No. 24-10951

In the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit

RYAN, L.L.C.,

Plaintiff – Appellee,

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA; BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE; TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF BUSINESS; LONGVIEW CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Intervenor-Plaintiffs– Appellee,

v.

FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION,

Defendant – Appellant.

On Appeal from the United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas, Case No. 3:24-cv-986

RYAN, LLC'S OPPOSITION TO MOTION FOR INTERVENTION OF SMALL BUSINESS MAJORITY, JOHN ROFFINO, AND DANIELLA EMMER

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The undersigned counsel of record certifies that the following listed persons and entities as described in the fourth sentence of Rule 28.2.1 have an interest in the outcome of this case. These representations are made in order that the judges of this court may evaluate possible disqualification or recusal.

Ryan, LLC is a private limited liability company. Its member holding companies are Ryan Direct Holdings, LLC, Ryan Tax Holdings, Inc., and Onex Ryan LLC. Ryan, LLC also identifies Onex Corporation (TXS:ONEX) and Ares Management Corporation (NYSE: ARES) as entities owning 10% or more of its stock. Additionally, Ryan, LLC has over 200 principals and a small number of other employees who are subject to non-competes affected by the rulemaking.

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12. The Restaurant Law Center
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Certificate of Interested Persons i

Table of Authorities xi

Preliminary Statement 1

Legal Standard 3

Argument 3

I. Putative Intervenors Must Meet The "Exceptional Case For Imperative Reasons" Standard. 3

II. The "Exceptional Case For Imperative Reasons" Standard Is Not Satisfied. 6

Conclusion 10

Certificate of Service 11

Certificate of Compliance 11

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

Page(s)

Cases

Baker v. Wade,
769 F.2d 289 (5th Cir. 1985) 5

Edwards v. City of Houston,
78 F.3d 983 (5th Cir. 1996) 4

United States ex rel. Hernandez v. Team Fin., L.L.C.,
80 F.4th 571 (5th Cir. 2023) 4

McKenna v. Pan Am. Petroleum Corp.,
303 F.2d 778 (5th Cir. 1962) 3, 5

Nat'l Ass'n for Gun Rights, Inc. v. Garland,
No. 24-10707 (5th Cir. Jan. 16, 2025) 6

Richardson v. Flores,
979 F.3d 1102 (5th Cir. 2020) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9

Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County v. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,
101 F.3d 503 (7th Cir. 1996) 8, 9

Texas v. United States,
805 F.3d 653, 656 (5th Cir. 2015) 7, 8

United Airlines, Inc. v. McDonald,
432 U.S. 385 (1977) 8

United States v. Bursey,
515 F.2d 1228 (5th Cir. 1975) 3

Rules

Fed. R. App. P. 15 3

Fed. R. Civ. P. 1 4

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES
(continued)

Page(s)

Fed. R. Civ. P. 24 3

Treatises

6 James Wm. Moore et al., Moore's Federal Practice § 24.10[1] 1

Other Authorities

Suzanne P. Clark, *The Chamber of Commerce Will Fight the FTC*, Wall St. J. (Jan. 22, 2023), https://tinyurl.com/5n7te9kr 7

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

The Small Business Majority, John Roffino, and Daniella Emmer (collectively, "Putative Intervenors") could have moved to intervene in the district court but chose not to do so. The hypothetical circumstances that they claim justify their intervention in this Court were entirely foreseeable. Their decision not to move in the district court, but instead to seek intervention in this Court, is a textbook attempt to "skirt" the abuse-of-discretion standard of review that would have applied in this Court following the district court's exercise of its "'broad discretion'" in ruling on a timely motion for permissive intervention. *Richardson v. Flores*, 979 F.3d 1102, 1105 (5th Cir. 2020) (quoting 6 James Wm. Moore et al., Moore's Federal Practice § 24.10[1], at 24-26).

In order to "prevent such procedural gamesmanship," and because there is no rule allowing intervention on appeal, this Court allows a party that did not move for intervention in the district court to intervene on appeal in only the narrowest circumstances. *Richardson*, 979 F.3d at 1105. As Putative Intervenors concede (at 4), motions to intervene before this Court are granted "*only in an exceptional case for imperative reasons*." *Id.* at 1104 (emphasis in original; quotation marks omitted).

