



Ohio Revised Code

Section 2335.39 Compensation for fees incurred by prevailing party in connection with action or appeal.

Effective: September 26, 2003

Legislation: House Bill 95 - 125th General Assembly

(A) As used in this section:

(1) "Court" means any court of record.

(2) "Eligible party" means a party to an action or appeal involving the state, other than the following:

(a) The state;

(b) An individual whose net worth exceeded one million dollars at the time the action or appeal was filed;

(c) A sole owner of an unincorporated business that had, or a partnership, corporation, association, or organization that had, a net worth exceeding five million dollars at the time the action or appeal was filed, except that an organization that is described in subsection 501(c)(3) and is tax exempt under subsection 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code shall not be excluded as an eligible party under this division because of its net worth;

(d) A sole owner of an unincorporated business that employed, or a partnership, corporation, association, or organization that employed, more than five hundred persons at the time the action or appeal was filed.

(3) "Fees" means reasonable attorney's fees, in an amount not to exceed seventy-five dollars per hour or a higher hourly fee approved by the court.

(4) "Internal Revenue Code" means the "Internal Revenue Code of 1954," 68A Stat. 3, 26 U.S.C. 1, as amended.



(5) "Prevailing eligible party" means an eligible party that prevails in an action or appeal involving the state.

(6) "State" has the same meaning as in section 2743.01 of the Revised Code.

(B)(1) Except as provided in divisions (B)(2) and (F) of this section, in a civil action, or appeal of a judgment in a civil action, to which the state is a party, or in an appeal of an adjudication order of an agency pursuant to section 119.12 of the Revised Code, the prevailing eligible party is entitled, upon filing a motion in accordance with this division, to compensation for fees incurred by that party in connection with the action or appeal. Compensation, when payable to a prevailing eligible party under this section, is in addition to any other costs and expenses that may be awarded to that party by the court pursuant to law or rule.

A prevailing eligible party that desires an award of compensation for fees shall file a motion requesting the award with the court within thirty days after the court enters final judgment in the action or appeal. The motion shall do all of the following:

(a) Identify the party;

(b) Indicate that the party is the prevailing eligible party and is entitled to receive an award of compensation for fees;

(c) Include a statement that the state's position in initiating the matter in controversy was not substantially justified;

(d) Indicate the amount sought as an award;

(e) Itemize all fees sought in the requested award. The itemization shall include a statement from any attorney who represented the prevailing eligible party, that indicates the fees charged, the actual time expended, and the rate at which the fees were calculated.

(2) Upon the filing of a motion under this section, the court shall review the request for the award of compensation for fees and determine whether the position of the state in initiating the matter in



controversy was substantially justified, whether special circumstances make an award unjust, and whether the prevailing eligible party engaged in conduct during the course of the action or appeal that unduly and unreasonably protracted the final resolution of the matter in controversy. The court shall issue an order, in writing, on the motion of the prevailing eligible party, which order shall include a statement indicating whether an award has been granted, the findings and conclusions underlying it, the reasons or bases for the findings and conclusions, and, if an award has been granted, its amount. The order shall be included in the record of the action or appeal, and the clerk of the court shall mail a certified copy of it to the state and the prevailing eligible party.

With respect to a motion under this section, the state has the burden of proving that its position in initiating the matter in controversy was substantially justified, that special circumstances make an award unjust, or that the prevailing eligible party engaged in conduct during the course of the action or appeal that unduly and unreasonably protracted the final resolution of the matter in controversy.

A court considering a motion under this section may deny an award entirely, or reduce the amount of an award that otherwise would be payable, to a prevailing eligible party only as follows:

(a) If the court determines that the state has sustained its burden of proof that its position in initiating the matter in controversy was substantially justified or that special circumstances make an award unjust, the motion shall be denied;

(b) If the court determines that the state has sustained its burden of proof that the prevailing eligible party engaged in conduct during the course of the action or appeal that unduly and unreasonably protracted the final resolution of the matter in controversy, the court may reduce the amount of an award, or deny an award, to that party to the extent of that conduct.

An order of a court considering a motion under this section is appealable as in other cases, by a prevailing eligible party that is denied an award or receives a reduced award. If the case is an appeal of the adjudication order of an agency pursuant to section 119.12 of the Revised Code, the agency may appeal an order granting an award. The order of the court may be modified by the appellate court only if it finds that the grant or the failure to grant an award, or the calculation of the amount of an award, involved an abuse of discretion.



(C) Compensation for fees awarded to a prevailing eligible party under this section may be paid by the specific branch of the state government or the state department, board, office, commission, agency, institution, or other instrumentality over which the party prevailed in the action or appeal from any funds available to it for payment of such compensation. If compensation is not paid from such funds or such funds are not available, upon the filing of the court's order in favor of the prevailing eligible party with the clerk of the court of claims, the order shall be treated as if it were a judgment under Chapter 2743. of the Revised Code and be payable in accordance with the procedures specified in section 2743.19 of the Revised Code, except that interest shall not be paid in relation to the award.

(D) If compensation for fees is awarded under this section to a prevailing eligible party that is appealing an agency adjudication order pursuant to section 119.12 of the Revised Code, it shall include the fees incurred in the appeal and, if requested in the motion, the fees incurred by the party in the adjudication hearing conducted under Chapter 119. of the Revised Code. A motion containing such a request shall itemize, in the manner described in division (B)(1)(e) of section 119.092 of the Revised Code, the fees, as defined in that section, that are sought in an award.

(E) Each court that orders during any fiscal year compensation for fees to be paid to a prevailing eligible party pursuant to this section shall prepare a report for that year. The report shall be completed no later than the first day of October of the fiscal year following the fiscal year covered by the report, and copies of it shall be filed with the general assembly. It shall contain the following information:

- (1) The total amount and total number of awards of compensation for fees required to be paid to prevailing eligible parties;
- (2) The amount and nature of each individual award ordered;
- (3) Any other information that may aid the general assembly in evaluating the scope and impact of awards of compensation for fees.

(F) The provisions of this section do not apply in any of the following:



- (1) Appropriation proceedings under Chapter 163. of the Revised Code;
- (2) Civil actions or appeals of civil actions that involve torts;
- (3) An appeal pursuant to section 119.12 of the Revised Code that involves any of the following:
 - (a) An adjudication order entered after a hearing described in division (F) of section 119.092 of the Revised Code;
 - (b) A prevailing eligible party represented in the appeal by an attorney who was paid pursuant to an appropriation by the federal or state government or a local government;
 - (c) An administrative appeal decision made under section 5101.35 of the Revised Code.