

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

Mario Mendoza v. Luz Elvia Castillo

No. 2:25-cv-05621-WLH-JPR, United States District Court for the Central District of California (July 15, 2025)

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Central District of California ordered Plaintiff Mario Mendoza to show cause why the court should exercise supplemental jurisdiction over claims under California’s Unruh Civil Rights Act and related state law. The order requires Plaintiff and counsel to identify the statutory damages sought and submit declarations addressing whether they qualify as high-frequency litigants under California law.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Central District of California
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Central District of California
DECIDED	July 15, 2025
DOCKET	2:25-cv-05621-WLH-JPR
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	After Plaintiff filed a complaint asserting an Americans with Disabilities Act claim for injunctive relief and an Unruh Civil Rights Act claim for damages, the district court issued an order to show cause regarding whether it should exercise supplemental jurisdiction over the state-law claims.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown; district-court order to show cause
PARTIES	Mario Mendoza v. Luz Elvia Castillo, et al.

TOPICS

- subject matter jurisdiction
- civil procedure
- pleadings
- public accommodations discrimination
- ada / disability

PRACTICE AREAS

- Civil procedure
- Federal jurisdiction
- Disability-access litigation
- Civil rights

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the district court should exercise supplemental jurisdiction over Plaintiff's Unruh Civil Rights Act claim and any related state-law claims.
2. Whether Plaintiff and his counsel must provide information and declarations concerning the amount of statutory damages sought and whether Plaintiff qualifies as a California high-frequency litigant.

HOLDINGS

1. Supplemental jurisdiction is discretionary rather than a plaintiff's right, and a district court may decline to exercise it under the circumstances identified in 28 U.S.C. § 1367(c), while weighing judicial economy, convenience, fairness, and comity.
2. The court ordered Plaintiff and counsel to respond to the order to show cause, identify the statutory damages sought, and submit declarations under penalty of perjury containing facts necessary to determine whether Plaintiff satisfies California's definition of a high-frequency litigant.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"is a doctrine of discretion, not of plaintiff's right" (at 1)

"a federal court should consider and weigh in each case, and at every stage of the litigation, the values of judicial economy, convenience, fairness, and comity." (at 2)

"the Court declines supplemental jurisdiction over Plaintiff's Unruh Act claim." (at 3)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff alleged a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act and sought injunctive relief. He also sought damages under California's Unruh Civil Rights Act and requested that the federal court exercise supplemental jurisdiction over that claim. The order indicates that the state-law claim may involve construction-related disability-access allegations and potentially implicate California's rules addressing high-frequency litigants.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The complaint invoked federal-question jurisdiction through the ADA claim and requested supplemental jurisdiction over the Unruh Act claim under 28 U.S.C. § 1367. The court did not finally decide the jurisdictional issue; instead, it ordered Plaintiff to respond within fourteen days and warned that inadequate or untimely responses could lead to declining supplemental jurisdiction and dismissal of the state-law claims.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- *Carnegie-Mellon Univ. v. Cohill*, 484 U.S. 343, 350 (1988)
- *Acri v. Varian Assocs.*, 114 F.3d 999, 1000 (9th Cir. 1997)

- Schutza v. Cuddeback, 262 F. Supp. 3d 1025, 1031 (S.D. Cal. 2017)

OPINION

Mario Mendoza v. Luz Elvia Castillo

PER CURIAM.

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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

9 CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

10 11 MARIO MENDOZA Case No. 2:25-cv-05621-WLH-JPR Plaintiff(s), 12 v. 13

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE

LUZ ELVIA CASTILLO, et al.

14 WHY THE COURT

Defendant(s). SHOULD

15 EXERCISE

16 SUPPLEMENTAL

JURISDICTION OVER THE

17 STATE LAW CLAIMS

18 19 The Complaint filed in this action asserts a claim for injunctive relief arising 20 out of an alleged violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (the “ADA”) and 21 claim for damages pursuant to California’s Unruh Civil Rights Act (the “Unruh 22 Act”), Cal. Civ. Code §§ 51-53. In the Complaint, Plaintiff requests the court 23 exercise supplemental jurisdiction over the Unruh Act claim pursuant to 24 28 U.S.C. § 1367. 25 The United States Supreme Court has recognized supplemental jurisdiction 26 “is a doctrine of discretion, not of plaintiff’s right, and that district courts can 27 2 The supplemental jurisdiction statute codifies these principles. After 3 establishing that supplemental jurisdiction encompasses “other claims” in the same 4 case or controversy as a claim within the district courts’ original jurisdiction, 5 § 1367(a), the statute confirms the discretionary nature of supplemental 6 jurisdiction by enumerating the circumstances in which district courts can refuse 7 its exercise: 8 (c) The district courts may decline to exercise supplemental jurisdiction over a claim under subsection (a) if -- 9

