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ORIGINAL

No. USCAS No. 24-10943

Supreme Court, U.S.
FILED
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OFFICE OF THE CLERK

IN THE
SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

LISA Y. REESE — PETITIONER
(Your Name)

vs.

UNITED PETROLEUM
TRANSPORTS, INCORPORATED — RESPONDENT(S)

ON PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT
(NAME OF COURT THAT LAST RULED ON MERITS OF YOUR CASE)

PETITION FOR WRIT OF CERTIORARI

LISA Y. REESE
(Your Name)

1119 GREEN HILLS ROAD
(Address)

DUNCANVILLE, TX 75137
(City, State, Zip Code)

817.715.7143
(Phone Number)

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the denial of appointed counsel to an indigent pro se litigant with severe disabilities violates the Due Process Clause of the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments when the litigant has repeatedly requested counsel, demonstrated an inability to effectively represent herself, inability to effectively present evidence and presented substantial constitutional and statutory claims.
2. Whether federal courts have an affirmative obligation under the Americans with Disabilities Act and constitutional due process principles to provide reasonable accommodations for litigants with documented disabilities that prevent court attendance, particularly when such accommodations are necessary to ensure meaningful access to the judicial system.
3. Whether the current standards for appointment of counsel in Employment Law cases, which vary significantly across circuits and are applied inconsistently, create a systemic barrier to justice for indigent litigants with disabilities in violation of equal protection principles and fundamental fairness, particularly when witnesses and documented evidence are available.
4. Whether the inability of a confirmed, documented, disabled, indigent, ProSe litigant to properly present a complex federal civil rights case without legal background is synonymous with a case having no merit, particularly when Summary Judgment is based on the inability of the ProSe litigant to properly present the merit of the case after being denied legal counsel.
5. Whether special accommodations in court proceedings should be law rather than a discretion, particularly when it prevents litigants from meeting with the presiding judge to verbally convey the pertinent, relevant evidence creating a systemic barrier to justice.
6. Whether the violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Federal Civil Rights Laws may constitute hate crimes within the workplace context, particularly when violations reflect not only a disregard for legal obligations but also a systemic bias against marginalized individuals. Moreover, when organizations expend substantial resources to mount defenses against claims rather than investing in rectifying the underlying systemic issues, it demonstrates a troubling prioritization of self-preservation as opposed to adhering to the law.
7. Whether the actions of the United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas raise significant concerns regarding procedural fairness and judicial discretion by consolidating cases without attaching the pertinent evidence from the consolidated court filing, the court may have undermined the transparency and thoroughness expected in legal proceedings. Furthermore, the refusal to allow legal counsel and the subsequent granting of summary judgment for lack of merit—without direct engagement with the litigant—suggests a potential disregard for the litigant's rights, particularly in light of the judge's inability to facilitate necessary virtual accommodations. Such practices may constitute a grave error, eroding trust in the judicial process and necessitating a reevaluation of the court's procedural safeguards.

PARTIES TO THE PROCEEDING

The parties to the proceeding in the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit were:

1. Lisa Y. Reese, Plaintiff-Appellant (Petitioner)
2. United Petroleum Transports, Incorporated, Defendant-Appellee (Respondent)

RELATED PROCEEDINGS

The proceedings directly related to this case are:

1. Lisa Y. Reese v. United Petroleum Transports, Incorporated, No. 4:21-CV-878-Y (consolidated with No. 4:22-CV-1039-Y-BJ), United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas. Judgment entered on September 25, 2025.
2. Lisa Y. Reese v. United Petroleum Transports, Incorporated, No. 24-10943, United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. Judgment entered on November 6, 2025.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI..... 1

 QUESTIONS PRESENTED.....2

 PARTIES TO THE PROCEEDING.....3

 RELATED PROCEEDINGS.....3

 TABLE OF CONTENTS.....4

 OPINIONS BELOW..... 5

 JURISDICTION..... 5

 CONSTITUTIONAL AND STATUTORY PROVISIONS INVOLVED..... 5

 STATEMENT OF THE CASE..... 6

 Factual Background..... 6

 Procedural History..... 6

 REASONS FOR GRANTING THE PETITION.....7

 I. This Case Presents Important Questions of Federal Law That Have Not Been, But
 Should Be, Settled by This Court..... 7

 II. The Lower Courts Failed to Properly Consider Petitioner’s Exceptional Circumstances
 Warranting Appointment of Counsel..... 8

 III. This Case Presents Issues of National Importance Affecting Many Similarly Situated
 Litigants..... 8

 IV. The Decision Below Conflicts with Due Process Principles and the Americans with
 Disabilities Act..... 9

 CONCLUSION..... 9

 APPENDIX..... 10

 Appendix A (5th Circuit Court of Appeals Summary Judgement).....10

 Appendix B (Northern District Court Summary Judgement)..... 33

 Appendix C (Northern District Court Denial of Legal Assistance)..... 53

 Appendix D (Northern District Court Request for Legal Assistance)..... 59

 Appendix E (Northern District Court Acknowledgement of Disability) 78

 Appendix F (Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy)..... 80

OPINIONS BELOW

The opinion of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, dated November 6, 2025, is unpublished. The opinion is included in the Appendix at App. A.