Putative Intervenors have not even attempted to show "imperative reasons" for intervening. *Richardson*, 979 F.3d at 1104. Nor could they, because there is nothing exceptional about one presidential administration ceasing to defend the prior administration's unlawful rule. Putative Intervenors have cited no case where, on appeal, a court let private parties intervene to defend a rule the government ceased defending. It is the pending intervention motion, not this case, that is "exceptional." *Id.*

Rather than grappling with the exacting standard for appellate intervention, Putative Intervenors contend their motion should be granted under the standards the district court would have applied had they moved for intervention there. It is questionable whether such a motion could be granted, even in the district court, based on hypotheticals about what the government may or may not do. But more to the point, the standard to intervene in the district court does not govern a party's attempt to intervene in this Court.

Because this is not an exceptional case in which imperative reasons justify Putative Intervenors' belated intervention request, the Court should deny the motion.

LEGAL STANDARD

"There is no appellate rule allowing intervention" outside the context of a petition for review governed by Federal Rule of Appellate Procedure 15. *Richardson*, F.3d at 1104. Therefore, "'a court of appeals may, but only in an exceptional case for imperative reasons, permit intervention where none was sought in the district court.'" *Id.* (quoting *United States v. Bursey*, 515 F.2d 1228, 1238 n.24 (5th Cir. 1975)) (emphasis omitted); *see also McKenna v. Pan Am. Petroleum Corp.*, 303 F.2d 778, 779 (5th Cir. 1962).[*]

ARGUMENT

I. Putative Intervenors Must Meet The "Exceptional Case For Imperative Reasons" Standard.

Putative Intervenors frame their arguments in support of intervention around Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 24. *See* Motion at

[*] Federal Rule of Appellate Procedure 15(d) is inapplicable here because it applies only to petitions to review agency action filed directly in a court of appeals. Quite arguably, the appellate rules make no provision for intervening on appeal because in a case commenced in district court, intervention must be "timely," Fed. R. Civ. P. 24(a), (b), and intervention after judgment by definition is not. As *Richardson* observed, however, "despite the lack of an on-point rule, [this Court has] allowed intervention in cases outside the scope of Rule 15(d)." 979 F.3d at 1104.

10-21. But that rule governs only "in the United States district courts." Fed. R. Civ. P. 1. This Court accordingly consults it only when reviewing a district court's decision to grant or deny a motion to intervene initially made in the district court. *See, e.g.*, *United States ex rel. Hernandez v. Team Fin., L.L.C.*, 80 F.4th 571 (5th Cir. 2023); *Edwards v. City of Houston*, 78 F.3d 983 (5th Cir. 1996).

Instead of applying Rule 24, this Court "permit[s] intervention where none was sought in the district court" "*only in an exceptional case for imperative reasons*." *Richardson*, 979 F.3d at 1104 (emphasis in original). Putative Intervenors concede as much. *See* Mot. at 4.

This Court applies that "high bar" for two reasons. *Richardson*, 979 F.3d at 1105. First, because "[t]here is no appellate rule allowing intervention generally . . . , motions to intervene on appeal are reserved for truly exceptional cases." *Id.* Second, at least for motions for permissive intervention, "there must be a steep threshold for allowing intervention on appeal" to prevent litigants from effectively obtaining "*de novo* review of" such motions, which are otherwise reviewed for abuse of discretion. *Id.* at 1105.

Putative Intervenors suggest (at 4) that in *Baker v. Wade*, 769 F.2d 289, 291-92 (5th Cir. 1985), this Court found "intervention on appeal 'justified'" based on Rules 23(d)(2) and 24(a)(2). *Baker* is inapposite. In that case, the "intervenor" was already a member of the defendant class and had moved in the district court both to intervene and to be substituted as the class representative. *Id.* at 291. The only reason this Court was ruling on a motion to intervene in an appeal was that a Rule 24 motion had been made in district court, but not acted upon; in that unique circumstance, this Court applied the standards in Rule 24. *See id.* Before and after *Baker*, this Court has applied the "exceptional cases for imperative reasons" standard—not Rule 24—to motions to intervene filed directly in this Court by movants that failed to seek intervention in the district court. *See Richardson*, 979 F.3d at 1104; *McKenna*, 303 F.2d at 779.

If Putative Intervenors wanted to avoid that high standard, they could have moved to intervene in the district court. As discussed below, they had ample notice and time. But they chose not to do so. Instead, the Small Business Majority filed an *amicus* brief, and Roffini and Emmer chose not to appear at all. *See Ryan v. FTC*, No. 3:24-cv-986 (N.D.

Tex. June 5, 2024), ECF No. 138. That decision has consequences, one of which is that they now must "meet the high bar of 'imperative reasons'" to intervene. *Richardson*, 979 F.3d at 1104.

