United States District Court Northern District of California

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1. UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
2. NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA 9

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NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND OF CALIFORNIA, et al.,

Plaintiffs,

v.

UBER TECHNOLOGIES, INC.,

Defendant.

Case No. [14-cv-04086 NC](https://ecf.cand.uscourts.gov/cgi-bin/DktRpt.pl?280572)

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# ORDER GRANTING FINAL

1. **APPROVAL AND ATTORNEYS’**
2. **FEES**

Re: Dkt. Nos. 119, 128

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1. In September 2014, the National Federation of the Blind of California and three
2. individuals sued Uber and its California subsidiaries, alleging that Uber violates state and
3. federal law by discriminating against blind persons when Uber drivers refuse to transport
4. service dogs. In April 2015, this Court denied Uber’s motion to dismiss the complaint and
5. found that NFB-CA had associational standing and that Uber is subject to the ADA. The
6. parties then began preparing for trial, while also engaging in settlement discussions.
7. In January 2016, the parties notified the Court that they had a settlement in
8. principle, so the Court granted their request to vacate the deadlines in the case. In late
9. April 2016, the parties requested preliminary approval of their class action settlement. The
10. Court granted preliminary approval, and the parties now seek final approval of the
11. settlement. In addition, plaintiffs move for $1,589,574 in attorneys’ fees and $13,447.14
12. in costs, with a multiplier of 2.0. Uber agrees that plaintiffs can recover attorneys’ fees,
13. but disputes the reasonableness of the fees and costs. The Court held a hearing on the Case No. [14-cv-04086 NC](https://ecf.cand.uscourts.gov/cgi-bin/DktRpt.pl?280572)

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1. motions on December 1, 2016, and granted both the motion for final approval and the
2. motion for attorneys’ fees.
3. As to the final approval of the settlement, the parties reported that no objections to
4. the settlement were received. In its order granting preliminary approval of the settlement,
5. the Court summarized the settlement’s key components and analyzed the fairness of
6. settlement in detail. Dkt. No. 112. The Court now concludes that the settlement is fair,
7. adequate, and reasonable and GRANTS the motion for final approval of the class action
8. settlement. The Court retains jurisdiction over the settlement for the duration of the
9. settlement agreement. *Kokkonen v. Guardian Life Ins. Co. of Am.*, 511 U.S. 375, 378 10 (1994).
10. As to the attorneys’ fees request, Uber does not dispute plaintiffs’ entitlement to
11. attorneys’ fees. Thus, the Court considers (1) the reasonableness of the attorneys’ fees,
12. and (2) the appropriate multiplier.
13. Plaintiffs request $1,589,574 in attorneys’ fees. The “lodestar is the product of
14. reasonable hours times a reasonable rate.” *City of Burlington v. Dague*, 505 U.S. 557, 559
15. (1992). Uber objects to (1) the attorneys’ hourly rate; (2) duplicative work done by
16. multiple attorneys in attending hearings and conference calls, and (3) plaintiffs’ trial
17. preparation after settlement negotiations had begun.
18. First, the Court finds that plaintiffs have cited sufficient authority that the rates
19. requested have been awarded in this district and are considered reasonable in the San
20. Francisco Bay Area market.
21. Second, the Court finds that plaintiffs’ counsel have not unnecessarily duplicated
22. work by structuring their team to have multiple attorneys consulted at key times in the
23. case. *See Nat’l Fed’n of the Blind v. Target Corp.*, No. 06-cv-01802 MHP, 2009 WL
24. 2390261, at \*3 (N.D. Cal. Aug. 3, 2009) (“the court may not condition fees on plaintiffs’
25. counsel’s conformance to the typical commercial law firm’s pyramidal staffing
26. structure.”).
27. Third, the parties moved to vacate trial deadlines in January, and the Court made Case No. [14-cv-04086 NC](https://ecf.cand.uscourts.gov/cgi-bin/DktRpt.pl?280572) 2

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* 1. clear for the following four months that trial dates would be reinstated if a settlement was
	2. not promptly entered. Under those circumstances, the Court finds it reasonable that
	3. plaintiffs’ counsel continued to prepare for trial after January and even until April when a
	4. final settlement was entered on the docket. Considering all arguments, the Court
	5. concludes that plaintiffs’ request for fees and costs are reasonable and GRANTS the
	6. motion.
	7. In addition to reasonable attorneys’ fees, plaintiffs request a multiplier of 2.0 under
	8. California law. A multiplier is permitted under California law to allow plaintiffs to be
	9. compensated for the real market value of their work, which includes a certain amount of
	10. risk absorbed by counsel when working on contingency. *See Ketchum v. Moses*, 24 Cal.
	11. 4th 1122, 1136 (2001) (“The experience of the marketplace indicates that lawyers
	12. generally will not provide legal representation on a contingent basis unless they receive a
	13. premium for taking that risk.”).
	14. The Court considers the most analogous case cited by the parties: *Nat’l Fed’n of the*
	15. *Blind v. Target Corp.*, No. 06-cv-01802 MHP, 2009 WL 2390261 (N.D. Cal. Aug. 3,
	16. 2009). In *Target*, plaintiffs sought to make Target’s online platform accessible to blind
	17. web users. *Id.* at \*1. There, Judge Patel found that a 1.65 multiplier was appropriate in a
	18. case with significant motion practice, including contested motions to dismiss, for
	19. preliminary injunction, class certification, and summary judgment. *Id.* at \*9.
	20. In this case, the Court finds that plaintiffs’ sought to enhance Uber’s policies to
	21. protect blind riders, which can provide a model for other businesses in the sharing
	22. economy. Additionally, plaintiffs faced a significant hurdle in overcoming the motion to
	23. dismiss, and took on the risk associated with raising novel legal issues in complex areas of
	24. jurisdictional, employment, and discrimination law. Thus, the Court finds that here, a
	25. multiplier of 1.5 is appropriate to fully award plaintiffs for the fair market value of their
	26. work in taking on this case.
	27. Plaintiffs must submit an updated proposed order as to the requested fees and costs
	28. for the Court’s signature in accordance with this order by December 12, 2016. Case No. [14-cv-04086 NC](https://ecf.cand.uscourts.gov/cgi-bin/DktRpt.pl?280572) 3

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# 2 IT IS SO ORDERED.

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1. Dated: December 6, 2016

NATHANAEL M. COUSINS

1. United States Magistrate Judge

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