

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Levi Dale Laster, Jr. v. State of California

Laster · No. 2:25-cv-00481-DAD-SCR · Decided December 19, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California adopted the magistrate judge’s findings and recommendations and dismissed Levi Dale Laster, Jr.’s 28 U.S.C. § 2254 petition without prejudice under the Younger abstention doctrine because his state criminal proceedings remained ongoing. The court denied the motion for release as moot, declined to issue a certificate of appealability, 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	Dale A. Drozd
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	December 19, 2025
DOCKET	2:25-cv-00481-DAD-SCR
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Petitioner sought federal habeas relief under 28 U.S.C. § 2254 while state criminal proceedings were ongoing. The matter was referred to a magistrate judge, who recommended dismissal without prejudice under Younger abstention. The district court conducted de novo review, adopted the findings and recommendations, dismissed the operative petition, denied a release motion as moot, and declined to issue a certificate of appealability.
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	Unknown; district court order with no published reporter citation.
PARTIES	Levi Dale Laster, Jr. v. State of California

TOPICS

- federal habeas corpus
- post-conviction relief
- federalism
- pleadings

PRACTICE AREAS

Federal habeas corpus

Post-conviction relief

Federal courts

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the district court should abstain under *Younger* and dismiss the § 2254 petition because petitioner was challenging matters arising from ongoing state criminal proceedings without demonstrating extraordinary circumstances or irreparable injury.
2. Whether petitioner's motion for release remained viable after dismissal of the habeas petition.
3. Whether petitioner was entitled to a certificate of appealability.

HOLDINGS

1. The district court must abstain under *Younger* and dismiss the habeas petition without prejudice when the petition challenges ongoing state criminal proceedings and the petitioner has not shown extraordinary circumstances or irreparable injury warranting federal intervention.
2. A certificate of appealability should be denied because petitioner failed to make a substantial showing of the denial of a constitutional right and reasonable jurists would not debate the court's resolution.
3. The motion for release was denied as moot because dismissal of the operative habeas petition eliminated a live basis for that motion.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“the state criminal proceedings against petitioner were ongoing when the habeas petition was filed.” (at 1)

*“petitioner had failed to establish any irreparable injury because he had not demonstrated the existence of extraordinary circumstances that would justify this federal court not abstaining under *Younger*.”* (at 1)

“jurists of reason could disagree with the district court’s resolution of [the petitioner’s] constitutional claims or that jurists could conclude the issues presented are adequate to deserve encouragement to proceed further.” (at 2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Petitioner was a current county jail inmate held at the Butte County Jail and was awaiting trial in ongoing state criminal proceedings. He filed a federal habeas petition under 28 U.S.C. § 2254 and later filed additional notices and amendments. The operative filings confirmed that the state proceedings remained ongoing, and petitioner did not demonstrate extraordinary circumstances or irreparable injury warranting an exception to *Younger* abstention.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Laster filed a § 2254 habeas petition while awaiting trial in ongoing state criminal proceedings. The magistrate judge recommended dismissal without prejudice because *Younger* abstention applied and petitioner had not shown extraordinary circumstances or irreparable injury. Although petitioner filed additional notices and amendments, he did not object to the findings and recommendations or identify a basis for rejecting them. The

district court reviewed the matter de novo, adopted the recommendations, dismissed the petition without prejudice, denied the release motion as moot, declined a certificate of appealability, and closed the case.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Page v. King, 932 F.3d 898, 902 (9th Cir. 2019)
- Miller-El v. Cockrell, 537 U.S. 322, 327, 335-36 (2003)
- Slack v. McDaniel, 529 U.S. 473, 484 (2000)

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