

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR VETERANS CLAIMS

LINDA K. BUTLER)	
Appellant,)	
)	
v.)	CAVC No. 19-98
)	EAJA
)	
ROBERT L. WILKIE,)	
SECRETARY OF)	
VETERANS AFFAIRS,)	
Appellee)	

APPELLANT'S APPLICATION FOR AN
AWARD OF ATTORNEYS FEES AND EXPENSES
PURSUANT TO 28 U.S.C. § 2412(d)

Pursuant to the Equal Access to Justice Act ("EAJA"), 28 U.S.C. § 2412(d), and the Court's Rule 39, Appellant, through counsel, seeks a total fee in the amount of **\$13,921.70**.

The basis for the application is as follows:

Grounds for an Award

This Court has identified four elements as being necessary to warrant an award by the Court of attorneys' fees and expenses to an eligible party pursuant to the EAJA. These are: (1) a showing that the appellant is a prevailing party; (2) a showing that the appellant is eligible for an award; (3) an allegation that the government's position is not substantially justified; and (4) an itemized statement

of the fees sought. *Owens v. Brown*, 10 Vet. App. 65, 66 (1997) (quoting *Bazalo*, 9 Vet. App. at 308). See also 28 U.S.C. §§ 2412(d)(1)(A),(B).

As will be demonstrated below, Appellant satisfies each of the above-enumerated requirements for EAJA.

1. THE APPELLANT SATISFIES EACH OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR AN AWARD OF ATTORNEY'S FEES AND EXPENSES

A. *The Appellant Is a Prevailing Party*

In *Buckhannon Bd. and Care Home, Inc. v. West Virginia Dept. of Health and Human Resources*, 532 U.S. 598, 121 S.Ct 1835 (2001) (hereafter "Buckhannon"), the Supreme Court explained that in order to be a prevailing party the applicant must receive "at least some relief on the merits" and the relief must materially alter the legal relationship of the parties. 532 U.S. at 603-605. The Federal Circuit adopted the *Buckhannon* test in *Brickwood Contractors, Inc. v. United States*, 288 F.3d 1371 (Fed. Cir. 2002) and applied it to an EAJA applicant. The Federal Circuit explained in *Rice Services, LTD. v. United States*, that "in order to demonstrate that it is a prevailing party, an EAJA applicant must show that it obtained an enforceable judgment on the merits or a court ordered consent decree that materially altered the legal relationship between the parties, or the equivalent of either of those." 405 F.3d 1017, 1025 (Fed. Cir. 2005).

In *Zuberi v. Nicholson*, 19 Vet. App. 541 (2006), this Court explained that the Federal Circuit case of *Akers v. Nicholson*, 409 F.3d 1356 (Fed. Cir. 2005) "did not change the focus for determining prevailing party status from a standard that looks to the basis for the remand to one that looks to the outcome of the remand. *Akers* simply did not involve a remand that was predicated on an administrative error." 19 Vet. App. at 547. (internal quotations omitted). The Court held in *Zuberi* that *Motorola* provided the proper test for prevailing party. *Id.* Next in *Kelly v. Nicholson*, 463 F.3d 1349 (Fed. Cir. 2006), the Federal Circuit held that:

To be considered a prevailing party entitled to fees under EAJA, one must secure some relief on the merits. Securing a remand to an agency can constitute the requisite success on the merits. [W]here the plaintiff secures a remand requiring further agency proceedings because of alleged error by the agency, the plaintiff qualifies as a prevailing party ... without regard to the outcome of the agency proceedings where there has been no retention of jurisdiction by the court.

Id. at 1353 (internal citations and quotations omitted).

Most recently, this Court in *Blue v. Wilkie*, 30 Vet.App. 61 (2018), laid out the following three-part test relating to when an appellant is considered a prevailing party under the EAJA:

An appellant who secures a remand to an administrative agency is a prevailing party under the EAJA if (1) the remand was necessitated by or predicated upon administrative error, (2) the remanding court did not retain jurisdiction, and (3) the language in the remand order clearly called for further agency proceedings, which leaves the possibility of attaining a favorable merits determination.

