

SETTLEMENT AND RELEASE AGREEMENT

1. **INTRODUCTION**

1.1. **Ecological Alliance, LLC and Votum Enterprises**

This Settlement Agreement is entered into by and between Ecological Alliance, LLC ("Ecological"), on the one hand, and Votum Enterprises ("Votum"), on the other hand, with Ecological and Votum collectively referred to as the "Parties."

1.2. **General Allegations**

Ecological alleges that Votum manufactured and/or distributed and/or offered for sale and/or sold in the State of California tool sets with bit holders containing Di(2-ethylhexyl)phthalate [DEHP], and that such sales have not included warnings pursuant to the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, California Health & Safety Code sections 25249.6 *et seq.* ("Proposition 65"). California has identified and listed DEHP under Proposition 65 as a chemical known to the State of California to cause cancer, birth defects or other reproductive harm.

1.3. **Product Description**

The products that are covered by this Settlement Agreement are defined as tool sets with bit holders containing Di(2-ethylhexyl)phthalate [DEHP], that Votum has manufactured, sold, offered for sale, or distributed in California. All such items shall be referred to herein as the "Products."

1.4. **Notice of Violation**

On January 24, 2022, Ecological served Votum, Marshall's of CA, LLC, and the requisite public enforcement agencies eligible to initiate Proposition 65 actions on behalf of the People of the State of California with documents entitled "60-Day Notice of Violation" ("Notice") that

provided Votum and such public enforcers with notice that Votum was allegedly in violation of California Health & Safety Code section 25249.6 for failing to warn consumers and customers that the Products exposed users in California to DEHP. The products referred to in the Notice are referred to as “cases of nail polish sets, including but not limited to Item #1272-104533877-000399-23-2 and bit holders in tools sets, including but not limited to Style #208327 ("Products") manufactured/distributed by Votum Enterprises and offered for sale by retailers, including Marshall's of CA, LLC, to California consumers.” To the Parties' knowledge, no public enforcer has commenced or is diligently prosecuting the allegations set forth in the Notice.

1.5. No Admission

The Parties enter into this Settlement Agreement to settle disputed claims between them as set forth herein and in the Notice concerning Votum's compliance with Proposition 65. Specifically, Votum denies the material factual and legal allegations contained in Ecological's Notice and maintains that all products that it has manufactured for sale and distribution in California, including the Products, have been and are in compliance with Proposition 65 and any other statutory, regulatory, common law or equitable doctrine. Nothing in this Settlement Agreement shall be construed as an admission by Votum of any fact, finding, issue of law, or violation of law; nor shall compliance with this Settlement Agreement constitute or be construed as an admission by Votum of any fact, finding, conclusion, issue of law, or violation of law, such being specifically denied by Votum. However, nothing in this section shall diminish or otherwise affect the obligations, responsibilities, and duties of Votum under this Settlement Agreement.

1.6. Effective Date

For purposes of this Settlement Agreement, the term "Effective Date" shall mean the date this Settlement Agreement is fully executed.

2. **INJUNCTIVE RELIEF: WARNING**

2.1. **Warning and Reformulation Requirements**

Within 90 days of the Effective Date, Products shall either be (1) accompanied by a warning as described in Section 2.2 below, or (2) reformulated to contain no more than 1,000 parts per million of DEHP. The warning and reformulation requirements shall apply only to Products that are distributed, marketed, sold or shipped for sale in the State of California. Products with less than 1,000 parts per million DEHP shall be considered compliant with Proposition 65. The warning requirement shall not apply to Products that are already in the stream of commerce as of the Effective Date or that Votum places into the stream of commerce within 90 days of the Effective Date.

2.2. **Warning Language**

Where required, Votum shall provide Proposition 65 warnings as follows:

(a) Votum may use either of the following warning statements in full compliance with this Section:

(1) **WARNING:** This product can expose you to chemicals including DEHP, which is known to the State of California to cause cancer and birth defects or other reproductive harm. For more information go to www.P65Warnings.ca.gov.

(2) **WARNING:** Cancer and Reproductive Harm – www.P65Warnings.ca.gov.

