

**TWENTY-FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT
PARISH OF LIVINGSTON
STATE OF LOUISIANA**

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FILED
CLERK OF COURT
VALID ONLY IF SIGNED

NUMBER: 175021

DIVISION: C

AMANDA JONES

versus

CITIZENS FOR A NEW LOUISIANA, MICHAEL LUNSFORD, AND RYAN THAMES

FILED: _____ DY. CLERK: _____

REASONS FOR JUDGMENT

This matter came before the court on June 8, 2026 pursuant to Plaintiff's Rule for attorneys fees and court costs pertaining to the special Motion to Strike, and the Court took the matter under advisement. The procedural history of this case is as follows:

In August of 2022 Plaintiff Amanda Jones (represented at the time by Ellyn Clevenger) filed a Petition for Defamation naming Defendants Citizens for a New Louisiana, Michael Lunsford, and Ryan Thames. In response, Defendants filed a Special Motion to Strike pursuant to La. C.C.P. art. 971, which the Court granted in September of 2022.

Plaintiff, represented by present counsel Alysson Mills, filed a Motion for New Trial which was denied. The parties stipulated Plaintiff would pay \$12,500 to Citizens for a New LA/Lunsford and \$13,000 to Thames should they prevail on appeal.

Throughout 2023, Plaintiff went through the appeals process filing a brief, reply brief to Defendants' two separate Oppositions, appearing at Oral argument, filing a supplemental brief regarding the First Circuit's appellate jurisdiction, and filing a Reply to one Defendant's Opposition. In January of 2024 the First Circuit held it lacked jurisdiction and dismissed the appeal without reaching the merits.

In early 2024 Plaintiff filed an Application for Rehearing and Reply to one Opposition, which was denied, necessitating a writ application to the Louisiana Supreme Court, and Reply to one defense Opposition. The Louisiana Supreme Court granted Writs, finding the First Circuit did have jurisdiction, and remanded the case back to the First Circuit in December of 2024.

In October of 2025, the First Circuit found Plaintiff has a likelihood of success on the merits, reversing the grant of Defendants' Special Motion to Strike. Plaintiff has settled with

Thames, and he has been dismissed from this lawsuit. The remaining Defendant, Citizens and Lunsford, filed a Writ Application to the Louisiana Supreme Court, to which Plaintiff filed an Opposition. The Louisiana Supreme Court denied the Writ in February of this year, which denial is now final.

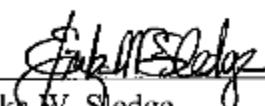
Plaintiff now seeks \$52,729.38 in attorney fees and \$3,262.28 in costs from the remaining Defendants pursuant to art. 971(B) providing, "a prevailing party on a special motion to strike shall be awarded reasonable attorney fees and costs." Plaintiff claims she has not sought fees and costs that can be allocated to Defendant Thames. Plaintiff further claims her fees are reasonable under the reasonableness factors the Louisiana Supreme Court directs courts to consider: 1. The ultimate result obtained; 2. The responsibility incurred; 3. The importance of the litigation; 4. The amount of money involved; 5. The extent and character of the work performed; 6. The legal knowledge, attainment, and skill of the attorneys; 7. The number of appearances made; 8. Intricacies of the facts involved; 9. Diligence and skill of counsel; and 10. The court's own knowledge.

In Opposition, Defendants Citizens for a New Louisiana and Michael Lunsford do not dispute fees are owed under art. 971, however they claim Plaintiff's fees are unreasonable.

This was a substantial case, litigated over three years on appeal, and involved a jurisdictional question that had to be resolved by the Louisiana Supreme Court prior to a decision on the merits. This was an important, hotly contested, and publicized case. The hours billed are not out of bounds, and the amounts charged per hour are in line with the amounts charged by attorneys employed by the Attorney General's office. The court would however subtract 5 hours for the preparation of the Amended Petition and the Motion to Substitute, which is not considered by the court to be related to the special Motion to Strike. Therefore, the total award of attorney fees to Plaintiff total \$50,979.38. The total costs awarded to Plaintiff total \$3,262.28 *less* the cost of the filing of the Motion to Substitute Counsel and the Amended Petition.

A judgment conforming to this ruling will be signed upon submission.

THUS, DONE AND SIGNED on this 15th day of June, 2026, Livingston,
Louisiana.



Erika W. Sledge
Judge, 21st JDC
Div. "C"

CLERK: PLEASE SEND NOTICE TO ALL COUNSEL