Id. at 67, *citing Dover v. McDonald*, 818 F.3d 1316 (Fed. Cir. 2016).

The Court set aside and remanded that part of the Board's September 11, 2018 decision that denied service connection for a gynecologic disorder and hysterectomy scar based upon the Board's failure to provide an adequate statement of reasons or bases and based upon the Board's failure to rely on adequate medical opinions. See pages 1-8 of the Memorandum Decision. Mandate issued on July 21, 2020. Based upon the foregoing, and because the three-part test promulgated in *Blue* is satisfied, Appellant is a prevailing party.

B. Appellant Is Eligible For An EAJA Award

Appellant also satisfies the EAJA requirement that her net worth at the time her appeal was filed did not exceed \$2,000,000. 28 U.S.C. § 2412(d)(2)(B). Ms. Butler had a net worth under \$2,000,000 on the date this action was commenced. See Paragraph 3 of the fee agreement filed with the Court. Therefore, Ms. Butler is a person eligible to receive an award under the EAJA.

C. The Position of the Secretary Was Not Substantially Justified

In *White v. Nicholson*, 412 F.3d 1314 (Fed. Cir. 2004) the Federal Circuit applied the totality of the circumstances test and noted that "EAJA requires that the record must supply the evidence of the Government's substantial justification." 412 F.3d at 1316. The Secretary's position during proceedings before the Agency and

in Court was not reasonable, either in law or in fact, and accordingly the Secretary's position was not substantially justified at either the administrative or litigation stage in this case. There thus is nothing substantially justified in the Board's failure to provide an adequate statement of reasons or bases or in the Board's failure to rely on adequate medical opinions. Moreover, there is no evidence that special circumstances exist in Appellant's case that would make an award of reasonable fees and expenses unjust. 28 U.S.C. § 2412(d)(1)(A).

2. ITEMIZED STATEMENT OF SERVICES RENDERED AND AMOUNTS OF REASONABLE FEES AND EXPENSES

Appellant has claimed a reasonable amount of attorneys' fees, predicated upon "the number of hours reasonably expended on the litigation multiplied by a reasonable hourly rate." *Ussery v. Brown*, 10 Vet. App. 51, 53 (1997) (*quoting Elcyszyn*, 7 Vet. App. at 176-177).

Six attorneys from the law firm of Chisholm Chisholm & Kilpatrick worked on this case: Kevin Medeiros, Danielle M. Gorini, Nicholas Phinney, Christian McTarnaghan, Amy Odom, and Zachary Stolz.¹ Attorney Kevin Medeiros

¹"There is nothing inherently unreasonable about a client having multiple attorneys, and they may all be compensated if they are not unreasonably doing the same work and are being compensated for the distinct contribution of each lawyer." *Norman v. Hous. Auth. of City of Montgomery*, 836 F.2d 1292, 1301 (11th

graduated from Suffolk University Law School in 2015 and the *Laffey Matrix* establishes that \$365.00 is the prevailing market rate for an attorney with his experience.² Danielle Gorini graduated from Roger Williams University Law School in 2005 and the *Laffey Matrix* establishes that \$510.00 is the prevailing

Cir. 1988); *see also* *Baldrige v. Nicholson*, 19 Vet.App. 227, 237-38 (2005)(“the fees sought must be ‘based on the distinct contribution of each individual counsel.’”). “The use in involved litigation of a team of attorneys who divide up the work is common today for both plaintiff and defense work.” *Johnson v. Univ. Coll. of Univ. of Alabama in Birmingham*, 706 F.2d 1205, 1208 (11th Cir. 1983) *holding modified by* *Gaines v. Dougherty Cty. Bd. of Educ.*, 775 F.2d 1565 (11th Cir. 1985). “Careful preparation often requires collaboration and rehearsal[.]” *Rodriguez-Hernandez v. Miranda-Velez*, 132 F.3d 848, 860 (1st Cir. 1998). As demonstrated in Exhibit A, each attorney involved in the present case provided a distinct, and non-duplicative contribution to the success of the appeal. *See* *Baldrige*, 19 Vet.App. at 237 (“An application for fees under EAJA where multiple attorneys are involved must also explain the role of each lawyer in the litigation and the tasks assigned to each, thereby describing the distinct contribution of each counsel.”).

