

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEVADA

KIRSTIN BLAISE LOBATO,

Appellant,

vs.

THE STATE OF NEVADA,

Respondent.

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) Case No. 58913
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Aug 07 2012 08:45 a.m.
Tracie K. Lindeman
Clerk of Supreme Court

**PETITION FOR RECONSIDERATION EN BANC AND REQUEST FOR
EXPEDITED RELIEF**

COMES NOW the amicus curiae, the Justice Institute, Proving Innocence, and the Worldwide Women’s Criminal Justice Network, by and through their counsel Dustin Dingman, and respectively requests reconsideration en banc, pursuant to NRAP 40A, of the Panel’s “Order Denying Motion” entered on May 9, 2012. A petition for rehearing to the Panel was denied on July 25, 2012. The Appellant is appealing the district court’s denial of her petition for a writ of habeas corpus, and on March 12, 2012 the Justice Institute filed a timely “Motion For Leave To File Amicus Curiae Brief” to bring state and federal constitutional issues to the Panel’s attention that are not adequately addressed in the Appellant’s opening brief filed on March 5, 2012. The “Motion For Leave To Add [Join] Amicus Curiae,” Proving Innocence, and the Worldwide Women’s Criminal Justice Network was filed on

April 5, 2012. The Panel entered an “Order Denying Motion” in which it ruled the amicus curiae’s brief is “not appropriate in this matter.” The amicus curiae respectfully submits that reconsideration by the full court is warranted because of the substantial precedential, constitutional and public policy issues presented. The amicus curiae also respectfully requests that this Court grant its request pursuant to NRAP 2 for expedited relief because briefing is underway by the parties, and normal processing may make this Petition moot.

A. The Panel Failed To Apply The Legal Standard Mandated By NRAP 29(c)(1) & (c)(2) And Relevant Law To Denial Of The Amici’s Brief

The Panel’s Order the Amici’s brief is “not appropriate in this matter,” materially overlooked the legal standard for evaluating the filing of the Amici’s brief.¹ *Panel’s Order*, 2. Reconsideration en banc should be granted to address the substantial precedential issue that there must be uniformity in this Court’s decisions because public policy precludes this Court from denying the filing of an amicus brief that meets the requirements of NRAP 29(c)(1) & (c)(2).

Under NRAP 29 the only two factors relevant for this Court’s evaluation of whether to grant or deny a motion for the filing of an amicus brief are whether the amicus has an “interest” (c)(1), and if their brief is “desirable” (c)(2).

¹ The Amici’s brief is attached hereto as Exhibit 1. It is signed and dated, but not file stamped because it was not filed. (Herinafter, “Amici’s Brief”) The Panel’s “Order Denying Motion” is attached hereto as Exhibit 2. (Herinafter, “Panel’s Order”)

NRAP 29(c)(1)'s requirement that the amicus must have an "interest" identically tracks Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure (Hereinafter, "FRAP") 29(b)(1).² NRAP (c)(2)'s requirement that an amicus brief must be "desirable" is a less stringent standard than FRAP 29(b)(2), which requires that a brief is "desirable" and that it is "relevant to the disposition of the case." *Id.*

Furthermore, NRAP 29(d) exactly tracks the requirement of FRAP 29(c) that an amicus brief must "identify the party or parties supported and indicate whether the brief supports affirmance or reversal." NRAP 29(d) prevents an amicus from feigning disinterest for one of the parties or impartiality for the desired outcome.

Yet, in spite of their material legal relevance, the Panel did not consider, apply or even mention NRAP 29(c)(1) or (c)(2) in denying the filing of the Amici's brief. *Panel's Order*, 1-3.

This Court has no precedent regarding application of NRAP 29(c)(1) & (c)(2)³, so federal cases can be looked to for guidance since the standards under NRAP 29 are equal to or less stringent than their companion federal rules in FRAP 29.

United States Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito authored a leading federal ruling when he was a Circuit Court judge, related to the application of

² FRAP 29 is attached hereto as Exhibit 3.

³ The Amici can find no precedent by this Court, and neither the State in its Opposition nor the Panel in its Order Denying Motion cited any precedent by this Court.

FRAP 29 and what constitutes an amicus curiae's "interest" ((b)(1)), and that an amicus brief is "desirable" and "relevant" ((b)(2)). In *Neonatology Associates, PA v. CIR*, 293 F. 3d 128 (3rd Cir. 2002), the Appellant was well-represented, the five amici had a direct special and pecuniary interest in the outcome, and the Respondent opposed their brief. *Id.* at 129-30.

Justice Alito specifically rejected that an amicus is impartial and cannot be motivated by a special interest or pecuniary concerns. *Id.* at 131-32. He noted that "Rule 29 requires that an amicus have an "interest" in the case," *Id.* at 131, and that:

"... the fundamental assumption of our adversary system that strong (but fair) advocacy on behalf of opposing views promotes sound decision making. Thus, an amicus who makes a strong but responsible presentation in support of a party can truly serve as the court's friend.

... Parties with pecuniary, as well as policy, interests also appear as amici in our court. (citation omitted) I thus reject the appellants' argument that an amicus must be an impartial person not motivated by pecuniary concerns." *Id.* at 131-32. (underlining added)

Justice Alito also specifically rejected that the quality of a party's representation has any relevance to the filing of an amicus brief supporting that party:

"Rule 29 does not contain any such provision. ... Even when a party is very well represented, an amicus may provide important assistance to the court. *Id.* at 132. (underlining added)

Justice Alito also ruled that determining whether a brief is "desirable" warrants an expansive interpretation of Rule 29:

"The criterion of desirability set out in Rule 29(b)(2) is open-ended, but a broad reading is prudent. The decision whether to grant leave to file

must be made at a relatively early stage of the appeal. ... Under these circumstances, it is preferable to err on the side of granting leave. If an amicus brief that turns out to be unhelpful is filed, the merits panel, after studying the case, will often be able to make that determination without much trouble and can then simply disregard the amicus brief. On the other hand, if a good brief is rejected, the merits panel will be deprived of a resource that might have been of assistance.

... For all these reasons, I think that our court would be well advised to grant motions for leave to file amicus briefs unless it is obvious that the proposed briefs do not meet Rule 29's criteria as broadly interpreted. ... "Even when the other side refuses to consent to an amicus filing, most courts of appeals freely grant leave to file, provided the brief is timely and well-reasoned." (citation omitted)." *Id.* at 132-33. (underlining added)

Based on his analysis of Rule 29's requirements, Justice Alito ruled, "I believe that the amici have stated "an interest in the case," and it appears that their brief is "relevant" and "desirable" since it alerts the merits panel to possible implications of the appeal." *Id.* at 133. In so ruling Justice Alito specifically rejected the two arguments in opposition that under Rule 29 the amici be impartial and support an unrepresented or inadequately represented party. *Id.* at 130. Those are substantively the same two arguments the State relied on to oppose the Justice Institute as amicus and the motion to file the brief. See, "Opposition To Motion For Leave To Submit Brief As Amicus Curiae," No. 58913, March 14, 2012, 2-3.(Herinafter, "State's Opposition") Furthermore, neither the State's Opposition nor the Panel's Order disputes the Amici's "brief is timely and well-reasoned," so based on *Neonatology* the rationale of the State's Opposition is irrelevant. *Id.* at

132-33.

Neonatology substantively mirrors the Ninth Circuit's precedents regarding "interest" in *Hoptowit v. Ray*, 682 F. 2d 1237 (9th Cir. 1982), that the amicus "acted exclusively on behalf of the points of view taken by the inmates. ... There is no rule, however, that amici must be totally disinterested." *Id.* at 1260; and in *Funbus v. California PUC*, 801 F.2d 1120 (9th Cir.1986), that the "amici's direct interest in the outcome of this litigation" was not relevant, because "they take a legal position and present legal arguments in support of it, a perfectly permissible role for an amicus." *Id.* at 1125. (underlining added)

The Ninth Circuit's precedent in *Miller-Wohl Co. v. Commissioner of Labor & Indus.*, 694 F.2d 203, 204 (9th Cir. 1982) substantively mirrors *Neonatology* that a "desirable" amicus brief helps ensure that justice may be done:

"These amici fulfilled the classic role of amicus curiae by assisting in a case of general public interest, supplementing the efforts of counsel, and drawing the court's attention to law that escaped consideration." *Miller-Wohl*, 694 F.2d at 204. (underlining added)

Reconsideration en banc should be granted so this Court can address the merits of allowing the Amici's brief to be filed under NRAP 29(c)(1) & (c)(2) which the Panel failed to do, recognize that NRAP 29(c)(1) & (c)(2) are the controlling law for the filing of an amicus brief in this Court, and to address the need for this Court to establish a precedent to maintain uniformity in this Court's decisions because public policy precludes this Court from denying the filing of an

amicus brief that meets the requirements of NRAP 29(c)(1) & (c)(2).

B. The Panel Misapprehended The Material Fact The State Doesn't Oppose The Amicus Curiae Proving Innocence and the Worldwide Women's Criminal Justice Network

The Panel's Order prejudicially misapprehended the material fact that "The motions are opposed." *Id.* at 1. Reconsideration en banc should be granted to address the substantial precedential issue that there must be uniformity in this Court's decisions because public policy precludes this Court from denying the filing of an amicus brief under NRAP 29(c)(1) & (c)(2) based on material misapprehensions of fact.

The Panel's Order misapprehended two material facts. First, contrary to the Panel's Order the Respondent ("State") did not oppose the granting of the motion for Proving Innocence and the Worldwide Women's Criminal Justice Network to join the amicus curiae brief. "Motion For Leave To Add Amicus Curiae, No. 58913, April 5, 2012 (Hereinafter, "Motion To Join"). Second, contrary to the Panel's Order the State's opposition to the filing of the brief was specific to the amicus the Justice Institute, and the State did not oppose the filing of the brief as submitted by the amicus Proving Innocence and the World Women's Criminal Justice Network. *State's Opposition*, 3.

