

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

David Lee Lucas v. Placer County Superior Court, et al.

No. 2:24-cv-01336-DC-AC (HC), United States District Court for the Eastern District of California (January 5, 2026)

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California adopted the magistrate judge’s findings and recommendations and dismissed David Lee Lucas’s habeas corpus petition challenging his commitment under the Sexually Violent Predator Act. The court declined to issue a certificate of appealability and directed the clerk to close the case.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Dena Coggins
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	January 5, 2026
DOCKET	2:24-cv-01336-DC-AC (HC)
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Petitioner sought federal habeas relief challenging his civil commitment under California's Sexually Violent Predator Act. After a magistrate judge issued findings and recommendations recommending dismissal, petitioner filed untimely objections. The district court conducted de novo review, adopted the findings and recommendations in full, dismissed the petition, and declined to issue a certificate of appealability.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	De novo review under 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(C) and Local Rule 304.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished
PARTIES	David Lee Lucas v. Placer County Superior Court, et al.

TOPICS

- federal habeas corpus
- post-conviction relief
- motions to dismiss
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

federal habeas corpus

post-conviction relief

civil procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the magistrate judge's findings and recommendations should be adopted despite petitioner's untimely objections.
2. Whether the pending habeas petition should be dismissed on the procedural grounds identified in the findings and recommendations.
3. Whether a certificate of appealability should issue after dismissal of the habeas petition.

HOLDINGS

1. The findings and recommendations were supported by the record and proper analysis, and petitioner's objections did not provide a basis for rejecting them; accordingly, the court adopted the findings and recommendations in full.
2. The habeas petition was dismissed on procedural grounds.
3. A certificate of appealability was denied because reasonable jurists would not find the court's determination that the petition must be dismissed debatable or wrong.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Where, as here, the court denies habeas relief on procedural grounds without reaching the underlying constitutional claims, the court should issue a certificate of appealability if “jurists of reason would find it debatable whether the petition states valid claim of the denial of a constitutional right and that jurists of reason would find it debatable whether the district court was correct in its procedural ruling.”” (at 1)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

David Lee Lucas was a civil detainee who filed a federal habeas petition challenging his commitment under the Sexually Violent Predator Act. The district court reviewed the magistrate judge's findings and recommendations and Lucas's untimely objections. The court concluded that the recommendations were supported by the record and proper analysis.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Lucas filed an application for a writ of habeas corpus. The matter was referred to a magistrate judge, who filed findings and recommendations on December 20, 2024. Lucas filed untimely objections on January 31, 2025. The district court found that the objections did not warrant rejection of the recommendations, adopted them in full, dismissed the petition, denied a certificate of appealability, and closed the case.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Miller-El v. Cockrell, 537 U.S. 322, 335-36 (2003)
- Slack v. McDaniel, 529 U.S. 473, 484 (2000)

OPINION

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT 9 FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA 10 11 DAVID LEE LUCAS, No. 2:24-cv-01336-DC-AC (HC) 12 Petitioner, 13 v.
ORDER ADOPTING FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 14 PLACER COUNTY
SUPERIOR COURT, et al., (Doc. No. 8) 15 Respondent. 16 17 Petitioner David Lee Lucas, a civil
detainee proceeding pro se, filed an application for a 18 writ of habeas corpus challenging his
commitment under the Sexually Violent Predator Act.

The 19 matter was referred to a United States Magistrate Judge pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)
(B) and 20 Local Rule 302. 21 On December 20, 2024, the magistrate judge filed findings and
recommendations herein, 22 which were served on Petitioner and contained notice to Petitioner
that any objections to the 23 findings and recommendations were to be filed within twenty-one
days.

(Doc. No. 8.) On January 24 31, 2025, Petitioner filed untimely objections to the findings and
recommendations. (Doc. No. 9.) 25 The court reviewed Petitioner's objections and finds they do
not provide a basis upon which to 26 reject the findings and recommendations. 27 In accordance
with the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(C) and Local Rule 304, this 28 court has conducted a
de novo review of this case.

Having carefully reviewed the entire file, the 1 | court finds the findings and recommendations to
be supported by the record and by proper 2 | analysis. 3 Having concluded that the pending
petition must be dismissed, the court also declines to 4 | issue certificate of appealability. A
petitioner seeking writ of habeas corpus has no absolute 5 | right to appeal; he may appeal only in
limited circumstances.

See 28 U.S.C. § 2253; Miller-El v. 6 | Cockrell, 537 U.S. 322, 335-36 (2003). If a court denies a
petitioner's petition, the court may only 7 | issue a certificate of appealability when a petitioner
makes a substantial showing of the denial of 8 | a constitutional right. 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c)(2).
Where, as here, the court denies habeas relief on 9 | procedural grounds without reaching the
underlying constitutional claims, the court should issue a 10 | certificate of appealability if “jurists
of reason would find it debatable whether the petition states 11 | valid claim of the denial of a
constitutional right and that jurists of reason would find it 12 | debatable whether the district court
was correct in its procedural ruling.” Slack v. McDaniel, 529 13 | U.S. 473, 484 (2000).

In the present case, the court finds that reasonable jurists would not find the 14 | court's
determination that the pending petition must be dismissed to be debatable or wrong. Thus, 15 | the

court declines to issue a certificate of appealability. 16 Accordingly, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that: 17 1.

The findings and recommendations filed on December 20, 2024 (Doc. No. 8) are 18 ADOPTED IN FULL; 19 2. Petitioner's application for a writ of a habeas corpus (Doc. No. 1) is DISMISSED; 20 3. The court declines to issue a certificate of appealability; and 21 4.

The Clerk of the Court is directed to close this case. 22 IT IS SO ORDERED. Dated: _ January 4, 2026 IVs Os 24 Dena Coggins United States District Judge 25 26 27 28