

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF
TENNESSEE, EASTERN DIVISION

Billie Joe Chapman v. Demetric Godfrey, Warden

No. 1:24-cv-01106-STA-jay (W.D. Tenn. Feb. 9, 2026) · No. 1:24-cv-01106-STA-jay · Decided February 9, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Western District of Tennessee denies Billie Joe Chapman’s motions to appoint counsel and recuse the judge, construes his amended petition as a motion to amend, and denies leave to amend. The Court also denies Chapman’s 28 U.S.C. § 2254 petition challenging the voluntariness of his guilty plea and alleged forced administration of medication, concluding that the claims do not warrant habeas relief. The Court denies a certificate of appealability and leave to appeal in forma pauperis and certifies that an appeal would not be taken in good faith.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Western District of Tennessee, Eastern Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	S. Thomas Anderson
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Western District of Tennessee, Eastern Division
DECIDED	February 9, 2026
DOCKET	1:24-cv-01106-STA-jay
DISPOSITION	denied
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Petitioner sought federal habeas relief under 28 U.S.C. § 2254 after pleading guilty in Tennessee state court and unsuccessfully pursuing state post-conviction and state habeas remedies. The district court denied a motion to appoint counsel, denied a motion to recuse, construed a proposed amended petition as a motion to amend and denied leave to amend, denied the § 2254 petition, denied a certificate of appealability, certified that an appeal would not be taken in good faith, and denied leave to appeal in forma pauperis.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under AEDPA, relief is unavailable on a claim adjudicated on the merits in state court unless the state decision was contrary to, or involved an unreasonable application of, clearly established Supreme Court precedent, or was based on an unreasonable determination of the

facts. State factual findings are presumed correct absent clear and convincing evidence. A state-court plea-voluntariness determination supported by an adequate plea transcript receives a presumption of correctness, and the petitioner bears a heavy burden to overturn it. Procedurally defaulted claims are generally barred absent cause and prejudice or a fundamental miscarriage of justice.

PRECEDENTIAL VALUE

unpublished district court opinion

PARTIES

Billie Joe Chapman v. Demetric Godfrey, Warden

TOPICS

federal habeas corpus

post-conviction relief

procedural due process

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

federal habeas corpus

post-conviction relief

criminal procedure

constitutional law

judicial recusal

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Chapman's guilty-plea voluntariness claim warranted federal habeas relief under AEDPA.
2. Whether Chapman's claim concerning forced hospitalization, civil commitment, and medication was procedurally defaulted.
3. Whether the forced-hospitalization and medication claim was cognizable under 28 U.S.C. § 2254 or moot because it did not challenge the custody imposed by the criminal judgment.
4. Whether leave to amend should be granted for new habeas claims raised after the limitations period.
5. Whether the district judge should recuse based on alleged familial relationship, bias, and prior rulings.
6. Whether counsel should be appointed because Chapman alleged mental disability.

HOLDINGS

1. Chapman was not entitled to habeas relief because the state courts reasonably determined, based on the plea colloquy and evidentiary record, that his guilty plea was knowing, intelligent, and voluntary.
2. Chapman procedurally defaulted his claim concerning forced hospitalization, civil commitment, and medication because he did not fairly present that claim through the Tennessee appellate review process and showed neither cause and prejudice nor actual innocence.
3. The forced-hospitalization and medication claim was not cognizable under § 2254 because it did not challenge custody pursuant to the criminal judgment; any challenge to a completed period of civil commitment was also moot.
4. Leave to amend was denied because the proposed new habeas claims were untimely, did not relate back to the original petition, and amendment therefore would be futile.

5. The motion to recuse was denied because Chapman alleged no facts that would cause a reasonable, objective person to question the judge’s impartiality.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“When a state defendant brings a federal habeas petition challenging the voluntariness of his plea, the state generally satisfies its burden of showing a voluntary and intelligent plea by producing a transcript of the state court proceeding.” (Ground One analysis)

“Federal habeas relief can be granted only if a petitioner demonstrates that he “is in custody pursuant to the judgment of a State court only on the ground that he is in custody in violation of the Constitution or laws or treaties of the United States.”” (Ground Three analysis)

