THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
In the Court of Appeals

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SC Court of Appeals

APPEAL FROM RICHLAND COUNTY
Court of Common Pleas

Jocelyn Newman, Circuit Court Judge

Appellate Case No.: 2016-000986

Porthemos Curry.....Respondent/Appellant,

v.

Carolina Insurance Group of SC, Inc. and Maurice Derrick,.....Appellants/Respondents.

RESPONDENT/APPELLANT'S INITIAL REPLY BRIEF OF APPELLANT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

CASES

OTHER AUTHORITIES

ARGUMENT IN REPLY

I. The Customer, Mr. Curry, Has Demonstrated Substantial Prejudice

In its Initial Brief, Agency argues that "nowhere in his brief does Mr. Curry what prejudice he suffered." Init. Br. at p. 5. Agency further argues that "there is no prejudice or surprise because Judge Newman continued the trial so that the issue of release could be fully briefed and argued pursuant to SCRCP 56" and asserts that because Customer's counsel consented to the continuance of the first day certain trial to allow the summary judgment motion to be heard, there was no prejudice shown. Id.

Customer respectfully submits that Agency's counsel is confusing the issue of the prejudice in the granting of the motion to amend with the consent by Customer's counsel – *after the motion to amend had already been granted* –to the continuance of the trial to allow counsel the requisite 10 days' notice, under Rule 56, to respond to Agency's summary judgment motion (filed at trial) on the newly allowed affirmative defense.

As more fully explained in its Initial Brief, the prejudice stems from the granting of the motion to amend to assert a new defense on the first day of trial, thereby leading to the eventual cancellation of two date certain trials. See Holland v. Morbark, Inc., 407 S.C. 227, 754 S.E.2d 714 (Ct. App. 2014). In Holland, the plaintiff, an injured mill worker, sought to amend his complaint – two years after the filing of the lawsuit – to advance a theory that the wood chipper at issue was defective under OSHA standards.

The trial court denied the motion to amend, holding that it would be prejudicial to the defendant where all scheduling deadlines had expired; all depositions had been taken; the case was on the trial roster; and advancing these new theories at the eleventh hour

would require the defendant to incur significant additional costs. 754 S.E.2d at 718. The trial court noted that the plaintiff "has long known about the possible relevance of the OSHA standard . . ." and that granting the motion to amend "would cause significant increases in discovery cots, at least some of which could have been avoided if [plaintiff] had timely moved." Id.

On appeal, the Court of Appeals affirmed the denial of the motion to amend, noting that the plaintiff had been on notice of this "new" theory since August 2010, but only elected to move to amend the complaint in January 2011, once the case had been transferred to the trial roster. Id. at 719. The Court of Appeals, recognizing that "prejudice occurs when the amendment states a new claim or defense that would require the opposing party to introduce additional or different evidence to prevail in the amended action", found that "granting this amendment would have result in an inevitable delay on the eve of trial". Id. (citing Johnson v. Oroweat Foods Co., 785 F.2d 503 (4th Cir. 1986) ("finding prejudice can result when a proposed amendment is offered shortly before or during trial and raises a new legal theory that would require gathering and analysis of facts not already considered by the opposition."))

Similarly, here the first day certain trial in this matter, scheduled by the Honorable Alison R. Lee, Chief Administrative Judge at the time, commenced on Monday, April 18, 2016. The case had been pending for almost two years at that point; depositions of the parties, expert witnesses, and fact witnesses had been taken. Mediation had been conducted and the parties had conducted extensive written discovery as well. The jury was qualified the morning of April 18th, and the trial court considered various motions *in limine* throughout the afternoon. See, generally, J. Newman Hrg. Tr. The trial was

expected to last a week. It is undisputed that Agency was aware of Customer's settlement with Scottsdale, and the existence of the Scottsdale Release, in November 2010 but did nothing, never requesting a copy of the Release for its file and never raising the issue until the eve of trial.

The prejudice to Customer is the time and expense associated with preparing for two (2) trials, both of which were ultimately cancelled due to Agency's last-minute filing of a motion to amend, such amendment relating to a settlement agreement of which Agency was on notice of almost 6 months prior. See Ltr. JR Murphy. Furthermore, the inclusion of the defense requires the Customer to present new evidence concerning the intent of the parties to the Release (including, necessarily, the testimony of the attorneys involved in the drafting of the Release and the settlement negotiations leading up to such agreement).

