# UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT MIDDLE DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA

RIECKE DEVELOPMENT &	*	C.A. NO
CONSTRUCTION CO., INC.	*	
AND SECO GROUP, LLC	*	SECTION
	*	JUDGE
VERSUS	*	
	*	DIVISION
NEW YORK LIFE INSURANCE	*	MAG. JUDGE
COMPANY		

# NOTICE OF REMOVAL UNDER 28 U.S.C. § 1441

To: Riecke Development and Construction Co., Inc. and SECO Group, LLC through their attorneys of record David M. Vaughn Vaughn & Associates 8480 Bluebonnet Blvd., Suite B Baton Rouge, LA 70810

Michael S. Walsh Lee & Walsh 257 Maxmillian Street Baton Rouge, LA 70802

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that defendant, New York Life Insurance Company ("New York Life"), hereby removes to this Court the above entitled state court action filed by Riecke Development and Construction Co., Inc. and SECO Group, LLC, now pending in the Nineteenth Judicial District Court for the Parish of East Baton Rouge, State of Louisiana, bearing Civil Action No. 614449, reserving any and all rights, objections, defenses, and exceptions. A copy of this notice is served upon you, as counsel of record for Riecke Development and Construction Co., Inc. ("Riecke") and SECO Group, LLC ("SECO"),

(collectively "Plaintiffs") and a copy of this notice is being filed with the Clerk of the 19<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court for the Parish of East Baton Rouge, State of Louisiana, in conformity with 28 U.S.C. § 1446.

New York Life submits that the grounds for removal are as follows:

1.

On August 7, 2012, Plaintiffs, Riecke and SECO, filed a Petition for Breach of Contract and Declaratory Judgment ("Petition") in an action entitled "*Riecke Development and Construction Co., Inc. and SECO Group, LLC versus New York Life Insurance Company*" Case No. 117050 on the docket of Section 22 of the 19th Judicial District Court for the Parish of East Baton Rouge, State of Louisiana, which is within the Middle District of Louisiana.<sup>1</sup>

2.

New York Life's first notice of this lawsuit occurred on or about August 20, 2012, when service of process was made on New York Life through the Secretary of State of Louisiana. Thirty days have not elapsed since service of the Petition on New York Life.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Attached as Exhibit "A" is a copy of the Citation and Petition which was filed in the 19th Judicial District Court for the Parish of East Baton Rouge.

. 3.

Plaintiffs' claims arise from a dispute over death benefits in the total amount of five million dollars (\$5,000,000.00) payable under certain life insurance policies issued by New York Life, insuring the life of Bruce Cucchiara, specifically Policy Nos. 48 727 608, 48 727 525, and 48 727 248 (the "Policies").<sup>2</sup>

4.

On information and belief, Bruce Cucchiara died on or about April 24, 2012.<sup>3</sup>

5.

Plaintiffs allege that New York life failed to pay any benefits from the Policies to them as required by contract and law and is, therefore, in breach of both its statutory and contractual duties to Plaintiffs.<sup>4</sup>

6.

As each individual policy bears a face value of \$1,000,000.00 or greater, the matter in controversy exceeds \$75,000.00, exclusive of interests and costs.

7.

Riecke is a Louisiana corporation with its principal place of business in St. Tammany

 $<sup>^2</sup>$ See Petition, ¶¶ 4, 5 alleging that Policy Nos. 48 727 608, 48 727 568 and 48 727 525 each have a face value of \$1,000,000.00 and Policy No. 48 727 248 has a face value of \$2,000,000.00.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>See Petition,  $\P$  6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>See Petition, ¶ 8-10.

Parish, Louisiana. For the purposes of diversity jurisdiction, Riecke is a citizen of Louisiana.

8.

SECO admits that it is a Louisiana limited liability company, with managers and members who are citizens of Louisiana, with its principal place of business in St. Tammany Parish.<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of diversity jurisdiction, SECO is a citizen of Louisiana.

