

Efforts for black limo service still in park

By John T. Stephens
Sentinel-Voice

A judge will determine next week if owners of a black wedding chapel can continue operating a limousine service without a state license.

Last month, District Court Judge John Mendoza set a Jan. 22 date to decide if Phillip and Jennifer Garland, owners of Rancho Florist and Gifts, Inc., Rancho Bridal and Formal Wear, can continue giving limousine service to patrons of their 1200 S. Maryland Pkwy. business.

Bell Trans, which specializes in airport transfer and charter limousine and bus service, filed charges against the Garlands claiming the couple did not have proper certification to operate a limousine service.

At the pre-hearing at the Grant Sawyer Building in November, Mendoza also rebuffed the Garlands' request to bump up the date since they said the Public Service Commission has

had their application for a license since November 1996.

"The Nevada statutes don't say clearly that you need to be certified to run a limousine on the streets," Phillip Garland said. "I feel we meet all the requirements for a limousine service and have not violated the law."

He also argued that since the customer had to use the florist or chapel to get the limousine service, a license was not needed. The Garlands started the limousine service in the summer of 1993 as an additional perk to patrons, most of whom were minorities and could not afford the cost of renting a limousine.

The general manager and attorney for Bells Trans declined to comment on the pending litigation.

Eight other companies have joined Bell Trans in opposing the Garlands' service. They are Yellow Cab Co., Suburban Cab, Charlie's



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Phillip Garland would like to see his stretch limousines and transport vehicles one day lined up along the curb at McCarran International Airport waiting for arrival of flights.

Limousine Service, On Demand Services, Adventure Charters & Tours, K-T Services and Grey Line Tour Services.

Certification costs \$200 dollars but legal fees can bump that to between \$250,000 and \$500,000. Phillip Garland said he has spent at least \$10,000 and plans to shell out at least \$35,000 to \$45,000 before the matter is settled.

Judge to assess mediation between Black farmers, USDA

By Ken Morgan
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON, D.C. — African-American farmers learn Jan. 26 in U.S. District Court, Judge Paul Friedman's courtroom, whether the progress of settlements between them and the U.S. government is heading in the right direction.

Last month more than 70 Black farmers and their supporters sat in court while Friedman gave the Department of Agriculture 30 days to

develop a way to resolve hundreds of discrimination complaints lodged by Black farmers or be confronted with a trial date.

He also approved a government request that the 1,000-plus cases being mediated be done on a case-by-case basis, as opposed to being dealt with as a group within six months.

Black farmers and their lawyers, however, contend that it will take at least two years, not six months, to hear and

mediate complaints individually. Aggrieved farmers will have the option to have their cases heard through a process set up by USDA to hear complaints or by Michael Lewis, the court-appointed mediator.

Last Aug. 28, Black farmers filed a \$2 billion discrimination lawsuit against the USDA. Pigford, et al vs. the U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman contends that Black farmers have been the victims of racial

discrimination by repeatedly being denied loans and other management and technical services by USDA.

It also asserts that from 1983 to 1997, the USDA failed to investigate hundreds of discrimination complaints filed by Black farmers — a request to have Black farmers discriminated against before 1983 included in the suit was denied.

According to the farmers, discrimination took the form of "stretching the review

process out many years or conducting vacuous or ghost investigations or failing to take action. These practices led to foreclosures, bankruptcies and other serious economic problems for Black farmers, they said.

Friedman has not yet ruled on whether or not the statute of limitations can be invoked by the justice department. Its implementation would mean that about 95 percent of plaintiffs would not be able to receive damages. Sitcoff said

farmers may only be able to receive forgiveness of their debts and top priority for new loans. However, echoing Black farmers' sentiments, Everett Greer of Yazoo, Miss., said, "We want debt relief and compensation for our suffering."

The National Black Farmers Association led by John Boyd, Gary Grant, and Tim Pigford first called national attention to their plight Dec. 12, of last year when they

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