

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF  
CALIFORNIA

Steven Oscar Austin v. Unknown

Austin v. Unknown · No. 2:25-cv-2054 DAD CSK P · Decided December 5, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States Magistrate Judge recommends denying Steven Oscar Austin’s motion for a temporary restraining order in his 28 U.S.C. § 2254 habeas proceeding. The recommendation concludes that Austin’s habeas claims are unexhausted, that many asserted conditions-of-confinement claims must instead be brought under a civil rights action, and that the remaining access-to-courts allegations do not establish an inability to litigate the case.

CASE DETAILS

|                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| COURT                 | United States District Court for the Eastern District of California                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| WRITING FOR THE COURT | Chi Soo Kim                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| JURISDICTION          | United States District Court for the Eastern District of California                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| DECIDED               | December 5, 2025                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| DOCKET                | 2:25-cv-2054 DAD CSK P                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| DISPOSITION           | other                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| PROCEDURAL POSTURE    | State prisoner proceeding pro se in a 28 U.S.C. § 2254 habeas action moved for a temporary restraining order. The magistrate judge issued findings and recommendations recommending denial of the motion, subject to review by the assigned district judge.                                                                |
| STANDARD OF REVIEW    | Temporary restraining orders and preliminary injunctions are governed by substantially identical standards. The movant must establish a likelihood of success on the merits, a likelihood of irreparable harm absent relief, that the balance of equities favors relief, and that an injunction is in the public interest. |
| PRECEDENTIAL VALUE    | Unknown; findings and recommendations pending review by the assigned district judge.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| PARTIES               | Steven Oscar Austin v. Unknown                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

TOPICS

federal habeas corpus

injunctions

post-conviction relief

prisoners rights

civil rights

## PRACTICE AREAS

federal habeas corpus

prisoners rights

civil rights

injunctions

## QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether petitioner demonstrated entitlement to a temporary restraining order under the federal injunction standard.
2. Whether unexhausted habeas claims supported a likelihood of success on the merits for purposes of temporary injunctive relief.
3. Whether claims challenging prison conditions were properly brought in a habeas action rather than a civil rights action.
4. Whether allegations concerning denial of legal property, access to courts, and mail tampering justified temporary injunctive relief in the habeas action.

## HOLDINGS

1. Petitioner was not entitled to a temporary restraining order because he failed to establish the required likelihood of success on the merits and otherwise failed to demonstrate grounds for relief.
2. Claims challenging conditions of confinement, rather than the fact or length of custody, are properly brought in a civil rights action and not in a habeas petition.

## KEY QUOTATIONS

*“Injunctive relief is “an extraordinary remedy that may only be awarded upon a clear showing that the [petitioner] is entitled to such relief.”” (slip op. at 1)*

*“a civil rights action is the “proper remedy” for a petitioner asserting “a constitutional challenge to the conditions of his prison life, but not to the fact or length of his custody.”” (slip op. at 3)*

## FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Petitioner, a state prisoner, alleged that he was falsely imprisoned, transferred among prisons, assaulted, falsely labeled, denied or improperly provided medical treatment, deprived of property and identifying documents, and denied access to legal materials, courts, and mail. He sought return of property, restitution, release, cessation of transfers, discovery, and an emergency hearing. The court noted that the underlying habeas claims were unexhausted and that many allegations challenged conditions of confinement rather than the fact or duration of custody.

## PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Petitioner filed a petition for writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2254 and a motion for a temporary restraining order. The court separately determined that petitioner's habeas claims were unexhausted and granted petitioner thirty days to seek a stay while exhausting those claims. The court recommended denying the

temporary restraining order because petitioner could not show a likelihood of success on unexhausted claims and because many of the requested claims concerned prison conditions that must be brought, if at all, in a civil rights action.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Winter v. Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc., 555 U.S. 7, 20, 22 (2008)
- Stuhlberg International Sales Co. v. John D. Brush & Co., 240 F.3d 832, 839 n.7 (9th Cir. 2001)
- Klein v. City of San Clemente, 584 F.3d 1196, 1201 (9th Cir. 2009)
- Brady v. Maryland, 373 U.S. 83 (1963)
- Miranda v. Arizona, 384 U.S. 436 (1966)
- Preiser v. Rodriguez, 411 U.S. 475, 499 (1973)
- Rhines v. Weber, 544 U.S. 269 (2005)
- Martinez v. Ylst, 951 F.2d 1153 (9th Cir. 1991)