The Panel's Order materially misapprehended those facts by automatically extending the State's objection to the Justice Institute as not impartial to the other

two amicus curiae the State doesn't oppose. *Panel's Order*, 1-3.

Since the Panel's Order specifically cited its misapprehension of fact – “the motions were opposed,” *Id.* at 1 – it cannot reasonably be argued it was not material to its decision.

The motion to join clearly stated without opposition by the State: “The amicus curiae, the Justice Institute, Proving Innocence, and the WWCJN are non-profit public interest organizations that are specifically interested in post-conviction cases involving an Appellant claiming actual innocence. ... Consequently, this Court's understanding of issues in Lobato's Opening Brief and its correct application of law to those issues is of paramount “interest” to each of the amicus curiae. See, NRAP 29(c)(1).” *Motion To Join*, at 2-4. Neither did the State oppose the filing of the amicus brief by Proving Innocence and the Worldwide Women's Criminal Justice Network as not meeting the relevant factors under *Miller-Wohl*, and “Consequently, “an amicus brief is desirable,” NRAP 29(c)(2).” *Motion To Join*, at 7. (underlining added)

Reconsideration en banc should be granted so this Court can address the issue that the Panel's Order was substantively based on two material misapprehensions of fact, and public policy precludes this Court from denying the filing of an amicus brief that meets the requirements of NRAP 29(c)(1) & (c)(2).

C. The Panel Misapprehended Material Facts And Overlooked The Controlling Law That The State Made No Substantive Opposition To Amicus Curiae The Justice Institute

The Panel's Order prejudicially misapprehended material facts and overlooked material questions of law related to the State's opposition to the amicus curiae the Justice Institute. Reconsideration en banc should be granted to address the substantial precedential issue that there must be uniformity in this Court's decisions because public policy precludes this Court from denying the filing of an amicus brief that meets the requirements of NRAP 29(c)(1) & (c)(2).

The State's opposition to the Justice Institute as amicus curiae was based on their arguments it is not impartial in the instant case and that Lobato's *pro bono* counsel is adequate. *State's Opposition*, at 3-4.

The State's opposition to the Justice Institute as amicus curiae has no legal relevance under NRAP 29(c)(1) because an amicus must have an interest in the case, while NRAP 29(d) requires that an amicus cannot be impartial to the outcome. See also, *Hoptowit*, 682 F. 2d at 1260; *Funbus*, 801 F.2d at 1125; and *Neonatology*, 293 F. 3d at 131-3. Furthermore, NRAP 29(d) bars an amicus from pretending to be impartial about the outcome – because it requires a public declaration of which party their brief supports and the relief it seeks for that party.

There is no question the Justice Institute satisfies NRAP 29(c)(1) because

the State argued it has an interest and is not impartial, *State's Opposition*, 3-4, and in accordance with NRAP 29(d)'s requirement, the *Amici's Brief* states it supports Lobato's opening brief and the granting of relief to her. *Id.* at 1.

The State's opposition to the Justice Institute as amicus curiae is also legally irrelevant because whether the Amici's brief is "desirable" under NRAP 29(c)(2) is unrelated to the quality of Lobato's representation – because the only factor is the brief's possible assistance to this Court. See e.g., *Neonatology*, 293 F. 3d at 132. The Amici's Brief correctly supplements the efforts of Lobato's counsel with law and arguments that assist this Court to have a more comprehensive and accurate legal framework to understand the issues. *Id.* at 132-3; and *Miller-Wohl*, 694 F.2d at 204.

The State made no valid legal objection under NRAP 29(c)(1) & (c)(2) to the Justice Institute as amicus curiae and the filing of the Amici's brief, and the Panel's Order made no finding the State did so. *State's Opposition*, 2-4; *Panel's Order*, 1-3.

Reconsideration en banc should be granted so this Court can address the issue that the Panel's Order was substantively based on the misapprehension of material facts and material questions of law, and the precedential issue that public policy precludes this Court from denying the filing of an amicus brief that meets the requirements of NRAP 29(c)(1) & (c)(2).

D. The Panel's Order Relied On A Rationale That Misapprehended Material Facts And Overlooked The Relevant Law

The Panel's Order prejudicially misapprehended material facts and overlooked material questions of law in denying the filing of the Amici's brief. Reconsideration en banc should be granted to address the substantial precedential issue that there must be uniformity in this Court's decisions because public policy precludes this Court from denying the filing of an amicus brief that meets the requirements of NRAP 29(c)(1) & (c)(2).

The Panel's Order relied on the rationale that "The issues addressed in the proposed amicus brief are addressed in the 129-page opening brief and it does not appear that the amicus "add[s] something distinctive to the presentation of the issues;" rather, it appears that the amicus is "serving as a mere conduit for the views of one of the parties."'" *Panel's Order*, at 2-3.

The Panel's Order cites no court ruling or statute supporting that either of its conclusions warrants denial of the Amici's motion and the filing of its brief, and it is materially contrary to NRAP 29(c)(1), (c)(2) and (d), and the relevant holdings in *Miller-Wohl*, *Hoptowit*, *Funbus* and *Neonatology*. In fact, the above quote relied on by the Panel is the opinion of a law professor in a legal text that was unsupported by reference to any court ruling. *Panel's Order*, at 2-3. The Panel's Order *de facto* elevated the professor's unsupported personal opinion to the

equivalent of being a precedent of this Court relied on to justify denial of the filing the Amici's brief.

The Panel materially overlooked that the Amici are required by NRAP 29(c)(1) and the applicable case law to have an "interest," and that under NRAP 29(c)(2) and the applicable case law to be "desirable" the Amici's brief is required to serve as a "conduit for the views of one of the parties" by supporting that party, and thus not be impartial. See NRAP 29(d).

The Panel's Order also overlooks that an amicus brief is limited to issues raised in a party's brief, so there is no legal authority for the Panel's rejection of the Amici's brief based on the fact it correctly addresses issues in Lobato's opening brief. *Panel's Order*, 2-3. See, *Preservation Coalition, Inc. v. Pierce*, 667 F.2d 851, 861-62 (9th Cir. 1982) (Amicus cannot raise issues not raised by a party.); *Riverkeeper, Inc. v. Collins*, 359 F.3d 156, 163 n. 8 (2nd Cir. 2004) (Court would not consider issues not raised by the petitioner.); *Bano v. Union Carbide Corp.*, 273 F.3d 120, 127 n. 5 (2nd Cir. 2001) (Court would not consider issues only raised by the amicus.); *Eldred v. Reno*, 239 F.3d 372, 378 (D.C. Cir. 2001) (Issue only raised by an amicus is not proper.); and, *Resident Council of Allen Parkway Village v. U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development*, 980 F.2d 1043, 1048-50 (5th Cir. 1993) (Amicus cannot expand scope of appeal by raising issues not raised by a party to the appeal.)

Furthermore, the Panel's Order prejudicially misapprehended the material fact that the Amici's brief is *prima facie* "desirable" under NRAP 29(c)(2) and distinct from Lobato's opening brief by supplementing its arguments and drawing attention to law that it doesn't raise. See, *Miller-Wohl*, 694 F.2d at 204; and, *Neonatology*, 293 F. 3d at 133. The arguments related to the five grounds raised in the Amici's brief are supported by 37 case citations that include nine U.S. Supreme Court cases. *Amici's Brief*, ii-iv. In contrast, Lobato's opening brief cites only two cases in support of those five grounds.⁴ *Lobato's Opening Brief*, 118-119, 122-125.

Each of the five grounds argued in the Amici's brief involve significant matters of public importance because they concern state and federal constitutional issues related to due process, a fair trial, effective assistance of counsel, and the facts support Ms. Lobato's actual and factual innocence.⁵ *Amici's Brief*, 2-28. The Amici's brief clearly meets the requirements of NRAP 29(c)(2) and the case law because it presents arguments and controlling or relevant Nevada Supreme Court and Federal Circuit and U.S. Supreme Court precedents related to those grounds that are not addressed in Lobato's opening brief. *Id.*

Reconsideration *en banc* should be granted so this Court can address the precedential issue that the Panel's Order was substantively based on the Panel's

⁴ The five grounds are 59, 64, 72, 74 and 77.

⁵ Neither the State's Opposition or the Panel's Order disputes Lobato's is "a case of general public interest." *Miller-Wohl*, 694 F.2d at 204.

material misapprehension of fact and that it overlooked material questions of law in its Order denying the filing of the Amici's brief, and public policy precludes this Court from denying the filing of an amicus brief that meets the requirements of NRAP 29(c)(1) & (c)(2).

E. The Panel's Order Based On Misapprehended Material Facts and Overlooked Law Creates The Appearance Of Viewpoint Discrimination Against Lobato

The Panel's Order based on misapprehended material facts and overlooked law creates the appearance of viewpoint discrimination against Lobato. Reconsideration en banc should be granted to address the substantial precedential issue that public policy precludes this Court from denying the filing of an amicus brief that meets the requirements of NRAP 29(c)(1) & (c)(2).