9.

New York Life is a mutual insurance company authorized and existing under the laws of the State of New York, with its principal place of business in New York, New York. For the purposes of diversity jurisdiction, New York Life is a citizen of New York.

10.

Because the jurisdictional amount is met and complete diversity exists between Plaintiffs and New York Life, this case is removable under 28 U.S.C. § 1441 because it could have been filed originally in this Court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1332.

11.

Attached as Exhibit "B" is a copy of New York Life's Notice of Filing Notice of Removal, which is being filed in the 19<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court, Parish of East Baton Rouge, State of Louisiana, with respect to the pending action number 614449.

WHEREFORE, defendant, New York Life Insurance Company, requests that it may effect the removal of this pending state court action to the United States District Court for

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> See Petition, ¶ 1

the Middle District of Louisiana in accordance with 28 U.S.C. § 1441 et seq.

# KREBS, FARLEY, & PELLETERI, P.L.L.C.

# /s/ Maura Z. Pelleteri

MAURA Z. PELLETERI (#8463) AMY S. MALISH (#28992) REBECCA B. FARINA (#33824) 400 Poydras Street, Suite 2500 New Orleans, Louisiana 70130

Telephone: 504-299-3570 Facsimile: 504-299-3582

E-mail: mpelleteri@kfplaw.com

ATTORNEYS FOR NEW YORK LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY

## **CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2012, I electronically filed the foregoing with the Clerk of Court by using the CM/ECF system which will send a notice of electronic filing to all counsel of record.

## /s/ Maura Z. Pelleteri

Maura Z. Pelleteri LA Bar No. 8463 Attorney for Defendant New York Life Insurance Company Krebs, Farley & Pelleteri, PLLC 400 Poydras Street, Suite 2500 New Orleans, LA 70130

Telephone: 504-299-3570 Facsimile: 504-299-3582

E-Mail: mpelleteri@kfplaw.com

# **CITATION**

RIECKE DEVELOPMENT & CONSTRUCTION COMPANY INC., ET AL	NUMBER C614449 SECTION 22				
(Plaintiff)		19th JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT			
vs.		PARISH OF EAST BA	ATON ROUGE		
NEW YORI (Defendant)	K LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY	STATE OF LOUISIAN	NA.		
THR	V YORK LIFE INSURANCE COMPAN OUGH THEIR AGENT FOR SERVICE RETARY OF STATE	The same of the sa	SERVED ON TOM SCHEDLER AUG 2 0 2012		
GREETING:	S:		SECRETARY OF STATE COMMERCIAL DIVISION		
Attached to this citation is a certified copy of the petition*. The petition tells you what you are being sued for.  You must EITHER do what the petition asks OR, within fifteen (15) days after you have received these documents, you must file an answer or other legal pleading in the office of the Clerk of Court at 300 North Boulevard, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.  If you do not do what the petition asks, or if you do not file an answer or legal pleading within fifteen (15) days, a judgment may be rendered against you without further notice.  This citation was issued by the Clerk of Court for East Baton Rouge Parish on 15-AUG-2012.  Deputy Clerk of Court for Doug Welborn, Clerk of Court Requesting Attorney DAVID MICHAEL VAUGHN  Also attached are the following documents: PETITION FOR BREACH OF CONTRACT					
	SERVICE INFO	RMATION:			
Received on the on the above na	e day of 20 and on t med party as follows:	heday of	, 20, served		
SECRETARY	OF STATE: By tendering same to the within name	ed, by handing same to			
DUE AND DILIGENT: After diligent search and inquiry, was unable to find the within named or his domicile, or anyone legally authorized to represent him.					
RETURNED: Parish of East Baton Rouge, this day of, 20					
SERVICE: MILEAGE TOTAL:	\$	Deputy Sheriff th of East Baton Rouge			

CITATION - 2424



-1 09/18/1*2* 

Page 1 of 4

SECTION:

