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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	Eric H. Gibbs (State Bar No. 178658) ehg@girardgibbs.com Amy M. Zeman (State Bar No. 273100) amz@girardgibbs.com <b>GIRARD GIBBS LLP</b> 601 California Street, 14th Floor San Francisco, California 94108 Telephone: (415) 981-4800 Facsimile: (415) 981-4846 Attorneys for Plaintiffs (Additional counsel listed on signature page)	
10	UNITED STATES	S DISTRICT COURT
11	NORTHERN DISTR	RICT OF CALIFORNIA
12	OAKLAN	D DIVISION
13 14	NANSEE PARKER and PHONG PHAM, on behalf of themselves and those similarly situated,	Case No. 4:11-CV-01457-PJH NOTICE OF MOTION AND MOTION FOR
15 16	Plaintiffs, v.	ATTORNEYS' FEES, EXPENSES AND INCENTIVE AWARDS
10	DISH NETWORK L.L.C.,	Date: March 21, 2012
18	Defendant.	Time: 9:00 a.m. Judge: Hon. Phyllis J. Hamilton
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		EXPENSES AND INCENTIVE AWARDS  1-CV-01457-PJH

#### **NOTICE OF MOTION AND MOTION**

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that on March 21, 2012, at 9:00 a.m. before the Honorable Phyllis J. Hamilton in Courtroom 3, 3rd Floor of the United States District Court for the Northern District of California, Oakland Division, located at 1301 Clay Street, Oakland, California 94612, Plaintiffs Nansee Parker and Phong Pham will and hereby do move for an order awarding attorneys' fees, expenses and incentive awards.

Plaintiffs bring this motion pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23(h) on the grounds that the parties' settlement agreement authorizes the requested award. Plaintiffs' motion is based on this notice; the accompanying Memorandum of Points and Authorities and Joint Declaration of Eric H. Gibbs, Andrew N. Friedman, and Richard B. Wentz; and all other papers filed and proceedings had in this action.

3	DATED: February 13, 2012	Respectfully submitted,
4		GIRARD GIBBS LLP
5		
6		By: <u>/s/ Eric H. Gibbs</u>
7		Eric H. Gibbs
8		601 California Street, 14th Floor
9		San Francisco, CA 94108 Telephone: (415) 981-4800
0		Facsimile: (415) 981-4846
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		FEES, EXPENSES AND INCENTIVE AWARDS
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18	In re Wells Fargo Loan Processor Over-Time Pay Litigation 2011 WL 3352460 (N.D. Cal. Aug. 2, 2011)
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21	<i>Kerr v. Screen Extras Guild, Inc.</i>
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4 5	<i>Staton v. Boeing</i> 327 F.3d 938 (9th Cir. 2003)1
6 7	<i>Sugarman v. Ducati North America, Inc.</i> 2012 WL 113361 (N.D. Cal. Jan. 12, 2012)
8 9	Vizcaino v. Microsoft Corp. 290 F3d 1043 (9th Cir.)
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#### **MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES**

## I. <u>INTRODUCTION</u>

After filing this action to address a rate increase imposed by DISH Network L.L.C. ("DISH") on subscribers engaged in two year contracts, Plaintiffs negotiated a settlement with DISH that provides a selection of benefits to class members. In the interest of efficiency and certainty, the parties chose to settle on the amount of attorneys' fees, expenses and incentive awards rather than litigate the issue. Accordingly, the parties agreed Plaintiffs would neither seek nor accept a fee award and cost reimbursement of more than \$817,500, and, in turn, DISH wouldn't oppose Plaintiffs' application so long as it is capped at \$817,500. The parties also agreed on \$500 incentive awards for each of the named Plaintiffs. The parties' agreements are, of course, subject to this Court's approval.

Plaintiffs now request that the Court approve the fee authorized by the parties' agreement under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23(h). The lodestar analysis under Ninth Circuit case law confirms the reasonableness of the agreed-upon fee. Class counsel dedicated 1647.45 hours to pursue claims on behalf of the class and negotiate a settlement that provides valuable benefits in a timely manner. At class counsel's customary rates, this results in a lodestar of \$712.819.25. In addition, class counsel incurred \$24,582.08 in expenses in this matter. The agreed-upon fee reasonably reimburses class counsel for these expenses and the lodestar, with a modest upward adjustment via a 1.1 multiplier. In light of the contingency risk class counsel bore, the positive results they achieved (which have been well received by the class), and the additional time class counsel will dedicate to addressing class member questions in the coming weeks, Plaintiffs believe the parties reached a reasonable agreement on a fee amount that warrants Court approval. Plaintiffs further request that the Court approve incentive awards of \$500 to each of the named Plaintiffs in recognition of their efforts to serve the interests of the class.