This Court has granted the filing of one or more amicus briefs in at least 18 appeals involving a criminal case since 1999.⁶

⁶ The 18 cases involved 6 habeas appeals and 12 direct appeals. The 18 cases are: *Gutierrez vs. State*, No. 53506; *Nunnery v. State*, 127 Nev. ___, 263 P.3d 235 (2011); *Higgs v. State*, 126 Nev. ___, 222 P.3d 648 (2010); *Nika v. State*, 124 Nev. 1272, 198 P.3d 839 (2008); *Rubio v. State*, 124 Nev. ___, 194 P.3d 1224 (2008); *Picetti v. State*, 124 Nev. 782, 192 P.3d 704 (2008); *Ferguson v. State*, 124 Nev. ___, 192 P.3d 712 (2008); *O'Neill v. State*, 123 Nev. 9, 153 P.3d 38 (2007); *McConnell v. State*, 121 Nev. 25, 107 P.3d 1287 (2005); *Means v. State*, 120 Nev. 1001, 103 P.3d 25 (2004); *Johnson v. State*, 118 Nev. 787, 59 P.3d 450 (2002); *Gonzales v. State*, 118 Nev. 590, 53 P.3d 901 (2002); *Gebers v. State*, 118 Nev. 500, 50 P.3d 1092 (2002); *Pellegrini v. State*, 117 Nev. 860, 34 P.3d 519 (2001); *Collman v. State*, 116 Nev. 687, 7 P.3d 426 (2000); *Fullerton v. State*, 116 Nev.

It is inconceivable this Court would not grant a motion for amicus briefs in support of the State in Lobato's case submitted by the Nevada Attorneys for Criminal Justice, the Office of the Nevada Attorney General, and the Washoe County District Attorney, who are unmistakably aligned with the State's interest. That is exactly what this Court did in *Nunnery v. State*, 127 Nev. ____; 263 P.3d 235, 241 (2011), decided in October 2011. Furthermore, this Court ordered the filing of two amicus briefs for the Appellant. *Id.* at 241.

In *Gutierrez vs. State*, No. 53506, that is submitted for decision, this Court ordered the filing of an amicus brief supporting Gutierrez. "Order Granting Motions," No. 53506, filed November 20, 2009. The Amici's brief in the instant case raises more constitutional issues than the amicus brief in *Gutierrez*. "Amicus Brief," No. 53506, filed December 14, 2009.

The three Amici are among the relatively few "actual innocence" organizations, and they have an interest in supplementing the efforts of Lobato's *pro bono* counsel and drawing this Court's attention to relevant state and federal constitutional issues. *Miller-Wohl*, 694 F.2d at 204. Yet, even though as explained above the facts, NRAP 29(c)(1), (c)(2) and (d), and case law clearly supports the filing of the Amici's brief, the Panel's Order misapprehended material facts and

906, 8 P. 3d 848 (2000); *Gaines v. State*, 116 Nev. 359, 998 P.2d 166 (2000); *Labastida v. State*, 115 Nev. 298, 986 P.2d 443 (1999).

overlooked the controlling NRAP rules and case law. Justice Alito's concern expressed in *Neonatology* is directly applicable to the situation created by the Panel's Order: that this Court would undoubtedly be open to assistance by a possible amicus for the State, but not for Lobato:

"A restrictive policy with respect to granting leave to file may also create at least the perception of viewpoint discrimination. Unless a court follows a policy of either granting or denying motions for leave to file in virtually all cases, instances of seemingly disparate treatment are predictable. A restrictive policy may also convey an unfortunate message about the openness of the court." *Neonatology*, 293 F. 3d at 133. (underlining added)

"The perception of viewpoint discrimination" under the circumstances of Lobato's appeal and the Panel's denial of the Amici's brief is magnified because the State is represented by lawyers skilled in post-conviction appeals and they have at their disposal the combined legal expertise of the Clark County District Attorney's Office and the Nevada State Attorney General's Office to assist them. In contrast, Lobato is an indigent high school graduate represented by a *pro bono* civil lawyer with a small firm and no previous post-conviction experience. The Amici's brief provides a minimal sense of fairness to the inherently unequal contest. This Court ordered amicus briefs in *Nunnery* who was represented by three Clark County Special Public Defenders, and in *Gutierrez* who is represented by three Federal Public Defenders – while Lobato is represented by a lone *pro bono* counsel. *Nunnery*, 263 P.3d 235, 241; and, *Gutierrez*, No. 53506, Party

Information, Nevada Supreme Court website last viewed August 5, 2012.

Reconsideration en banc should be granted so this Court can dispel “the perception of viewpoint discrimination” decried by Justice Alito and address the precedential issue that the Panel’s Order was substantively based on the misapprehension of material facts and material questions of law, and that public policy precludes this Court from denying the filing of an amicus brief that meets the requirements of NRAP 29(c)(1) & (c)(2).

F. The Panel Failed To Recognize The Appellant’s State And Federal Constitutional Rights Are Implicated By The Panel’s Failure To Order Filing Of The Amici’s Brief

The Panel’s Order based on misapprehended material facts and overlooked law implicates Lobato’s state and federal constitutional rights to due process, a fair trial, and effective assistance of counsel that are argued in the Amici’s brief, and her right to equal protection of the law. Reconsideration en banc should be granted to address the substantial constitutional issue involving Lobato’s constitutional rights and that public policy precludes this Court from denying the filing of an amicus brief that meets the requirements of NRAP 29(c)(1) & (c)(2).

The five grounds argued in the Amici’s brief involve significant matters of public importance because they concern state and federal constitutional issues related to due process, a fair trial, effective assistance of counsel, and that the facts

support Ms. Lobato's actual and factual innocence. *Amici's Brief*, 2-28. The Amici cite 37 cases – including nine U.S. Supreme Court cases – in support of its arguments whereas Lobato's opening brief only offers two cases in support of those five grounds. *Id.*, *Lobato's Opening Brief*, 118-119, 122-125. On its face the Amici's brief presents significant legal support for Lobato's opening brief that it is known this Court will not consider if the Amici's brief is not filed, because it presents arguments and controlling or relevant Nevada Supreme Court and federal circuit and U.S. Supreme Court precedents related to those grounds that are not addressed in Lobato's opening brief. *Id.*; *Amici's Brief*, 2-28.

As stated above, this Court has ordered the filing of one or more amicus briefs in at least 18 appeals involving a criminal case since 1999. Those cases include the *Nunnery* case decided 10 months ago in which this Court ordered the filing of five amicus briefs – 2 for the Appellant and 3 for the State. *Nunnery*, 127 Nev. ____; 263 P.3d 235, 241. It is a violation of Lobato's state and federal constitutional rights to due process and equal protection if she is not treated by this Court the same as other similarly situated prisoners with an appeal before this Court in which an amicus files (or filed) a motion under NRAP 29 to file an amicus brief. That is exactly what the Amici have done in the instant case. For more than 90 years this Court and the U.S. Supreme Court have acknowledged, "Equal protection of the law has long been recognized to mean that no class of

persons shall be denied the same protection of the law which is enjoyed by other classes in like circumstances.” *Allen v. State*, 100 Nev. 130, 135, 676 P.2d 792, 795 (1984), citing, *Truax v. Corrigan*, 257 U.S. 312, 336 (1921), and *In the Matter of McGee*, 44 Nev. 23, 189 P. 622 (1920). See, U.S. Constitution Amends. 5 and 14; and Nevada Constitution Art. 1, Sections. 1 and 8.

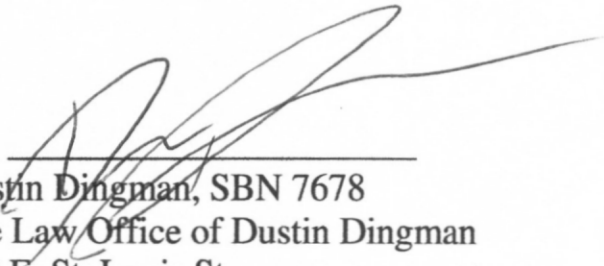
Reconsideration en banc should be granted so this Court can address the substantial precedential and constitutional issue that Lobato’s constitutional rights to due process and equal protection of the law were violated by the Panel’s Order that was substantively based on material misapprehensions of fact and overlooked material questions of law, and public policy precludes this Court from denying the filing of an amicus brief that meets the requirements of NRAP 29(c)(1) & (c)(2).

Conclusion

For each of the reasons set forth herein, the three amicus curiae respectfully submits that reconsideration en banc should be granted pursuant to NRAP 40A.

Dated this 6th day of August, 2012.

Respectfully submitted,

By: 
Dustin Dingman, SBN 7678
The Law Office of Dustin Dingman
540 E. St. Louis St.
Las Vegas, Nevada 89104
(702) 529-1414

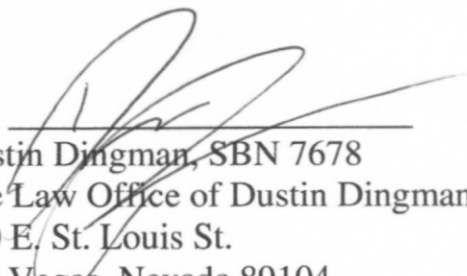
Form 16. Certificate of Compliance

I hereby certify that this motion for reconsideration complies with the formatting requirements of NRAP 32(a)(4), the typeface requirements of NRAP 32(a)(5) and the type style requirements of NRAP 32(a)(6) because:

It has been prepared in a proportionally spaced typeface using Microsoft Word 2007 in 14 point Times New Roman.

I further certify that this motion complies with the page or type volume limitations of NRAP 40A because it is proportionately spaced, has a typeface of 14 points or more, and contains no more than 4,667 words.

Dated this 6th day of August, 2012.

By: 
Dustin Dingman, SBN 7678
The Law Office of Dustin Dingman
540 E. St. Louis St.
Las Vegas, Nevada 89104
(702) 529-1414

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that this document was filed electronically with the Nevada Supreme Court on August 6, 2012. Electronic Service of the foregoing document shall be made in accordance with the Master Service List as follows:

TRAVIS BARRICK, ESQ.
Counsel for Appellant

CATHERINE CORTEZ MASTO
Nevada Attorney General

STEVEN S. OWENS
Chief Deputy District Attorney

By: /s/

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "S. Owens", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized with large loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

EXHIBIT

1

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEVADA

KIRSTIN BLAISE LOBATO,

Appellant,

vs.