(b) If Votum elects to use the warning statements identified in either 2.2(a)(1) or (2), it may also include a symbol consisting of a black exclamation point in a yellow equilateral triangle with a bold black outline. Where the sign, label or

shelf tag for the product is not printed using the color yellow, the symbol may be printed in black and white. The symbol shall be placed to the left of the text of the warning, in a size no smaller than the height of the word "**WARNING**".

(c) The requirements for warnings, set forth in subsection (a) above are imposed pursuant to the terms of this Settlement Agreement. The Parties recognize that these are not the exclusive methods of providing a warning under Proposition 65 and its implementing regulations.

(d) If Proposition 65 warnings for DEHP should no longer be required, Votum shall have no further obligations pursuant to this Settlement Agreement.

(e) In the event that the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment ("OEHHA") promulgates one or more regulations requiring or permitting warning text and/or methods of transmission different than those set forth above, Votum shall be entitled to use, at their discretion, such other warning text and/or method of transmission without being deemed in breach of this Agreement.

3. **PENALTIES PURSUANT TO HEALTH & SAFETY CODE SECTION 25249.7(b)**

In settlement of all the claims referred to in this Settlement Agreement, Votum shall pay a total of \$200 in civil penalties in accordance with this Section. The penalty payment will be allocated in accordance with California Health & Safety Code section 25249.12(c)(1) & (d), with 75% of the funds remitted to the OEHHA and the remaining 25% of the penalty remitted to Ecological. Ecological's counsel shall be responsible for delivering OEHHA's portion of any penalty payment made under this Settlement Agreement.

4. REIMBURSEMENT OF FEES AND COSTS

The Parties reached an accord on the compensation due to Ecological and its counsel under the private attorney general doctrine and principles of contract law. Under these legal principles, Votum shall reimburse Ecological's counsel for fees and costs, incurred as a result of investigating and bringing this matter to Votum's attention. Votum shall pay Ecological's counsel \$9,000 for all attorneys' fees, expert and investigation fees, and related costs associated with this matter and the Notice.

5. PAYMENT INFORMATION

By July 31, 2022, Votum shall make a total payment of Nine Thousand Two Hundred Dollars (\$9,200) for the civil penalties and attorneys' fees / costs by wire transfer to Plaintiff's counsel Custodio & Dubey LLP:

Bank: Bank of America, N.A.

Routing No.: 026009593

Account No.: 325149324377

Beneficiary: Custodio & Dubey LLP

Other than this payment, each side is to bear its own attorneys' fees and costs.

6. RELEASE OF ALL CLAIMS

6.1. Release of Votum, Downstream Distributors and Upstream Vendors

This Settlement Agreement is a full, final, and binding resolution of all claims under Proposition 65 between Ecological and Votum of any violation of Proposition 65 that was or could have been asserted by Ecological against Votum. In further consideration of the promises and agreements herein contained, and for the payments to be made pursuant to Sections 3 and 4 above, Ecological, on behalf of itself, its past and current agents, representatives, attorneys,

successors and/or assignees, hereby waives all rights to institute or participate in, directly or indirectly, any form of legal action and releases all claims relating to the Products (which includes all packaging and branding versions of the Products), including, without limitation, all actions, and causes of action, in law or in equity, suits, liabilities, demands, obligations, damages, costs, fines, penalties, losses or expenses (including, but not limited to, investigation fees, expert fees and attorneys' fees) of any nature whatsoever, whether known or unknown, fixed or contingent (collectively "Claims"), against (a) Votum, (b) each of Votum's downstream distributors (including but not limited to Marshall's of CA, LLC, and its parents, subsidiaries, and affiliates), wholesalers, vendors, licensors, licensees, auctioneers, retailers, franchisees, dealers, shareholders, cooperative members, customers, owners, purchasers, users, and (c) Votum's parent companies, affiliates, subsidiaries, and their respective officers, directors, attorneys, representatives, shareholders, agents, and employees, and sister and parent entities (collectively "Releasees").

