

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF
WASHINGTON**

Ryan Scott Adams v. State of Washington

Adams · No. 3:25-cv-05659-BHS-DWC · Decided January 21, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Western District of Washington reviews Magistrate Judge David W. Christel’s denial of Ryan Scott Adams’s motion for recusal. The court concludes that the petitioner’s alleged predisposition, discovery limitations, and prior adverse ruling do not establish grounds for recusal under 28 U.S.C. §§ 144 or 455. The court affirms the denial of the recusal motion.

OPINION

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT 8 WESTERN DISTRICT OF
WASHINGTON AT TACOMA 9 10 RYAN SCOTT ADAMS, CASE NO. 3:25-cv-05659-BHS-
11 Petitioner, DWC 12 v. ORDER AFFIRMING DENIAL OF 13 STATE OF WASHINGTON,
RECUSAL (DKT. NO. 39) 14 Respondent. 15 16 This matter comes before the Court on the
Honorable Magistrate Judge David W. 17 Christel’s denial (Dkt.

No. 39) of Petitioner’s motion for recusal (Dkt. No. 34). Local Civil Rule 18 3(f) provides that
whenever a judge in this District declines to voluntarily recuse themselves from a 19 case following
a party’s motion to recuse pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 144 or 28 U.S.C. § 455, they 20 “will direct the
clerk to refer the motion to the chief judge.” Accordingly, this Court now review 21 Judge
Christel’s decision not to recuse.

22 Motions for recusal are governed by 28 U.S.C. § 144 and 28 U.S.C. § 455. Recusal is 23
required if a judge’s impartiality might reasonably be questioned or if the judge harbors personal
24 1 bias or prejudice against a party. 28 U.S.C. § 455(a), (b)(1). Such bias or prejudice must
derive 2 from an extrajudicial source. See *Liteky v. United States*, 510 U.S. 540, 555 (1994)
(“judicial 3 remarks during the course of a trial that are critical or disapproving of, or even hostile
to, 4 counsel, the parties, or their cases, ordinarily do not support a bias or partiality challenge”); 5
Agha-Khan v. Mortgage Elec.

Registration Sys., Inc., 2022 WL 501564, at *1 (9th Cir. Feb. 18, 6 2022); *Mayes v. Leipziger*, 729
F.2d 605, 607 (9th Cir. 1984). Under both 28 U.S.C. § 144 and 7 28 U.S.C. § 455, recusal of a
federal judge is appropriate if “a reasonable person with knowledge 8 of all the facts would
conclude that the judge’s impartiality might reasonably be questioned.” 9 *Yagman v. Republic*
Ins., 987 F.2d 622, 626 (9th Cir.

1993). This is an objective inquiry 10 concerned with whether there is the appearance of bias, not whether there is bias in fact. *Preston v. United States*, 923 F.2d 731, 734 (9th Cir. 1992). 12 Petitioner identifies three bases for his recusal motion: first, that Judge Christel showed a 13 “predispos[ition] to dismiss” Petitioner’s petition because Judge Christel informed Petitioner 14 about his right to move for reconsideration; second, that Judge Christel violated his due process 15 rights by limiting his access to discovery; and third, that Judge Christel previously ruled against 16 him in a separate case.

(Dkt. No. 34 at 2.)1 17 Petitioner’s first argument appears to stem from a miscommunication between Petitioner 18 and Judge Christel: Petitioner may have interpreted Judge Christel’s statement that Petitioner 19 could move for reconsideration to be a statement about Petitioner’s case. But this Court finds 20 Judge Christel’s explanation of his statement, that it was about “the Court’s decision on the 21 motions for extension, not the case” to be the clear meaning of Judge Christel’s order.

(Dkt. No. 22 1 Petitioner also filed a “supplement” to his motion for recusal. (Dkt. No. 35.) This supplement 23 is best construed as a motion for reconsideration; it identifies no facts in support of Petitioner’s motion for recusal. 24 1 39 at 3.) This Court finds nothing in Judge Christel’s language indicates his impartiality may 2 reasonably be questioned.

And Petitioner’s second and third claims are only disagreements with 3 the judge’s rulings and do not serve as a proper basis for recusal. See *Downs v. California Atty. 4 Gen.*, 639 F. App’x 435, 436 (9th Cir. 2016) (district court did not err in denying disqualification 5 of magistrate judge, because “disagreement with the magistrate judge’s rulings does not provide 6 a basis for recusal”).

7 The Court finds Petitioner provides no evidence that would lead a reasonable person to 8 question Judge Christel’s impartiality. Accordingly, the Court AFFIRMS Judge Christel’s denial 9 (Dkt. No. 39) of Plaintiffs’ motion for recusal (Dkt. No. 34). 10 11 Dated this 21st day of January, 2026. 12 a 13 David G. Estudillo 14 United States District Judge 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24