## II. <u>ARGUMENT</u>

A.

### The Court's Role In Evaluating The Fee Agreement Of The Parties

Following the settlement of a class action, "the court may award reasonable attorney's fees and nontaxable costs that are authorized by law or by the parties' agreement." Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(h). To protect the interests of the class affected by the settlement, the Court must carefully assess the reasonableness of the parties' fee agreement. *Staton v. Boeing*, 327 F.3d 938, 963 (9th Cir. 2003).

However, the Court need not exercise the same level of scrutiny as applied in a litigated fee motion. *Id.* at 966 (noting that "the parties are compromising precisely to avoid litigation").

While the Court has discretion to determine what constitutes a reasonable fee award, *see Cunningham v. County of Los Angeles*, 879 F.2d 481, 484 (9th Cir. 1988), the determination generally requires the Court to multiply the number of hours reasonably expended by a reasonable hourly rate to calculate a lodestar amount and then adjust the lodestar upward or downward as appropriate, *Kent v. Hewlett-Packard Co.*, 5:09-CV-05341, 2011 WL 4403717, at \*4 (N.D. Cal. Sept. 20, 2011); *Perez v. Safety-Kleen Sys., Inc.*, C-05-5338, 2010 WL 934100, at \*3 (N.D. Cal. Mar. 15, 2010); *Lara v. Renaissance Hotel Operating Co.*, CIV-08-00560, 2011 WL 6002521, at \*3, (D. Haw. Nov. 29, 2011). The lodestar calculation provides the Court with an "objective basis" from which to evaluate the requested fee award. *Hensley v. Eckerhart*, 461 U.S. 424, 433 (1983).

**B**.

# The Agreed-Upon Fee Is Reasonable Under The Lodestar Calculation

To date, class counsel have invested a total of 1647.45 hours toward this litigation and settlement. Joint Decl. of Eric H. Gibbs, Andrew N. Friedman, and Richard Wentz (hereinafter, "Joint Decl.") ¶ 18. Applying hourly rates ranging from \$200 to \$225 for litigation assistants and \$330 to \$710 for attorneys, this results in a total lodestar of \$712,819.25. Joint Decl. ¶¶ 18-19.

## 1. Class Counsel's Time Was Reasonably Spent

Class counsel began litigating this case in February 2011 upon hearing from consumers about a rate increase imposed by DISH for its satellite television services. The rate increase affected DISH customers who were bound by two year contracts for which DISH had advertised a set discounted rate for the first 12 months. Many of these customers were upset that DISH increased their prices, and believed that DISH did so without their consent. Class counsel spent several weeks investigating consumer complaints, gathering factual data, and researching potential legal claims that might provide relief to DISH customers. Joint Decl. ¶¶ 7-7.

Recognizing that any relief obtained would become less valuable as class members' two-year contracts cycled to an end, class counsel opened a dialogue with DISH's counsel soon after filing Plaintiffs' complaint in late March. Class counsel hoped to promptly develop and implement an informal, streamlined discovery plan that would establish the basis for a well-informed mediation

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session at which Plaintiffs would test the merits of their claims and DISH's defenses. Plaintiffs' goal was to obtain an early resolution to the litigation that would deliver timely and valuable benefits to the class while minimizing costs and conserving judicial resources. Joint Decl. ¶ 9.

Despite their mutual interest in an early resolution of Plaintiffs' claims, the parties had very different goals for the outcome of the planned mediation session. Thus, reaching agreement on an accelerated discovery plan proved contentious and required numerous meet and confer communications, both in person, by phone conference and through e-mail. At the same time, the parties worked though a disagreement regarding what entities were properly named as defendants and prepared an unopposed motion to appoint interim class counsel. Joint Decl. ¶¶ 10 &12.

After extensive negotiations regarding discovery, DISH ultimately produced several thousand pages of account information, print and online advertisements, and multiple versions of the consumer contracts DISH utilized for its consumer satellite service. DISH also produced several animated, digital internet advertisements and dozens of television advertisements. Culling through this material proved particularly time consuming because of the importance of the precise information conveyed in the advertisements. Class counsel had to analyze the uniformity of the advertisements for their own claims while tracking the fine print language on which DISH was relying for some of its defenses. In addition, DISH provided extensive consumer subscriber data in raw form, which class counsel was able to manipulate into a useful format that tracked the number of consumers affected by the rate increase and for what portion of their two-year contracts. Developing these numbers required a significant amount of time but was highly relevant to evaluating the potential damages in the case and later negotiating relief of an appropriate value. Joint Decl. ¶ 11.

