

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF KANSAS

Blakely v. Crouse

Case No. 2:26-cv-02274-HLT-ADM · No. 2:26-cv-02274-HLT-ADM · Decided June 3, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Kansas adopted a magistrate judge’s report and recommendation and dismissed Michele Blakely’s Bivens action against Judge Toby Crouse. The court held that it lacked subject-matter jurisdiction over Blakely’s collateral challenge to rulings in a prior federal case and that any independent damages claim was barred by absolute judicial immunity. The court denied a motion to supplement, certified that an appeal would not be taken in good faith, and closed the case.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Kansas
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Holly L. Teeter
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Kansas
DECIDED	June 3, 2026
DOCKET	2:26-cv-02274-HLT-ADM
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff proceeding pro se and in forma pauperis filed a Bivens action for damages against a federal district judge based on rulings in an earlier federal case. A magistrate judge recommended dismissal, Plaintiff objected and moved to supplement the record, and the district court reviewed the objections de novo, adopted the recommendation, denied supplementation, and dismissed the case.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The district court reviews de novo those portions of a magistrate judge’s report and recommendation to which a written objection is made. Complaints filed by plaintiffs proceeding in forma pauperis may be screened and dismissed if they fail to state a claim or fall within another statutory ground for dismissal under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2) (B).
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court order

TOPICS

subject matter jurisdiction

civil procedure

due process

constitutional law

appellate procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

constitutional law

civil rights

judicial immunity

appellate procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the district court had subject-matter jurisdiction over Plaintiff's action insofar as it sought to challenge rulings entered by another federal judge in a prior case.
2. Whether Plaintiff's constitutional framing of her claims created an independent claim rather than an impermissible collateral attack on the prior judgment.
3. Whether absolute judicial immunity barred Plaintiff's damages claims against Judge Crouse for acts performed in his judicial capacity.
4. Whether Plaintiff's motion to supplement the record should be granted.
5. Whether any appeal should be certified as not taken in good faith.

HOLDINGS

1. A district court lacks subject-matter jurisdiction to review or collaterally attack rulings entered by another federal judge in a prior federal action; such challenges must be pursued through the applicable trial-level postjudgment procedures or appeal.
2. Absolute judicial immunity bars damages claims against a judge for acts performed in the judge's judicial capacity unless the acts were nonjudicial or taken in the complete absence of all jurisdiction.
3. The appeal was not in good faith and was certified as frivolous, so Plaintiff was denied in forma pauperis status for purposes of appeal.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"Plaintiff does not get another bite at the apple at the district court level."

"Entering an order is a judicial act."

"judicial immunity is not overcome by allegations of bad faith or malice."

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff challenged rulings entered by Judge Crouse in her prior federal action, including the removal of her state-court case, confirmation of an arbitration award, and dismissal of claims against CarMax. She alleged that Judge Crouse acted without subject-matter jurisdiction, entered a void judgment, and violated her due process rights. She sought \$250,000 in damages and punitive damages against Judge Crouse in his individual capacity.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff previously sued American Credit Acceptance, LLC and CarMax Auto Superstores, Inc. in a case that was removed to federal court and dismissed by Judge Crouse after confirmation of an arbitration award and

application of claim and issue preclusion. The Tenth Circuit affirmed, rejecting Plaintiff's challenges to removal, subject-matter jurisdiction, arbitration, and due process. Plaintiff thereafter sought relief from judgment and certiorari unsuccessfully, filed another motion for relief that was denied, and filed a second appeal that was dismissed for failure to prosecute. Plaintiff then filed this action against Judge Crouse, and the magistrate judge recommended dismissal for lack of subject-matter jurisdiction and judicial immunity.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Hall v. Bellmon, 935 F.2d 1106, 1110 (10th Cir. 1991)
- Price v. Kansas, 2016 WL 4500910, at *1 (D. Kan. 2016)
- Summers v. Utah, 927 F.2d 1165, 1167 (10th Cir. 1991)
- Wenger v. Severson, 2025 WL 2576953, at *4 (D. Kan. 2025)
- Blakely v. CarMax Auto Superstores, Inc., 2024 WL 4891269 (10th Cir. 2024)
- Mireles v. Waco, 502 U.S. 9, 9-12 (1991)
- Coppedge v. United States, 369 U.S. 438, 444-45 (1962)