



Issue Date: 19 August 2010

CASE No.: 2010-STA-40

In the Matter of

THERON K. CARTER,
Complainant

v.

EQUITY TRANSPORTATION COMPANY INC.,
Respondent

RECOMMENDED ORDER APPROVING SETTLEMENT

This proceeding arises under the Surface Transportation Assistance, P.L. 103-272 at 49 U.S.C. § 31105 et seq., and the regulations promulgated thereunder at 29 C.F.R. Part 1978, which are employee protective provisions. The Secretary of Labor is empowered to investigate and determine “whistleblower” complaints filed by employees of commercial motor carriers who are allegedly discharged or otherwise discriminated against with regard to their terms and conditions of employment because the employee refused to operate a vehicle when such operation would violate a regulation, standard, or order of the United States related to commercial motor vehicles.

Pursuant to Section 31105(b)(2)(C) of the STAA, “[b]efore the final order is issued, the proceeding may be ended by a settlement agreement made by the Secretary, the Complainant, and the person alleged to have committed the violation.” Under regulations implementing the STAA, the parties may settle a case at any time after the filing of objections to the Assistant Secretary’s findings “if the participating parties agree to a settlement and such settlement is approved by the Administrative Review Board...or the ALJ.” 29 C.F.R. § 1978.111(d)(2). Under STAA a settlement agreement cannot become effective until its terms have been reviewed and determined to be fair, adequate, and reasonable, and in the public interest. *Tankersly v. Triple Crown Services, Inc.*, 1992-STA-8 (Sec’y Feb. 18, 1993). Consistent with that required review, the regulations direct the parties to file a copy of the settlement “with the ALJ or the Administrative Review Board as the case may be.” *Id.*

The parties in this matter have submitted a Settlement Agreement and Release constituting a resolution of all matters in controversy. The parties acknowledge and agree that they have consulted with attorneys of their own choosing or have had access to independent legal advice from attorneys with respect to the advisability of making this settlement before entering the agreement.

The undersigned has reviewed the parties' settlement agreement and has determined that it constitutes a fair, adequate and reasonable settlement of the complaint. Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. § 1978.109 (c), however, the Administrative Review Board must issue the final order of dismissal of a STAA complaint resolved by settlement

Accordingly, **IT IS RECOMMENDED** that the Administrative Review Board **APPROVE the SETTLEMENT and DISMISS** Complainant's claim in its entirety with prejudice.

So ORDERED.

A
THOMAS M. BURKE
Administrative Law Judge

NOTICE OF REVIEW: The administrative law judge's Recommended Order Approving Settlement, along with the Administrative File, will be automatically forwarded for review to the Administrative Review Board, U. S. Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Ave., NW, Washington, DC. 20210. *See* C.F.R. § 1978.109(a); Secretary's Order 1-2002, ¶4.c. (35), 67 Fed. Reg. 64272 (2002).

Within thirty (30) days of the date of issuance of the administrative law judge's Recommended Order Approving Settlement, the parties may file briefs with the Administrative Review Board ("Board") in support of, or in opposition to, the administrative law judge's order unless the Board, upon notice to the parties, establishes a different briefing schedule. *See* 29 C.F.R. § 1978.109(c)(2). All further inquires and correspondence in this matter should be directed to the Board.