In May 2011, DISH filed motions to transfer this action to Colorado and to dismiss Plaintiffs' claims. As DISH filed these motions prior to the parties' planned mediation, class counsel was able to fully evaluate the merits of DISH's arguments and prepare counter-arguments that would be tested at the mediation. Informed by extensive discovery and DISH's pending motions, class counsel engaged in a two-day mediation session with DISH in late July 2011. The mediation culminated in an agreement in principle under which DISH would provide an assortment of benefits to class members. Different benefits were crafted based on where class members fell within their two-year contract at the time of the

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rate increase and for how many months during the first 12 months of a contract each had paid the rate increase. Joint Decl. ¶¶ 13 &14.

Class counsel then began drafting the formal settlement agreement and preparing preliminary approval papers, continuing to engage in negotiations with DISH as disagreements arose over the details. For example, class counsel felt strongly that the claims forms submission process should be as simple as possible and include an e-mail option. DISH, in contrast, was adamant that only original, mailed claim forms could be accepted. Class counsel was ultimately successful in securing an e-mail claim form submission option for class members. Further negotiations also ensued over the expiration period for pay-per-view vouchers claimed by class members and how long access codes for the Blockbuster By Mail benefit would remain active. Working through these and other issues required considerable time. Joint Decl. ¶ 15.

Finally, class counsel has expended significant time and effort addressing class member questions following the dissemination of notice. DISH began sending notice by mail and e-mail in early January and continued sending notices on a rolling basis until late January. Although DISH established a dedicated phone number to address class member questions and class counsel maintained a comprehensive website with information about the settlement and links to claim forms, many consumers contacted class counsel directly with wide-ranging questions. To date, almost 4000 class members have reached out to class counsel by phone or e-mail and class counsel has responded to almost every one. Most frequently, class members were looking for claim forms, while many others wanted more information about the lawsuit, the benefits available under the settlement, or the options available to accept, opt-out of, or comment on the proposed settlement. Class counsel expects to spend additional time responding to class member questions and comments, at least until the claims submission deadline in mid-March and likely beyond that as class members inquire about the status of settlement approval and the distribution of benefits. Joint Decl. ¶ 16.

This summary of class counsel's work in the present action, supplemented by the details included in the accompanying joint declaration, demonstrates the reasonableness of the hours class counsel expended to achieve the proposed settlement. While class counsel considers this summary method more accessible and useful to the Court in evaluating their efforts on behalf of the class than

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voluminous daily time records, the latter are readily available for submission should the Court prefer. *See Winterrowd v. Am. Gen. Annuity Ins. Co.*, 556 F.3d 815, 827 (9th Cir. 2009) (considering counsel's testimony regarding the hours worked on a case sufficient to support a fee award).

2.

## Class Counsel's Hourly Rates Are Reasonable

Class counsel calculated the total lodestar using their regular hourly rates, which range from \$200 to \$225 for the litigation assistants and \$330 to \$710 for the attorneys who worked on this action. *See* Joint Decl. ¶ 19. A review of recent fee awards confirms that these hourly rates align with rates prevailing for class action litigation in the community.

- In January 2012, Judge Fogel approved attorneys' fees requested by Girard Gibbs LLP and calculated with hourly rates ranging from \$200 for litigation assistants and \$330-\$675 for four attorneys who also worked on the present action at the same rates. *See Sugarman v. Ducati North America, Inc.*, No. 5:10-CV-05246, 2012 WL 113361, at \*6 (N.D. Cal. Jan. 12, 2012); *Sugarman*, Dkt. No. 81 (Decl.) 7.
- In August 2011, Judge Chen approved attorneys' fees calculated with hourly rates ranging from \$500-\$675 for attorneys and \$125-\$225 for professional staff. *In re Wells Fargo Loan Processor Over-Time Pay Litigation*, No. C-07-1841, 2011 WL 3352460, at \*10 (N.D. Cal. Aug. 2, 2011); *Wells Fargo*, Dkt. No. 181 (Decl.) 7.
- In July 2011, Judge Breyer approved attorneys' fees checked against a lodestar calculated with hourly rates ranging from \$350-\$500 for associates and \$500-\$700 for partners. *In re Nuvelo, Inc. Securities Litig.*, No. C-07-04056, 2011 WL 2650592, at \*3 (N.D. Cal. July 6, 2011); *Nuvelo*, Dkt. No. 159-4 (Decl.), Exh. 2.