THE STATE OF NEVADA,

Respondent.

} Case No. 58913
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**BRIEF OF AMICUS CURIAE THE JUSTICE INSTITUTE IN SUPPORT
OF APPELLANT KIRSTIN BLAISE LOBATO AND REVERSAL OF THE
DISTRICT COURT'S JUDGMENT**

Dustin Dingman, SBN 7678
The Law Office of Dustin Dingman
540 E. St. Louis St.
Las Vegas, Nevada 89104
(702) 529-1414

Attorney For Amicus Curiae

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STATEMENT OF INTERESTS OF *AMICUS CURIAE*

The *amicus curiae*, the Justice Institute, promotes awareness of issues related to wrongful convictions in general and specific cases of the possible conviction of an actually innocent person. The Justice Institute is an IRS approved 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that is incorporated as a non-profit corporation in the State of Oregon and it operates from Seattle, Washington.

The Justice Institute operates the website www.justicedenied.org founded in 1999 which acts as a resource center and makes information available generally concerning wrongful convictions, and specifically concerning cases of persons with evidence of their actual innocence seeking post-conviction relief.

Consequently, the Justice Institute has a substantial interest in ensuring that courts have correctly interpreted the evidence to convict the guilty and acquit the innocent, and is well-situated to assist this Court in ensuring that post-conviction issues are properly considered under the applicable case law. The Justice Institute's interest in the judicial system's proper consideration of post-conviction claims is particularly compelling where a district court's erroneous rulings have resulted in the continued incarceration of an Appellant the evidence supports is actually innocent. The Justice Institute is convinced the case of the Appellant is one of those cases.

ARGUMENT

- I. **The State did not introduce evidence at trial to prove every essential element of the Appellant's charged crimes beyond a reasonable doubt as required by *Jackson v. Virginia*, 443 U.S. 307 (1979), and thus the District Court prejudicially erred in denying her petition for a writ of habeas corpus grounds 59, 64, 72 and 74 that her counsel provided prejudicially deficient assistance of counsel under *Strickland v. Washington*, 466 U.S. 668 (1984) in violation of her federal rights to due process, a fair trial, and effective assistance of counsel.**

In re Winship, 397 U.S. 358 (1970) the U.S. Supreme Court held that due process under the federal constitution requires that the State must introduce evidence proving guilt of every essential element beyond a reasonable doubt. Relying on *Winship* the Court held in *Jackson v. Virginia*, 443 U.S. 307, 319, 324 (1979): "the applicant is entitled to habeas corpus relief if it is found that, upon the record evidence adduced at the trial, no rational trier of fact could have found proof of guilt beyond a reasonable doubt." *Id.* at 324. See also, *Koza v. State*, 100 Nev. 245, 250, 681 P.2d 44, 47 (1984).

Granting relief based on insufficiency of the evidence amounts to acquittal under the Double Jeopardy Clause. *Burks v. United States*, 437 U.S. 1, 18 (1978) ("the Double Jeopardy Clause precludes a second trial once the reviewing court has found the evidence legally insufficient."); see also, *Hudson v. Louisiana*, 450 U.S. 40, 44-45 (1981) (Double Jeopardy Clause bars retrial if conviction vacated based on insufficient evidence.); and *State v Purcell*, 110 Nev. 1389, 887 P.2d 276, 279 (1994) ("If there is truly insufficient evidence, a defendant must be

acquitted.”).

The State’s Criminal Information in this case charged:

“That KIRSTIN BLAISE LOBATO, the Defendant(s) above named, having committed the crimes of MURDER WITH THE USE OF A DEADLY WEAPON (OPEN MURDER) (Felony – NRS 200.010, 200.030, 193.165); and SEXUAL PENETRATION OF A DEAD HUMAN BODY (Felony – NRS 201.450), on or about the 8th day of July 2001, within the County of Clark, State of Nevada, contrary to the form, force and effect of statutes in such cases made and provided, and against the peace and dignity of the State of Nevada.” 1 App. 1.

Richard Shott testified by deposition he found Duran Bailey’s body around 10 p.m. on July 8, 2001 in the trash enclosure for a Nevada State Bank in Las Vegas, which is in Clark County. 2 App. 267. There was no testimony Bailey died anywhere other than where his body was found, and that was the State’s theory and narrative of the crime. 2 App. 255; 5 App. 1006.

Clark County Medical Examiner Dr. Lary Simms testified Duran Bailey died on July 8, 2001. 2 App. 443, 457, which was the State’s basis for Count I.

Dr. Simms also testified an injury to Bailey’s rectal area was post-mortem, which was the State’s basis for Count II. 2 App. 419.

Thus the evidence at trial established the person who murdered Bailey did so on July 8, 2001, it occurred in Clark County, and after his death a person injured his rectal area. Consequently, to prove the Appellant (hereinafter “Lobato”) committed the crimes the State had to introduce evidence individually proving beyond a reasonable doubt the four essential elements of the crime: 1) she was in

Clark County (Las Vegas); 2) on July 8, 2001 at the time of the crime; 3) she was the assailant who murdered Bailey; and 4) she was the assailant who post-mortem inflicted Bailey's rectal area injury.¹ 1 App. 1.

If Lobato was not in Clark County, on July 8, 2001 and specifically at the time of Bailey's murder, and when his rectal area was injured, it is not possible she was his assailant.

At trial every witness for the State and the defense who testified they saw or talked with Lobato on July 8, 2001² stated they did so when she was at or near her home in Panaca, 165 miles north of Las Vegas. 4 App. 761. There was no testimony by any person who saw or talked with her when she was anywhere other than Panaca during the entire 24-hours of July 8, 2001, and there was no physical evidence such as a CCTV video or a gas receipt she was not in Panaca on July 8. Lobato does not state in her police Statement on July 20, 2001 (hereinafter "Statement") that she in Clark County at anytime on July 8, 2001. Exhibit 125A. The trial evidence Lobato was in Panaca is consistent with the fact that neither the District Court's Order, 11 App. 2263, denying Lobato's habeas corpus petition (hereinafter "Petition"), nor the State disputes Lobato's statement of fact:

¹ These are only four of the charged crimes essential elements.

² State witnesses, 2 App. 374; 2 App. 384; 2 App. 461-62 and 465-66, 470. Defense witnesses, 4 App. 751-52; 4 App. 880-81; 4 App. 771; 4 App. 779-80; 4 App. 886; 4 App. 891; 4 App. 917; 5 App. 935-37 and 5 App. 986-87.

“No physical, forensic, medical, eyewitness, documentary, surveillance or confession evidence was introduced at trial placing the Petitioner in Clark County at any time on July 8, 2001, the day of Duran Bailey’s murder.” 6 App.1368-69; 9 App.1936-77.

The State’s claimed during its opening statement, and then in the absence of introducing evidence it claimed during its closing argument, that Lobato was in Clark County (Las Vegas) at the time of Bailey’s murder on July 8, 2001. 2 App. 257; 5 App. 1008.

Furthermore, neither the district court nor the State denies that, “Likewise, no forensic tests of the Petitioner’s personal items and car tested positive for Bailey’s DNA or blood, and none of her DNA or fingerprints were found on any crime scene evidence.” 7 App.1425-26. Additionally, the tires on Lobato’s car were excluded as the source of fresh tire tracks found next to the murder scene. 3 App. 523, 589.

The State did not introduce any “physical, forensic, medical, eyewitness, documentary, surveillance or confession evidence ... that establishes she committed the crimes.” 7 App. 1486. Neither the district court nor the State denies that fact. 11 App. 2280; 9 App. 1972-73.

One of Lobato’s defenses at trial was her Statement and all her comments to people she confided in were related to her using her pocket knife to fend off an attempted sexual assault at the Budget Suites Hotel closest to Sam’s Town Casino in east Las Vegas, which she described as happening prior to June 20, 2001 –

weeks before Bailey's murder. Exhibit 125A at 3-5, 11, 20, 27. She described in her statement and to all those she talked to that her assailant was alive when she escaped from him. Exhibit 125A at 7. State witness Jeremy Davis provided testimony consistent with Lobato's statement concerning her leaving her car at his house after the Budget Suites assault, which identifies it occurred in the last week of May 2001. 2 App. 391.

There is no mention in Lobato's Statement about her assailant's rectum, and no witness for the State or defense testified she ever mentioned anything about her assailant's rectum or anus. In fact, the State introduced no evidence Lobato inflicted Bailey's rectal area injury that was the basis for Count II. The State only introduced Dr. Simms' testimony about the injury – not who inflicted it.

In the absence of introducing evidence, the State's claimed during its opening statement and then claimed during its closing argument that Lobato was Bailey's assailant based on her Statement and nondescript comments she made to several acquaintances, during which Lobato never made any reference to ever killing or mutilating the dead body of any person at any time – much less Bailey on July 8, 2001. 2 App. 256-258; 5 App. 1006-1009, 1022; Exhibit 125A.

It is a prejudicial federal due process violation for a conviction to be based on speculation, conjecture or unreasonable inferences. See, *Juan H. v. Allen*, 408 F.3d 1262, 1269 (9th Cir. 2005); *United States v. Lewis*, 787 F.2d 1318, 1323 (9th

Cir. 1986); *Newman v. Metrish*, 543 F.3d 793, 797 (6th Cir. 2008); and *O’Laughlin v. O’Brien*, 568 F.3d 287, 308 (1st Cir. 2009); See also, *Konold v Sheriff, Clark County*, 94 Nev. 289, 579 P. 2d 768, 769 (1978), and *State v Luchetti*, 87 Nev. 343, 486 P. 2d 1189, 1191 (1971).