²The U.S. Attorney’s Office maintains a matrix, known as the Laffey Matrix, of prevailing market rates for attorneys by years of practice, taking into account annual price increases, pursuant to *Laffey v. Northwest Airlines, Inc.*, 572 F.Supp. 354 (D.D.C. 1983), *aff’d in part by* 746 F.2d.4 (D.C. Cir. 1984), *cert. denied*, 472 U.S. 1021, 105 S. Ct. 3488 (1985). This Court has approved the use of the Laffey Matrix for determining the prevailing market rate for EAJA fees. *See, e.g., Wilson v. Principi*, 16 Vet. App. 509, 213 (2002) (finding the Laffey Matrix a “reliable indicator of fees...particularly as to cases involving fees to be paid by government entities or determined under fee-shifting statutes”), *vacated on other grounds by* 391 F.3d 1203 (Fed. Cir. 2004); *see also* *Sandoval*, 9 Vet. App. at 181 (using the Laffey Matrix as an indicator of prevailing market rate and holding that once a prevailing market rate is established, the government has the burden of producing evidence to show that the rate is erroneous.) *See* Exhibit B (Laffey Matrix).

market rate for an attorney with her experience. Nicholas Phinney graduated from Roger Williams University Law School in 2007 and the *Laffey* Matrix establishes that \$510.00 is the prevailing market rate for an attorney with his experience. Christian McTarnaghan graduated from Suffolk University Law School in 2015 and the *Laffey* Matrix establishes that \$365.00 is the prevailing market rate for an attorney with his experience. Amy Odom graduated from University of Florida Law School in 2006 and the *Laffey* Matrix establishes that \$510.00 is the prevailing market rate for an attorney with her experience. Zachary Stolz graduated from the University of Kansas School of Law in 2005 and the *Laffey* Matrix establishes that \$510.00 is the prevailing market rate for an attorney with his experience.

Attached as Exhibit A to this fee petition are the hours worked for all attorneys. Appellant seeks attorneys' fees at the rate of \$207.60 per hour for Mr. Medeiros, Ms. Gorini, Mr. Phinney, Mr. McTarnaghan, and Mr. Stolz for representation services before the Court.³ This rate per hour, multiplied by the

³This rate was determined by adjusting the \$125 per hour statutory EAJA rate by the increase in the cost of living as determined by the Consumer Price Index-U for Northeast. See *Mannino v. West*, 12 Vet. App. 242, 243 (1999). The increase was calculated for the period from March 29, 1996 (the start date for the EAJA rate), to July 2019 the chosen mid-point date for the litigation in this case, using the method described in *Elczyn v. Brown*, 7 Vet. App. 170, 181 (1994).

number of hours billed for these five attorneys (62.40) results in a total attorney's fee amount of \$12,954.24.

Appellant seeks attorney's fees at the rate of \$203.60 per hour for Ms. Odom's representation services before the Court.³ This rate per hour, multiplied by the number of hours billed for Ms. Odom (4.60) results in a total attorney's fee amount of \$936.56.

In addition, Appellant seeks reimbursement for the following expense:

Federal Express: \$30.70

Based upon all of the foregoing, the total fee amount sought is **\$13,921.70.**

³ This rate was determined by adjusting the \$125 per hour statutory EAJA rate by the increase in the cost of living as determined by the Consumer Price Index-U for Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-MD-VA-WV. *See Mannino v. West*, 12 Vet. App. 242, 243 (1999). The increase was calculated for the period from March 29, 1996 (the start date for the EAJA rate), to July 2019 the chosen mid-point date for the litigation in this case, using the method described in *Elczyn v. Brown*, 7 Vet. App. 170, 181 (1994).

