

Hartnett v. Washington Federal Bank
Case No. 2:21-cv-00888-RSM (W.D. Washington)

NOTICE OF PENDING CLASS ACTION AND PROPOSED SETTLEMENT

**READ THIS NOTICE FULLY AND CAREFULLY; THE PROPOSED SETTLEMENT
MAY AFFECT YOUR RIGHTS!**

IF YOU HAD A PERSONAL ACCOUNT WITH WASHINGTON FEDERAL BANK (“DEFENDANT”) AND YOU WERE CHARGED A NONSUFFICIENT FUNDS (“NSF”) FEE AND/OR OVERDRAFT (“OD”) FEE BETWEEN NOVEMBER 15, 2015, AND AUGUST 31, 2021, THEN YOU MAY BE ENTITLED TO A PAYMENT FROM A CLASS ACTION SETTLEMENT

IF YOU HAD A BUSINESS ACCOUNT WITH DEFENDANT AND YOU WERE CHARGED AN NSF FEE AND/OR OD FEE BETWEEN JULY 1, 2020 AND AUGUST 31, 2021, THEN YOU MAY BE ENTITLED TO A PAYMENT FROM A CLASS ACTION SETTLEMENT

The Western District of Washington has authorized this Notice; it is not a solicitation from a lawyer.

SUMMARY OF YOUR OPTIONS AND THE LEGAL EFFECT OF EACH OPTION	
DO NOTHING	If you have been assessed the type of NSF fee and/or OD Fee that is being challenged in this case, then you will receive a payment from the Settlement Fund so long as you do not exclude yourself (described in the next box).
EXCLUDE YOURSELF FROM THE SETTLEMENT; RECEIVE NO PAYMENT BUT RELEASE NO CLAIMS	You can choose to exclude yourself from the settlement or “opt out.” This means you choose not to participate in the settlement. You will keep your individual claims against Defendant, but you will not receive a payment. If you want to recover against Defendant, then you will have to file a separate lawsuit or claim.
OBJECT TO THE SETTLEMENT	You can file an objection with the Settlement Administrator explaining why you believe the Court should reject the settlement. If your objection is overruled by the Court, you <u>will</u> receive a payment and you <u>will not</u> be able to sue Defendant for the claims asserted in this litigation. If the Court agrees with your objection, then the settlement may not be approved.

These rights and options – *and the deadlines to exercise them* – along with the material terms of the settlement are explained in this Notice.

BASIC INFORMATION

1. What is this lawsuit about?

The lawsuit that is being settled is entitled *Hartnett v. Washington Federal Bank, Case No. 2:21-cv-00888-RSM (W.D. Washington)*. The case is a “class action.” That means that the “Named Plaintiffs,” Edward C. Hartnett and Julie A. Hartnett, are individuals who are acting on behalf of a group that includes all customers of Defendant who were charged an NSF or OD fee on their accounts for a payment submitted to Defendant for collection during the Class Period—for personal accounts, from November 15, 2015 through August 31, 2021 and for business accounts, from July 1, 2020 through August 31, 2021—which request for collection initially was rejected for insufficient funds, but subsequently was re-presented to Defendant for collection on one or more additional occasions resulting in additional NSF and/or OD Fees, provided the customer either (1) ceased being a customer of Defendant on or before August 31, 2021, or (2) affirmatively opted out of contractual arbitration with Defendant before January 11, 2022. The persons in this group are collectively called the “Class Members.”

The Named Plaintiffs claim they were improperly charged NSF and/or OD fees. Defendant does not deny that it assessed the Named Plaintiffs NSF and/or OD fees, but denies that its practices give rise to claims for damages by the Named Plaintiffs or any Class Member. Defendant specifically maintains that it properly and lawfully assessed all fees in accordance with the terms of its agreements, disclosure, and applicable law.

2. Why did the parties settle?

In any lawsuit, there are risks and potential benefits that come with a trial versus settling at an earlier stage. It is the Named Plaintiffs’ lawyers’ job to identify when a proposed settlement offer is good enough that it justifies recommending settling the case instead of continuing to trial. In a class action, these lawyers, known as Class Counsel, make this recommendation to the Named Plaintiffs. The Named Plaintiffs have the duty to act in the best interests of the class as a whole and, in this case, it is their belief, as well as Class Counsel’s opinion, that this settlement is in the best interest of all Class Members for at least the following reasons:

There is legal uncertainty about whether the Court (or eventually a trial court judge or a jury) will find that Defendant breached its agreements with customers or otherwise acted improperly by assessing the NSF and/or OD fees that are the subject of this case. There also is uncertainty about whether the Named Plaintiffs’ claims are subject to other defenses that might result in no recovery or less recovery to Class Members. Even if the Named Plaintiffs were to win at trial, there is no assurance that the Class Members would be awarded more than the current settlement amount, and it may take years of litigation before any payments would be made. By settling, the Class Members will avoid these and other risks and the delays associated with continued litigation.

Although Defendant disputes Plaintiffs’ claims, it has agreed to settle to avoid the costs, distractions and risks of further litigation. Thus, even though Defendant denies that it did anything improper, it believes settlement is in its best interest and in the best interests of all of its customers.