Ecological also, in its capacity, on behalf of itself, its past and current agents, representatives, attorneys, successors, and/or assignees, provides a general release herein which shall be effective as a full and final accord and satisfaction, as a bar to all actions, causes of action, obligations, costs, expenses, attorneys' fees, damages, losses, claims, liabilities and demands of any nature, character or kind, known or unknown, suspected or unsuspected, against Votum and the Releasees. Ecological acknowledges that it is familiar with California Civil Code section 1542, which provides as follows:

A GENERAL RELEASE DOES NOT EXTEND TO CLAIMS
THAT THE CREDITOR OR RELEASING PARTY DOES NOT
KNOW OR SUSPECT TO EXIST IN HIS OR HER FAVOR AT
THE TIME OF EXECUTING THE RELEASE AND THAT, IF
KNOWN BY HIM OR HER, WOULD HAVE MATERIALLY

AFFECTED HIS OR HER SETTLEMENT WITH THE DEBTOR
OR RELEASED PARTY.

Ecological, in its capacity only, and on behalf of itself, its past and current agents, representatives, attorneys, successors, and/or assignees expressly waives and relinquishes any and all rights and benefits which it may have under, or which may be conferred on it by the provisions of California Civil Code section 1542 as well as under any other state or federal statute or common law principle of similar effect, to the fullest extent that it may lawfully waive such rights or benefits pertaining to the released matters.

6.2. Votum's Release of Ecological

Votum waives any and all claims against Ecological, its attorneys and other representatives, for any and all actions taken or statements made (or those that could have been taken or made) by Ecological and its attorneys and other representatives, whether in the course of investigating claims or otherwise seeking enforcement of Proposition 65 against it in this matter, and/or with respect to the Products.

7. GOVERNING LAW

The terms of this Settlement Agreement shall be governed by the laws of the State of California and apply within the State of California. In the event that Proposition 65 is repealed or is otherwise rendered inapplicable by reason of law generally, or as to DEHP and/or the Products, then Votum shall have no further obligations pursuant to this Settlement Agreement.

8. NOTICES

Unless specified herein, all correspondence and notices required to be provided pursuant to this Settlement Agreement shall be in writing and personally delivered or sent by: (i) first-class, (registered or certified mail) return receipt requested; or (ii) overnight courier on any party by the other party at the following addresses:

For Votum: Tedd S. Levine, Esq.
The Law Offices of Tedd S. Levine, LLC
31 Dock Rd, Suite 162
Remsenburg, NY 11960

For Ecological: Vineet Dubey, Esq.
Custodio & Dubey LLP
445 S. Figueroa St., Suite 2520
Los Angeles, CA 90013

Any party, from time to time, may specify in writing to the other party a change of address to which all notices and other communications shall be sent.

9. COUNTERPARTS; FACSIMILE/E-SIGNATURES

This Settlement Agreement may be executed in counterparts and by facsimile or e-signatures, each of which shall be deemed an original, and all of which, when taken together, shall constitute one and the same document.

10. COMPLIANCE WITH HEALTH & SAFETY CODE SECTION 25249.7(f)

Ecological agrees to comply with the reporting form requirements referenced in California Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(f).

11. ENTIRE AGREEMENT

This Settlement Agreement contains the sole and entire agreement and understanding of the Parties with respect to the entire subject matter hereof, and all related prior discussions, negotiations, commitments and understandings. No other agreements, oral or otherwise, exist to bind either of the Parties.

12. MODIFICATION

This Settlement Agreement may be modified only by a written agreement signed by the Parties.

13. SEVERABILITY

If, subsequent to the execution of this Settlement Agreement, any provision of this Settlement Agreement is held by a court to be unenforceable, the validity of the remaining provisions shall not be affected adversely.

14. AUTHORIZATION

The undersigned are authorized to execute this Settlement Agreement on behalf of their respective Parties and have read, understood and agree to all of the terms and conditions of this Settlement Agreement.

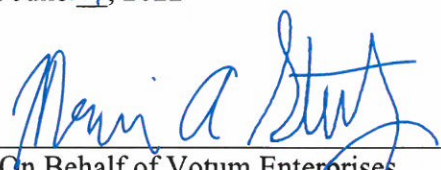
AGREED TO: Date: June <u>27</u>, 2022 By:  On Behalf of Ecological Alliance, LLC	AGREED TO: Date: June __, 2022 By: _____ On Behalf of Votum Enterprises
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