I, Zachary M. Stolz, am the lead counsel in this case. I certify that I have reviewed the combined billing statement and am satisfied that it accurately reflects the work performed by all representatives. I have considered and eliminated all time that I believe, based upon my over ten years of practicing before this Court, is either excessive or redundant.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda K. Butler
By Her Attorneys,
CHISHOLM CHISHOLM & KILPATRICK
/s/Zachary M. Stolz
321 S Main St #200
Providence, Rhode Island 02903
(401) 331-6300
Fax: (401) 421-3185

Exhibit A

Time from 10/1/2018 to 7/27/2020

Case No. 265132

Client: Butler, Ms. Linda K.

			<u>Hours</u>
11/30/2018	AODOM	Reviewed and analyzed BvA decision. Identified issues to raise on appeal. Prepared case notes regarding same.	0.60
1/8/2019	DANIELLE	Reviewed and emailed notice of appeal to Court. Received, reviewed, and saved Court confirmation email to the file. Updated file.	0.10
1/14/2019	DANIELLE	Reviewed and efiled notice of appearance for ZMS as lead counsel, fee agreement, and DFH. Reviewed docket to ensure proper filing and docketing. Updated file.	0.10
1/30/2019	KEVIN	Assigned case, prepared and e-filed notice of appearance, reviewed docket for procedural status, received and reviewed e-mail from court confirming appearance, and updated client's case file.	0.20
2/5/2019	KEVIN	Received and reviewed e-mails from Secretary serving BVA decision and BVA transmittal; reviewed decision to ensure it was for the correct client; updated client's case file.	0.10
2/26/2019	KEVIN	Received and reviewed Appellee's Notice of Appearance for attorney Kelley, and updated file.	0.10
3/7/2019	KEVIN	Received and reviewed RBA certificate of service for accuracy, and updated file.	0.10
3/12/2019	NICK	Reviewed RBA to determine need for dispute	1.50
3/18/2019	KEVIN	Received and reviewed notice of uploaded RBA, reviewed, calculated case deadline for motion to dispute record, and updated file.	0.10
3/18/2019	KEVIN	Prepared status letter to client re: acceptance of RBA; updated file.	0.10
3/27/2019	KEVIN	Received and reviewed Court's notice to file appellant's opening brief for accuracy, calculated brief deadline, and updated file.	0.10
4/11/2019	KEVIN	Received and reviewed Court's PBC order for accuracy, calculated PBC memo deadline, and updated file.	0.20
4/24/2019	KEVIN	Reviewed and outlined BVA decision for issues and arguments; began case map and review of RBA for briefing purposes pp. 1-532.	1.90
4/25/2019	KEVIN	Continued case map and review of RBA for briefing purposes pp. 533-1496.	3.00
4/25/2019	KEVIN	Continued and completed case map and review of RBA for briefing purposes pp. 1497-2531.	2.70
4/25/2019	KEVIN	Completed PBC memo; served to VA and CLS counsels; prepared and e-filed rule 33 cert; received and reviewed confirmation email for accuracy; updated file.	0.90
5/9/2019	KEVIN	Prepared for and participated in PBC with VA and CLS counsels; drafted memo to file re: PBC outcome, issues, and VA's position; discussed case with co-counsel; updated file.	1.30
5/9/2019	KEVIN	Received and reviewed e-mail from Court confirming PBC conference was held for accuracy; updated client's case file.	0.10
5/14/2019	KEVIN	Reviewed case and drafted memo to file for review with co-counsel prior to litigation strategy meeting.	0.60
5/14/2019	KEVIN	Discussed opening brief strategy with co-counsel at litigation strategy meeting.	0.10
6/24/2019	KEVIN	Began review of record for draft of opening brief statement of the case section.	2.60
6/25/2019	KEVIN	Continued and completed review of record and began draft of opening brief statement of the case section.	2.70
6/27/2019	KEVIN	Continued draft of opening brief statement of the case section.	2.70
7/17/2019	KEVIN	Continued draft of opening brief statement of the case section.	3.00
7/17/2019	KEVIN	Continued and completed statement of the case section, completed issues presented and standard of review sections, and began argument section.	3.00
7/18/2019	KEVIN	Continued draft of opening brief argument sections.	3.00
7/18/2019	KEVIN	Continued and completed draft opening brief; completed argument sections, summary, and conclusion	1.30
7/18/2019	KEVIN	Continued draft of opening brief argument sections.	3.00

Exhibit A

Time from 10/1/2018 to 7/27/2020

Case No. 265132

Client: Butler, Ms. Linda K.