WHO IS IN THE SETTLEMENT

3. How do I know if I am part of the Settlement?

If you received a notice in the mail or via email, then Defendant's records indicate that you are a Class Member who is entitled to receive a payment or credit to your account.

YOUR OPTIONS

4. What options do I have with respect to the Settlement?

You have three options: (1) do nothing and you will receive a payment according to the terms of this settlement; (2) exclude yourself from the settlement ("opt out" of it); or (3) participate in the settlement but object to it. Each of these options is described in a separate section below.

5. What are the critical deadlines?

If you do nothing, you will receive settlement funds by credit to your account if you are still a customer of Defendant when the settlement is paid or via check mailed to your residence of record if you are not a customer of Defendant when the settlement is paid at the close of the claims period.

The deadline for sending a letter to exclude yourself from or opt out of the settlement is September 21, 2022.

The deadline to file an objection with the Court is also September 21, 2022.

6. How do I decide which option to choose?

If you do not like the settlement and you believe that you could receive more money by pursuing your claims on your own (with or without an attorney that you could hire) and you are comfortable with the risk that you might lose your case or get less than you would in this settlement, then you may want to consider opting out.

If you believe the settlement is unreasonable, unfair, or inadequate and the Court should reject the settlement, you can object to the settlement terms. The Court will decide if your objection is valid. If the Court agrees, then the settlement will not be approved and no payments will be made to you or any other Class Member. If your objection (and any other objection) is overruled, and the settlement is approved, then you will still get a payment.

7. What has to happen for the Settlement to be approved?

The Court has to decide that the settlement is fair, reasonable, and adequate before it will approve it. The Court already has decided to provide preliminary approval of the settlement, which authorized this Notice. The Court will make a final decision regarding the settlement at a "Fairness Hearing" or "Final Approval Hearing," which is currently scheduled for November 18, 2022 at 9:00 am PT.

THE SETTLEMENT PAYMENT

8. How much is the Settlement?

Defendant has agreed to create a Settlement Fund of \$495,000.00. As discussed separately below, attorneys' fees, litigation costs and a service award to the Named Plaintiffs, will be paid out of this amount. The balance of the Settlement Fund will be divided among all Class Members proportionally. Additionally, as a result of this lawsuit, Defendant has implemented changes to its disclosures that clarify Defendant's NSF and OD fee practices. The Defendant will pay the costs of notice and administration of the class action settlement separately.

9. How much of the settlement fund will be used to pay for attorney fees and costs?

Class Counsel will request that the Court award up to one-third (33-1/3%) of the value of the settlement as attorneys' fees plus reimbursement litigation costs incurred in prosecuting the case. The Court will decide the amount of the attorneys' fees based on a number of factors, including the risk associated with bringing the case, the amount of time spent on the case, the amount of costs incurred to prosecute the case, the quality of the work, and the outcome of the case.

10. How much of the settlement fund will be used to pay the Named Plaintiffs a Service Award?

Class Counsel on behalf of the Named Plaintiffs will request that the Court award them up to \$5,000 for their role in securing this settlement on behalf of the class. The Court will decide if a Service Award is appropriate and if so, the amount of the award.

11. How much will my payment be?

The balance of the Settlement Fund will be divided among all Class Members proportionally. Class Members will receive a check for the amount they are entitled to receive from the Settlement Administrator.

12. Do I have to do anything if I want to participate in the Settlement?

No. Any amount you are entitled to under the terms of the settlement will be distributed to you unless you choose to exclude yourself from the settlement, or "opt out." Excluding yourself from the settlement means you choose not to participate in the settlement. You will keep your individual claims against Defendant, but you will not receive a payment. In that case, if you choose to seek recovery against Defendant, then you will have to file a separate lawsuit or claim.

13. When will I receive my payment?

The Court will hold a Final Approval Hearing (explained below in Questions 22-24) on November 18, 2022 at 9:am PT to consider whether the settlement should be approved. If there are no objections and the Court approves the settlement, then the Settlement Administrator should begin paying claims within approximately forty days of the Court's approval. However, if someone objects to the settlement, and the objection is sustained, then there is no settlement. Even if all objections are overruled and the Court approves the settlement, an objector could appeal, and it might take months or even years to have the appeal resolved, which would delay any payment.

EXCLUDING YOURSELF FROM THE SETTLEMENT

14. How do I exclude myself from the settlement?

If you do not want to receive a payment, or if you want to keep any right you may have to sue Defendant for the claims alleged in this lawsuit, then you must exclude yourself, or “opt out.”

To opt out, you **must** send a letter to the Settlement Administrator that you want to be excluded. Your letter can simply say “I hereby elect to be excluded from the settlement in the *Hartnett v. Washington Federal Bank, Case No. 2:21-cv-00888-RSM (W.D. Washington)* class action. Be sure to include your name, the last four digits of your account number (current or former) or Social Security Number, address, telephone number, and email address. Your exclusion or opt out request must be postmarked by September 21, 2022, and sent to:

Hartnett v. Washington Federal Bank
c/o JND Legal Administration
PO Box 91125
Seattle, WA 98111

15. What happens if I opt out of the settlement?

If you opt out of the settlement, you will preserve and not give up any of your rights to bring claims against Defendant for the claims alleged in this case. However, you will not be entitled to receive a payment from this settlement.

