

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Eric L. Gonzalez v. Julie Garland, et al.

Gonzalez · No. 25-cv-08871-RFL (PR) · Decided October 24, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of California denied Eric L. Gonzalez’s motion for a preliminary injunction seeking a new parole suitability hearing. The court held that Gonzalez had not shown a serious question on the merits of his due process or equal protection claims, nor demonstrated irreparable harm or that the balance of hardships favored relief. The court concluded that he received constitutionally adequate process and was ineligible for parole special conditions because parole had been denied.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Rita F. Lin
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
DECIDED	October 24, 2025
DOCKET	25-cv-08871-RFL (PR)
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff moved for a preliminary injunction requiring defendants to hold a new parole suitability hearing based on alleged due process and equal protection violations.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	A preliminary injunction requires satisfaction of the Winter factors: likelihood of success on the merits, likely irreparable harm, favorable balance of equities, and consistency with the public interest. Under the Ninth Circuit's sliding-scale formulation, serious questions on the merits may suffice only if the balance of hardships tips sharply in the plaintiff's favor and the other Winter factors are satisfied.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished district court order; precedential status is unknown and the opinion is not reported.
PARTIES	Eric L. Gonzalez v. Julie Garland, et al.

TOPICS

procedural due process

equal protection

prisoners rights

equitable relief

civil rights

PRACTICE AREAS

constitutional law

civil rights

prisoner rights

post-conviction relief

injunctive relief

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Gonzalez demonstrated a serious question going to the merits of his claim that the parole hearing violated procedural due process by failing to consider particular evidence.
2. Whether Gonzalez demonstrated a serious question going to the merits of his equal protection claim based on the Board's failure to address special parole conditions.
3. Whether Gonzalez established the irreparable-harm and balance-of-hardships factors required for a preliminary injunction.

HOLDINGS

1. A parole candidate receives constitutionally adequate process when he is given an opportunity to be heard and receives a statement of the reasons for parole denial; due process does not require that the hearing officer permit the candidate to discuss every matter for as long as he wishes or dictate particular hearing procedures. Gonzalez therefore did not show a serious question on the merits of his due process claim.
2. A prisoner who was denied parole and therefore was not eligible for special conditions of release does not state an equal protection claim merely because the Board addressed special conditions for prisoners who were granted release. Gonzalez therefore did not show a serious question on the merits of his equal protection claim.
3. The motion for a preliminary injunction must be denied because Gonzalez failed to show a likelihood of success or serious questions going to the merits, likely irreparable harm, and a sharply favorable balance of hardships.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“*The Constitution does not require more.*” (562 U.S. at 220)

“*The opportunity to be heard standard requires only that: allowing an opportunity to be heard.*”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Gonzalez was denied parole after a suitability hearing at which the hearing officer asked whether he had addressed his control issues, including whether he had stopped taking romantic partners' money to control them. Gonzalez asserted that the hearing officer refused to consider his statement that he had not demanded, asked for, or accepted his fiancée's winnings from her appearance on "Wheel of Fortune." He also alleged that the Board of Parole Hearings applied special parole conditions to other prisoners but not to him. The Board explained that special conditions are addressed only when parole is granted, whereas Gonzalez was found unsuitable for parole and denied release for five years.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Gonzalez filed a motion for a preliminary injunction in his prisoner civil-rights action. The district court denied the motion, concluding that he had not shown a serious question going to the merits of either claim, irreparable harm, or that the balance of hardships tipped sharply in his favor.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Winter v. Natural Resources Defense Council, 555 U.S. 7, 20 (2008)
- Alliance for the Wild Rockies v. Peña, 865 F.3d 1211, 1217 (9th Cir. 2017)
- DISH Network Corp. v. F.C.C., 653 F.3d 771, 776-77 (9th Cir. 2011)
- Swarthout v. Cooke, 562 U.S. 216, 220 (2011)
- Greenholtz v. Inmates of Nebraska Penal and Correctional Complex, 442 U.S. 1, 16 (1979)