			<u>Hours</u>
7/21/2019	AODOM	Reviewed case notes and began reviewing brief.	0.80
7/22/2019	AODOM	Finished reviewing and editing draft brief; prepare memo to K. Mederios regarding same.	2.00
7/22/2019	KEVIN	Reviewed AO's memo to file re: draft opening brief and necessary revisions; reviewed edits and comments to draft; began editing draft with incorporation of edits and revision of arguments.	2.80
7/24/2019	KEVIN	Continued editing draft with incorporation of edits and revision of arguments.	1.70
7/24/2019	KEVIN	Continued editing draft with incorporation of edits and revision of arguments.	3.00
7/25/2019	AODOM	Reviewed edited draft of brief, prepared additional suggestions for edits, and provided legal advice to Kevin regarding additional edits to be made by him.	1.20
7/25/2019	KEVIN	Final revisions to brief, checked citations to record and authority, and e-filed; received and reviewed confirmation email for accuracy; updated client's file.	2.60
7/25/2019	KEVIN	Reviewed additional edits and comments re: draft opening brief; incorporation of additional edits and suggestions	2.20
7/25/2019	KEVIN	Veteran called to discuss case; memo to file about discussion.	0.20
9/20/2019	KEVIN	Received, reviewed, and responded to OGC's request for position on extension of time to file brief; updated file.	0.10
9/20/2019	KEVIN	Received and reviewed VA counsel's motion for extension of time to file brief for accuracy; updated file.	0.10
9/20/2019	KEVIN	Received and reviewed Court order granting VA counsel's motion for extension of time to file brief for accuracy; updated file.	0.10
11/7/2019	KEVIN	Received and reviewed notice of OGC's brief; updated file; reviewed brief against opening brief and drafted memo to file for review at litigation strategy meeting re: reply strategy.	0.90
11/12/2019	KEVIN	Discussed reply brief strategy with co-counsel at litigation strategy meeting.	0.10
12/30/2019	KEVIN	Continued and completed draft of reply brief; proofread and revised.	0.70
12/30/2019	KEVIN	Began draft of reply brief.	3.00
1/6/2020	CMC	Review revised draft of reply brief.	0.40
1/6/2020	CMC	Review BVA decision, opening brief, and VA's brief. Review reply brief for legal accuracy. Suggest adding more to the Stegall section. Suggest adding an argument about adequacy vs competency.	1.80
1/6/2020	KEVIN	Reviewed CMC's revisions and suggested additions to reply brief draft; began editing draft.	2.10
1/6/2020	KEVIN	Continued editing draft reply brief	0.40
1/6/2020	KEVIN	Final revisions to reply brief, checked citations to record and authority, and e-filed; received and reviewed confirmation email for accuracy; updated client's file.	0.80
1/15/2020	KEVIN	Reviewed ROP to ensure inclusion of all records cited in pleadings; prepared and e-filed letter accepting ROP; updated file.	0.40
1/17/2020	KEVIN	Received and reviewed notice of assignment of case to Judge Bartley for accuracy; updated file.	0.10
4/27/2020	KEVIN	Phone call with client to discuss case status; memo to file about discussion.	0.10
4/28/2020	KEVIN	Received and reviewed CAVC decision against pleadings for outcome and to ensure all issues were addressed; drafted detailed memo to file summarizing case history and outcome; updated file.	1.20
5/6/2020	ZACH	Reviewed Court decision, pleadings, and notes in case. Prepared letter to client concerning Court's decision. Ensured case file was updated with necessary letters, pleadings, and correspondence so that client could be properly informed of case progress, disposition, and next steps.	0.70
5/20/2020	KEVIN	Received and reviewed CAVC's entry of judgment for accuracy and content; updated file.	0.10

Exhibit A

Time from 10/1/2018 to 7/27/2020

Case No. 265132

Client: Butler, Ms. Linda K.

