believe them to be true. I am an attorney at Simons Hall Johnston PC and am counsel for Petitioner Nanyah Vegas, LLC.
- This Petition deals with the interpretation and application of NRS
 163.120.
- 3. The Court's consideration of this Petition is necessary to clarify important issues of law and procedure since NRS 163.120's express provisions authorize the district court to enter any order necessary to provide notice—if necessary—to any beneficiaries up to the moment prior to entry of judgment. The discretion contained in NRS 163.120(2) even allows a trial to be completed and verdicts rendered against a trust before notice is provided to trust beneficiaries. When the district court ruled that NRS 163.120(2) did not contain discretionary authority, the district court erred as a matter of law.

- 4. Further, this Court's consideration of this Petition would also serve to resolve an area of law that appears to be generating confusion with the district courts since the district court in this instance ignored the clear language of the statute and persuasive case law interpreting the identical provision from a uniform act.
- 5. I certify and affirm that this Petition for Writ of Mandamus, or in the Alternative, Prohibition is made in good faith and not for delay.

FURTHER AFFIANT SAYETH NAUGHT.

DATED this 22 day of June, 2019.

MARK G. SIMONS

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 27 day of June, 2019, by Mark G. Simons, Esq., at Reno, NV.

NOTARY PUBLIC



CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

Pursuant to NRAP 25, I certify that I am an employee of SIMONS HALL JOHNSTON PC, and that on this date I caused to be served a true copy of the PETITION FOR WRIT OF MANDAMUS, OR IN THE ALTERNATIVE, **PROHIBITION** on all parties to this action by the method(s) indicated below:

> X by placing an original or true copy thereof in a sealed envelope, with sufficient postage affixed thereto, in the United States mail at Reno, Nevada, addressed to:

Brenoch Wirthlin Thomas Fell Samuel S. Lionel Fennemore Craig, P.C. 300 S. Fourth Street, Ste. 1400 Las Vegas, NV 89101 Attorneys for Sigmund Rogich, Individually and as Trustee of the Rogich Family Irrevocable Trust and Imitations, LLC

Joseph Liebman **Dennis Kennedy Bailey Kennedy** 8984 Spanish Ridge Avenue Las Vegas, NV 89148-1302 Attorneys for Eldorado Hills, LLC, TELD, LLC, a Nevada limited liability company; PETER ELIADES, individually and as Trustee of the The Eliades Survivor Trust of 10/30/08

Honorable Nancy L. Allf Eighth Judicial District Court, Dept. 27 200 Lewis Avenue Las Vegas, NV 89101

DATED: This 27 day of June, 2019.

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