

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
VIRGINIA, NORFOLK DIVISION

Derek J. Stephens v. Chadwick Dotson

Stephens v. Dotson · No. 2:24cv170 · Decided February 26, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia grants the respondent’s motion to dismiss a pro se petition for a writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2254. The court adopts the magistrate judge’s Report and Recommendation, dismisses the petition with prejudice, enters judgment for the respondent, and declines to issue a certificate of appealability.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Norfolk Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Arenda L. Wright Allen
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Norfolk Division
DECIDED	February 26, 2026
DOCKET	2:24cv170
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Petitioner's 28 U.S.C. § 2254 habeas petition was referred to a magistrate judge, who recommended granting Respondent's motion to dismiss and denying and dismissing the petition with prejudice. Neither party filed objections, and the district court adopted and approved the Report and Recommendation.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The district court reviewed the magistrate judge's Report and Recommendation under 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(B)-(C), Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 72(b), and Local Civil Rule 72. The court also applied the substantial-showing standard for a certificate of appealability under 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c).
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished district court final order; precedential status not stated in the source.
PARTIES	Derek J. Stephens v. Chadwick Dotson

TOPICS

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PRACTICE AREAS

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QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Respondent's motion to dismiss the petition for a writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2254 should be granted.
2. Whether Petitioner made a substantial showing of the denial of a constitutional right sufficient to warrant a certificate of appealability.

HOLDINGS

1. The court granted Respondent's motion to dismiss and denied and dismissed Petitioner's habeas petition with prejudice by adopting and approving the magistrate judge's Report and Recommendation in its entirety.
2. The court declined to issue a certificate of appealability because Petitioner failed to make a substantial showing of the denial of a constitutional right.

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

On August 9, 2005, Petitioner was sentenced in the Circuit Court for the City of Portsmouth to thirty-five years and nine months of incarceration for first-degree murder, use of a firearm in the commission of a felony, grand larceny, and burglary. In his federal habeas petition, he alleged that certain amendments to the Virginia Code violated his federal rights. The district court resolved the petition by adopting the magistrate judge's recommendation to grant the motion to dismiss.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Petitioner filed a petition for a writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2254, and Respondent moved to dismiss. The magistrate judge issued a Report and Recommendation on December 5, 2025, recommending that the motion to dismiss be granted and the petition be denied and dismissed with prejudice. After receiving no objections, the district court adopted the Report and Recommendation, granted the motion, dismissed the petition with prejudice, entered judgment for Respondent, and declined to issue a certificate of appealability.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Miller-El v. Cockrell, 537 U.S. 322, 335-36 (2003)