			<u>Hours</u>
5/20/2020	KEVIN	Left voicemail for client regarding CAVC decision and judgment; updated file.	0.10
5/20/2020	KEVIN	Discussed CAVC decision with client; memo to file summarizing discussion.	0.20
6/7/2020	ZACH	Prepared letter to client concerning entry of Court's judgment.	0.30
7/21/2020	KEVIN	Received and reviewed CAVC entry of mandate for accuracy and content; updated file.	0.10
7/27/2020	DANIELLE	Prepared and e filed Notice of Appearance. Received, reviewed, and saved Court confirmation email. Checked docket sheet to ensure proper filing. Updated case file.	0.20
7/27/2020	DANIELLE	Reviewed file. Prepared EAJA Petition and Exhibit A. Submitted completed EAJA Application for proofreading and billing accuracy review.	1.00
7/27/2020	ZACH	Reviewed EAJA Application for proofreading purposes and to ensure billing accuracy.	0.30

Timekeeper Summary

<u>Staff</u>	<u>Hours</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Amount</u>
AODOM	4.6	\$ 203.60	\$ 936.56
CMC	2.2	\$ 207.60	\$ 456.72
DANIELLE	1.4	\$ 207.60	\$ 290.64
KEVIN	56.0	\$ 207.60	\$ 11,625.60
NICK	1.5	\$ 207.60	\$ 311.40
ZACH	1.3	\$ 207.60	\$ 269.88
	67.0		\$ 13,890.80

Expense: Federal Express: \$30.70

Total: \$13,921.70

USAO ATTORNEY'S FEES MATRIX — 2015-2020

Revised Methodology starting with 2015-2016 Year

Years (Hourly Rate for June 1 – May 31, based on change in PPI-OL since January 2011)

Experience	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
31+ years	568	581	602	613	637
21-30 years	530	543	563	572	595
16-20 years	504	516	536	544	566
11-15 years	455	465	483	491	510
8-10 years	386	395	410	417	433
6-7 years	332	339	352	358	372
4-5 years	325	332	346	351	365
2-3 years	315	322	334	340	353
Less than 2 years	284	291	302	307	319
Paralegals & Law Clerks	154	157	164	166	173

Explanatory Notes

1. This matrix of hourly rates for attorneys of varying experience levels and paralegals/law clerks has been prepared by the Civil Division of the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia (USAO) to evaluate requests for attorney's fees in civil cases in District of Columbia courts. The matrix is intended for use in cases in which a fee-shifting statute permits the prevailing party to recover "reasonable" attorney's fees. *See, e.g.*, 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-5(k) (Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act); 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(E) (Freedom of Information Act); 28 U.S.C. § 2412(b) (Equal Access to Justice Act). The matrix has not been adopted by the Department of Justice generally for use outside the District of Columbia, or by other Department of Justice components, or in other kinds of cases. The matrix does **not** apply to cases in which the hourly rate is limited by statute. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 2412(d).
2. A "reasonable fee" is a fee that is sufficient to attract an adequate supply of capable counsel for meritorious cases. *See, e.g., Perdue v. Kenny A. ex rel. Winn*, 559 U.S. 542, 552 (2010). Consistent with that definition, the hourly rates in the above matrix were calculated from average hourly rates reported in 2011 survey data for the D.C. metropolitan area, which rates were adjusted for inflation with the Producer Price Index-Office of Lawyers (PPI-OL) index. The survey data comes from ALM Legal Intelligence's 2010 & 2011 Survey of Law Firm Economics. The PPI-OL index is available at <http://www.bls.gov/ppi>. On that page, under "PPI Databases," and "Industry Data (Producer Price Index - PPI)," select either "one screen" or "multi-screen" and in the resulting window use "industry code" 541110 for "Offices of Lawyers" and "product code" 541110541110 for "Offices of Lawyers." The average hourly rates from the 2011 survey data are multiplied by the PPI-OL index for May in the year of the update, divided by 176.6, which is the PPI-OL index for January 2011, the month of the survey data, and then rounding to the nearest whole dollar (up if remainder is 50¢ or more).
3. The PPI-OL index has been adopted as the inflator for hourly rates because it better reflects the mix of legal services that law firms collectively offer, as opposed to the legal services that typical consumers use, which is what the CPI-

Legal Services index measures. Although it is a national index, and not a local one, *cf. Eley v. District of Columbia*, 793 F.3d 97, 102 (D.C. Cir. 2015) (noting criticism of national inflation index), the PPI-OL index has historically been generous relative to other possibly applicable inflation indexes, and so its use should minimize disputes about whether the inflator is sufficient.

