

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Marino v. Bessent

Marino · No. Case No. 25-cv-03884 (APM) · Decided November 21, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Columbia sua sponte dismisses Kena LaJuan Marino’s complaint against the Secretary of the Treasury for lack of subject-matter jurisdiction. The court concludes that the complaint’s allegations are patently insubstantial and frivolous and do not present a substantial federal question.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Columbia
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Amit P. Mehta
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Columbia
DECIDED	November 21, 2025
DOCKET	Case No. 25-cv-03884 (APM)
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Pro se plaintiff brought false-arrest and/or malicious-prosecution claims against the Secretary of the United States Department of the Treasury. The district court sua sponte dismissed the complaint and the action for lack of subject-matter jurisdiction because the claims were patently insubstantial and frivolous.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court independently assessed subject-matter jurisdiction and the legal sufficiency of the complaint on its face.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published district court memorandum opinion; persuasive authority within the District of Columbia but not binding precedent outside the court's limited precedential context.
PARTIES	Kena LaJuan Marino v. Scott Bessent, Secretary, United States Department of the Treasury

TOPICS

- subject matter jurisdiction
- pleadings
- civil procedure
- motions to dismiss

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

civil rights

federal jurisdiction

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the complaint presented a substantial federal question sufficient to invoke federal subject-matter jurisdiction.
2. Whether the district court could sua sponte dismiss claims that were patently insubstantial, frivolous, or otherwise devoid of merit.

HOLDINGS

1. The complaint was patently insubstantial and presented no federal question suitable for decision; therefore, the court lacked subject-matter jurisdiction.
2. The district court may sua sponte dismiss an action for lack of subject-matter jurisdiction when the complaint is patently insubstantial and frivolous.
3. Although pro se complaints are held to less stringent standards than formal pleadings drafted by lawyers, pro se status did not cure the complaint's jurisdictional and substantive deficiencies.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“[F]ederal courts are without power to entertain claims otherwise within their jurisdiction if they are so attenuated and unsubstantial as to be absolutely devoid of merit” (at 1)

“A complaint may be dismissed on jurisdictional grounds when it ‘is patently insubstantial, presenting no federal question suitable for decision.’” (at 1)

“But Plaintiff’s claim is “patently insubstantial” and presents “no federal question suitable for decision.”” (at 2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Kena LaJuan Marino, proceeding pro se, asserted false-arrest and/or malicious-prosecution claims against Scott Bessent in his capacity as Secretary of the United States Department of the Treasury. The complaint alleged, in a stream-of-consciousness manner, various forms of systemic misconduct, conspiracies, discrimination, inheritance interference, redistricting, bribery, insurance fraud, and privatization, but provided insufficient detail to identify a cognizable claim. Marino sought \$9.25 trillion in compensatory damages and additional relief concerning qualified immunity, birthright sovereignty, and generational wealth transfers.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Marino filed a complaint seeking compensatory damages and other relief. The district court reviewed the complaint sua sponte, found that it failed to present a substantial federal question and was patently insubstantial, and dismissed the action for lack of subject-matter jurisdiction. A separate final, appealable order accompanied the memorandum opinion.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Hagans v. Lavine, 415 U.S. 528, 536-37 (1974)
- Tooley v. Napolitano, 586 F.3d 1006, 1009 (D.C. Cir. 2009)
- Best v. Kelly, 39 F.3d 328, 330 (D.C. Cir. 1994)
- Lewis v. Bayh, 577 F. Supp. 2d 47, 54 (D.D.C. 2008)
- Haines v. Kerner, 404 U.S. 519, 520 (1972)

OPINION

PER CURIAM.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
_____) KENA LAJUAN MARINO)) Plaintiff,)) v.
) Case No. 25-cv-03884 (APM)) SCOTT BESSENT, SECRETARY,) UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT) OF THE TREASURY,)) Defendants.)
_____) MEMORANDUM OPINION Plaintiff Kena
LaJuan Marino, proceeding pro se, brings false arrest and/or malicious prosecution claims against
Defendant Scott Bessent, Secretary of the United States Department of the Treasury.

Compl., ECF No. 1 [hereinafter Compl.], at 6. Because Plaintiff fails to raise a substantial federal question and the claims are patently frivolous, the court sua sponte dismisses the Complaint and this action. “[F]ederal courts are without power to entertain claims otherwise within their jurisdiction if they are so attenuated and unsubstantial as to be absolutely devoid of merit” or “obviously frivolous.” Hagans v. Lavine, 415 U.S. 528, 536–37 (1974) (internal quotation marks and citations omitted); see also Tooley v. Napolitano, 586 F.3d 1006, 1009 (D.C.

Cir. 2009) (“A complaint may be dismissed on jurisdictional grounds when it ‘is patently insubstantial, presenting no federal question suitable for decision.’” (internal quotation marks omitted) (quoting Best v. Kelly, 39 F.3d 328, 330 (D.C. Cir. 1994))). Claims are insubstantial and frivolous if they are “essentially fictitious” because they advance, for example, “bizarre conspiracy theories.” Best, 39 F.3d at 330 (internal quotation marks omitted).

In such cases, a district court may dismiss the case sua sponte. See Lewis v. Bayh, 577 F. Supp. 2d 47, 54 (D.D.C. 2008). The court has reviewed Plaintiff’s Complaint and finds it difficult to follow. The Complaint proceeds in a stream-of-consciousness manner and alleges, among other things, “‘systemic’ misconduct,” “national security risks,” “C-19 conspiracies/discriminations,”

“inheritance interferences,” “redistrictings,” “Bills, bribes Acts,” “Insurance Companies fraudulences, Privatizations.” Compl.

1. Plaintiff also alludes to a conspiracy to promote “Powers” and “opportunistic accomplishments” at the “expense of innocent lives and livelihoods.” Id. at 2. The Complaint otherwise lacks details sufficient to illuminate a claim. Plaintiff seeks compensatory damages in the amount of \$9.25 trillion and “Qualified immunities. Restoration of birthrights sovereignties, generational wealth transfers.” Id. at 1.

The court is mindful that complaints filed by pro se litigants are held to less stringent standards than those applied to formal pleadings drafted by lawyers. See *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519, 520 (1972). But Plaintiff’s claim is “patently insubstantial” and presents “no federal question suitable for decision.” Best, 39 F.3d at 330 (citations omitted).

Accordingly, the court dismisses the Complaint and this action for lack of subject matter jurisdiction. A separate final, appealable order accompanies this Memorandum Opinion. Dated: November 21, 2025 Amit P. Mehta United States District Judge 2