(1) the claim raises a novel or complex issue of State law,

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(2) the claim substantially predominates over the claim or claims

11 over which the district court has original jurisdiction, 12 (3) the district court has dismissed all claims over which it has 13 original jurisdiction, or 14 (4) in exceptional circumstances, there are other compelling reasons for declining jurisdiction. 15 16 28 U.S.C. § 1367(c). 17 Depending on a host of factors, then -- including the circumstances of the 18 particular case, the nature of the state law claims, the character of the governing 19 state law, and the relationship between the state and federal claims -- district 20 courts may decline to exercise jurisdiction over supplemental state law

claims. 21 The statute thereby reflects the understanding that, when deciding whether to 22 exercise supplemental jurisdiction, “a federal court should consider and weigh 23 in each case, and at every stage of the litigation, the values of judicial economy, 24 convenience, fairness, and comity.” *Id.* at 173 (quoting *Carnegie-Mellon Univ. 25 v. Cohill*, 484 U.S. 343, 350 (1988)); see also *Acri v. Varian Assocs.*, 114 F.3d 26 999, 1000 (9th Cir. 1997) (recognizing district courts have discretion to decline 27 2 brought under the Unruh Act to combat the influx of baseless claims and 3 vexatious litigation in the disability access litigation sphere. Cal. Code Civ. Proc. 4 § 425.50. The stricter pleading standard requires a plaintiff bringing construction- 5 access claims¹ to file a verified complaint alleging specific facts concerning the 6 plaintiff’s claim, including the specific barriers encountered or how the plaintiff 7 was deterred and each date on which the plaintiff encountered each barrier or 8 was deterred. See *id.* § 425.50(a). California also imposed a “high-frequency 9 litigant fee” in 2015 in response to the “special and unique circumstances” 10 presented by certain plaintiffs and law firms filing an outsized number of Unruh 11 Act lawsuits. Cal. Gov’t Code § 70616.5. 12 In recognition of California’s efforts to reduce the abuse of California’s 13 disability access laws, district courts within the state have determined that the 14 interests of fairness and comity counsel against exercising supplemental jurisdiction 15 over construction-access claims brought under the Unruh Act. See, e.g., *Schutza 16 v. Cuddeback* 262 F. Supp. 3d 1025, 1031 (S.D. Cal. 2017) (“[T]he Court finds it 17 would be improper to allow Plaintiff [a high frequency litigant] to use federal court 18 as an end-around to California’s pleading requirements. Therefore, as a matter of 19 20 21 1 “Construction-related accessibility claim’ means any civil claim in a civil action with respect to a place of public accommodation, including, but not limited to, a 22 claim brought under [Cal. Civ. Code] Section 51, 54, 54.1, or 55, based wholly or in part on an alleged violation of any construction-related accessibility standard, as 23 defined in paragraph (6).” Cal. Civ. Code § 55.52(a)(1). “Construction-related accessibility standard’ means a provision, standard, or regulation under state or 24 federal law requiring compliance with standards for making new construction and existing facilities accessible to persons with disabilities, including, but not 25 limited to, any provision, standard, or regulation set forth in Section 51, 54, 54.1, or 55 of this code, Section 19955.5 of the Health and Safety Code, the California 26 Building Standards Code (Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations), the federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-336; 27 I comity, and in aereference to Cahtromia § substantial interest 1n discouraging 2 unverified disability discrimination claims, the Court declines supplemental 3 jurisdiction over Plaintiff’s Unruh Act claim.”). 4 In light of the foregoing, the Court ORDERS Plaintiff to show cause in writing 5 why the court should exercise supplemental jurisdiction over the Unruh Act claim 6 and any related state law claims. See 28 U.S.C. § 1367(c). In responding to this 7 Order to Show Cause, Plaintiff shall identify the amount of statutory damages 8 || Plaintiff seeks to recover. Plaintiff and his or her counsel also shall support their || responses to the Order to Show Cause with declarations, signed under penalty 10|| of perjury, providing all facts necessary for the court to determine if they satisfy

|| the definition of a “high-frequency litigant” as provided by Cal. Code Civ. Proc. § 425.55(b)(1) & (2). 13 Plaintiff shall file a Response to this Order to Show Cause within fourteen 14|| (14) days of this Order. Failure to timely or adequately respond to this Order to 15|| Show Cause may result in the court declining to exercise supplemental jurisdiction 16|| over the Unruh Act claim and any related state law claims and dismissing such 17|| claim or claims without further notice, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1367(c). The || Court may set a hearing on the Order to Show Cause after reviewing the 19|| parties’ responses, if necessary. 20 21 IT IS SO ORDERED. 22 24 |/Dated: July 15, 2025
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26 UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE
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