

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Davis v. Shepard

Davis · No. 2:24-cv-01952-DC-AC (PS) · Decided September 2, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California adopted the magistrate judge’s findings and recommendations and dismissed Eric Davon Davis’s action without prejudice for lack of subject matter jurisdiction. The court held that Davis’s challenge to state child-support orders was barred by the Rooker-Feldman doctrine and the domestic-relations exception, and that claims against certain defendants were also barred by judicial immunity. The court denied Davis’s motions for preliminary injunction, default judgment, and immediate ruling as moot and directed the clerk to close the case.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Dena Coggins
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	September 2, 2025
DOCKET	2:24-cv-01952-DC-AC (PS)
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The district court conducted de novo review of a magistrate judge's findings and recommendations after plaintiff filed objections. The court adopted the findings and recommendations, dismissed the complaint without prejudice for lack of subject matter jurisdiction, and denied plaintiff's motions as moot.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	De novo review of the magistrate judge's findings and recommendations under 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(C).
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished district court order; precedential status is not stated in the opinion.
PARTIES	Eric Davon Davis v. Neil Shepard, Jaya Badiga, Sacramento Department of Child Support, El Dorado County Auditor-Controller's Office

TOPICS

subject matter jurisdiction

default judgment

injunctions

family law

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

family law

remedies

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the complaint challenging enforcement of state child-support orders was barred by the Rooker-Feldman doctrine and the domestic-relations exception.
2. Whether the court could enter default judgment when it lacked subject matter jurisdiction.
3. Whether plaintiff's disagreement with the magistrate judge's rulings established judicial bias.
4. Whether the magistrate judge's findings and recommendations should be adopted after de novo review.

HOLDINGS

1. The claims were barred because they sought to challenge a state-court order requiring plaintiff to make child-support payments; the court therefore lacked subject matter jurisdiction.
2. The claims against Commissioner Shepard and Judge Badiga were barred by judicial immunity.
3. A court cannot enter a valid default judgment when it lacks subject matter jurisdiction, so denial of plaintiff's motion for default judgment as moot was proper.
4. Disagreement with the court's rulings does not establish bias; an assertion of bias must be based on an extrajudicial source.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“a court cannot enter a valid default judgment against a defendant when it lacks subject matter jurisdiction”
(at 2)

“Disagreements with the [c]ourt’s rulings do not support [] assertions of bias ... because assertions of bias must be predicated upon an extrajudicial source.” (at 2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff challenged the enforcement of state-court child-support orders against him, naming a commissioner, a state judge, a child-support agency, and a county office as defendants. He sought a preliminary injunction preventing enforcement of the orders and later sought default judgment. The magistrate judge concluded that the claims were barred by the Rooker-Feldman doctrine and the domestic-relations exception, and that claims against the commissioner and judge were also barred by judicial immunity.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed a civil action challenging enforcement of state child-support orders and later moved for a preliminary injunction and default judgment. The magistrate judge recommended dismissal without leave to

amend under the Rooker-Feldman doctrine, the domestic-relations exception, and judicial immunity, and recommended denial of the motions as moot. After plaintiff objected, the district court reviewed the matter de novo, adopted the findings and recommendations in full, dismissed the complaint without prejudice, denied the pending motions as moot, and closed the case.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Rooker v. Fidelity Trust Co., 263 U.S. 413 (1923)
- District of Columbia Court of Appeals v. Feldman, 460 U.S. 462 (1983)
- In re Tuli, 172 F.3d 707, 712 (9th Cir. 1999)
- Martinez v. Secretary of California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, No. 22-cv-01170-JLT-GSA, 2025 WL 572995, at *5 (E.D. Cal. Feb. 21, 2025)

OPINION

(PS) Davis v. Shepard

PER CURIAM.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

9 FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

10

11 ERIC DAVON DAVIS, No. 2:24-cv-01952-DC-AC (PS)

12 Plaintiff,

13 v. ORDER ADOPTING FINDINGS AND

RECOMMENDATIONS

14 NEIL SHEPARD, et al., (Doc. Nos. 5, 8, 11, 14) 15 Defendants. 16 17 Plaintiff Eric Davon Davis is proceeding pro se and in forma pauperis in this civil action. 18 This matter was referred to a United States Magistrate Judge pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 19 636(b)(1)(B) and Local Rule 302. 20 On July 17, 2024, Plaintiff filed a complaint alleging violations by Defendants 21 Commissioner Neil Shepard, Judge Jaya Badiga, Sacramento Department of Child Support, and 22 El Dorado County, Auditor-Controller’s Office relating to the enforcement of support orders 23 against him. (Doc. No. 1.) On July 25, 2024, Plaintiff filed a motion for preliminary injunction to 24 prevent Defendants Commissioner Shepard, Judge Badiga, and Sacramento Department of Child 25 Support Services from enforcing child support orders against him. (Doc. No. 5.) On September 26 20, 2024, Plaintiff filed a motion for default judgment against Defendants. (Doc. No. 8.) 27 On November 20, 2024, the magistrate judge issued findings and recommendations 28 recommending that this action be dismissed without leave to amend for lack of subject matter 1 jurisdiction and