OPINION

Unknown

PER CURIAM.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

9 FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

10

11 STEVEN OSCAR AUSTIN, No. 2:25-cv-2054 DAD CSK P

12 Petitioner,

13 v. FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

14 UNKNOWN,

15 Respondent. 16

17 I. INTRODUCTION

18 Petitioner is a state prisoner, proceeding without counsel, with a petition for writ of habeas corpus pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2254. Pending before the Court is petitioner’s motion for a temporary restraining order. (ECF No. 17.) For the following reasons, this Court recommends that petitioner’s motion for a temporary restraining order be denied.

22 II. LEGAL STANDARD FOR TEMPORARY RESTRAINING ORDER

23 Injunctive relief is “an extraordinary remedy that may only be awarded upon a clear showing that the [petitioner] is entitled to such relief.” Winter v. Natural Res. Def. Council, Inc., 25 555 U.S. 7, 22 (2008) (citation omitted). The standard governing the issuing of a temporary 26

restraining order is “substantially identical” to the standard for issuing a preliminary injunction. 27 See *Stuhlbarg Int’l Sales Co. v. John D. Brush & Co.*, 240 F.3d 832, 839 n.7 (9th Cir. 2001). To 28 obtain either form of injunctive relief, the moving party must show: (1) a likelihood of success on 1 the merits; (2) a likelihood of irreparable harm to the moving party in the absence of preliminary 2 relief; (3) that the balance of equities tips in favor of the moving party; and (4) that an injunction 3 is in the public interest. See *Winter*, 555 U.S. at 20 (2008). A plaintiff seeking a preliminary 4 injunction bears the burden of proving these elements. See *Klein v. City of San Clemente*, 584 F.3d 1196, 1201 (9th Cir. 2009).

### 6 III. DISCUSSION

7 The petition appears to raise the following claims: (1) conviction obtained in violation of 8 the Fourth Amendment; (2) ineffective assistance of counsel; (3) violation of *Brady v. Maryland*, 9 373 U.S. 83 (1963), Fourteenth Amendment right to due process and equal protection; and 10 (4) violation of Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination, the Takings Clause, double 11 jeopardy and *Miranda v. Arizona*, 384 U.S. 436 (1966). (ECF No. 16 at 4-5.) This Court 12 separately issued an order finding that none of petitioner’s claims are exhausted. (See ECF No. 13 18.) In this order, the Court granted petitioner thirty days to file a motion to stay this action while 14 petitioner exhausts his claims pursuant to *Rhines v. Weber*, 544 U.S. 269 (2005). 15 In the pending motion for a temporary restraining order, filed largely on a civil rights 16 complaint form, petitioner raises six claims. In claim one, petitioner alleges violation of the 17 Fourth Amendment, Fifth Amendment and Fourteenth Amendment. (ECF No. 17 at 2.) 18 Petitioner alleges that he was falsely imprisoned under a name that is not his name and that he has 19 been transferred from prison to prison against his will so that he is “hidden” in the system. (Id.) 20 Petitioner claims that he is falsely imprisoned and has suffered multiple injuries from targeted 21 assaults based on false rumors. (Id.) In claim two, petitioner alleges violation of the Eighth 22 Amendment, First Amendment and Fourteenth Amendment. (Id. at 18.) Petitioner claims that 23 false information regarding petitioner has been disseminated, including false information that 24 petitioner is transgender, has sex crimes convictions, is gay and is a federal informant. (Id.) In 25 claim three, petitioner alleges violation of the First Amendment, Fourth Amendment, Fifth 26 Amendment and Fourteenth Amendment. (Id. at 4.) Petitioner claims that his property was 27 transferred without his knowledge and/or approval. (Id.) Petitioner claims that he is being held 28 against his will while he attempts to obtain his property, which contains proof of his claims. (Id.) 1 In claim four, petitioner alleges violation of the First Amendment, Fourth Amendment, Eighth 2 Amendment and Fourteenth Amendment. (Id. at 5.) Petitioner claims that he was arrested 3 without a warrant and without probable cause. (Id.) Petitioner appears to claim that based on his 4 false arrest, “higher ups” maliciously prosecuted petitioner, slandered petitioner and declared 5 petitioner mentally ill in order to discredit petitioner and cover up this illegality. (Id.) Petitioner 6 claims that his identifying documents have been taken from him. (Id.) Petitioner claims that he 7 has been illegally drugged in order to be transported against his will. (Id.) Petitioner claims that 8 he has