In June 2011, Judge Koh approved attorneys' fees calculated with hourly rates ranging from \$140-\$175 for paralegals and \$290-\$740 for attorneys. *Buccellato v. AT&T Operations, Inc.*, No. C-10-00463, 2011 WL 4526673, at \*4 (N.D. Cal. June 30, 2011); *Buccellato*, Dkt. No. 66 (Decl.), Exh. A.

• In April 2011, Judge Alsup approved attorneys' fees checked against a lodestar calculated with hourly rates ranging from \$150 for paralegals, \$325-\$425 for associates, and \$380-

\$650 for partners. *In re Charles Schwab Corp. Securities Litig*, No. 08-01510, 2011 WL 1481424, at \*8 (N.D. Cal. Apr. 19, 2011); *see Schwab*, Dkt. No. 853 (Decl.) 18.

In September 2010, Judge Stotler awarded attorneys' fees to Girard Gibbs LLP (and others) and, over defendants' objection, found Girard Gibbs' attorneys' hourly rates ranging from \$445-\$675 reasonable. *Parkinson v. Hyundai Motor America*, 796 F. Supp. 2d 1160, 1172-73 (C.D. Cal. 2010).

3. Class Counsel's Work in this Case Justifies an Upward Adjustment

The Ninth Circuit has identified the following factors as relevant to whether the lodestar amount should be adjusted: (1) time limitations imposed by the client or the circumstances, (2) the amount involved and the results obtained, (3) the experience, reputation, and ability of the attorneys, (4) the "undesirability" of the case, (5) the nature and the length of the professional relationship with the client, and (6) awards in similar cases. *See Kerr v. Screen Extras Guild, Inc.*, 526 F.2d 67, 70 (9th Cir. 1976); *Morales v. City of San Rafael*, 96 F.3d 359, 634 n.9 (9th Cir. 1997); *City of Burlington v. Dague*, 505 U.S. 557, 567 (1992); *see also Lara*, 2011 WL 6002521 at \*3-4 (identifying 6 of the 12 factors listed in *Kerr* that the Ninth Circuit has since held to be subsumed in the initial lodestar calculation and thus inappropriate for consideration when evaluating an adjustment). Upward multipliers are common in class action fee awards. *See, e.g., Grannan v. Alliant Law Group, P.C.*, C-11/02803, 2012 WL 216522, at \*10 (N.D. Cal. Jan. 24, 2012) ("In class actions, where counsel works on a contingency basis and risks receiving nothing for the time and effort expended, it is reasonable to apply a multiplier to the lodestar value.").

Plaintiffs' fee request incorporates a 1.1 multiplier to upwardly adjust the lodestar. Such an adjustment is reasonable under each of the Ninth Circuit factors. This case involves DISH's conduct toward customers bound by two-year contracts initiated as early as February 1, 2009. As their contracts come to an end, many customers cancel their DISH service. As class members terminate their customer relationship with DISH, relief for the February 2011 rate increase is likely to become less valuable to these former customers. Thus class counsel aggressively pursued a prompt resolution of the lawsuit to provide meaningful relief to as many class members as possible.

The benefits achieved also compare favorably with the potential damages suffered by class

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members. Class members who paid the February 2011 rate increase for 1-4 months during the first 12 months of a two-year contract and thus allegedly overpaid between \$3 and \$20 may choose \$20 worth of the Blockbuster By Mail service, \$15-\$21 worth of Pay-Per-View vouchers or a \$5 account credit. A class member who paid the rate increase for 5-8 months and thus allegedly overpaid between \$15 and \$40 may choose \$30 worth of the Blockbuster By Mail service, \$20-\$28 worth of Pay-Per-View vouchers, or a \$10 account credit. A class member who paid the rate increase for 9-12 months and thus allegedly overpaid between \$27 and \$60 may choose \$40 worth of the Blockbuster By Mail service, \$25-\$35 worth of Pay-Per-View vouchers, or a \$15 account credit. The Pay-per-view vouchers and account credits require an active DISH account, but Blockbuster By Mail is availale to all class members, including former DISH customers. In addition, class members who were subject to the rate increase during any portion of their first 12 months with DISH will benefit from locked-in pricing until January 31, 2013 on most service packages. Class members who were already past the period for which DISH had advertised a set discounted rate—will receive locked-in pricing until January 31, 2013.