II. The "Exceptional Case For Imperative Reasons" Standard Is Not Satisfied.

Putative Intervenors do not even attempt to satisfy the "exceptional case for imperative reasons" standard. Nor could they. The possibility that the government might dismiss the appeal—the only reason given for intervention—presents neither an exceptional case nor an imperative reason. This Court effectively recognized as much just last week when it denied sixteen States' motion to intervene in *National Association for Gun Rights, Inc. v. Garland*, No. 24-10707, Dkt. 89 (5th Cir. Jan. 16, 2025), which was premised on the same grounds as the motion of the Putative Intervenors—private parties—here.

Putative Intervenors concede (at 9) that "[t]here is ample precedent for a new administration declining to defend the prior administration's regulatory actions." What by their own account is a common occurrence does not present an "exceptional case" justifying a late-breaking motion to intervene on appeal.

Perhaps more importantly, that the government might at some point stop representing Putative Intervenors' avowed interests was foreseeable from the moment this case was filed, if not even earlier. The Rule was proposed on January 19, 2023, 88 Fed. Reg. 3482, and Plaintiff-Intervenor U.S. Chamber of Commerce announced the next day that it would challenge the Rule when finalized, Suzanne P. Clark, *The Chamber of Commerce Will Fight the FTC*, Wall St. J. (Jan. 22, 2023), https://tinyurl.com/5n7te9kr. If Putative Intervenors were interested in bolstering the government's defense of the Rule when Plaintiff filed suit 15 months later, they had ample time to prepare to intervene promptly, as the Chamber of Commerce, the Business Roundtable, Texas Association of Business, and Longview Chamber of Commerce did.

In other cases involving challenges to federal programs, parties who were concerned the government would not adequately defend their interests intervened promptly in just this way. For example, in *Texas v. United States*, three beneficiaries of the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents program sought to intervene in the district court to defend the program. 805 F.3d 653, 656 (5th Cir. 2015). This Court held that the district court intervention

motion had been proper, even though the government was still defending the program. *See id.* at 661-64. The Putative Intervenors could have followed that path.

To the extent Putative Intervenors were concerned only that the government would not prosecute an appeal after the district court invalidated the Rule—a hypothetical possibility that should have been apparent to Putative Intervenors in an election year—they could have moved to intervene in the district court after final judgment solely for purposes of appeal, the procedure the Supreme Court approved in *United Airlines, Inc. v. McDonald*, 432 U.S. 385, 394 (1977). *See also Richardson*, 979 F.3d at 1104 n.1 (distinguishing motions to intervene on appeal from motions to intervene in the district court for purposes of appeal).

That would have been much closer to the course of action that the Seventh Circuit suggested in *Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County v. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*, 101 F.3d 503 (7th Cir. 1996) ("*SWANCC*")—and that Putative Intervenors purport to embrace (at 2, 16)—than the course actually taken here. In *SWANCC*, the Seventh Circuit expressed "sympath[y] to the aspiring intervenors' concern that

at some future point in th[at] litigation the government's representation of their interest may turn inadequate," and suggested that "[t]he proper way to handle such an eventuality" is "*to file at the outset of the case* a standby or conditional application for leave to intervene *and ask the district court* to defer consideration" until the government's representation became inadequate. *Id.* at 508-09 (emphases added). The Seventh Circuit gave no indication, by contrast, that such a conditional request would be appropriate on appeal, far after "the outset of the case." *Id.*

While a conditional motion based on hypotheticals might be permissible under Rule 24 in the district court, *see SWANCC*, 101 F.3d at 508-09, it does not present the sort of imperative reasons that would justify intervention on appeal. Putative Intervenors' conjecture about steps the government *might* take does not come close to making this "an exceptional case" in which intervention on appeal is warranted "for imperative reasons." Nor does it excuse the failure to seek intervention in the district court based on those same concerns. *Richardson*, 979 F.3d at 1104.

CONCLUSION

Putative Intervenors' motion should be denied.

Dated: January 23, 2025

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I certify that, on January 23, 2025, a true and correct copy of the foregoing reply was served via CM/ECF on all counsel of record.

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I certify that this reply complies with the typeface requirements of Rule 32(a)(5) and the typestyle requirements of Rule 32(a)(6), *see* Fed. R. App. P. 27(d)(1)(E), because it was prepared in 14-point New Century Schoolbook, a proportionally spaced typeface, using Microsoft Word 2019 This response complies with the type-volume limitation of Rule 28(d)(2)(A) because it contains 1,764 words, excluding the parts exempted by Rule 32(f).

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