been prescribed medications he does not need. (Id.) Petitioner claims that he has been 9 denied proper medical treatment. (Id.) In claim five, petitioner alleges violation of the Fourth 10 Amendment, Fifth Amendment, Fourteenth Amendment and Thirteenth Amendment. (Id. at 6.) 11 Petitioner claims that he was arrested without probable cause and that he is factually innocent. 12 (Id.) Petitioner claims that he was maliciously prosecuted. (Id.) In claim six, petitioner alleges 13 violation of the First Amendment, Fourth Amendment, Fifth Amendment and Fourteenth 14 Amendment. (Id. at 7.) Petitioner claims that he has been denied access to the court and his mail 15 has been tampered with. (Id.) Petitioner claims that his legal property was “provided to others” 16 and that his address was fraudulently concealed to prevent adequate mail delivery. (Id.) 17 In his request for relief, petitioner requests the return of all property, an award of costs, 18 mandatory restitution, an order for his release, an order to cease all transfers, an emergency 19 hearing to provide proof and an order for discovery. (Id. at 8.) 20 To the extent petitioner seeks injunctive relief regarding the merits of the claims raised in 21 the habeas corpus petition, petitioner fails to demonstrate a likelihood of success on the merits of 22 these claims because petitioner’s claims are not exhausted. (See ECF No. 18.) For this reason, 23 petitioner’s motion for a temporary restraining order should be denied. It also appears that many 24 of the claims raised in the pending motion are improperly raised in this habeas corpus petition as 25 they concern conditions of confinement. See *Preiser v. Rodriguez*, 411 U.S. 475, 499 (1973) (a 26 civil rights action is the “proper remedy” for a petitioner asserting “a constitutional challenge to 27 the conditions of his prison life, but not to the fact or length of his custody.”). For example, 28 petitioner’s claims alleging inadequate medical care and that he was placed in danger as a result 1 | of being falsely labeled transgender, gay, convicted of sex crimes and a federal informant concern 2 || conditions of confinement and should be raised in a civil rights action. Finally, petitioner may 3 || file a motion in the instant action raising claims alleging denial of access to legal property, denial 4 || of access to the courts and mail tampering if petitioner demonstrates that these conditions impact 5 || his ability to litigate the instant action. The pending motion fails to demonstrate petitioner’s 6 || inability to litigate the instant action based on the alleged denial of access to legal property, denial 7 || of access to the courts or mail tampering. Accordingly, petitioner’s motion for a temporary 8 | restraining order on these grounds should be denied. 9 Accordingly, IT IS HEREBY RECOMMENDED that petitioner’s motion for a temporary 10 || restraining order (ECF No. 17) be denied. 11 These findings and recommendations are submitted to the United States District Judge 12 || assigned to the case, pursuant to the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1). Within fourteen days 13 || after being served with these findings and recommendations, petitioner may file written 14 || objections with the court and serve a copy on all parties. Such a document should be captioned 15 || “Objections to Magistrate Judge’s Findings and Recommendations.” Petitioner is advised that 16 || failure to file objections within the specified time may waive the right to appeal the District 17 || Court’s order. *Martinez v. Ylst*, 951 F.2d 1153 (9th Cir. 1991). 18 19 | Dated: December 5, 2025 ry \_- Aan Spe |

CHI SOO KIM

71 UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

22 53 Aust2054.156/2 24 25 26 27 28

---

Retrieved from lawtools.ai · <https://lawtools.ai/cases/state/united-states-district-court-for-the-eastern-district-of-california-united-states-district-court-for/2025/steven-oscar-austin-v-unknown-7py3d4ps>