

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Sheila-Jo Hunter Tellez v. Donald J. Proietti

Hunter Tellez v. Proietti · No. 1:24-cv-00408-KES-SKO · Decided August 4, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California adopted the magistrate judge’s findings and recommendations and dismissed Sheila-Jo Hunter Tellez’s pro se, in forma pauperis action against Donald J. Proietti without leave to amend. The court held that the Rooker-Feldman doctrine deprived it of jurisdiction to review state-court orders concerning an estate’s claimed ownership of property and rejected plaintiff’s objections.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	August 4, 2025
DOCKET	1:24-cv-00408-KES-SKO
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The district court reviewed de novo a magistrate judge's findings and recommendations, overruled plaintiff's objections, adopted the findings and recommendations, and dismissed the action without leave to amend.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	De novo review of the magistrate judge's findings and recommendations under 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1).
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished district court order; precedential status unknown.

TOPICS

- subject matter jurisdiction
- civil procedure
- probate
- pleadings

PRACTICE AREAS

- civil procedure
- constitutional law
- probate

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the federal district court had subject matter jurisdiction to review state-court orders concerning an estate's ownership claim to property.
2. Whether plaintiff's objections to the magistrate judge's recommendation warranted rejection of the recommendation or amendment of the complaint.

HOLDINGS

1. The federal district court lacked jurisdiction under the Rooker-Feldman doctrine to review plaintiff's challenges to state-court judicial orders concerning the estate's ownership claim to property.
2. The action was dismissed without leave to amend because the findings and recommendations were supported by the record and proper analysis, and plaintiff's objections were unpersuasive.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“As the magistrate judge noted, under the Rooker-Feldman doctrine, this Court lacks jurisdiction to review such orders.” (at 1)

“This action is dismissed without leave to amend;” (at 1)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff sought federal review of orders issued by a state-court judge concerning an estate's claimed ownership of property. She argued that the federal court had jurisdiction to review constitutional questions concerning the state judge's authority to sign orders. The district court concluded that the complaint challenged state-court judicial orders and therefore fell within the Rooker-Feldman jurisdictional bar.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff initiated a civil action on April 5, 2024, proceeding pro se and in forma pauperis. The matter was referred to a magistrate judge, who screened the complaint and recommended dismissal without leave to amend for failure to state a cognizable claim. Plaintiff filed timely objections, and the district court conducted de novo review before adopting the recommendation and closing the case.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Lockhart v. Fretta, 766 F.3d 505 (8th Cir. 2014)
- Centifanti v. Nix, 865 F.2d 1422, 1424 (3d Cir. 1989)
- Exxon Mobile Corp. v. Saudi Basic Industries Corp., 544 U.S. 280 (2005)

OPINION

Hunter Tellez v. Proiettii

PER CURIAM.

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7 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

8 EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

9 10 SHEILA-JO HUNTER TELLEZ, Case No. 1:24-cv-00408-KES-SKO 11 Plaintiff, ORDER
ADOPTING FINDINGS AND

RECOMMENDATIONS AND DISMISSING

12 v. CASE WITHOUT LEAVE TO AMEND

13

DONALD J. PROIETTII, Doc. 4

14 Defendant. 15

16 17 18 19 20 Plaintiff Sheila-Jo Hunter Tellez proceeds pro se and in forma pauperis in this civil
action 21 initiated on April 5, 2024. Docs. 1, 3. This matter was referred to a United States
magistrate 22 judge pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(B) and Local Rule 302. 23 On April 23,
2024, the assigned magistrate judge screened plaintiff's complaint and issued 24 findings and
recommendations recommending that this action be dismissed without leave to 25 amend for
failure to state a cognizable claim. Doc. 4. On May 8, 2024, plaintiff timely filed 26 objections.
Doc. 5. Plaintiff focuses her objections on three purportedly analogous cases, one of 27 28 1 which
appears to be fictitious, and the remaining two of which do not support her argument.1 In 2 any
event, plaintiff's objections are unpersuasive. Plaintiff contends that this Court has 3 jurisdiction to
review constitutional questions regarding a state court "judge signing orders out of 4 capacity or
'in vacation.'" Doc. 5 at 3. It is unclear exactly what plaintiff is referring to, however 5 to the
extent she argues that the order she seeks to appeal was not a judicial action, her complaint 6
squarely challenges court orders by a state judge regarding an estate's claim of ownership to 7
property. See Doc. 1 at 3. As the magistrate judge noted, under the Rooker-Feldman doctrine, 8
this Court lacks jurisdiction to review such orders. 9 In accordance with 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1),
this Court conducted a de novo review of this 10 case. Having carefully reviewed the matter,
including plaintiff's objections, the Court concludes 11 that the findings and recommendations are
supported by the record and proper analysis. 12 /// 13 /// 14 /// 15 /// 16 /// 17 /// 18 /// 19 /// 20 1
Plaintiff cites "Lockhart v. Fretta, 766 F.3d 505 (8th Cir. 2014)," "Centifanti v. Nix, 865 F.3d 21
384 (3rd Cir. 2017)," and Exxon Mobile Corp. v. Saudi Basic Industries Corp., 544 U.S. 280
(2005). Lockhart does not appear to be a real case by a search of its name or citation. Centifanti
22 appears to be a real case, but with an incorrect citation, and it was decided in 1989, not 2017.
See 23 Centifanti v. Nix, 865 F.2d 1422, 1424 (3rd Cir. 1989). Plaintiff's objections misrepresent
the holding of Centifanti, asserting that the court held that the "Rooker-Feldman doctrine does not
24 apply to a constitutional question regarding a judge signing orders out of capacity or in
vacation." Doc. 5 at 2. Centifanti does not support plaintiff's claim that she may challenge in

federal district 25 court various orders from her state court case. Rather, Centifanti held that the district court had jurisdiction over a constitutional challenge seeking prospective declaratory relief as to a state rule. 26 Exxon is a Supreme Court case discussing the Rooker-Feldman doctrine but provides no support 27 for plaintiff’s argument in this case. Plaintiff is warned that submitting a fictitious case citation and summary to the Court may be grounds for sanctions under Rule 11 of the Federal Rules of 28 Civil Procedure. 1 Accordingly: 2 1. The findings and recommendations issued on April 23, 2024, Doc. 4, are adopted in 3 full; 4 2. This action is dismissed without leave to amend; and 5 3. The Clerk of Court is directed to terminate all pending motions and close this case. 6 7

g | IT ISSO ORDERED. _

9 Dated: _ August 3, 2025 4h | |

10 UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

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