

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Groundbreaking Settlement to End Discrimination Against Blind Uber Riders Who Use Guide Dogs**

April 30, 2016 – Berkeley, California – In an unprecedented settlement announced today, Uber has agreed to take affirmative steps to prevent discrimination against blind riders who use guide dogs in its transportation network across the United States.

The settlement resolves a lawsuit—*National Federation of the Blind of California, et al. v. Uber Technologies, Inc.*—brought by the National Federation of the Blind, its California affiliate, and individuals who use guide dogs, to ensure that guide dog users have full and equal access to vehicles in the Uber network. This is the first nationwide class-action settlement of its kind against an app-based transportation network company.

While the growth of Uber’s on-demand transportation services has the potential to be a boon to blind people, drivers using the Uber platform have denied rides to blind people who use guide dogs. Any such discrimination violates federal and state laws that protect the rights of people with disabilities. Under the settlement, Uber will work to end this discrimination and blind individuals will be able to use Uber without the threat of discrimination.

Uber has agreed to take affirmative steps to tell drivers about their obligations to transport riders who are disabled and use service animals. Uber will require that existing and new drivers expressly confirm that they understand their legal obligations to transport riders with guide dogs or other service animals. Uber will also implement stricter enforcement policies—Uber will remove a driver from the platform upon a single complaint if Uber finds that the driver knowingly denied a person with a disability a ride because the person was traveling with a service animal. In addition, if Uber receives complaints that a driver denied a person a ride because of a service animal on more than one occasion, the driver will permanently be removed from the Uber platform regardless of the driver’s intent.

Uber will also enhance its response system for complaints related to discrimination against guide-dog users, and will track detailed data on all allegations of such discrimination.

Additionally, the National Federation of the Blind and its California affiliate will deploy testers over a multi-year period to evaluate Uber's compliance with the settlement.

Mark A. Riccobono, President of the National Federation of the Blind, said: "Access to reliable and effective transportation is critical to the ability of blind people to live the lives we want. Uber and similar services can be a great asset to the blind when they are fully and equally available to us. The National Federation of the Blind is therefore pleased with Uber's commitment to effectively enforce a nondiscrimination policy with respect to blind people who use guide dogs. We look forward to working with Uber to ensure that all blind passengers can take advantage of the innovative transportation service it offers."

Plaintiff Michael Hingson commented: "This settlement is a great step forward for all blind people. Uber can be such a convenient transportation option. I'm looking forward to being able to use the Uber services when Uber makes the changes needed to fix its discrimination problem and bring true access to guide dog users."

Attorney Larry Paradis of Disability Rights Advocates said: "This settlement sets important precedent and shows that companies cannot ignore the rights of people with disabilities just because they use a new technology or a novel business model. We are pleased we could come to an agreement with Uber and look forward to working with the company to ensure a more accessible system."

Attorney Michael Bien of Rosen Bien Galvan & Grunfeld LLP observed: "Technology-enabled services such as Uber have tremendous potential to empower people with disabilities to live more independent lives. By ensuring reliable equal access for blind riders with service animals to Uber's services, this agreement harnesses that potential."

Plaintiffs and defendant submitted the proposed settlement to the court on April 29, 2016, and seek approval from the court to settle as a nationwide class action. Copies of the settlement and other documents can be found at <http://dralegal.org/case/national-federation-of-the-blind-of-california-et-al-v-uber-technologies-inc-et-al/>.

Plaintiffs are represented by Larry Paradis and Julia Marks of Disability Rights Advocates, Timothy Elder of TRE Legal, and Michael Bien and Michael Nunez of Rosen Bien Galvan & Grunfeld LLP.

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*About the National Federation of the Blind:*

The National Federation of the Blind knows that blindness is not the characteristic that defines you or your future. Every day we raise the expectations of blind people, because low expectations create obstacles between blind people and our dreams. You can live the life you want; blindness is not what holds you back. For more information, visit <http://nfb.org>.

*About the California Affiliate of the National Federation of the Blind:*

The NFB of California (NFBC) is the state affiliate of the National Federation of the Blind. The NFBC knows that blindness does not define you or your future. For more information, visit <http://nfbcal.org/>.

*About Disability Rights Advocates:*

Disability Rights Advocates (DRA) is one of the leading non-profit disability rights legal centers in the nation. With offices in Berkeley and New York City, DRA's mission is to advance equal rights and opportunities for people with all types of disabilities nationwide. To advance that mission, DRA regularly advocates for greater access to transportation services and modern technologies. DRA recently negotiated a landmark settlement that will dramatically improve access to taxis in New York for people with mobility disabilities. DRA has also negotiated access improvements to several types of popular modern technologies, including the website Target.com in *National Federation of the Blind v. Target, Corp.* and Redbox touchscreen video rental kiosks in *Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired et al. v. Redbox Automated Retail, LLC et al.* For more information, visit [www.dralegal.org](http://www.dralegal.org).

*About TRE Legal:*

Founded by Timothy Elder, TRE Legal is a civil rights law firm fighting discrimination and specializing in the rights of the blind and other disabled people to access employment, education, government programs, public accommodations, digital information, and all other aspects of modern society. TRE Legal has helped negotiate collaboration agreements between the blindness community and several mobile app developers to make their respective technologies independently accessible to the blind. For more information, visit [www.trelegal.com](http://www.trelegal.com).

*About Rosen Bien Galvan & Grunfeld LLP:*

Rosen Bien Galvan & Grunfeld LLP (RBGG) is a private law firm that specializes in complex litigation, including with respect to business disputes, employment matters, institutional reform, and civil rights. RBGG has extensive experience representing individuals and classes of people with disabilities in litigation both against private entities and in the criminal justice context. For more information, visit <http://rbgg.com/>