

**United States Department of Labor  
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board**

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N.L., Appellant )

and )

**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS,** )  
**JERRY L. PETTIS MEMORIAL VETERANS** )  
**AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTER,** )  
**Loma Linda, CA, Employer** )

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**Docket No. 11-2134**  
**Issued: May 14, 2014**

*Appearances:*  
*Steven E. Brown, Esq., for the appellant*  
*Office of Solicitor, for the Director*

*Case Submitted on the Record*

**ORDER DENYING ATTORNEY'S FEE**

Before:

COLLEEN DUFFY KIKO, Judge  
ALEC J. KOROMILAS, Alternate Judge  
JAMES A. HAYNES, Alternate Judge

Counsel for appellant has filed a request for approval of attorney's fee in the amount of five thousand, nine hundred fifty four dollars and fifty cents (\$5,954.50).

The Board notes that all petitions for approval of fees for representative services are considered under the Board's *Rules of Procedure* and the applicable statute and regulation are found at 20 C.F.R. § 501.9.<sup>1</sup>

Under these regulations, the Board must consider the petition under the following general criteria:

(1) The usefulness of the Representative's services;<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 5 U.S.C. § 8127; 20 C.F.R. § 501.9(e).

<sup>2</sup> The Board's consideration of "usefulness" includes, but is not limited to, the frequency and quality of communication by the attorney with the client, the factual evidence and legal argument offered by the attorney and written pleadings filed in the case. The Board will also consider the usefulness of an attorney's work as it aided the Board in its consideration and decision of the issue appealed.

- (2) The nature and complexity of the appeal;<sup>3</sup>
- (3) The capacity in which the Representative has appeared;<sup>4</sup>
- (4) The actual time spent in connection with the Board appeal;<sup>5</sup> and
- (5) Customary local charges for similar services.<sup>6</sup>

As required by the Board's regulations, appellant has been afforded written notice of the fee requested and provided an opportunity to comment on the fee petition.<sup>7</sup> No response was received.

The Board, having considered the fee petition and supporting documentation, denies the fee petition. The Board finds the petition provides insufficient information to allow approval of any portion of the amount claimed. The Board notes the following defects:<sup>8</sup>

- (1) The fee petition does not adequately delineate the services performed relative to the appeal(s) before the Board. Discrete, listed services billed separately were not adequately described.
- (2) The fee petition fails to explain in detail how the claimed fee, especially the hourly rate, is justified under the five factors listed in this order.
- (3) The same individuals, Daniel Goodkin and Erika Bauer, list different hourly rates without explaining the basis for the different rates.

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<sup>3</sup> The Board's evaluation of the "nature and complexity" of an appeal includes, but is not limited to, whether the issue appealed is novel or required extensive or unusual factual evidence or legal argument. The Board recognizes that not all complex issues are cases of first impression. However, the attorney must establish the complex or unusual nature of the appeal.

<sup>4</sup> The Board's consideration of the "capacity" in which an attorney appears includes, but is not limited to, whether the attorney obtained a written retainer and fee agreement.

<sup>5</sup> The Board's evaluation of an attorney's itemized statement of work and charges includes, but is not limited to, whether the statement is clear, detailed and describes those aspects of the appeal which merit the fee claimed and whether counsel has personally affirmed the correctness of the fee. No stipulated or contingent fee will be approved by the Board. 20 C.F.R. § 501.9(e).

<sup>6</sup> The Board's consideration of customary, local fees recognizes that attorneys often have clients in several states and that local custom must be balanced against national practice in the Federal Employees' Compensation Act appeals.

<sup>7</sup> 20 C.F.R. § 501.9(e).

<sup>8</sup> This list is intended to assist counsel but does not limit the Board's discretion to evaluate any future fee petition on its own merits.

**IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT** the fee petition is denied and may be resubmitted to the Board within 60 days of the date of this order.

Issued: May 14, 2014  
Washington, DC

Colleen Duffy Kiko, Judge  
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

Alec J. Koromilas, Alternate Judge  
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

James A. Haynes, Alternate Judge  
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board