RIECKE DEVELOPMENT AND CONSTRUCTION CO., INC., A SECO GROUP, LLC

VERSUS

19<sup>TH</sup> JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT

PARISH OF EAST BATON ROUGE

NEW YORK LIFE INSURANE COMPANY

STATE OF LOUSIANA

#### PETITION FOR BREACH OF CONTRACT AND DECLARATORY JUDGMENT

NOW COMES RIECKE DEVELOPMENT AND CONSTRUCTION CO., INC., AND SECO GROUP, LLC (formerly known as SOUTHERN LOUISIANA WATER & SEWERAGE CO., L.L.C.), which file this Petition, and allege the following:

1.

#### **PLAINTIFFS**

Riecke Development and Construction Co., Inc., ("Riecke") is a domestic corporation with its principal place of business in St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana. SECO Group, LLC ("SECO"), is a domestic limited liability company with its principal place of business in St. Tammany Parish.

2.

#### DEFENDANT

Made defendant herein is NEW YORK LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY ("New York Life" or "Defendant"), a foreign insurance company domiciled in Delaware, who can be served through its registered agent for service of process, Louisiana Secretary of State.

#### **VENUE**

Venue is proper in East Baton Rouge Parish pursuant to La. C.C.P. art. 42(7) which mandates venue in East Baton Rouge Parish for any foreign insurer.

### **FACTS**

On March 19, 2007, defendant issued four policies of life insurance, insuring the life of Bruce Cucchiara, totaling \$5,000,000.00. Three of the policies were in the face amount of \$1,000,000 each. Each of these three policies were owned by Riecke and named Riecke as the beneficiary, specifically policy numbers 48 727 608, 48 727 568, and 48 727 525.

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ighn & Associates, LLC

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Deputy Clerk of Court

5.

The fourth policy, number 48 727 348, was issued on March 19, 2007, in the face amount of \$2,000,000.00, insuring the life of Bruce Cucchiara, owned by and designating the beneficiary as Southern Louisiana Water & Sewerage Co., LLC, now known as SECO.

6.

On April 24, 2012, Bruce Cucchiara died.

7.

On May 22, 2012, the New York Life insurance agent which placed the above described insurance policies, Philbert "PJ" Demarie, III, forwarded to New York Life the appropriate claim forms on behalf of Riecke and SECO, including proper proofs of loss and the death certificate of Bruce Cucchiara, all of which New York Life has admitted receiving on May 24, 2012.

8.

Pursuant to La. R.S. 22:1811, all death claims "shall be settled by the insurer within 60 days after the date of receipt of due proof of death . . . ." New York Life has failed to pay any policy benefits to Riecke or SECO as required by contract and by law, and thus is in breach of contract.

9.

Defendant is justly and truly indebted to Riecke in the amount of THREE MILLION AND 00/100 (\$3,000,000.00) DOLLARS, and Defendant is justly and truly indebted to SECO in the amount of TWO MILLION AND 00/100 (\$2,000,000.00) DOLLARS together with legal interest from judicial demand until paid, penalty interest provided by law and by contract, and for reasonable attorney's fees and all costs of these proceedings.

10.

New York Life has indicated that it is waiting for the police investigation of Bruce Cucchiara to be concluded by the New Orleans Police Department, but there are no facts supporting any reasonable conclusion that Riecke or SECO or any of their authorized agents or employees were involved in the death of Cucchiara. As such, New York Life has no reasonable basis to delay payment to Plaintiffs under its life insurance contracts.

11.

Plaintiffs request a trial by jury.

Vaughn & Associates, LLC Attorneys at Law 8460 Bluebonnet Blvd. Suite B Baton Rouge, LA 708 (2011)

> Certified True and Correct Copy eCertID: 000044447

Denta Gray
East Baton Rouge Parish
Deputy Clerk of Court

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Alteration and subsequent re-filling of this certified copy may violate La. R.S. 14:132, 133, and/or RPC Rule 3.3(a)(3).

WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs pray that Defendant be cited to appear and answer this demand and after due proceedings had, that Riecke Development and Construction Co., Inc., have judgment against Defendant in the amount of \$3,000,000.00, that SECO Group, LLC, have judgment against Defendant in the amount of \$2,000,000.00, and that both Plaintiffs have judgment against Defendant for contractual and legal penalty interest, together with reasonable attorney's fees, legal interest from the date of judicial demand, and all costs of court; and further, Plaintiffs pray that the Court declare that there is evidence proven by a preponderance of evidence that Riecke Development and Construction Co., Inc., or SECO Group, LLC, or their agents or employees were involved in the death of Bruce Cucchiara which would allow New York Life to escape payment of the face value of the policies at issue.

By Attorneys:

David M. Vaughn, Bar No. 08807 VAUGHN & ASSOCIATES, LLC

8480 Bluebonnet Blvd., Suite B Baton Rouge, LA 70810

225.769.1320

Facsimile: 225,769-1115 Email: david@lalawfirm.net

AND

Michael & Walsh, Bar No. 8500

LEE AND WALSH 257 Maxmilian Street Baton Rouge, LA 70802

(225) 344-0474

Michael@leeandwalsh.com

Attorneys for Riecke Development and Construction Co., Inc., and SECO Group, LLC

Please serve:

New York Life Insurance Company Through its registered agent Louisiana Secretary of State 8585 Archives Avenue Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70809

Vaughn & Associates, LLC Attorneys at Law 8480 Bluebonnet Blvd. Suite B

> Certified True and Correct Copy eCertID: 000044447

East Baton Rouge Parish
Deputy Clerk of Court

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Alteration and subsequent re-filing of this certified copy may violate La. R.S. 14:132, 133, and/or RPC Rule 3.3(a)(3)

RIECKE DEVELOPMENT & CONSTRUCTION CO., INC. AND SECO GROUP, LLC

**VERSUS** 

NEW YORK LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY

**NUMBER: 614449 SECTION: 22** 

19TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT

PARISH OF EAST BATON ROUGE

STATE OF LOUISIANA

FILED:			
		DEPUTY CLERK	

# **NOTICE OF FILING NOTICE OF REMOVAL**

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that New York Life Insurance Company, defendant in that certain proceeding entitled "Riecke Development and Construction Co., Inc. and SECO Group, LLC versus New York Life Insurance Company," Case No. 614449 on the docket of Section 22 of the 19<sup>th</sup> Judicial District for the Parish of East Baton Rouge, State of Louisiana, has on this day filed in the United States District Court for the Middle District of Louisiana, its Notice to effect the removal of said Civil Action to the United States District Court for the Middle District of Louisiana. A copy of said Notice is herewith served upon the other parties hereto and a copy of the first page of said Notice is attached as Exhibit "A," in conformity with 28 U.S.C. § 1446(d) as amended.

Dated: September 18, 2012

KREBS, FARLEY & PELLETERI, P.L.L.C.

MAURA Z. PELLE/TERI (¥ 8463)

AMY S. MALISH (#28992/)

REBECCA B. FARINA (#33824)

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New Orleans, Louisiana 70130

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Facsimile: 504-299-3582

ATTORNEYS FOR NEW YORK LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY



# **CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I do hereby certify that I have on this 18th day of September, 2012, served a copy of the foregoing pleading by facsimile and by mailing same by United States mail, properly addressed and first class postage prepaid, on:

David M. Vaughn Vaughn & Associates 8480 Bluebonnet Blvd., Suite B Baton Rouge, LA 70810

Michael S. Walsh Lee & Walsh 257 Maxmillian Street Baton Rouge, LA 70802

MAURA Z. PELLETERI

# **CIVIL COVER SHEET**

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON THE REVERSE OF THE FORM.)

