

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

In the Matter of A.W., Appellant)	
)	
and)	Docket No. 19-1615
)	Issued: March 8, 2024
U.S. POSTAL SERVICE, LOS ANGELES BULK)	
MAIL CENTER, Los Angeles, CA, Employer)	

Appearances:
Daniel M. Goodkin, Esq., for the appellant
Office of Solicitor, for the Director

Case Submitted on the Record

ORDER GRANTING FEE PETITION

Before:
ALEC J. KOROMILAS, Chief Judge
PATRICIA H. FITZGERALD, Deputy Chief Judge
VALERIE D. EVANS-HARRELL, Alternate Judge

Counsel for appellant has filed a fee petition in the amount of \$2,792.50.¹ The Board notes that all petitions for approval of fees for representative's services are considered under the Board's statutory authority found at section 8127 of the Federal Employees' Compensation Act,² (FECA) and under its *Rules of Procedure* found at 20 C.F.R. § 501.9(e).³

¹ FECA (5 U.S.C. § 8127(b)) and its implementing regulations (20 C.F.R. § 501.9) clearly require the Board to review each fee petition on its own merits and with regard to the unique facts and issues of each appeal. The recognition that each appeal to the Board has unique aspects is reflected in the Board's orders granting or denying fee petitions.

² 5 U.S.C. § 8127.

³ 20 C.F.R. § 501.9(e).

Pursuant to its regulations, the Board considered the fee petition under the following criteria:

- (1) The usefulness of the Representative's services;⁴
- (2) The nature and complexity of the appeal;⁵
- (3) The capacity in which the Representative has appeared;⁶
- (4) The actual time spent in connection with the Board appeal;⁷ and
- (5) Customary local charges for similar services.⁸

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.⁹

The requested fees pertain to services performed before the Board in the above-referenced appeal. The underlying issue was whether OWCP met its burden of proof to reduce appellant's compensation, effective April 16, 2018, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 8113(b) and 20 C.F.R. § 10.519 for failure to cooperate with vocational rehabilitation without good cause. By decision dated April 8, 2019, OWCP denied appellant's request for reconsideration of its April 9, 2018 decision suspending her compensation benefits because she failed, without good cause, to undergo vocational rehabilitation as directed. On July 25, 2019 appellant, through counsel, appealed from the April 8, 2019 OWCP decision. By order dated March 30, 2021, the Board reversed the April 8, 2019 OWCP decision finding that the second opinion report was an insufficient basis for reduction of appellant's wage-loss compensation under 5 U.S.C. § 8113(b) based upon her wage-earning capacity had she continued to participate in vocational rehabilitation efforts.

On appeal, counsel submitted a five-page brief presenting a factual pattern and Board precedent in similar cases. He argued that Board precedent supported a finding that the second

⁴ The Board's consideration of "usefulness" includes, but is not limited to, the frequency and quality of communication by the representative with the client, the factual evidence and legal argument offered and written pleadings filed in the case. The Board will also consider the usefulness of a representative's work as it aided the Board in its consideration and decision of the issue appealed.

⁵ 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 representative must establish the complex or unusual nature of the appeal.

⁶ The Board's consideration of the "capacity" in which a representative appears includes, but is not limited to, whether the representative obtained a written retainer and fee agreement was obtained.

⁷ The Board's evaluation of an 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 the representative 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).

⁸ The Board's consideration of customary, local fees recognizes that representatives often have clients in several states and that local custom must be balanced against national practice in the FECA appeals.

⁹ 20 C.F.R. § 501.9(e). The Board notes that included with the counsel's fee petition was a signed statement from appellant indicating that she found the requested fee to be reasonable and appropriate.

opinion report was an insufficient basis for reduction of appellant’s wage-loss compensation under 5 U.S.C. § 8113(b).

OWCP’s decision on appeal was dated April 8, 2019 and the appeal was filed with the Board on July 25, 2019. The fee petition requests approval of services from May 1, 2019 through March 30, 2021, and documents 6.70 hours spent in connection with this appeal before the Board. This is comprised of 3.00 hours at \$490.00 per hour for Daniel M. Goodkin, Esquire; 1.70 hours at \$560.00 per hour for Steven E. Brown, Esquire; 1.90 hours at \$195.00 per hour for Paralegal Erika Bauer; and 0.10 at \$0.00 per hour for Yajaira Alvarado.

The Board has carefully reviewed the fee petition and finds it satisfies the requirements of section 501.9(e) of the Board’s implementing regulations.

The Board notes that under 20 C.F.R. § 501.9(e) “[n]o claim for a fee for legal or other service performed on appeal before the Board is valid unless approved by the Board.” Under 18 U.S.C. § 292, collecting a fee without the approval of the Board may constitute a misdemeanor, subject to fine or imprisonment for up to a year or both.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT the fee petition is granted in the amount of \$2,792.50.

Issued: March 8, 2024
Washington, DC

Alec J. Koromilas, Chief Judge
Employees’ Compensation Appeals Board

Patricia H. Fitzgerald, Deputy Chief Judge
Employees’ Compensation Appeals Board

Valerie D. Evans-Harrell, Alternate Judge
Employees’ Compensation Appeals Board