

CHAPTER 107
COSTS IN CIVIL AND ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS
S.F. 470

AN ACT relating to the payment of costs in certain civil and administrative actions to which the state is a party.

Be It Enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Iowa:

Section 1. NEW SECTION. DEFINITIONS. As used in section 2 of this Act, unless the context otherwise requires:

1. "Fees and other expenses" include the reasonable attorney fees and reasonable expenses of expert witnesses plus court costs, but they do not include any portion of an attorney's fees or salary paid by a unit of local, state, or federal government for the attorney's services in the case.

2. "State" includes the state of Iowa, an agency of the state, or any official of the state acting in an official capacity.

Sec. 2. NEW SECTION. FINES—EXPENSES.

1. Unless otherwise provided by law, and if the prevailing party meets the eligibility requirements of subsection 2, the court in a civil action brought by the state or an action for judicial review brought against the state pursuant to chapter 17A other than for a rule-making decision, shall award fees and other expenses to the prevailing party unless the prevailing party is the state. However, the court shall not make an award under this section if it finds one of the following:

- a. The position of the state was supported by substantial evidence.
- b. The state's role in the case was primarily adjudicative.
- c. Special circumstances exist which would make the award unjust.
- d. The action arose from a proceeding in which the role of the state was to determine the eligibility or entitlement of an individual to a monetary benefit or its equivalent or to adjudicate a dispute or issue between private parties or to establish or fix a rate.
- e. The proceeding was brought by the state pursuant to titles 35 through 37.
- f. The proceeding involved eminent domain, foreclosure, collection of judgment debts, or was a proceeding in which the state was a nominal party.
- g. The proceeding involved the Iowa merit employment commission under chapter 19A.
- h. The proceeding is a tort claim.

2. To be eligible for an award of fees and other expenses under this section, the prevailing party shall be one of the following:

- a. A natural person.
- b. A sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation, association, or public or private organization, any of which meets the following criteria:

(1) Its average daily employment was twenty persons or less for the twelve months preceding the filing of the action.

(2) Its gross receipts for the twelve-month period preceding the filing of the action were one million dollars or less, or its average gross receipts for the three twelve-month periods preceding the filing of the action were two million dollars or less.

3. A party seeking an award for fees and other expenses under this section must file a claim for relief as a part of the civil action or as a part of the action for judicial review brought against the state pursuant to chapter 17A. If the amount sought includes an attorney's fees or fees for an expert, the application shall include an itemized statement for these fees indicating the actual time expended in representing the party and the rate at which the fees were computed. The party seeking relief must establish that the state's case was not supported by substantial evidence.

4. The court, in its discretion, may reduce the amount to be awarded pursuant to this section, or deny an award, to the extent that the prevailing party, during the course of the proceedings engaged in conduct which unduly and unreasonably protracted the final resolution of the matter in controversy.

5. An award pursuant to this section shall not personally obligate any officer or employee of this state for payment.

6. Fees and other expenses awarded under this section may be ordered in addition to any compensation awarded in a judgment. When awarding fees and other expenses against the state under this section, the court shall order the auditor of state to issue a warrant drawn on the state general fund for the amount of the award. The treasurer of state shall pay the warrant. However, if the court finds that an agency of state government, against which fees and other expenses are awarded for an action for judicial review of an agency proceeding under chapter 17A, has acted in bad faith in initiating an action deemed frivolous or without merit, then the agency shall make the payment ordered from the moneys appropriated to that agency.

7. Each agency that pays fees or other expenses for an action for judicial review of an agency proceeding under chapter 17A shall report annually to the chairs and ranking members of the appropriate appropriations subcommittees of the general assembly the amount of fees or other expenses paid during the preceding fiscal year by that agency. In its report the agency shall describe the number, nature, and amount of the awards, the claims involved in the action, and other relevant information which might aid the general assembly in evaluating the scope and impact of these awards.

Sec. 3. This Act applies only to legal and administrative agency proceedings initiated after the effective date of this Act.

Approved May 9, 1983