4. The methodology used to compute the rates in this matrix replaces that used prior to 2015, which started with the matrix of hourly rates developed in *Laffey v. Northwest Airlines, Inc.* 572 F. Supp. 354 (D.D.C. 1983), *aff'd in part, rev'd in part on other grounds*, 746 F.2d 4 (D.C. Cir. 1984), *cert. denied*, 472 U.S. 1021 (1985), and then adjusted those rates based on the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) for the Washington-Baltimore (DC-MD-VA-WV) area. The USAO rates for years prior to and including 2014-15 remains the same as previously published on the USAO's public website.
5. The various "brackets" in the column headed "Experience" refer to the attorney's years of experience practicing law. Normally, an attorney's experience will be calculated starting from the attorney's graduation from law school. Thus, the "Less than 2 years" bracket is generally applicable to attorneys in their first and second years after graduation from law school, and the "2-3 years" bracket generally becomes applicable on the second anniversary of the attorney's graduation (*i.e.*, at the beginning of the third year following law school). See *Laffey*, 572 F. Supp. at 371. An adjustment may be necessary, however, if the attorney's admission to the bar was significantly delayed or the attorney did not otherwise follow a typical career progression. See, *e.g.*, *EPIC v. Dep't of Homeland Sec.*, 999 F. Supp. 2d 61, 70-71 (D.D.C. 2013) (attorney not admitted to bar compensated at "Paralegals & Law Clerks" rate); *EPIC v. Dep't of Homeland Sec.*, 982 F. Supp. 2d 56, 60-61 (D.D.C. 2013) (same). The various experience levels were selected by relying on the levels in the ALM Legal Intelligence 2011 survey data. Although finer gradations in experience level might yield different estimates of market rates, it is important to have statistically sufficient sample sizes for each experience level. The experience categories in the current USAO Matrix are based on statistically significant sample sizes for each experience level.
6. ALM Legal Intelligence's 2011 survey data does not include rates for paralegals and law clerks. Unless and until reliable survey data about actual paralegal/law clerk rates in the D.C. metropolitan area become available, the USAO will compute the hourly rate for Paralegals & Law Clerks using the most recent historical rate from the USAO's former *Laffey* Matrix (*i.e.*, \$150 for 2014-15) updated with the PPI-OL index. The formula is \$150 multiplied by the PPI-OL index for May in the year of the update, divided by 194.3 (the PPI-OL index for May 2014), and then rounding to the nearest whole dollar (up if remainder is 50¢ or more).
7. The attorney's fees matrices issued by the United States Attorney's Office are intended to facilitate the settlement of attorney's fees claims in actions in which the United States may be liable to pay attorney's fees to the prevailing party and the United States Attorney's Office is handling the matter. The United States Attorney's Office is presently working with other parties to develop a revised rate schedule, based upon current, realized rates paid to attorneys handling complex federal litigation in the District of Columbia federal courts. This effort is motivated in part by the D.C. Circuit's urging that "both the plaintiff and defense sides of the bar" should "work together and think creatively about how to produce a reliable assessment of fees charged for complex federal litigation in the District." *D.L. v. District of Columbia*, 924 F.3d 585, 595 (D.C. Cir. 2019). This new matrix should address the issues identified by the majority in *D.L.*, but it is expected that it will be some time before a new matrix can be prepared. In the interim, for matters in which a prevailing party agrees to payment pursuant to the matrices issued by the United States Attorney's Office, the United States Attorney's Office will not demand that a prevailing party offer the additional evidence that the law otherwise requires. See *Eley*, 793 F.3d at 104 (quoting *Covington v. District of Columbia*, 57 F.3d 1101, 1109 (D.C. Cir. 1995)) (requiring "evidence that [the] 'requested rates are in line with those prevailing in the community for similar services'").