

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF
PENNSYLVANIA

Dwight Campbell v. Superintendent S.C.I. Dallas, et al.

Campbell · No. 3:25-cv-587 · Decided June 2, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania adopted a magistrate judge’s Report and Recommendation and denied Dwight Andre Campbell’s habeas corpus petition under 28 U.S.C. § 2254. The court held that the petition was barred as an abuse of the writ, while the parole-eligibility claim was unexhausted, and it overruled Campbell’s objections. The court dismissed pending motions as moot, denied a certificate of appealability, and directed the clerk to close the case.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Stephanie L. Haines
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania
DECIDED	June 2, 2026
DOCKET	3:25-cv-587
DISPOSITION	denied
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Petition for habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2254; the district court reviewed and adopted a magistrate judge's Report and Recommendation, overruled the petitioner's objections, denied the petition, denied pending motions as moot, and denied a certificate of appealability.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The district court reviewed the Report and Recommendation under Local Civil Rule 72.D.2 and applied the Rule 4 screening standard for habeas petitions. A habeas petition may be summarily dismissed when it plainly appears from the petition and attached exhibits that the petitioner is not entitled to relief.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished district court memorandum order; precedential status not stated.
PARTIES	Dwight Campbell v. Superintendent S.C.I. Dallas, District Attorney of Blair County, Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office

TOPICS

federal habeas corpus

post-conviction relief

successive petitions

pleadings

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

federal habeas corpus

post-conviction relief

civil procedure

constitutional law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the district court had jurisdiction over Campbell's state habeas applications under 28 U.S.C. §§ 2241 and 2254.
2. Whether the district court was required to obtain Campbell's consent before referring the habeas matter to a magistrate judge.
3. Whether Campbell's petition was barred by the abuse-of-the-writ doctrine because substantially similar claims had already been adjudicated.
4. Whether Campbell's parole-hearing claim was exhausted.
5. Whether new allegations raised for the first time in objections could be considered.
6. Whether Campbell was entitled to a certificate of appealability.

HOLDINGS

1. The district court had jurisdiction to entertain Campbell's applications for state habeas relief under 28 U.S.C. §§ 2241 and 2254.
2. A district court need not obtain a habeas petitioner's consent before referring the matter to a magistrate judge for a report and recommendation.
3. The petition was subject to denial under the abuse-of-the-writ doctrine because Campbell's related petitions raised claims that had already been adjudicated on the merits; a prior trial is not required for the doctrine to apply.
4. Campbell's claim that he had reached parole eligibility but had not received a parole hearing was unexhausted and could not provide a basis for federal habeas relief.
5. New allegations raised for the first time in objections to a magistrate judge's Report and Recommendation were not properly before the district court.
6. A certificate of appealability was denied because Campbell did not make a substantial showing of the denial of a constitutional right or show that reasonable jurists would debate the court's assessment.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"The language of the rule thus makes clear: where it is plainly apparent from the face of the petition that the petitioner will not prevail, the petition should be dismissed without ordering the respondent to answer."

"The abuse of the writ doctrine generally prohibits claims that were previously litigated and decided on the merits, which does not necessarily mean at a trial."

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Campbell is incarcerated at the State Correctional Institution at Dallas and sought federal habeas relief concerning three matters for which he was sentenced. He asserted that he had reached parole eligibility as of October 2025 but had not received a parole hearing because a charge remained pending. His related federal habeas cases had previously been denied, and his state-court appeal concerning the claims was quashed.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Campbell filed a pro se § 2254 habeas petition. Magistrate Judge Keith A. Pesto recommended denial of the petition for abuse of the writ, except that the claim concerning the absence of a parole hearing should be dismissed as unexhausted. Campbell objected, challenging jurisdiction, the magistrate judge's referral, the abuse-of-the-writ determination, exhaustion, and alleged false information. The district court adopted the Report and Recommendation in full, overruled the objections, denied the petition, dismissed pending motions as moot, and closed the case.

DISPOSITION

denied

CASES CITED

- Santiago Rosario v. Philadelphia Cnty., No. CV 19-6017, 2020 WL 8674051, at 2 (E.D. Pa. Sept. 24, 2020)
- Rosario v. Philadelphia Cnty., No. 19-CV-6017, 2021 WL 765781 (E.D. Pa. Feb. 26, 2021)
- Pritchard v. Wetzel, No. 13-5406, 2014 WL 199907, at *2 (E.D. Pa. Jan. 16, 2014)
- Smallwood v. Meisel, No. 13-3989, 2013 WL 6153238, at *2 (E.D. Pa. Oct. 16, 2013)
- Ogunlana v. Barraza, No. 4:22-CV-01854, 2022 WL 17814213, at *1 (M.D. Pa. Dec. 14, 2022)
- Shaw v. Wynder, No. Civ.A. 08-1863, 2008 WL 3887642 (E.D. Pa. Aug. 21, 2008)
- Craig v. Rozum, No. Civ.A. 07-5490, 2008 WL 920346 (E.D. Pa. Apr. 2, 2008)
- Watson v. Wynder, No. 2:07-cv-4066 (E.D. Pa. Nov. 27, 2007)
- Porte Yanes v. Lore, No. CIV 4:CV-07-1525, 2007 WL 2852385 (M.D. Pa. Sept. 27, 2007)
- Allen v. Perini, 26 Ohio Misc. 149, 424 F.2d 134, 140-41 (6th Cir. 1970)
- Alexander v. Corbin, No. CIV.A. 11-2727, 2011 WL 5340568, at *1 (E.D. Pa. Sept. 28, 2011)
- Tice v. Wilson, No. 1:24-CV-46-RAL, 2024 WL 1771054, at *1 (W.D. Pa. Feb. 29, 2024)
- Henry v. Smith, No. 16-5010, 2017 WL 2957819, at *3 (E.D. Pa. July 10, 2017)
- Boardley v. Grondolsky, 343 Fed. Appx. 837, 839-40 (3d Cir. 2009)
- McCleskey v. Zant, 499 U.S. 467, 489 (1991)
- Kirk v. Meyer, 279 F. Supp. 2d 617, 619 (E.D. Pa. 2003)
- Slack v. McDaniel, 529 U.S. 473, 484 (2000)