

# Defense Perspective: Attorney's Fees after *Irwin*

**ROBERT E. VALDEZ**  
Valdez & Treviño,  
Attorneys at Law, P.C.  
San Antonio, Texas

1

## Attorney's Fees in UIM Cases

### **Pre-*Irwin***

- No recovery since no breach of contract (TCPRC chapter 38);
- No "legal entitlement";
- No recovery since no "presentment"
- Declaratory Judgment no vehicle for recovery of fees (*Jordan*).

### **Post-*Irwin***

- Recovery possible under Texas Declaratory Judgment Act (TCPRC chapter 37);
- Fees must be "**just and equitable**"
- Declaratory Judgment Act is proper vehicle.

2

## Defenses under *Irwin*

Pick the proper battlefield.

Is there **federal (diversity) jurisdiction**? Amount in controversy-  
-\$75,000; complete diversity of citizenship.

Reason: **No attorney's fees** in federal declaratory judgment action.  
See page 2 of my article.

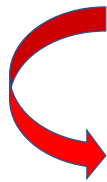
3

Narrow the issues:  
Stipulate to coverage issues (except legal entitlement).  
Make the case a “car wreck” case.

4

## Basis for Recovery (under DJA): “reasonable”

The fees must be “reasonable”.



Question  
of fact



“Not excessive”;  
“Moderate and  
fair”;  
*Arthur Andersen*  
factors.

See page 2 of my article

5

## Who is proving up the fee?

Defense perspective: Consider designating **independent expert** to controvert / rebut plaintiff’s testimony re the reasonableness of fee.

- Designating yourself (or your law firm) as comparator in challenging opponent’s fees: **puts your attorney’s fees** in issue.
- **“opens the door** to expert witness discovery”

See page 4-6 of my article (*In re National Lloyds*)

6

Find the full text of this and thousands of other resources from leading experts in dozens of legal practice areas in the [UT Law CLE eLibrary \(utcle.org/elibrary\)](https://utcle.org/elibrary)

Title search: Defense Perspective: Attorney's Fees after Irwin

Also available as part of the eCourse

[Answer Bar: Taking on the Car Crash Client](#)

First appeared as part of the conference materials for the  
2022 The Car Crash Seminar session

"Recent Developments in Prosecuting and Defending UM/UIM Actions"