The jury only had the State’s speculation, conjecture and unsubstantiated inferences upon which to determine Lobato was in Clark County, on July 8, 2001 at the time of Bailey’s murder because all the testimony at trial was she was in Panaca the entire 24-hours of July 8, and there was no testimony she murdered Bailey, and then inflicted his rectal injury.

Since the un rebutted evidence at trial by witnesses for the State and the defense established Lobato was in Panaca the entire 24-hours of July 8, 2001, and there was no testimony she murdered Bailey (Count I) and then inflicted his rectal injury (Count II), the State did not prove those four essential elements of the crime and “no rational trier of fact could have found proof of guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.” *Jackson, supra*, at 324, and *Winship, supra*, and her conviction violates her federal constitutional rights to due process and a fair trial. *Id.* Lobato is also entitled to acquittal under *Burks*, 437 U.S. at 18.

Lobato had the constitutional right to effective assistance of counsel during her trial proceedings. *Strickland v. Washington*, 466 U.S. 668, 686-87 (1984). The Supreme Court established a two prong test in *Strickland*: “First, the defendant

must show that counsel's performance was deficient. ... Second, the defendant must show that the deficient performance prejudiced the defense." *Id.*

Deficient representation is that which falls "below an objective standard of reasonableness." *Id.* at 688. To establish deficient representation "the defendant must overcome the presumption that, under the circumstances, the challenged action "might be considered sound trial strategy.'" *Id.* at 689.

To establish prejudice, "The defendant must show that there is a reasonable probability that, but for counsel's unprofessional errors, the result of the proceeding would have been different. A reasonable probability is a probability sufficient to undermine confidence in the outcome." *Id.* at 694. Under the "reasonable probability" standard prejudice is established by *less than* a preponderance of the evidence, "On the other hand, we believe that a defendant need not show that counsel's deficient conduct more likely than not altered the outcome in the case." *Id.* at 693.

Lobato had the constitutional right to effective assistance of counsel in her direct appeal. *Evitts v. Lucey*, 469 U.S. 387, 395-97 (1985). *Strickland's* two-prong deficient conduct and prejudice test applies to evaluating a claim of ineffective assistance of appellate counsel. *Smith v. Robbins*, 528 US 259, 289 (2000). To prove prejudice Lobato must show that but for her appellate counsel's deficient conduct she would have had a reasonable probability of success on appeal. *Heath*

v. *Jones*, 941 F.2d 1126, 1132 (11th Cir. 1991).

This Court ruled in *Kirksey v State*, 112 Nev. 980, 923 p.2d 1102, 1107 (1996), “A claim of ineffective assistance of counsel presents a mixed question of law and fact and is therefore subject to independent review. (citation omitted) This court evaluates a claim of ineffective assistance of trial counsel under the “reasonably effective assistance” test articulated in *Strickland v. Washington*, 466 U.S. 668 (1984).”

Yet given the above facts and law, at trial and in her direct appeal, 5 App. 1048, Lobato’s counsel inexplicably ignored the key issues in her trial that the State failed to meet its federal and state constitutional burden of proving by competent evidence every essential element of her charged crimes beyond a reasonable doubt. *Jackson, supra*, at 324, and *Winship, supra*.

The following are grounds in Lobato’s Petition.

A. Ground 59 – Prejudicial failure of counsel to make NRS 175.381(1) motions. 7 App. 1427.

The NRS doesn’t provide for a motion for a judgment of acquittal prior to the verdict. However, NRS 175.381(1) allows the district court to advise the jury to acquit based on the prosecution’s failure to introduce evidence sufficient to prove every essential element of the alleged offenses beyond a reasonable doubt.

Lobato’s counsel did not make a motion under NRS 175.381(1). 7 App. 1427.

This Court in *Milton v State*, 111 Nev. 1487, 908 P. 2d 684, 688 (1995), stated the giving of an advisory instruction to acquit under NRS 175.381 “rests within the sound discretion of court.” *Id.* The judge in *Milton* provided a comprehensive three paragraph explanation for why he didn’t do so. *Milton* cited *Lenz v. State*, 97 Nev. 65, 66, 624 P.2d 15, 16 (1981), in which this Court ruled, “The trial court did not abuse its discretion when it declined to offer an advisory verdict on the appellant’s behalf, given the evidence which had been presented by the State to link the appellant to the crime.” *Id.* at 66. Lobato’s case is profoundly dissimilar to *Milton* and *Lenz* because neither the State nor the Court disputes the facts underlying this claim that:

“the prosecution’s failure to introduce evidence sufficient to prove every essential element of the Petitioner’s alleged offenses beyond a reasonable doubt, and most particularly, no physical, forensic, documentary, eyewitness, surveillance or confession evidence was introduced at trial that the Petitioner was anywhere in Clark County at any time on July 8, 2001, and so she could not have been at the Nevada State Bank’s trash enclosure at the precise time of Duran Bailey’s murder and she could not have committed her accused crimes...” 7 App. 1427.

In light of the State’s failure to introduce evidence proving beyond a reasonable doubt the essential elements that Lobato was in Clark County, on July 8, 2001, and that she was Bailey’s assailant, it would have been an objectively reasonable decision for her counsel to have made a NRS 175.381(1) motion for the district court to advise the jury to acquit her at the close of the State’s evidence, at

the close of the defense's evidence, and at the close of the prosecution's rebuttal evidence. 7 App. 1427. The district court would have been required as a matter of law under *Winship* and *Jackson* to have granted the motion and so instructed the jury. With an explanation from the district court to the jury about the State's fatal failure to introduce evidence proving the essential elements that Lobato was in Clark County, on July 8, 2001, and that she was Bailey's assailant – there is no reasonable basis to think she would have been convicted because “no rational trier of fact could have found proof of guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.” *Jackson*, *supra*, at 324.

Consequently, the deficient conduct and prejudice prongs of *Strickland* are satisfied by this ineffective assistance of counsel ground. First, the performance of Lobato's counsel was objectively unreasonable for failing to make a NRS 175.381(1) motion because it can never be considered sound strategy, *Id.* at 689, for Lobato's counsel to fail to make a motion that would have been expected to ensure she wasn't convicted in violation of *Winship* and *Jackson*. Second, her counsel's deficient conduct was prejudicial under *Strickland* because it “undermines confidence in the outcome” since there is far more than “a reasonable probability that, but for counsel's unprofessional errors, the result of the proceeding would have been different.” *Id.* at 694 – it is a near certainty considering she “need not show that counsel's deficient conduct more likely than

not altered the outcome in the case.” *Id.* at 693.

The district court prejudicially erred denying this ground for the following reasons. First, the district court determined without explanation “that it would have denied such a motion.” 11 App. 2277. Second, the failure of Lobato’s counsel’s to make NRS 175.381(1) motions was not an issue in her direct appeal. Third, this Court did not rule in *Lobato v. State*, No. 49087 (2009) on the factual and legal basis of this ground, and if it had, this Court would have been required to vacate Lobato’s convictions under *Winship* and *Jackson*, which would have barred her retrial. *Burks, supra*, at 18. Fourth, in light of the information herein, this Court’s general ruling in *Lobato* (2009) concerning sufficiency of the evidence is inapplicable under any circumstance to this ground under *Arizona v. California, et al.*, 460 U.S. 605, 618 (1983) that the law of the case doctrine “does not limit the tribunal’s power,” and “...it is not improper for a court to depart from a prior holding if convinced that it is clearly erroneous and would work a manifest injustice.” *Id.* at fn.8. This Court relied on *Arizona* in ruling in *Pellegrini v. State*, 117 Nev. 860, 34 P.3d 519, 535-36 n.107 (2001), “However, it cannot be seriously disputed that a court of last resort has limited discretion to revisit the wisdom of its legal conclusions when it determines that further discussion is warranted.” Lobato’s conviction is the most extreme “manifest injustice” imaginable considering the State introduced no evidence she was within 165 miles of Las

Vegas on the day of Mr. Bailey's murder, and there is no physical, forensic, eyewitness or confession evidence she committed either of her charged crimes. Fifth, the district court prejudicially misapplied *Hargrove v. State*, 100 Nev. 498, 686 P.2d 222 (1984), because unlike *Hargrove* this ground is based on "a factual background, names of witnesses or other sources of evidence demonstrating ... entitlement to relief." *Id.* at 502.

B. Ground 64 – Prejudicial failure of counsel to request an essential elements instruction or argue to the jury that the State failed to prove every essential element of the Appellant's charged crimes. 7 App. 1446.

An accurate instruction on the essential elements of a charge is required by the federal constitution's Fifth, Sixth and Fourteenth amendment guarantees of due process, a fair trial, and a fair and impartial jury, and a defendant's corresponding state rights, and failure to so instruct the jury constitutes reversible error. See *United States v. Gaudin*, 515 U.S. 506, 510, 522-23 (1995) (Conviction reversed because jury wasn't instructed about every essential element.); *Rossana v State*, 113 Nev. 375, 382, 934 P. 2d 1045, 1050 (1997) (Failure to instruct about essential element of crime is constitutional error requiring reversal.); and, *Wegner v State*, 116 Nev. 1149, 14 P. 3d 25, 29-30 (2000) (Conviction reversed because erroneous instruction of an essential element was constitutional violation that "relieved the State of its burden to prove every element of the crime charged.")

