

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF
ILLINOIS

Dakota Keller v. Judge Kelley, Aaron Jones, and Scott Schmidt

Keller · No. 26-cv-00057-SMY · Decided February 12, 2026

SUMMARY

The court dismissed Dakota Keller’s petition for a writ of mandamus challenging his Illinois state-court sentence. It held that 28 U.S.C. §§ 1361 and 1651 do not authorize federal mandamus relief against state officials and that the court therefore lacked subject-matter jurisdiction. The dismissal was not counted as a strike under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g) and did not preclude Keller from pursuing relief in state court or another appropriate forum.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Southern District of Illinois
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Staci M. Yandle
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Southern District of Illinois
DECIDED	February 12, 2026
DOCKET	26-cv-00057-SMY
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	A state prisoner filed a federal petition for mandamus challenging the legality of his Illinois state-court sentence. The district court dismissed the petition at preliminary screening for lack of subject matter jurisdiction.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Preliminary screening under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A; the court assessed whether the petition was frivolous, malicious, failed to state a claim, or named an immune party, and whether subject matter jurisdiction existed.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished, nonprecedential district court memorandum and order
PARTIES	Dakota Keller v. Judge Kelley, Aaron Jones, Scott Schmidt

TOPICS

- subject matter jurisdiction
- civil procedure
- post-conviction relief
- sentencing

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

federal jurisdiction

mandamus

post-conviction relief

criminal sentencing

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether a federal district court may issue a writ of mandamus under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1361 or 1651 against state judicial and state-court officials.
2. Whether the district court had subject matter jurisdiction over Keller's petition challenging his state-court sentence.

HOLDINGS

1. Neither 28 U.S.C. § 1361 nor 28 U.S.C. § 1651 authorizes a federal court to issue a writ of mandamus against state officials.
2. The district court lacked subject matter jurisdiction over Keller's petition for mandamus challenging actions by Illinois state officials, and the petition was dismissed.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Neither authorizes federal courts to grant mandamus relief against state officials.” (Discussion)

“The Petition of Mandamus (Doc. 1) is **DISMISSED** for lack of subject matter jurisdiction.” (Disposition)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Dakota Keller, an Illinois Department of Corrections inmate, was serving a four-year sentence at 50 percent for resisting a peace officer, a Class 4 felony. He alleged that the Illinois sentencing court failed to advise him on the record that he was eligible for an extended-term sentence and that the respondents gave him inconsistent information about the felony classification and sentence. He sought immediate release from custody based on those alleged sentencing errors.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Keller filed a handwritten Petition of Mandamus under 735 ILCS § 5/14-101 et seq., seeking immediate release based on alleged sentencing errors in an undisclosed Illinois criminal case. The district court screened the petition under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A and dismissed it because federal mandamus statutes do not authorize mandamus relief against state officials. The court directed the Clerk to close the case and enter judgment.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- *Leuvano v. State Bar of Tex.*, No. 11-33-GPM, 2011 WL 334291, at *1 (S.D. Ill. Jan. 29, 2011)
- *In re Campbell*, 264 F.3d 730 (7th Cir. 2001)

