



**In the Matter of:**

**LYNN E. ROBESON,**

**ARB CASE NO. 10-065**

**COMPLAINANT,**

**ALJ CASE NO. 2009-STA-074**

**v.**

**DATE: March 17, 2010**

**DENNEY TRANSPORT LIMITED,**

**RESPONDENT.**

**BEFORE: THE ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW BOARD**

**FINAL DECISION AND ORDER APPROVING SETTLEMENT  
AND DISMISSING COMPLAINT WITH PREJUDICE**

Lynn E. Robeson complained that Denney Transport Limited violated the employee protection provisions of the Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1982 (STAA),<sup>1</sup> and its implementing regulations,<sup>2</sup> when it discharged him from employment. Following an investigation of this complaint, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) concluded that there was no reasonable cause to believe that Denney Transport violated the STAA. Accordingly, OSHA dismissed the complaint.

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<sup>1</sup> 49 U.S.C.A. § 31105 (Thomson/West Supp. 2009). Section 405 of the STAA provides protection from discrimination to employees who report violations of commercial motor vehicle safety rules or who refuse to operate a vehicle when such operation would violate those rules.

<sup>2</sup> 29 C.F.R. Part 1978 (2009).

Robeson objected to OSHA's findings and requested a hearing before a Department of Labor Administrative Law Judge (ALJ).<sup>3</sup> The ALJ assigned to the case scheduled a hearing, but before the hearing took place, the parties reached a settlement agreement.<sup>4</sup> The parties submitted the settlement agreement to the ALJ, and he issued an order recommending approval of the settlement agreement and dismissing the case on February 22, 2010.

The case is now before the ARB pursuant to the STAA's automatic review provisions.<sup>5</sup> The ARB "shall issue the final decision and order based on the record and the decision and order of the administrative law judge."<sup>6</sup>

The ARB issued a Notice of Review and Briefing Schedule reminding the parties of their right to submit briefs in support of or in opposition to the ALJ's order. Neither party submitted a brief.

Under the regulations implementing the STAA, the parties may settle a case at any time after filing objections to OSHA's preliminary findings, and before those findings become final, "if the participating parties agree to a settlement and such settlement is approved by the Administrative Review Board [ARB] . . . ."<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, we review the settlement to determine whether the settlement agreement constitutes a fair, adequate, and reasonable settlement of Robeson's STAA complaint.

The ARB agrees with the ALJ's determination that the parties' settlement agreement constitutes a fair, adequate, and reasonable settlement of Robeson's STAA complaint and none of the parties allege otherwise. We note, however, that the settlement agreement may encompass the settlement of matters under laws other than the STAA.<sup>8</sup> The Board's authority over settlement agreements is limited to the statutes that are within the Board's jurisdiction as defined by the applicable statute. Therefore, we approve only the terms of the agreement pertaining to Robeson's current STAA case.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See 29 C.F.R. § 1978.105.

<sup>4</sup> See No Fault Release of Claims Agreement, Denney Transport Limited and Lynn E. Robeson, U.S. Department of Labor Claim Number 2009-STA-74 (Agreement).

<sup>5</sup> 49 U.S.C.A. § 31105(b)(2)(C); see 29 C.F.R. § 1978.109(c)(1).

<sup>6</sup> 29 C.F.R. § 1978.109(c); *Monroe v. Cumberland Transp. Corp.*, ARB No. 01-101, ALJ No. 2000-STA-050, slip op. at 2 (ARB Sept. 26, 2001).

<sup>7</sup> 29 C.F.R. § 1978.111(d)(2).

<sup>8</sup> See Agreement, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> *Fish v. H & R Transfer*, ARB No. 01-071, ALJ No. 2000-STA-056, slip op. at 2 (ARB Apr. 30, 2003).

The agreement provides that the parties shall keep the terms of the settlement confidential.<sup>10</sup> The Board notes that the parties' submissions, including the Agreement, become part of the record of the case and are subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).<sup>11</sup> FOIA requires Federal agencies to disclose requested records unless they are exempt from disclosure under the Act.<sup>12</sup> Department of Labor regulations provide specific procedures for responding to FOIA requests and for appeals by requestors from denials of such requests.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, the settlement provides that the agreement shall be governed and construed under the laws of the state of Nebraska.<sup>14</sup> We construe this choice of law provision as not limiting the authority of the Secretary of Labor and any federal court, which shall be governed in all respects by the laws and regulations of the United States.<sup>15</sup>

The parties have indicated that the Agreement constitutes the entire settlement with respect to Robeson's STAA claim. The ARB finds that the settlement is fair, adequate, and reasonable. Accordingly, as construed, we **APPROVE** the ALJ's recommended order and **DISMISS** Robeson's complaint with prejudice.

**SO ORDERED.**

**PAUL M. IGASAKI**  
**Chief Administrative Appeals Judge**

**WAYNE C. BEYER**  
**Administrative Appeals Judge**

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<sup>10</sup> See Agreement, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> 5 U.S.C.A. § 552 (Thomson/West 1996 & Supp. 2008).

<sup>12</sup> *Coffman v. Alyeska Pipeline Serv. Co. & Arctic Slope Inspection Serv.*, ARB No. 96-141, ALJ Nos. 1996-TSC-005, -006, slip op. at 2 (ARB June 24, 1996).

<sup>13</sup> 29 C.F.R. § 70 *et seq.* (2009).

<sup>14</sup> Agreement, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> *Trucker v. St. Cloud Meat & Provisions, Inc.*, ARB No. 08-080, ALJ No. 2008-STA-023, slip op. at 3 (ARB May 30, 2008).