Even though as explained above the State does not deny failing to introduce evidence proving the essential elements that Lobato was in Clark County, on July 8, 2001, and that no physical, forensic, eyewitness or confession evidence was introduced identifying her as Bailey's murderer or the person who injured his rectal area post-mortem, her counsel failed to both request an essential elements instruction and to argue to the jury that the State failed to introduce evidence to prove all essential elements of her charged crimes beyond a reasonable doubt and therefore she must be acquitted. 7 App. 1446.

Neither the district court, 11 App. 2277-78, nor the State, 9 App. 1967-68, denies Lobato's counsel did not raise the issue at trial that the State failed to introduce evidence to prove every essential element, and thus the State failed to meet its constitutional burden of proof under *Winship* and *Jackson*.

It is not enough to simply say, "Well, the jury found Lobato guilty." It is an undisputed fact the jury found her guilty without knowing the State had the specific constitutional burden of introducing evidence to prove beyond a reasonable doubt every essential element, including that she was in Clark County, on July 8, 2001, and that she was the assailant for both Counts I and II, as required by *Winship* and *Jackson*. That violation of Lobato's federal and state rights to due process, a fair trial, and a fair and impartial jury also mandates reversal of her

convictions under *Gaudin, supra*, at 510, 522-23, and *Rossana*, 113 Nev. at 382, 934 P. 2d at 1050.

The State offers as a defense – without legal support – that the jury’s reliance on “common sense” relieved the State of its constitutional burden to introduce evidence proving every essential element beyond a reasonable doubt. 9 App. 1968.

Consequently, the deficient conduct and prejudice prongs of *Strickland* are satisfied by this ineffective assistance of counsel ground. First, the performance of Lobato’s counsel was objectively unreasonable for failing to request an essential elements instruction or argue to the jury that the State failed to prove all essential elements of the charged crimes. 7 App. 1446. It cannot be considered sound strategy, *Id.* at 689, for Lobato’s counsel to fail to request a jury instruction and to make arguments to the jury that would have been expected to ensure she wasn’t convicted in violation of *Winship* and *Jackson*. Second, her counsel’s deficient conduct was prejudicial under *Strickland* because it “undermines confidence in the outcome” since there is far more than “a reasonable probability that, but for counsel’s unprofessional errors, the result of the proceeding would have been different.” *Id.* at 694 – it is a near certainty considering she “need not show that counsel’s deficient conduct more likely than not altered the outcome in the case.” *Id.* at 693.

The district court prejudicially erred denying this ground without explanation that her counsel exercised “legitimate defense strategy,” 11 App. 2277, and “presentation of defense is ultimately defense counsel’s responsibility.” 11 App. 2278. Under *Strickland* neither of those findings has any relevance to this ground nor alters the fact Lobato’s counsel had the constitutional responsibility to act within “prevailing professional norms,” *Id.* at 688. Failing to request a jury instruction or make arguments to the jury that could reasonably be expected to result in Lobato not being convicted cannot be excused as strategy because it “undermines confidence in the outcome,” and thus is prejudicial and requires the granting of relief under *Strickland*.

C. Ground 72 – Prejudicial failure of counsel to make NRS 175.381(2) motion. 7 App. 1471.

NRS 175.381(2) provides that a motion for a judgment of acquittal based on insufficient evidence must be made within 7 days after the jury is discharged.

Lobato’s counsel did not file a motion for a judgment of acquittal under NRS 175.381(2). 7 App. 1471.

Neither the district court, 11 App. 2279, nor the State, 9 App. 1971, disputes the facts underlying this claim that:

“the prosecution introduced insufficient evidence to prove every essential element of the Petitioner’s alleged offenses beyond a reasonable doubt, and most particularly, no physical, forensic, documentary, eyewitness, surveillance or confession evidence was

introduced at trial that the Petitioner was anywhere in Clark County at any time on July 8, 2001, and so she could not have been at the Nevada State Bank's trash enclosure at the precise time of Duran Bailey's murder and she could not have committed her accused crimes..." 7 App. 1471.

In light of the State's failure to introduce evidence proving the essential elements that Lobato was in Clark County, on July 8, 2001, and that she was Bailey's assailant in Counts I and II, it would have been an objectively reasonable decision for her counsel to have made a NRS 175.381(2) motion for the district court to enter a judgment of acquittal. 7 App. 1471. The district court would have been required as a matter of law under *Winship* and *Jackson* to have granted the motion based on the State's fatal failure to introduce evidence proving every essential element, because "no rational trier of fact could have found proof of guilt beyond a reasonable doubt." *Jackson, supra*, at 324.

Consequently, the deficient conduct and prejudice prongs of *Strickland* are satisfied by this ineffective assistance of counsel ground. First, the performance of Lobato's counsel was objectively unreasonable for failing to make a NRS 175.381(2) motion because it cannot be considered sound strategy, *Id.* at 689, for Lobato's counsel to fail to make a motion that could be expected to ensure her acquittal under *Winship* and *Jackson*, based on *Burks, supra* and *Purcell, supra*. Second, her counsel's deficient conduct was prejudicial under *Strickland* because it "undermines confidence in the outcome" since there is far more than "a reasonable

probability that, but for counsel's unprofessional errors, the result of the proceeding would have been different." *Id.* at 694 – it is a near certainty considering she “need not show that counsel’s deficient conduct more likely than not altered the outcome in the case.” *Id.* at 693.

The district court prejudicially erred denying this ground for the following reasons. First, the district court determined without explanation, “Defendant has failed to demonstrate that counsel was deficient or that she was prejudiced.” 11 App. 2279. Second, the prejudicial failure of Lobato’s counsel’s to make a NRS 175.381(2) was not an issue in her direct appeal, and thus *Hall v State*, 91 Nev. 314, 315, 535 P.2d 797, 798 (1975), has no applicability because this Court did not rule in *Lobato* (2009) on the factual and legal basis of this ground. Third, in light of the information herein, this Court’s general ruling in *Lobato* (2009) concerning sufficiency of the evidence is inapplicable under any circumstance to this ground under *Arizona*, 460 U.S. at 618 that the law of the case doctrine “does not limit the tribunal’s power,” and “...it is not improper for a court to depart from a prior holding if convinced that it is clearly erroneous and would work a manifest injustice.” *Id.* at fn.8. This Court relied on *Arizona* in ruling in *Pellegrini*, 117 Nev. 860, 34 P.3d at 535-536 n.107, “However, it cannot be seriously disputed that a court of last resort has limited discretion to revisit the wisdom of its legal conclusions when it determines that further discussion is warranted.” Lobato’s

conviction is the most extreme “manifest injustice” imaginable considering the State doesn’t deny it introduced no evidence she was within 165 miles of Las Vegas on the day of Mr. Bailey’s murder, and there is no physical, forensic, eyewitness or confession evidence she committed either of her charged crimes. Fourth, the district court prejudicially misapplied procedural default under NRS 34.810 because this ground is raised in Lobato’s original and timely Petition, and this Court ruled in *Pellegrini*, 117 Nev. 860, 34 P.3d at 535, “claims of ineffective assistance of counsel brought in a timely first post-conviction petition for a writ of habeas corpus are not subject to dismissal on grounds of waiver...”

D. Ground 74 – Prejudicial failure of appellate counsel to correctly argue and brief this Court in Appellant’s direct appeal Argument A. that there is insufficient evidence to support Appellant’s convictions. 7 App. 1478.

As explained above the State relied on assumptions, speculation, conjecture and unreasonable inferences to support their theory and narrative that Lobato was in Las Vegas on July 8, 2001 and that she was Bailey’s assailant, because there was no physical, forensic, eyewitness or confession evidence to prove those essential elements. Detective Thomas Thowsen was the primary support for the State’s speculation based prosecution with his testimony that he assumed her Statement was about Bailey’s murder and she was the perpetrator. 3 App. 663-6, 673, 686. However, opinion testimony based on “theoretical conclusions or

inferences” cannot be relied on by the State as a substitute for the failure to introduce sufficient evidence. *United States v. Boissoneault*, 926 F.2d 230, 234 (2d Cir. 1991).

Even though Lobato was linked to Bailey’s murder based on the State’s unbridled speculation in their opening statement, by Det. Thowsen’s testimony, and in their closing and rebuttal arguments, in her direct appeal Argument A concerning insufficiency of the evidence her counsel did not even raise the issue that the State failed to introduce evidence to prove each and every essential element beyond a reasonable doubt. 5 App. 1070. Furthermore, there was only one sentence in Argument A concerning the reliance of the State’s case on speculation: “Additionally, it must be determine whether the defendant was inferred to be guilty based upon evidence from which only uncertain inferences may be drawn.” 5 App. 1071. That one tepid sentence was deficient in not even alleging that Lobato’s conviction based on conjecture and speculation violated her federal and state rights to due process and a fair trial under *Winship* and *Jackson*, because the State failed to introduce competent evidence to prove beyond a reasonable doubt each essential element.

Neither the district court, 11 App. 2280, nor the State, 9 App. 1972-73, disputes the truthfulness of Lobato’s statement:

If Petitioner’s counsel had correctly and fully briefed the Nevada Supreme Court on the law and circumstances of her prosecution to

show it is based on a “house of unsubstantiated speculative inferences” built on top of Detective Thowsen’s speculative assumption that she confessed to Bailey’s murder in her Statement, it can be expected that the Court would have vacated her conviction on the basis of insufficiency of the evidence. 7 App. 1487.

The Ninth Circuit granted habeas relief in *Juan*, 408 F.3d at 1269, ruling evidence cannot be replaced by “speculation and conjecture.” In granting habeas relief the Sixth Circuit ruled in *Newman*, 543 F.3d at 797, “...conspicuously absent is any evidence placing Newman at the scene of the crime. ... Without additional evidence placing him at the scene of the crime, there is only a reasonable speculation that Newman himself was present.” The First Circuit ruled in *O’Laughlin*, 568 F.3d at 308, “Based on the record before us ... we hold that it would be overly speculative to conclude O’Laughlin to be the assailant beyond a reasonable doubt.” This Court granted habeas relief in *Konold*, 94 Nev. 289, 579 P.2d at 769, on the basis inference of identity as a crime’s perpetrator was insufficient.