“Chapman’s § 2254 Petition is DENIED because Ground Three is procedurally defaulted and because Grounds One and Three lack merit.” (Conclusion)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Chapman was charged in Tennessee with theft, vandalism, burglary, aggravated burglary, and multiple firearm-possession offenses. After a competency-related evaluation found him competent to stand trial, he pleaded guilty to all charges and received an effective thirteen-year sentence. During the plea colloquy, he stated under oath that he understood his rights and sentencing exposure, was not impaired by drugs or medication, and was pleading freely and voluntarily. He later alleged that he had been forcibly hospitalized and medicated and that his plea was involuntary.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Chapman pleaded guilty to multiple Tennessee offenses and received an effective thirteen-year sentence. His state post-conviction petition was denied after an evidentiary hearing, and the Tennessee Court of Criminal Appeals affirmed; the Tennessee Supreme Court denied permission to appeal. Chapman later filed the present § 2254 petition raising claims concerning the voluntariness of his guilty plea, judicial conflicts, and forced hospitalization and medication. The court previously dismissed the conflict-of-interest ground, then denied the remaining claims, denied amendment as futile and untimely, denied recusal and appointment of counsel, and entered judgment for Respondent.

DISPOSITION

denied

CASES CITED

- Chapman v. State, No. W2022-01333-CCA-R3-PC, 2023 WL 5572932, at *1, *6 (Tenn. Crim. App. Aug. 29, 2023)
- Chapman v. Wardlow, No. 1:22-cv-01203-STA-jay, 2023 WL 9119924, at *1-*2 (W.D. Tenn. Dec. 6, 2023)
- United States v. Sammons, 918 F.2d 592, 599 (6th Cir. 1990)
- United States v. Adams, 38 F.3d 1217, 1994 WL 589509, at *2 (6th Cir. 1994)

- *Wade v. Knoxville Utilities Bd.*, 259 F.3d 452, 458 (6th Cir. 2001)
- *Woolbright v. Crews*, No. 18-5131, 2018 WL 7247245, at *4 (6th Cir. July 9, 2018)
- *Midkiff v. Adams County Regional Water District*, 409 F.3d 758, 767 (6th Cir. 2005)
- *Wiedbrauk v. Lavigne*, 174 F. App'x 993, 999-1000 (6th Cir. 2006)
- *Hill v. Mitchell*, 842 F.3d 910, 922 (6th Cir. 2016)
- *Watkins v. Stephenson*, 57 F.4th 576, 581 (6th Cir. 2023)
- *Harrington v. Richter*, 562 U.S. 86, 100 (2011)
- *Williams v. Taylor*, 529 U.S. 362, 405, 409 (2000)
- *Wood v. Allen*, 558 U.S. 290, 301 (2010)
- *Ayers v. Hudson*, 623 F.3d 301, 308 (6th Cir. 2010)
- *Moritz v. Woods*, 692 F. App'x 249, 254 (6th Cir. 2017)
- *Harris v. Booker*, 251 F. App'x 319, 322 (6th Cir. 2007)
- *Caldwell v. Mississippi*, 472 U.S. 320, 327 (1985)
- *Fox Film Corp. v. Muller*, 296 U.S. 207, 210 (1935)
- *Klinger v. Missouri*, 80 U.S. 257, 263 (1871)
- *Trevino v. Thaler*, 569 U.S. 413, 423 (2013)
- *Martinez v. Ryan*, 566 U.S. 1, 14, 16-17 (2012)
- *Balducci v. Spatny*, No. 25-3186, 2025 WL 2743906, at *2 (6th Cir. July 15, 2025)
- *Boykin v. Alabama*, 395 U.S. 238, 243 (1969)
- *Fautenberry v. Mitchell*, 515 F.3d 614, 636-37 (6th Cir. 2008)
- *King v. Dutton*, 17 F.3d 151, 154 (6th Cir. 1994)
- *Hart v. Marion Correctional Institution*, 927 F.2d 256, 259 (6th Cir. 1991)
- *United States v. Valdez*, 362 F.3d 903, 909 (6th Cir. 2004)
- *Bousley v. United States*, 523 U.S. 614, 618-19 (1998)
- *Garcia v. Johnson*, 991 F.2d 324, 326, 328 (6th Cir. 1993)
- *McAdoo v. Elo*, 365 F.3d 487, 494 (6th Cir. 2004)
- *Parke v. Raley*, 506 U.S. 20, 29 (1992)
- *Blackledge v. Allison*, 431 U.S. 63, 73-74 (1977)
- *Hayworth v. United States*, Nos. 3:18-cv-430-TAV-HBG, 3:14-cr-017-TAV-HBG-1, 2021 WL 1910084, at *13 (E.D. Tenn. May 12, 2021)
- *Williams v. Meyer*, 346 F.3d 607 (6th Cir. 2003)
- *Miller-El v. Cockrell*, 537 U.S. 322, 336 (2003)
- *Slack v. McDaniel*, 529 U.S. 473, 484 (2000)
- *Dufresne v. Palmer*, 876 F.3d 248, 252-53 (6th Cir. 2017) (per curiam)