

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

DeCheri Hafer v. United States, et al.

Hafer · No. 1:22-cv-00972-JLT-EPG · Decided January 12, 2026

SUMMARY

The document contains findings and recommendations by a United States magistrate judge recommending denial of Plaintiff DeCheri Hafer’s motion for default judgment. The court concluded that default judgment was unavailable because the case had been closed, judgment had been entered in favor of a defendant, and the plaintiff’s prior motion to reopen had been denied. The recommendations were issued with a thirty-day period for objections.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	United States Magistrate Judge
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	January 12, 2026
DOCKET	1:22-cv-00972-JLT-EPG
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff moved for default judgment in a previously closed Social Security benefits case after the court had dismissed her claims and denied her motion to reopen the case. The magistrate judge issued findings and recommendations that the motion for default judgment be denied.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential
PARTIES	DeCheri Hafer v. United States, Social Security Administration

TOPICS

- default judgment
- default
- civil procedure
- subject matter jurisdiction

PRACTICE AREAS

- civil procedure
- Social Security
- administrative law
- remedies

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

- 1. Whether Plaintiff was entitled to default judgment under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 55 when no clerk's entry of default had been entered and the case had been dismissed, closed, and not reopened.

HOLDINGS

- 1. Default judgment was not warranted because no entry of default had been made, the case had been dismissed and closed, and the court had denied Plaintiff's motion to reopen the case.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“As the case has been closed and not re-opened, there has been no failure of Defendant to plead or otherwise defend the case, and Plaintiff is not entitled to default judgment.” (at 2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff brought claims against the Commissioner of Social Security, the Social Security Administration, and the United States arising from the denial of her Social Security benefits. The court dismissed the claims without prejudice for lack of subject matter jurisdiction, entered judgment in favor of the defendant, and closed the case. After the court denied Plaintiff's motion to reopen, Plaintiff sought default judgment on the ground that Defendants had not responded to her complaint.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed the action on July 22, 2022, challenging the denial of Social Security benefits. The Commissioner moved to dismiss under Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 12(b)(1) and 12(b)(6); the district judge ultimately dismissed all claims without prejudice and closed the case on April 6, 2023. Plaintiff's motion to reopen the case was denied on August 20, 2025. She then filed the present motion for default judgment on December 29, 2025.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Wilkerson v. Wheeler, 772 F.3d 834, 838-39 (9th Cir. 2014)
- Baxter v. Sullivan, 923 F.2d 1391, 1394 (9th Cir. 1991)

OPINION

DeCheri Hafer v. United States, et al.

PER CURIAM.

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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

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EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

8 9 DECHERI HAHER, Case No. 1:22-cv-00972-JLT-EPG 10 Plaintiff,

11 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS,

v. RECOMMENDING THAT PLAINTIFF'S

12 MOTION FOR DEFAULT JUDGMENT BE

UNITED STATES, et al.,

DENIED

13 Defendants. (ECF No. 36) 14

OBJECTIONS, IF ANY, DUE WITHIN

15 THIRTY (30) DAYS

16 17 Plaintiff DeCheri Hafer, proceeding pro se, filed a motion for default judgment in this 18 closed case on December 29, 2025. (ECF No. 36). Plaintiff's motion asks for the Court to grant a 19 default judgment in her favor for \$1,001,600,000 against Defendants the United States and Social Security Administration. Plaintiff claims that Defendants have not filed a response to her 20 complaint. 21 However, the Court granted the Commissioner of Social Security's motion to dismiss and 22 closed this case on April 6, 2023. (ECF No. 31 and 33). Moreover, the Court subsequently 23 denied Plaintiff's motion to reopen the case on August 20, 2025. (ECF No. 35). 24 For the reasons set forth below, the Court recommends denying Plaintiff's motion for a 25 default judgment. 26 /// 27 /// 28

1 I. BACKGROUND

2 Plaintiff initiated this action by filing a complaint on July 22, 2022. (ECF No. 1). 3 Plaintiff's complaint asserted various claims against the Commissioner of Social Security, the 4 Social Security Administration, and the United States related to the denial of Plaintiff's social security benefits. 5 On December 12, 2022, the Commissioner of Social Security filed a motion to dismiss 6 Plaintiff's claims pursuant to Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 12(b)(1) and 12(b)(6). (ECF No. 7 25). 8 On March 6, 2023, the undersigned issued findings and recommendations, recommending 9 that the Commissioner's motion to dismiss be granted. (ECF No. 30). On April 6, 2023, District 10 Judge adopted the Findings and Recommendations in part, 1 dismissed Plaintiff's claims without 11 prejudice, and directed the Clerk of the Court to close the case. (ECF Nos. 32 and 33). 12 On July 10, 2025, Plaintiff filed a Motion to Reopen the Case and Enter Default 13 Judgment. (ECF No. 33). On August 20, 2025, the District Judge denied Plaintiff's motion and 14 ordered that the case shall remain closed. (ECF Nos. 33 and 35). 15 On December 29, 2025, Plaintiff filed a Motion for Default Judgment. (ECF No. 36). 16 Plaintiff's motion consists of several forms requesting the Court to grant Plaintiff's motion for 17 default judgment, asserting the Defendants have failed to file a response to Plaintiff's complaint.

18 II. ANALYSIS

19 Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 55 permits the Court to enter a default judgment 20 following entry of default by the clerk when a party has failed to plead or otherwise defend a 21 case. Fed. R. Civ. P. 55(b)(2). 22 Default judgment is not warranted here because there has been no entry of

default. 23 Rather, the case was closed on April 6, 2023, and judgment was entered in favor of Defendant. Moreover, the Court previously denied Plaintiff's motion to reopen the case. 24 As the case has been closed and not re-opened, there has been no failure of Defendant to 25 26 1 The District Judge declined to adopt the recommendation that certain claims be dismissed with prejudice, 27 and instead dismissed all claims without prejudice. (ECF No. 31, at p. 2) ("Accordingly, the claims against the Social Security Administration and the United States will be dismissed without prejudice for 28 lack of subject matter jurisdiction, rather than the recommended dismissal with prejudice."). 1 | plead or otherwise defend the case, and Plaintiff is not entitled to default judgment.

2 I. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3 Accordingly, IT IS RECOMMENDED as follows: 4 1. Plaintiff's motion for default judgment be DENIED. (ECF No. 36). 5 These findings and recommendations will be submitted to the United States District Judge 6 | assigned to the case, pursuant to the provisions of Title 28 U.S.C. § 636(b) (1). Within thirty (30) 7 | days after being served with these findings and recommendations, Plaintiff may file written g | objections with the Court. The document should be captioned "Objections to Magistrate Judge's g | Findings and Recommendations." Any objections shall be limited to no more than fifteen (15) 10 | Pages, including exhibits. Plaintiff is advised that failure to file objections within the specified 1] | time may result in the waiver of rights on appeal. *Wilkerson v. Wheeler*, 772 F.3d 834, 838-39 12 | (Oth Cir. 2014) (citing *Baxter v. Sullivan*, 923 F.2d 1391, 1394 (9th Cir. 1991)). 13 IT IS SO ORDERED. 14 1s | Dated: _ January 10, 2026 [Jehy □

6 UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

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