There is every reason to think this Court would have vacated Lobato’s conviction if her appellate counsel had properly briefed and argued Argument A to this Court as detailed in this ground.

Furthermore, if this Court vacated her conviction on insufficiency of the evidence it would have resulted in her acquittal, *Burks, supra* and *Purcell, supra*, and her immediate release from custody because at that point she would have been

“wrongfully imprisoned.” *State ex rel. Orsborn v. Fogliani*, 82 Nev. 300, 417 P.2d 148, 150 (1966).

The deficient conduct and prejudice prongs of *Strickland* are satisfied by this ineffective assistance of counsel ground. First, the performance of Lobato’s appellate counsel was objectively unreasonable for failing correctly argue and brief this Court in her direct appeal that the State relied on speculation and conjecture as a substitute for introducing evidence to prove beyond a reasonable doubt every essential element. 7 App. 1478. It cannot be considered sound strategy, *Id.* at 689, for Lobato’s counsel to fail to make an argument to this Court on direct appeal that she was unconstitutionally convicted in violation of *Winship* and *Jackson*, which could be expected to have resulted in the vacating of her conviction and her immediate release from custody. Second, her counsel’s deficient conduct was prejudicial under *Strickland* because it “undermines confidence in the outcome” since there is far more than “a reasonable probability that, but for counsel’s unprofessional errors, the result of the proceeding [in this Court] would have been different.” *Id.* at 694 – it is a near certainty considering she “need not show that counsel’s deficient conduct more likely than not altered the outcome in the case.” *Id.* at 693. Prejudice is also established because as noted above, if this grounds issue had been raised on direct appeal where the burden is considerably higher on an Appellant to show prejudice than on collateral review under *Strickland*,

vacating of Lobato's convictions and her acquittal would have been required under *Jackson* and *Winship*.

The district court prejudicially erred denying this ground for the following reasons. First, the district court determined without explanation, "Defendant has failed to demonstrate that counsel was deficient or that she was prejudiced." 11 App. 2280. Second, this ground is based on the prejudicial failure of Lobato's counsel's to raise on direct appeal the issue that the State relied on speculation and conjecture to secure her convictions and did not introduce evidence proving beyond a reasonable doubt every essential element, and therefore this Court did not rule on this issue. Thus *Hall*, 91 Nev. at 315, 535 P.2d at 798, has no applicability because this Court did not rule in *Lobato* (2009) on the factual and legal basis of this ground, and the district court's Order prejudicially erred in stating "This claim is therefore belied by the record." 11 App. 2280. Third, in light of the information herein, this Court's general ruling in *Lobato* (2009) concerning sufficiency of the evidence is inapplicable under any circumstance to this ground under *Arizona*, 460 U.S. at 618, that the law of the case doctrine "does not limit the tribunal's power," and "it is not improper for a court to depart from a prior holding if convinced that it is clearly erroneous and would work a manifest injustice." *Id.* at fn.8. This Court relied on *Arizona* in ruling in *Pellegrini*, 117 Nev. 860, 34 P.3d at 535-536 n.107, "However, it cannot be seriously disputed that a court of last resort has limited

discretion to revisit the wisdom of its legal conclusions when it determines that further discussion is warranted.” Lobato’s conviction is the most extreme “manifest injustice” imaginable considering the State doesn’t deny it introduced no evidence she was within 165 miles of Las Vegas on the day of Mr. Bailey’s murder, and there is no physical, forensic, eyewitness or confession evidence she committed her charged crimes. Fourth, the district court prejudicially misapplied NRS 34.810 because this ground is raised in Lobato’s original and timely Petition, and this Court ruled in *Pellegrini*, 117 Nev. 860, 34 P.3d at 535, “claims of ineffective assistance of counsel brought in a timely first post-conviction petition for a writ of habeas corpus are not subject to dismissal on grounds of waiver...”

II. The District Court prejudicially erred in denying ground 77 that her counsel cumulatively provided prejudicially deficient assistance of counsel in grounds 27-76 and 79 under *Strickland v. Washington*, 466 U.S. 668 (1984), in violation of her federal rights to due process, a fair trial, and effective assistance of counsel.

If any one ineffective assistance of counsel claim is insufficient to warrant relief, multiple claims may warrant relief under *Strickland* when considered cumulatively. *U.S. v. Frederick*, 78 F.3d 1370, 1381 (9th Cir 1996). Relevant factors to consider in evaluating “cumulative errors are: (1) whether the issue of guilt is close, (2) the quantity and character of the error, and (3) the gravity of the crime charged.” *Mulder v. State*, 116 Nev. 1, 992 P.2d 845, 854-55 (2000). See also, *Strickland, supra*, at 696.

As the above explanations of grounds 59, 64, 72 and 74 detail, the State's case was extraordinarily weak. The State introduced no evidence Lobato was in Clark County on July 8, 2001 and no physical, forensic, eyewitness or confession evidence she either murdered Bailey or injured his rectal area post-mortem. After two days of deliberation the jury convicted on the significantly reduced charge of voluntarily manslaughter, and it was reported in the press that counsel for both the State and Lobato acknowledged the jury compromised, thus there were juror holdouts for acquittal. 10 App. 2145-46.

The Ninth Circuit ruled in *Frederick*, "In those cases where the government's case is weak, a defendant is more likely to be prejudiced by the effect of cumulative errors." *Id.* at 1381. The record supports the slightest degree of cumulative error by Lobato's counsel likely tipped the scale for the jury and "altered the outcome in the case."

Lobato's ineffective assistance of counsel grounds 38-41 and 71 are based on new expert evidence not presented at trial she obtained post-conviction.

Ground 38 and 40. New forensic entomology, 6 App. 1173-80, 1339, and forensic pathology, 6 App. 1181, 1348, evidence establishes to a reasonable scientific certainty Bailey died between 8 p.m. and "around 10 p.m." on July 8, 2001. This un rebutted new evidence establishes she didn't murder Bailey because

the State admitted during closing arguments un rebutted alibi evidence establishes she was in Panaca from at least “11:30 a.m. through the night.” 5 App. 1008.

Ground 40. New forensic pathology and photographic evidence establishes Bailey was alive after his rectum wound was inflicted. 6 App. 1202, 1348. This un rebutted new evidence establishes Lobato is not guilty of Count II.

Ground 41. New forensic science evidence Lobato’s shoeprints don’t match those of the person who was present at the crime scene before and after Bailey began bleeding. 6 App. 1222, 1358. This un rebutted new evidence establishes she was not present during Bailey’s murder.

Ground 39 and 41. New psychology evidence, 6 App. 1185, 1344, and new forensic science evidence the shoes Lobato wore during the sexual assault described in her Statement were not worn during Bailey’s murder, 6 App. 1218, 1358, establishes her Statement and Bailey’s murder are different events. This un rebutted new evidence establishes her Statement is not about Bailey’s murder, which was the basis of her prosecution.

Ground 71. New dental evidence establishes Bailey was not hit in the mouth with a baseball bat. 6 App. 1253, 7 App. 1468. This un rebutted new evidence establishes Lobato’s baseball bat could not have been used to knock out Bailey’s teeth and knock him over which was a key part of the State’s speculative narrative of the crime.

Lobato's new evidence is proof she did not murder Bailey, and it is "reasonably probable" the cumulative effect of that evidence combined with the jury being properly informed and instructed about all the essential elements of the crimes – grounds 59, 64, 72 and 74 – would have altered the outcome. Thus Lobato's counsel was prejudicially deficient under *Strickland* for failing to make any effort to obtain the exculpatory evidence prior to trial because it "undermines confidence in the outcome." *Id.* at 694. See, *Richter v. Hickman*, 578 F.3d 944, 952-53 (9th Cir. 2009) (Petitioner prejudiced by counsel's failure to investigate and present critical expert testimony, "This is indeed precisely what Strickland requires."); See also, *Sanborn v. State*, 107 Nev. 399, 812 P. 2d 1279, 1283-84 (1991), and *Warner v. State*, 102 Nev. 635, 729 P.2d 1359, 1361 (1986).

There is even more of a "reasonable probability" the outcome would have been different when the cumulative effect of Lobato's ineffective assistance of counsel grounds 49, 52, 65, 67, 69 and 70 are considered that detail her counsel's failure to make almost 300 objections to rampant prejudicial prosecutor misconduct from the beginning of the State's opening statement to the end of their rebuttal argument, which enabled the State to convince the jury to convict Lobato on the basis of speculation and conjecture. 7 App. 1393, 1402, 1448, 1452, 1455, 1458. Claims of prosecutor misconduct are considered for whether "that conduct appears likely to have affected the jury's discharge of its duty to judge the

evidence fairly.” *Frederick, supra* at 1379. As detailed in the above grounds Lobato’s trial was so thoroughly infected with prosecutor misconduct the jury wasn’t able to fairly judge the absence of evidence.

When the cumulative effect of Lobato’s 51 ineffective assistance of counsel grounds is considered, there is no reasonable possibility her counsel’s deficient conduct didn’t “undermine confidence in the outcome,” mandating relief under *Strickland*.

In 2008 this Court granted relief in *Valdez v. State*, 124 Nev. 97, 196 P.3d 465, 481 (2008) based on the cumulative effect of three errors not sufficient individually to warrant relief. This Court specifically noted it couldn’t “allow prosecutors to engage in misconduct by overlooking cumulative error...” *Id.* This Court also reversed the convictions in *Big Pond v. State*, 101 Nev. 1, 692 P.2d 1288, 1289 (1985) and *Witherow v. State*, 104 Nev. 721, 765 P. 2d 1153, 1156 (1988) based on cumulative errors. The number of egregious errors by Lobato’s counsel dwarfs the combined errors in *Valdez*, *Big Pond* and *Witherow* that resulted in relief.