The remaining factors further support an upward adjustment. Class counsel has extensive experience litigating consumer class actions and has achieved a number of significant results for clients in a broad range of consumer protection cases. *See* Dkt. No. 30 (Gibbs Decl.) ¶¶ 4-6; Dkt. No. 31 (Friedman Decl.) ¶¶ 5-10; Dkt. No. 53-2 (Gibbs Decl.), Exh. 2 (Girard Gibbs Firm Resume); *id.*, Exh. 3 (Cohen Milstein Firm Resume); *id.*, Exh. 4 (Wentz Firm Resume). This case involved relatively small individual damages and it is unlikely an individual plaintiff would have invested the funds necessary to pursue action against DISH. Rather, over 3.2 million class members would likely have foregone any relief for the February 2011 rate increase had Plaintiffs and class counsel not pursued this class action. Class counsel worked closely with Plaintiffs during the initial factual investigation and kept Ms. Parker and Mr. Pham informed about the progress of the litigation. Finally, courts within the Ninth Circuit have awarded fees with similar, and even greater, upward adjustments. *See Grannan*, 2012 WL 216522 at \*10 (finding a multiplier of 1.47 "well within the range of permissible multiples"); *Vizcaino v. Microsoft Corp.*, 290 F3d 1043 (9th Cir.) (finding a 3.65 multiplier appropriate).

## C. <u>The Requested Service Awards Are Reasonable and Appropriate</u>

Following a class action settlement, the Court has discretion to approve incentive awards to compensate the class representatives for work done on the case. *Rodriguez v. West Publishing Corp.*, 563 F.3d 948, 958 (9th Cir. 2009) ("Incentive awards are fairly typical in class action cases."). Plaintiffs seek awards of \$500 each for Ms. Parker and Mr. Pham—a reasonable amount to compensate them for their efforts to further this litigation and well within the range of awards approved in recent class action litigation. *See, e.g., Eldridge v. Electronic Arts Inc.*, 5:08-CV-04421 (N.D. Cal.), Dkt. No. 19 (awarding \$250 to each class representative); *Sugarman*, 2012 WL 113361 at \*7 (awarding \$1500 each to two named plaintiffs and two actively-involved class members); *Kent*, 2011 WL 4403717 at \*4 (approving incentive awards not to exceed \$2000 per named plaintiff).

Ms. Parker and Mr. Pham took a risk in the interest of the class by filing a lawsuit against a corporation to which each remained bound by contract. *See* Parker Decl. ¶ 3; Pham Decl. ¶ 3. Each contributed significantly to the litigation by describing to counsel their experiences with DISH and searching for and providing account documentation. *See* Parker Decl. ¶ 3; Pham Decl. ¶ 3. Both kept informed about the case and provided signed approval of the settlement agreement. *See* Parker Decl. ¶ 3; Pham Decl. ¶ 3. Plaintiffs' efforts to secure relief for the class warrant the Court's approval of the requested incentive awards.

## III. <u>CONCLUSION</u>

For the foregoing reasons, Plaintiffs respectfully request that the Court approve an \$817,500 award for fees and expenses to class counsel pursuant to rule 23(h), and also approve incentive awards of \$500 each to Ms. Parker and Mr. Pham.

23	Dated: February 13, 2012GIRARD GIBBS LLP
24	By: <u>/s/ Eric H. Gibbs</u>
25	Eric H. Gibbs
26	Amy M. Zeman
27	601 California Street, 14th Floor San Francisco, California 94108
28	Telephone: (415) 981-4800 Facsimile: (415) 981-4846
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1	
2	Andrew N. Friedman Douglas J. McNamara
3	Stefanie M. Ramirez
4	COHEN MILSTEIN SELLERS & TOLL PLLC
5	1100 New York Ave., NW West Tower, Suite 500
6	Washington, D.C. 20005-3964
7	Telephone: (202) 408-4600 Facsimile: (202) 408-4699
8	Richard B. Wentz
9	Jean W. Wentz THE WENTZ LAW FIRM
	82955 East Hillcrest Drive, Suite 123
10	Thousand Oaks, California 91362 Telephone: (805) 374-0060
11	Facsimile: (888) 855-8124
12	Attorneys for Plaintiffs
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