I. (a) PLAINTIFFS Riecke Development & Co	onstruction Co., Inc. and SECO Group, LL	C DE	FENDANTS ew York Life Ins	surance Company	g
(E	e of First Listed Plaintiff St. Tammany Paris EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)		NOTE: IN LAN	f First Listed Defendant (IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES O CONDEMNATION CASES, U NVOLVED.	· ·
Baton Rouge, LA 70810 (	e, Address, and Telephone Number)  & Associates, 8480 Bluebonnet Blvd., St.  (225) 769-1320; Michael S. Walsh, Lee & Von Rouge, LA 70802 (225) 344-0474  DICTION (Place an "X" in One Box Only)  1 3 Federal Question	Walsh, 250	ura Z. Pelelteri, 0, New Orleans ENSHIP OF P versity Cases Only) P	RINCIPAL PARTIES	ri, 400 Poydras St., Suite 3570 S(Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff and One Box for Defendant) PTF DEF
Plaintiff  2 U.S. Government Defendant	(U.S. Government Not a Party)  2 4 Diversity  (Indicate Citizenship of Parties in Item III)	Citizen of Ti	nother State	<ol> <li>Incorporated or Poof Business In Th</li> <li>Incorporated and of Business In</li> <li>Torong and of Business In</li> <li>Torong Nation</li> </ol>	is State  Principal Place
IV. NATURE OF SUI	T (Place an "X" in One Box Only) TORTS	Foreign C	ountry FURE/PENAUTY	BANKRUPTCY	OTHER STATUTES
☐ 196 Franchise  REAL PROPERTY  ☐ 210 Land Condemnation  ☐ 220 Foreclosure	Slander G 368 Asbestos Personal  330 Federal Employers' Liability  340 Marine Product Liability  345 Marine Product Liability  350 Motor Vehicle Product Liability  735 Motor Vehicle Product Liability  736 Asbestos Personal  PERSONAL PROPER  370 Other Fraud  371 Truth in Lending  Property Damage  Product Liability 385 Property Damage		Related Scizure Related Scizure Sperty 21 USC 881 Truck Regs. Pational Sy/Health Example Standards  T/Mgmt. Relations F/Mgmt. Reporting Closure Act Full Labor Litigation Ret. Inc. Ret. Inc. Ret. Inc. Red Application Red Application Recorpus Detainee Immigration	□ 422 Appeal 28 USC 158 □ 423 Withdrawal 28 USC 157 ■ PROPERTY RIGHTS □ 820 Copyrights □ 830 Patent □ 840 Trademark ■ SOCIAL SECURITY □ 861 HIA (1395ff) □ 862 Black Lung (923) □ 863 DIWC/DIWW (405(g)) □ 864 SSID Title XVI □ 865 RSI (405(g)) ■ FEDERAL TAX SUITS ■ 7 Taxes (U.S. Plaintiff or Defendant) □ 871 IRS—Third Party 26 USC 7609	□ 400 State Reapportionment □ 410 Antitrust □ 430 Banks and Banking □ 450 Commerce □ 460 Deportation □ 470 Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations □ 480 Consumer Credit □ 490 Cable/Sat TV □ 810 Selective Service □ 850 Securities/Commodities/Exchange □ 875 Customer Challenge □ 12 USC 3410 □ 890 Other Statutory Actions □ 891 Agricultural Acts □ 892 Economic Stabilization Act □ 893 Environmental Matters □ 894 Energy Allocation Act □ 895 Freedom of Information Act □ 900 Appeal of Fee Determination Under Equal Access to Justice □ 950 Constitutionality of State Statutes
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VI. CAUSE OF ACTI	ON 28 U.S.C. 1441 Brief description of cause:				
VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:	UNDER F.R.C.P. 23	N DEMAN	ND \$	CHECK YES only JURY DEMAND	if demanded in complaint: :
VIII. RELATED CAS IF ANY DATE	(See instructions): JUDGE STONATURE OF AT	TORNEY OF PE	CORD	DOCKET NUMBER	
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