

SUPREME COURT OF OHIO

Seelbaugh v. Montgomery Cty. Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations Div.

2025-Ohio-5297 · No. 2025-0070 · Decided December 2, 2025

SUMMARY

The Supreme Court of Ohio affirmed dismissal of Christopher P. Seelbaugh’s prohibition action challenging a domestic-relations magistrate’s contempt finding and the county child-support-enforcement agency’s default determination. The court held that the domestic-relations court was not sui juris, that neither respondent patently and unambiguously lacked jurisdiction, and that Seelbaugh had adequate remedies through administrative hearings, objections to the magistrate’s decision, and appeal.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Supreme Court of Ohio
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Per Curiam; Chief Justice Kennedy; Justice Fischer; Justice DeWine; Justice Brunner; Justice Deters; Justice Hawkins; Justice Shanahan
JURISDICTION	Supreme Court of Ohio
DECIDED	December 2, 2025
DOCKET	2025-0070
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Appeal as of right from the Second District Court of Appeals' dismissal under Civ.R. 12(B)(6) of an original action seeking a writ of prohibition.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	De novo review of a court of appeals' decision granting a Civ.R. 12(B) (6) motion to dismiss a writ action. Dismissal is proper when, accepting the factual allegations as true, it appears beyond doubt that the relator can prove no set of facts entitling him to relief in prohibition.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published and precedential Supreme Court of Ohio opinion
PARTIES	Christopher P. Seelbaugh, grantor/trustee of the Christopher Paul Seelbaugh Revocable Living Trust v. Montgomery County Court of

TOPICS

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writ of certiorari

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QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the Montgomery County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations Division, was a proper respondent in a prohibition action.
2. Whether Seelbaugh showed that the domestic-relations court lacked subject-matter or personal jurisdiction over his divorce and child-support proceedings.
3. Whether alleged due-process violations arising from the appointment and compensation of a magistrate or the CSEA's contractual arrangements established a patent and unambiguous lack of jurisdiction supporting prohibition.
4. Whether Seelbaugh had adequate remedies in the ordinary course of law to challenge the CSEA's default finding and the magistrate's contempt decision.
5. Whether the court of appeals properly dismissed the action for failure to pay a security deposit or file an affidavit of indigency.

HOLDINGS

1. A court of common pleas, including its domestic-relations division, is not sui juris and cannot be sued; naming it as a respondent is sufficient grounds for dismissal as to that entity.
2. Seelbaugh failed to establish that the domestic-relations court or the CSEA patently and unambiguously lacked jurisdiction over his divorce and child-support matters.
3. Alleged due-process violations concerning the magistrate's appointment, compensation, or the CSEA's contractual arrangements do not establish that either respondent patently and unambiguously lacked jurisdiction.
4. Seelbaugh had adequate remedies to challenge both the CSEA's default finding and the magistrate's contempt decision, so he could not satisfy the adequate-remedy element of prohibition.
5. The court of appeals properly dismissed the action for failure to comply with its local rule requiring payment of a security deposit or submission of an affidavit of indigency.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“By naming the domestic-relations court as a respondent, Seelbaugh named an entity that cannot be sued.” (¶

8)

“a person cannot shield himself from a court’s jurisdiction by creating a trust.” (¶ 14)

“An opportunity to file objections to a magistrate’s decision qualifies as an adequate remedy in the ordinary course of the law.” (¶ 23)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Seelbaugh was a defendant in Montgomery County domestic-relations divorce proceedings and was subject to a child-support order. After his former spouse sought contempt for nonpayment, a domestic-relations magistrate found him in contempt, and the CSEA issued income withholdings based on his default. Seelbaugh attributed the alleged jurisdictional and due-process defects to service on a trust, the existence of the trust, and contractual arrangements involving the domestic-relations court, magistrates, and the CSEA.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Seelbaugh filed a prohibition action in the Second District seeking to vacate a domestic-relations magistrate's contempt decision and the CSEA's finding that he was in default on a child-support order. The court of appeals granted the respondents' motions to dismiss. The Supreme Court of Ohio affirmed, holding that the domestic-relations court was not a proper respondent, that Seelbaugh failed to show a patent and unambiguous lack of jurisdiction, that he had adequate remedies in the ordinary course of law, and that he failed to comply with the appellate court's security-deposit or indigency-affidavit requirement.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Cramer v. Petrie, 1994-Ohio-404, ¶ 15
- State ex rel. Martre v. Cheney, 2023-Ohio-4594, ¶ 16
- State ex rel. Smith v. Hamilton Cty. Court of Common Pleas, 2024-Ohio-2779, ¶ 7
- In re Application of Black Fork Wind Energy, L.L.C., 2013-Ohio-5478, ¶ 22
- State ex rel. Reynolds v. Kirby, 2023-Ohio-782, ¶ 9
- State ex rel. Rarden v. Butler Cty. Common Pleas Court, 2023-Ohio-3742, ¶ 10
- Sec. Credit Servs., L.L.C. v. Miller, 2024-Ohio-3371, ¶¶ 22-24, 26
- Young v. Young, 2023-Ohio-3918, ¶¶ 6-9, 20-25
- SoFi Lending Corp. v. Williams, 2024-Ohio-1166, ¶¶ 5, 7-10, 19, 22
- Furr v. Ruehlman, 2023-Ohio-481, ¶¶ 2, 10-11
- Ostanek v. Ostanek, 2021-Ohio-2319, ¶ 36
- State ex rel. Gray v. Kimbler, 2022-Ohio-3937, ¶ 14
- LG Chem, Ltd. v. Goulding, 2022-Ohio-2065, ¶ 9
- Lundeen v. Turner, 2021-Ohio-1533, ¶ 17
- State ex rel. Suburban Constr. Co. v. Skok, 1999-Ohio-329, ¶ 9

- State ex rel. Ames v. Ondrey, 2023-Ohio-4188, ¶ 14
- State ex rel. Drouhard v. Morrow Cty. Bd. of Commrs., 2020-Ohio-4160, ¶ 19
- State ex rel. Jones v. Paschke, 2024-Ohio-135, ¶ 17
- State ex rel. Gilmour Realty, Inc. v. Mayfield Hts., 2008-Ohio-3181, ¶ 14
- State ex rel. Nalls v. Russo, 2002-Ohio-4907, ¶¶ 27, 30
- State ex rel. Smith v. Hall, 2016-Ohio-1052, ¶ 8
- State ex rel. O'Malley v. Collier-Williams, 2018-Ohio-3154, ¶ 13

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