The opinion of the United States District Court for the Northern District, dated September 25, 2025. The opinion is included in the Appendix at App. B.

The opinion of the United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas Multiple Denials of Legal Assistance is included in the Appendix at App. C.

The opinion of the United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas Multiple Motion for Legal Assistance is included in the Appendix at App. D.

The opinion of Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy is included in the Appendix at App. E.

JURISDICTION

The judgment of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit was entered on November 6, 2025. No petition for rehearing was filed by any party. This petition is being filed within 90 days of the entry of judgment by the Court of Appeals, as required by 28 U.S.C. § 2101(c) and Rule 13 of the Rules of this Court.

This Court has jurisdiction pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1254(1), which provides that cases in the courts of appeals may be reviewed by the Supreme Court by writ of certiorari granted upon the petition of any party to any civil or criminal case, before or after rendition of judgment or decree.

CONSTITUTIONAL AND STATUTORY PROVISIONS INVOLVED

This case involves the following constitutional and statutory provisions, which are set forth in full in the Appendix:

1. “No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offence to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.”

“All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”

2. 28 U.S.C. § 1915 (Proceedings in forma pauperis)
3. Civil action for deprivation of rights

4. Americans with Disabilities Act, particularly:

- Public entities are prohibited from discriminating against qualified individuals with disabilities in their services, programs, and activities

Prohibition of discrimination by public accommodations

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

Factual Background

Petitioner Lisa Y. Reese was employed by Respondent United Petroleum Transports, Incorporated until her termination, which she alleges was discriminatory and in violation of federal law and reasonable accommodations. Petitioner suffers from multiple documented disabilities, including severe anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, and agoraphobia, which have prevented her from leaving her home since 2021.

Prior to her disability and termination, Petitioner earned \$98,600.00 annually. Received praise, awards and accolations for her work. Her current income is limited to \$1,703.00 monthly in SSDI benefits, representing an 80% reduction in income. This severe financial hardship has made it impossible for Petitioner to afford legal representation despite extensive efforts to secure counsel.

Procedural History

Petitioner filed her original action in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas (Case No. 4:21-CV-878-Y), which was later consolidated with another related case (Case No. 4:22-CV-1039-Y-BJ). The underlying case involves claims of disability discrimination, failure to provide reasonable accommodations, hostile work environment, and wrongful termination in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act and other federal civil rights statutes.

Throughout the district court proceedings, Petitioner requested appointment of counsel on six to seven separate occasions, explicitly informing the court that she had “no clue” what she was doing and that the case involved over 2,000 pages of documents plus exhibits. Despite these repeated requests and Petitioner’s documented disabilities that prevented her from effectively representing herself, the district court denied all requests for appointed counsel, finding that Petitioner’s case “lacked merit or substantial constitutional issues.”

Petitioner’s case was assigned to a Magistrate Judge despite Petitioner specifically not completing the form consenting to magistrate jurisdiction. Petitioner alleges that the presiding district judge was not set up to conduct virtual hearings to accommodate her disabilities, preventing any chance of verbally presenting her evidence.

Petitioner further alleges that the district court failed to review her evidence, interrogatories, or sworn statements, and that witnesses were never heard. The district judge allegedly stated that Petitioner’s case was based on her “mental condition” rather than the substantive issues presented. The petitioner was given special accommodations upon hire. The special accommodations were revoked without undue hardship to the organization. In the EEOC hearing it was agreed that mistakes were made and that ADA Accommodations would be reinstated

without any further issues and I would be allowed to return to work. The ADA Accommodations were revoked again stating that it was unfair to the other drivers.

Following an adverse ruling in the district court, Petitioner filed a timely notice of appeal to the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit (Case No. 24-10943). Petitioner prepared and filed her appellate brief pro se, acknowledging its inadequacy due to her lack of legal training and the complexity of the legal issues involved. The Fifth Circuit entered judgment against Petitioner on November 6, 2025.

REASONS FOR GRANTING THE PETITION

This case presents exceptional circumstances that warrant this Court's review, as it raises fundamental questions about access to justice for indigent litigants with disabilities and the proper standards for appointment of counsel in civil cases involving substantial constitutional and statutory rights.

This case represents the circular reasoning implied in our current legal system, you have the right to defend yourself but only if you can speak and adapt to a legal culture that takes over 8 years of schooling and internships. It's no different than telling an English Speaking Attorney to defend someone in another language without an interpreter and then calling it justice.

The citizens of the United States are governed by laws. Laws which can only be properly defended with legal counsel, yet we lack a system to consistently provide legal representation to those who have been denied basic human rights in the workplace. Abiding by workplace laws is not an option, so how are everyday people who have been grossly affected by workplace violations expected to uphold the law without help.