The district court prejudicially erred denying this ground without explanation, “there is no cumulative error as to warrant relief.” 11 App. 2281.

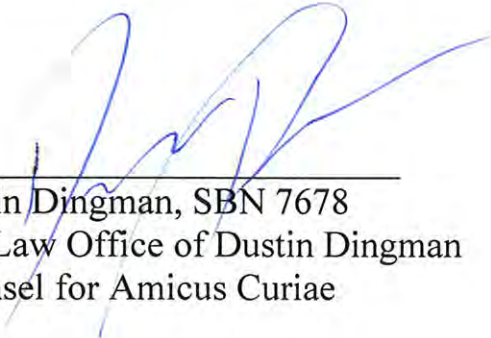
III. Conclusion

Ms. Lobato was prejudiced under *Strickland* by her counsel’s multitude of

prejudicial errors that include failing to prevent the State from obtaining her conviction by substituting speculation and conjecture for evidence proving essential elements of her accused crimes beyond a reasonable doubt, and failing to attempt to obtain critical evidence supporting her actual innocence or prevent extensive prosecutor misconduct.

All available evidence supports Ms. Lobato's actual innocence and this Court can rescue her from her legal quagmire by reversing the district court's Order and granting the appropriate relief of acquittal and her immediate release from custody, or in the alternative a new trial.

Respectfully submitted,

By: 
Dustin Dingman, SBN 7678
The Law Office of Dustin Dingman
Counsel for Amicus Curiae

Form 9. Certificate of Compliance

I hereby certify that I have read this *amicus curiae* 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 N.R.A.P. 28(e)(1), which requires every assertion in the brief regarding matters in the record to be supported by a reference to the page and volume number, if any, of the transcript or 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.

Pursuant to NRAP 32(a)(4)-(6), this brief is formatted in Times New Roman, size 14 font, with 1" margins on all sides.

Pursuant to NRAP Rule 32(a)(7)(ii) and NRAP Rule 29(e) this brief's type-volume is no more than 7,000 words.

Dated this 12th day of March, 2012.

By: 

Dustin Dingman, SBN 7678
The Law Office of Dustin Dingman
540 E. St. Louis St.
Las Vegas, Nevada 89104
(702) 529-1414


CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I HEREBY CERTIFY that on the 12th day of March, 2012, a copy of the foregoing was deposited in a sealed envelope in the U.S. Mail, first-class postage fully prepaid, and addressed to the counsels of record:

Travis N. Barrick, Esq.
Gallian, Wilcox, Welker, Olson & Beckstrom, LC
540 E. St. Louis Avenue
Las Vegas, NV 89104

Steven S. Owens, Esq.
District Attorney's Office
200 Lewis Avenue
Las Vegas, NV 89155

Catherine Cortez Masto, Esq.
Office of the Attorney General
100 N. Carson Street
Carson City, NV 89701


By: _____

EXHIBIT

2

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEVADA

KIRSTIN BLAISE LOBATO,
Appellant,
vs.
THE STATE OF NEVADA,
Respondent.

No. 58913

FILED

MAY 09 2012

TRACIE K. LINDEMAN
CLERK OF SUPREME COURT
BY *R. Malone*
DEPUTY CLERK

ORDER DENYING MOTION

This is an appeal from a district court order denying a post-conviction petition for a writ of habeas corpus. Three organizations (the Justice Institute, Proving Innocence, and the Worldwide Women's Criminal Justice Network) have filed motions requesting leave to file a joint amicus curiae brief supporting appellant and reversal of the district court's judgment. These organizations indicate that they are nonprofit public interest organizations "that are specifically interested in post-conviction cases involving an Appellant claiming actual innocence." They assert that an amicus brief is desirable for three reasons: (1) it will assist in a case of general public interest; (2) it will supplement the efforts of counsel, who is a civil practitioner representing appellant on a pro bono basis, by providing more extensive arguments and case law that are not in appellant's brief; and (3) it will draw the court's attention to law that escaped consideration in appellant's brief. The motions are opposed, primarily on the basis that the organizations are not impartial but also on the basis that their interests are adequately represented in the case and that the amicus brief is unnecessary.

The literal definition of an “amicus curiae” is friend of the court, not friend of one of the parties; however, it has become accepted that amicus curiae may assume an adversarial role. Ryan v. Commodity Futures Trading Com’n, 125 F.3d 1062, 1063 (7th Cir. 1997). Nevertheless, there must remain some limitations on permitting amicus curiae to participate in an appeal. See id. Accordingly, the Seventh Circuit has explained that participation by amicus curiae would normally be appropriate:

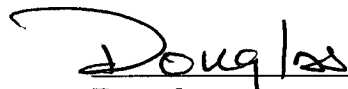
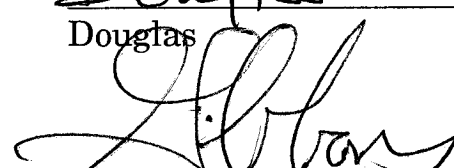
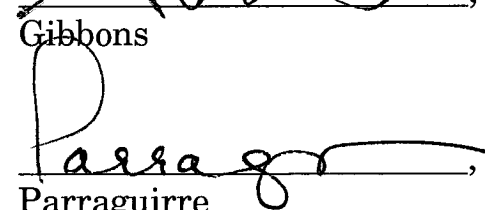
when a party is not represented competently or is not represented at all, when the amicus has an interest in some other case that may be affected by the decision in the present case . . . , or when the amicus has unique information or perspective that can help the court beyond the help that the lawyers for the parties are able to provide.

Id. The Ninth Circuit’s opinion in Miller-Wohl Co. v. Com’r of Labor and Industry, 694 F.2d 203 (9th Cir. 1982), cited by the moving parties, appears consistent with this position. The Ninth Circuit explained that an amicus curiae is not a party but that its “classic role” is to assist in cases of general public interest and to supplement the efforts of counsel by drawing the court’s attention to law that might have escaped consideration. Id. at 204.

Consistent with this case law and our review of the other authority presented by the parties, we conclude that the appearance of the Justice Institute, Proving Innocence, and the Worldwide Women’s Criminal Justice Network as amici curiae is not appropriate in this matter. The issues addressed in the proposed amicus brief are addressed in the 129-page opening brief and it does not appear that the amicus “add[s] something distinctive to the presentation of the issues;” rather, it

appears that the amicus is “serving as a mere conduit for the views of one of the parties.” 16AA Charles Alan Wright et al., Federal Practice and Procedure § 3975, at 313 (4th ed. 2008). Accordingly, we deny the motions received on March 12, 2012, and April 5, 2012, and direct the clerk of this court to return the proposed amicus brief received on March 13, 2012.

It is so ORDERED.

 _____, J.
Douglas
 _____, J.
Gibbons
 _____, J.
Parraguirre

cc: Gallian Wilcox Welker Olson & Beckstrom, LC
Attorney General/Carson City
Clark County District Attorney
Dustin L. Dingman

EXHIBIT

3



UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE SECOND CIRCUIT CLERK'S OFFICE



FRAP 29. Brief of an Amicus Curiae

(a) When Permitted.

The United States or its officer or agency or a state may file an amicus-curiae brief without the consent of the parties or leave of court. Any other amicus curiae may file a brief only by leave of court or if the brief states that all parties have consented to its filing.

(b) Motion for Leave to File.

The motion must be accompanied by the proposed brief and state:

- (1) the movant's interest; and
- (2) the reason why an amicus brief is desirable and why the matters asserted are relevant to the disposition of the case.

(c) Contents and Form.

An amicus brief must comply with Rule 32. In addition to the requirements of Rule 32, the cover must identify the party or parties supported and indicate whether the brief supports affirmance or reversal. An amicus brief need not comply with Rule 28, but must include the following:

- (1) if the amicus curiae is a corporation, a disclosure statement like that required of parties by Rule 26.1;
- (2) a table of contents, with page references;
- (3) a table of authorities — cases (alphabetically arranged), statutes and other references to the pages of the brief where they are cited;
- (4) a concise statement of the identity of the amicus curiae, its interest in the case, and the source of its authority to file;
- (5) unless the amicus curiae is one listed in the first sentence of Rule 29(a), a statement that indicates whether:
 - (A) a party's counsel authored the brief in whole or in part;
 - (B) a party or a party's counsel contributed money that was intended to fund preparing or submitting the brief; and
 - (C) a person — other than the amicus curiae, its members, or its counsel — contributed money that was intended to fund preparing or submitting the brief and, if so, identifies each such person;
- (6) an argument, which may be preceded by a summary and which need not include a statement of the applicable standard of review; and
- (7) a certificate of compliance, if required by Rule 32(a)(7).

(d) Length.

Except by the court's permission, an amicus brief may be no more than one-half the maximum length authorized by these rules for a party's principal brief. If the court grants a party permission to file a longer brief, that extension does not affect the length of an amicus brief.

(e) Time for Filing.

An amicus curiae must file its brief, accompanied by a motion for filing when necessary, no later than 7 days after the principal brief of the party being supported is filed. An amicus curiae that does not support either party must file its brief no later than 7 days after the appellant's or petitioner's principal brief is filed. A court may grant leave for later filing, specifying the time within which an opposing party may answer.

(f) Reply Brief.

Except by the court's permission, an amicus curiae may not file a reply brief.

(g) Oral Argument.

An amicus curiae may participate in oral argument only with the court's permission.

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