II. The Scottsdale Release is Not "Correspondence"

In Section III of its Initial Brief, Agency argues that "counsel admitted that it was an error not to provide the executed release" in response to Agency's discovery requests. This is a mischaracterization of the hearing transcript. At the hearing on the Motion to Amend on the first day of trial, Agency's counsel alleged that the release was responsive to Agency's discovery requests to Customer; however, it is undisputed that Agency's counsel never identified the request for production it was referencing to the Court; never submitted such discovery request to the Court for review; and never provided Customer's counsel with the alleged Request for Production at the time of the motion hearing.

As the hearing transcript reflects, if a Request for Production had, in fact, actually requested settlement agreements or releases or covenants not to execute, then Customer's counsel readily agreed that she would have been under a duty to produce it to Agency's

counsel, as more fully outlined in Customer's Initial Brief. See J. Newman Hrg. Tr. at p. 58. However, after reviewing the Request for Production No. 6, it is clear that the Request only asks for "emails, correspondence, receipts, bills, invoices, statements" between Customer and Scottsdale Insurance Company. Agency asks this Court to find the Scottsdale Release to be "correspondence" but provides no legal support for such a determination. See Init. Br. at p. 7. In fact, under the generally held definitions of the word "correspondence", the Scottsdale release is no such thing, as more fully outlined in Customer's Initial Brief. See, e.g., Merriam-Webster Dictionary; Black's Law Dictionary; See also Times Mirror Co. v. Superior Court, 53 Cal. 3d 1325, 813 P.2d 240 (1991) (wherein the Supreme Court of California held that "correspondence means communication by letters") (cited with approval in Office of the Governor v. Washington Post, 759 A.2d 249, 268 (Ct. App. Md. 2000); Gandy v. Barber, C/A No. 1:12-cv-03331-MSK-MJW (10th Cir. 2016) (noting that "correspondence is defined [in Webster's Third New International Dictionary] as the communication between persons by an exchange of letters or any communication by letter.")

Conclusion

Mr. Curry respectfully request that this Court issue an order finding that the lower court abused its discretion in granting the Agency's Motion to Amend at trial; strike the defense; dismiss the appeal of the Agency as moot; and remand the case to the circuit court for immediate trial.

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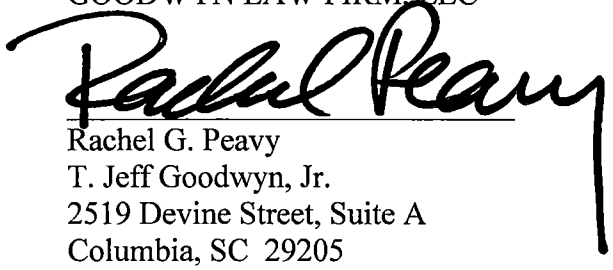
GOODWYN LAW FIRM, LLC



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PROOF OF SERVICE

I certify that I have served the **Respondent/Appellant's Initial Reply Brief of Appellant** upon Wesley D. Peel, Esquire and Bryan M. J. Triplett, Esquire, Attorneys for the Appellants/Respondents, at the address listed below by depositing a copy of same in the United States Mail, postage prepaid, on October 17th 2016.

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October 17, 2016

VIA HAND DELIVERY
The Honorable Jenny Abbott Kitchings
Clerk of Court, South Carolina Court of Appeals
1220 Senate Street
Columbia, SC 29201

RE: ***Porthemos Curry v. Carolina Insurance Group of SC, Inc. and Maurice Derrick***
Appellate Case No.: 2016-000986
Our File No.: 3000-0106

Dear Ms. Kitchings:

Please find enclosed for filing the original and one copy of the **Respondent/Appellant's Initial Reply Brief of Appellant** along with the Proof of Service, in regard to the above-referenced matter.

By copy of this letter and as evidenced by the attached Proof of Service, I am serving a copy of the Respondent/Appellant's Intital Reply Brief of Appellant upon Wesley D. Peel, Esquire, and Bryan M. J. Triplett, Esquire, attorneys for the Appellants/Respondents.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Very truly yours,

Rachel G. Peavy

RGP/msb
Enclosures

cc: Wesley D. Peel, Esquire (w/encl.) (via US Mail)
Bryan M. J. Triplett, Esquire (w/encl.) (via US Mail)
Porthemos Curry (w/encl.) (via US Mail)