This case has witnesses, sworn statements, depositions and documentation that has never been properly presented to the court due to lack of legal counsel. It is only fair and judicial to allow evidence to be properly presented before it is deemed as having no merit. I know I am not a lawyer, I know I have mental issues. All I am asking for is someone to listen to me tell my story in plain English. I know a judge does not have time to go through thousands of pages and extract pertinent information. I know three other employees who filed claims faced this same issue. This is not a fluke it is a flaw in the legal system and prevents justice and due process.

I. This Case Presents Important Questions of Federal Law That Have Not Been, But Should Be, Settled by This Court

The questions presented in this petition concern the intersection of disability rights, due process, and equal protection in the context of Employment Law litigation. While this Court has addressed the right to counsel in criminal proceedings, it has not definitively established when due process requires appointment of counsel in civil cases involving fundamental rights, particularly for litigants with disabilities that prevent effective self-representation.

The current patchwork of standards for appointment of counsel in civil cases varies significantly across circuits, creating inconsistent access to justice based on geography rather than the merits of a case or the needs of the litigant. This inconsistency undermines the uniform application of federal law and raises serious constitutional concerns.

II. The Lower Courts Failed to Properly Consider Petitioner's Exceptional Circumstances Warranting Appointment of Counsel

Petitioner's case presents exceptional circumstances that demonstrate the need for appointed counsel:

1. **Complexity of the Case:** Petitioner's claims involve complex federal employment law, constitutional issues, and procedural questions beyond the expertise of a non-lawyer. The case requires analysis of multiple federal statutes, regulations, and case law interpreting the Americans with Disabilities Act and civil rights protections.
2. **Petitioner's Inability to Effectively Self-Represent:** Petitioner has no legal training and finds court procedures confusing. More significantly, Petitioner suffers from severe anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, and agoraphobia, which have prevented her from leaving her home since 2021. These disabilities substantially impair her ability to effectively represent herself.
3. **Fundamental Fairness Concerns:** Respondent was represented by experienced counsel with expertise in federal employment law, creating a substantial imbalance in the proceedings. This imbalance raises fundamental fairness concerns that go to the heart of due process.
4. **Potential Merit of Claims:** Petitioner's claims raise substantial questions of federal law regarding disability discrimination and reasonable accommodations. The lower courts' determination that the case lacks merit appears to have overlooked significant evidence and legal arguments that counsel could have effectively presented.
5. **Inability to Obtain Private Counsel:** Petitioner made extensive efforts to secure private representation, contacting over 25 attorneys and law firms, all of whom either declined the case or quoted fees far beyond Petitioner's financial means. Many attorneys declined due to Petitioner's disability preventing in-person court attendance.

III. This Case Presents Issues of National Importance Affecting Many Similarly Situated Litigants

This case raises issues that extend far beyond Petitioner's individual circumstances and affect many similarly situated litigants across the country. The questions presented concern:

1. **Access to Justice for Persons with Disabilities:** How federal courts accommodate litigants with disabilities that prevent traditional court participation is a matter of national importance, particularly as virtual proceedings have become more technologically feasible.
2. **Standards for Appointment of Counsel:** The lack of clear, consistent standards for when courts should appoint counsel in Employment Law cases involving fundamental rights creates systemic barriers to justice for indigent, disabled litigants.
3. **Intersection of Disability Rights and Due Process:** This case presents an opportunity for this Court to clarify how the Americans with Disabilities Act's reasonable accommodation requirements intersect with constitutional due process protections in the context of judicial proceedings.

4. **Procedural Protections for Pro Se Litigants:** The treatment of pro se litigants, particularly those with disabilities, raises important questions about what procedural protections are necessary to ensure meaningful access to the courts.

The recent actions of the United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas raise significant concerns regarding procedural fairness and the rights of ProSe litigants. By consolidating cases without providing the accompanying evidence, denying legal representation, and issuing a summary judgment without direct engagement with the litigant—particularly in light of an expressed need for virtual accommodation—the court may have undermined the integrity of its judicial process. This situation highlights the critical importance of ensuring equitable access to legal resources and the necessity for courts to adapt to the evolving demands of legal representation, especially in the context of technological advancements. The implications of these procedural decisions warrant careful examination, as they may set a concerning precedent for future case handling and litigant rights.

IV. The Decision Below Conflicts with Due Process Principles and the Americans with Disabilities Act

The lower courts' refusal to appoint counsel or provide reasonable accommodations for Petitioner's disabilities conflicts with fundamental due process principles and the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Courts are public entities subject to the ADA's requirement to provide reasonable accommodations to ensure that individuals with disabilities have meaningful access to services, programs, and activities.

By refusing to conduct virtual hearings or appoint counsel for a litigant whose documented disabilities prevented effective self-representation and court attendance, the lower courts effectively denied Petitioner meaningful access to the judicial system. This denial raises serious constitutional and statutory concerns that merit this Court's review.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, the petition for a writ of certiorari should be granted.

Respectfully submitted,



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Dated: April 9, 2026