Plaintiff's motions for preliminary injunction and default judgment be denied as moot. (Doc. No. 11.) Specifically, the magistrate judge found Plaintiff's claims are barred by the Rooker-Feldman doctrine¹ and the domestic relations exception because his claims are an attempt⁴ to challenge a state court order requiring him to make child support payments. (Id. at 3–4.) The magistrate judge also found Plaintiff's claims against Defendants Commissioner Shepard and Judge Badiga barred by judicial immunity. (Id. at 4.) The findings and recommendations were served on Plaintiff and contained notice that any objections thereto were to be filed within twenty-one (21) days from the date of service. (Id. at 5.)⁹ On November 25, 2024, Plaintiff filed objections to the findings and recommendations.¹⁰ (Doc. No. 12.) On December 19, 2024, Plaintiff filed a motion for an immediate ruling on his objections. (Doc. No. 14.) In his objections, Plaintiff first argues the magistrate judge erroneously applied the Rooker-Feldman doctrine and the domestic relations exception to this case. (Doc. No. 13 at 3–4.) Plaintiff cites cases and federal statutes to support his objections, but none refute the magistrate judge's findings that Plaintiff's claims are barred by the Rooker-Feldman doctrine and domestic relations exception.¹⁶ Plaintiff also argues the magistrate judge erred in failing to consider his motion for default judgment. (Id. at 4.) However, a court cannot enter a valid default judgment against a defendant¹⁸ when it lacks subject matter jurisdiction. See *In re Tuli*, 172 F.3d 707, 712 (9th Cir. 1999)¹⁹ (finding that when default judgment is sought, the “district court has an affirmative duty to look into its jurisdiction over both the subject matter and the parties”). Because the magistrate judge found this court does not have subject matter jurisdiction over Plaintiff's claims, it was appropriate for the magistrate judge to deny the motion as moot.²³ Additionally, Plaintiff contends that the magistrate judge exhibited bias against him. (Doc.

No. 12 at 5.) Plaintiff bases his contention of bias upon the magistrate judge's rulings and actions

in this case. (Id.) However, “[d]isagreements with the [c]ourt's rulings do not support [] assertions²⁶ ²⁷ 1 The doctrine takes its name from *Rooker v. Fid. Trust Co.*, 263 U.S. 413 (1923) and *District of Columbia Court of Appeals v. Feldman*, 460 U.S. 462 (1983).²⁸ 1 | of bias ... because assertions of bias must be predicated upon an extrajudicial source.” *Martinez v. Sec'y of Cal. Dep't of Corr. & Rehab.*, No. 22-cv-01170-JLT-GSA, 2025 WL 572995, at *5 3 | (E.D. Cal. Feb. 21, 2025). Accordingly, Plaintiff's contention of bias is without merit.⁴ In accordance with the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(C), the court has conducted a ⁵ || de novo review of the case. Having carefully reviewed the entire file, including Plaintiff's ⁶ | objections, the court concludes the findings and recommendations are supported by the record ⁷ | and by proper analysis.⁸ Accordingly,⁹ 1. The findings and recommendations issued on November 20, 2024 (Doc. No. 11)¹⁰ are ADOPTED in full; ¹¹ 2. Plaintiff's complaint (Doc. No. 1) is DISMISSED without prejudice for lack of ¹² subject matter jurisdiction; ¹³ 3. Plaintiff's motion for preliminary injunction (Doc. No. 5) is DENIED as moot; ¹⁴ 4. Plaintiff's motion for entry of default judgment (Doc. No. 8) is DENIED as moot; ¹⁵ 5. Plaintiff's motion for an immediate ruling on his

objections is DENIED as moot; 16 and 17 6. The Clerk of Court is directed to close this case. 18
19 IT IS SO ORDERED. : 20 | Dated: _ August 29, 2025 _ RUG Dena Coggins 21 United States
District Judge 22 23 24 25 26 27 28

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