16. If I exclude myself, can I obtain a payment?

No. If you exclude yourself, you will not be entitled to a payment.

OBJECTING TO THE SETTLEMENT

17. How do I notify the Court that I do not like the settlement?

You can object to the settlement or any part of it that you do not like **IF** you do not exclude yourself, or opt out, from the settlement. (Class Members who exclude themselves from the settlement have no right to object to how other Class Members are treated.) To object, you **must** send a written document to the Settlement Administrator, the Court, Class Counsel, and Defendant's counsel, at the addresses below. Your objection must include the following:

- A heading referring to the *Hartnett v. Washington Federal Bank* Class Action;
- Your name, address, telephone number, the last four digits of your account number (current or former) or Social Security Number, and the contact information for any attorney you have retained in connection with this case;
- A statement of the factual and legal basis for each objection and any exhibits you wish the Court to consider in connection with the objection;
- A statement as to whether you intend to appear at the Final Approval Hearing, either in person or through an attorney, and, if through an attorney, identifying the attorney by name, address, and telephone number; and
- Your signature.

Class Counsel and/or Defendant's Counsel will file any objections and responsive pleadings at least seven days before the Final Approval Hearing Date. Be advised that if you object to the settlement and retain an attorney for purposes of objecting, you are solely responsible for paying that attorneys' fees and costs. If you fail to comply with the provisions herein, you will waive and forfeit any and all rights to appear and/or object separately, and will be bound by the terms of this Agreement and the orders and judgments of the Court.

All objections must be post-marked no later than September 21, 2022 and must be mailed to the above-identified recipients as follows:

CLAIMS ADMINISTRATOR:

**Hartnett v. Washington Federal Bank
c/o JND Legal Administration
PO Box 91125
Seattle, WA 98111**

18. What is the difference between objecting and requesting exclusion from the settlement?

Objecting is telling the Court that you do not believe the settlement is fair, reasonable, and adequate for the class, and asking the Court to reject it. You can object only if you do not opt out of the settlement. If you object to the settlement and do not opt out, then you are entitled to a payment if the settlement is approved, but you will release claims you might have against Defendant. Excluding yourself or opting out is telling the Court that you do not want to be part of the settlement, and do not want to receive a payment or release claims you might have against Defendant for the claims alleged in this lawsuit.

19. What happens if I object to the settlement?

If the Court sustains your objection, or the objection of any other Class Member, then there is no settlement. If you object, but the Court overrules your objection and any other objection(s), then you will be part of the settlement.

THE COURT’S FAIRNESS HEARING

20. When and where will the Court decide whether to approve the settlement?

The Court will hold a Final Approval or Fairness Hearing on November 18, 2022 at 9:00 am PT at the United States Courthouse at 700 Stewart Street, Seattle, WA At this hearing, the Court will consider whether the settlement is fair, reasonable and adequate. If there are objections, the Court will consider them. The Court may also decide how much to award Class Counsel for attorneys’ fees and expenses and how much the Named Plaintiffs should get as a “Service Award” for acting as the class representatives.

21. Do I have to come to the hearing?

No. Class Counsel will answer any questions the Court may have. You may attend if you desire to do so. If you have submitted an objection, then you may want to attend.

22. May I speak at the hearing?

If you have objected, you may ask the Court for permission to speak at the Final Approval Hearing. To do so, you must include with your objection, described in Question 18, above, the statement, “I hereby give notice that I intend to appear at the Final Approval Hearing.”

IF YOU DO NOTHING

23. What happens if I do nothing at all?

If you do nothing at all, and if the settlement is approved, then you may receive a payment that represents your share of the Settlement Fund. You will be considered a part of the class, and you will give up claims against Defendant for the conduct identified in the settlement. You will not give up any other claims you might have against Defendant that are not released in this settlement.

THE LAWYERS REPRESENTING YOU

24. Do I have a lawyer in this case?

The Court ordered that the lawyers and their law firms referred to in this notice as “Class Counsel” will represent you and the other Class Members.

25. Do I have to pay the lawyer for accomplishing this result?

No. Class Counsel will be paid directly from the Settlement Fund.

26. Who determines what the attorneys’ fees will be?

The Court will be asked to approve the amount of attorneys’ fees at the Fairness Hearing. Class Counsel will file an application for fees and costs and will specify the amount being sought as discussed above. You may review a physical copy of the fee application at the website established by the Settlement Administrator, www.hartnettNSFfeeLitigation.com.

For additional information about the settlement and/or to obtain copies of the settlement agreement, the pleadings in this case or to change your address for purposes of receiving a payment, you should contact the Settlement Administrator as follows:

Hartnett v. Washington Federal Bank
c/o JND Legal Administration
PO Box 91125
Seattle, WA 98111

***PLEASE DO NOT CONTACT THE COURT OR ANY REPRESENTATIVE OF
DEFENDANT CONCERNING THIS NOTICE OR THE SETTLEMENT.***