

COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE FIRST DISTRICT OF TEXAS

In re Kirpal Singh and Kulwant Singh Nagra

No. 01-25-00147-CV (Tex. App.—Houston [1st Dist.] Dec. 23, 2025) · No. 01-25-00147-CV · Decided December 23, 2025

SUMMARY

The Texas Court of Appeals for the First District granted Kirpal Singh and Kulwant Singh Nagra’s petition for writ of habeas corpus. The court held that contempt and commitment orders issued by the state trial court after removal of the underlying action to federal bankruptcy court were void, either because they interfered with pursuit of federal jurisdiction or because their terms of incarceration and purge requirements were unclear. The court ordered the relators discharged from custody and released from their bonds.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Court of Appeals for the First District of Texas
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Andrew Johnson; Justice Guerra; Justice Guiney; Justice Johnson
JURISDICTION	Court of Appeals for the First District of Texas
DECIDED	December 23, 2025
DOCKET	01-25-00147-CV
DISPOSITION	writ_granted
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Original proceeding on a petition for writ of habeas corpus challenging contempt and commitment orders entered by a Texas district court after the underlying fraudulent-transfer action had been removed to federal bankruptcy court.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	In an original habeas proceeding, the relator bears the burden of showing that the contempt or commitment order is void; the challenged order is presumed valid until that burden is met.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published memorandum opinion
PARTIES	Kirpal Singh, Kulwant Singh Nagra

TOPICS

- contempt
- bankruptcy
- writ of certiorari
- appellate procedure
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

bankruptcy

appellate procedure

contempt

remedies

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the state trial court retained jurisdiction after removal to federal bankruptcy court to issue contempt and commitment orders against Relators for pre-removal conduct.
2. Whether the contempt and commitment orders were void because their purging provisions interfered with Relators' pursuit of federal bankruptcy jurisdiction.
3. Whether the amended commitment orders were void because they failed to state clearly and unambiguously what Relators were required to do to obtain release.

HOLDINGS

1. The contempt and commitment orders were void after removal because, if their purging language remained operative, the orders interfered with Relators' pursuit of federal bankruptcy jurisdiction.
2. The orders were independently void because the amended commitment orders were not clear and unambiguous regarding the terms of incarceration or the action required for release.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“state courts retain jurisdiction after removal of a case to federal court to sanction lawyers for pre-removal conduct so long as the sanction does not operate upon the merits of the underlying action.” (at 11)

“The failure of an order of contempt to specify in clear and unambiguous language that which the contemnor is required to do to purge himself and escape the restraint on his liberty invalidates the order.” (at 14)

“We thus conclude that, regardless of whether the purging language is still operable, the contempt and commitment orders are void.” (at 15)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Kirpal Singh and Kulwant Singh Nagra were subject to a state-court judgment arising from fiduciary-duty and operating-agreement claims involving Yogi International, LLC. While a later fraudulent-transfer action was pending, the trial court enjoined them from participating in meetings concerning the judgment, but they held such a meeting and voted for Yogi International to seek Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. Yogi International filed bankruptcy and removed the fraudulent-transfer action to federal bankruptcy court before the state trial court entered contempt and commitment orders requiring Relators to serve up to ninety days in jail, with purported purging language tied to dismissal of the bankruptcy case.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Surjit Singh obtained a state-court judgment against Kirpal Singh and Kulwant Singh Nagra and later filed a fraudulent-transfer action to collect that judgment. The state trial court issued a temporary injunction, found Relators in contempt for participating in a meeting concerning the judgment, and ordered them confined, even though the underlying action had been removed to bankruptcy court before the contempt orders were entered.

The bankruptcy court declared the post-removal state-court orders void ab initio. Relators then sought habeas relief in the court of appeals, which previously released them from custody on bond and granted the petition.

DISPOSITION

writ_granted

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

None. The court declared the specified contempt and commitment orders void, ordered Relators discharged from custody, and released them from the bonds previously set by the court.

CASES CITED

- Ex parte Hernandez, 827 S.W.2d 858, 858 (Tex. 1992) (per curiam) (orig. proceeding)
- In re Tavaréz, 681 S.W.3d 909, 913–14 (Tex. App.—Eastland 2023, orig. proceeding)
- In re Markowitz, 25 S.W.3d 1, 3 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1998, orig. proceeding)
- Ex parte Tanner, 904 S.W.2d 202, 203 (Tex. App.—Houston [1st Dist.] 1995, orig. proceeding)
- Ex parte Gordon, 584 S.W.2d 686, 688 (Tex. 1979) (orig. proceeding)
- In re Luther, 620 S.W.3d 715, 721–22 (Tex. 2021) (per curiam) (orig. proceeding)
- In re Coppock, 277 S.W.3d 417, 418 (Tex. 2009) (orig. proceeding)
- In re Chaumette, 456 S.W.3d 299, 304 (Tex. App.—Houston [1st Dist.] 2014, orig. proceeding)
- In re Parks, 264 S.W.3d 59, 61–62 (Tex. App.—Houston [1st Dist.] 2007, orig. proceeding)
- In re Bennett, 960 S.W.2d 35, 39–40 (Tex. 1997) (per curiam) (orig. proceeding)
- In re U.S. Silica Co., 157 S.W.3d 434, 439 (Tex. 2005)
- Willy v. Coastal Corp., 915 F.2d 965, 968 n.8 (5th Cir. 1990), *aff'd*, 503 U.S. 131 (1992)
- Moore v. Permanente Medical Group, Inc., 981 F.2d 443, 445–46 (9th Cir. 1992)
- Cooter & Gell v. Hartmarx Corp., 496 U.S. 384, 395–96 (1990)
- Willy v. Coastal Corp., 503 U.S. 131, 137–38 (1992)
- Sibley v. Seminole Pipeline Co., LLC, No. 01-15-00775-CV, 2017 WL 491290, at *5 (Tex. App.—Houston [1st Dist.] Feb. 7, 2017, no pet.) (mem. op.)
- Meyerland Co. v. F.D.I.C., 848 S.W.2d 82, 83 (Tex. 1993)
- Truck Insurance Exchange v. Kaiser Gypsum Co., Inc., 602 U.S. 268, 144 S. Ct. 1414, 1421, 219 L. Ed. 2d 41 (2024)
- Ex parte Rosser, 899 S.W.2d 382, 387 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1995, orig. proceeding)
- Ex parte Garcia, 831 S.W.2d 1, 2 (Tex. App.—El Paso 1992, orig. proceeding)
- In re Watson, 108 S.W.3d 531, 533 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 2003, orig. proceeding)