

SUPREME COURT OF ALABAMA

Marty Roberson and Brenda Roberson v. Teresa Daniel

Roberson v. Daniel · No. SC-2025-0040 · Decided November 26, 2025

SUMMARY

The Supreme Court of Alabama dismisses the Robersons' appeal from a jury verdict awarding Teresa Daniel approximately \$10 million on promissory-fraud and fraudulent-inducement claims. The court holds that the Cullman Circuit Court exceeded its discretion by certifying the partial judgment as final under Rule 54(b), because other claims, counterclaims, and third-party claims remained pending and were factually intertwined with the adjudicated claims. The court does not decide whether the judgment violated the automatic stay under 11 U.S.C. § 362.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Supreme Court of Alabama
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Bryan, J.; Stewart, C.J.; Shaw, J.; Wise, J.; Sellers, J.; Mendheim, J.; Cook, J.; McCool, J.
JURISDICTION	Supreme Court of Alabama
DECIDED	November 26, 2025
DOCKET	SC-2025-0040
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The Robersons appealed a jury verdict and judgment awarding Daniel approximately \$10 million in compensatory and punitive damages. The circuit court certified the judgment as final under Rule 54(b), Ala. R. Civ. P., despite pending claims, counterclaims, and third-party claims.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	A Rule 54(b) determination that there is no just reason for delay is reviewed for excess of discretion.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published
PARTIES	Marty Roberson, Brenda Roberson v. Teresa Daniel

TOPICS

- final judgment rule
- appellate jurisdiction
- civil procedure
- bankruptcy
- appellate procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

appellate procedure

bankruptcy

commercial litigation

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the circuit court's Rule 54(b) certification of the judgment against the Robersons individually was proper when related claims, counterclaims, and third-party claims remained pending.
2. Whether the filing of bankruptcy by codefendant entities affected the availability or propriety of a Rule 54(b) certification.
3. Whether the pending claims were sufficiently interrelated, and whether the possibility of a setoff existed, such that piecemeal appellate review was inappropriate.

HOLDINGS

1. The circuit court exceeded its discretion by certifying the judgment against the Robersons individually as final under Rule 54(b) because related claims, counterclaims, and third-party claims remained pending, creating a substantial risk that the Supreme Court would have to reconsider the same facts in a later appeal.
2. A Rule 54(b) certification may generally be available for a judgment against solvent codefendants when another defendant files for bankruptcy, but bankruptcy does not make the certification proper where the remaining claims are interrelated and the Rule 54(b) factors otherwise establish just reason for delay.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“In short, Rule 54(b) permits a trial court to certify a partial judgment as ‘final,’ and thus immediately appealable, even though some claims remain pending.” (13-14)

“This Court has repeatedly emphasized that ‘certifications under Rule 54(b) should be entered only in exceptional cases,’ because piecemeal appeals -- which typically entail considerable delay and expense -- are disfavored.” (14)

“Accordingly, we conclude that the circuit court's Rule 54(b) certification was invalid, and, therefore, this appeal is from a nonfinal judgment. Consequently, we dismiss the appeal.” (38)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Daniel sold Vintage West, a furniture, decorating, and design company, to Roberson Investments, III, LLC, for \$2.7 million payable in installments and later entered into a consulting agreement. She alleged that the defendants terminated the consulting agreement, stopped paying compensation, and failed to pay the final \$1.1 million installment. During the litigation, Roberson Investments, III, LLC, and Vintage West sought Chapter 7 bankruptcy protection, while Daniel's fraud claims against Marty and Brenda Roberson individually proceeded to trial. The circuit court entered judgment on the jury verdict while multiple related claims, counterclaims, and third-party claims remained unresolved.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Daniel sued the Robersons and related entities over the sale of Vintage West and related consulting and payment obligations. Her promissory-fraud and fraudulent-inducement claims against the Robersons individually proceeded to a jury trial, resulting in an award of \$1,424,582.05 in compensatory damages and \$8,575,418 in punitive damages. Other claims remained pending or were continued in connection with bankruptcy proceedings, and the circuit court later denied the Robersons' motion to vacate and certified the judgment under Rule 54(b). The Supreme Court of Alabama held the certification invalid and dismissed the appeal as arising from a nonfinal judgment.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Lewis v. State, 463 So. 2d 154, 155-56 (Ala. 1985)
- Bradberry v. Carrier Corp., 86 So. 3d 973, 981, 984 (Ala. 2011)
- Snow v. Baldwin, 491 So. 2d 900, 902 n.2 (Ala. 1986)
- Gaddy v. SE Property Holdings, LLC, 218 So. 3d 315, 320-21, 324 n.2, 325 (Ala. 2016)
- Garrigan v. Hinton Beef & Provision Co., 425 So. 2d 1091 (Ala. 1983)
- McKiever v. King & Hatch, Inc., 366 So. 2d 264, 265 (Ala. 1978)
- Stephens v. Fines Recycling, Inc., 84 So. 3d 867, 874-76, 878-79 (Ala. 2011)
- Wright v. Harris, 280 So. 3d 1040, 1043, 1047 (Ala. 2019)
- Bowling v. U.S. Bank Nat'l Ass'n, 380 So. 3d 1030, 1033-34 (Ala. 2023)
- Highlands of Lay, LLC v. Murphree, 101 So. 3d 206, 208-09 (Ala. 2012)
- Fuller v. Birmingham-Jefferson Cnty. Transit Auth., 147 So. 3d 907, 911, 913 (Ala. 2013)
- Branch v. SouthTrust Bank of Dothan, N.A., 514 So. 2d 1373 (Ala. 1987)
- Smith v. Slack Alost Dev. Servs. of Alabama, LLC, 32 So. 3d 556, 562 (Ala. 2009)
- Van Hoof v. Van Hoof, 997 So. 2d 278, 284 n.12 (Ala. 2007)
- Key v. Robert M. Duke Ins. Agency, 340 So. 2d 781, 783 (Ala. 1976)
- Ex parte Sterilite Corp. of Alabama, 837 So. 2d 815, 819 (Ala. 2002)
- Slater v. United States Steel Corp., 871 F.3d 1174, 1180 (11th Cir. 2017)
- Cold Metal Process Co. v. United Eng'g & Foundry Co., 351 U.S. 445, 452 (1956)
- Cates v. Bush, 293 Ala. 535, 540, 307 So. 2d 6, 11 (1975)
- Lighting Fair, Inc. v. Rosenberg, 63 So. 3d 1256, 1264 (Ala. 2010)
- Curtiss-Wright Corp. v. General Electric Co., 446 U.S. 1, 9, 12 (1980)
- Scrushy v. Tucker, 955 So. 2d 988, 999 (Ala. 2006)
- H.P.H. Props., Inc. v. Cahaba Lumber & Millwork, Inc., 811 So. 2d 554, 556 (Ala. Civ. App. 2001)
- Harper Sales Co. v. Brown, Stagner, Richardson, Inc., 742 So. 2d 190, 192 (Ala. 1999)
- Cook v. Midland Funding, LLC, 208 So. 3d 1153, 1158 (Ala. Civ. App. 2016)

- Ex parte Rudolph, 515 So. 2d 704, 707 (Ala. 1987)
- Ex parte Daniels, 264 So. 3d 865, 870 (Ala. 2018)
- Ex parte McQueen, 352 So. 3d 1179, 1184-85 (Ala. 2021)
- Schlarb v. Lee, 955 So. 2d 418, 419 (Ala. 2006)
- Dzwonkowski v. Sonitrol of Mobile, Inc., 892 So. 2d 354, 363 (Ala. 2004)

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