

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Ana Ventura v. Francisco Flores, et al.

Ventura · No. CV 25-03205-DMG (AGR) · Decided April 23, 2025

SUMMARY

The court ordered the plaintiff to show cause why it should exercise supplemental jurisdiction over state-law claims arising from alleged disability-access violations. The court directed the plaintiff and counsel to identify the statutory damages sought and provide sworn declarations addressing whether they qualify as high-frequency litigants under California law, warning that failure to respond could result in dismissal of the state-law claims.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Central District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Dolly M. Gee, Chief United States District Judge
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Central District of California
DECIDED	April 23, 2025
DOCKET	CV 25-03205-DMG (AGR)
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The court issued an order to show cause why it should not decline to exercise supplemental jurisdiction over the plaintiff's state-law claims.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Whether to exercise supplemental jurisdiction is discretionary and requires consideration of judicial economy, convenience, fairness, and comity; under 28 U.S.C. § 1367(c)(4), exceptional circumstances may justify declining jurisdiction.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court order; limited persuasive value

TOPICS

- subject matter jurisdiction
- civil procedure
- pleadings
- ada / disability
- federalism

PRACTICE AREAS

- Civil procedure
- Federal courts
- Disability rights
- Civil rights

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the court should exercise supplemental jurisdiction over the plaintiff's Unruh Act, California Disabled Persons Act, California Health and Safety Code, and negligence claims.
2. Whether California's heightened pleading requirements and high-frequency-litigant provisions constitute circumstances supporting a possible declination of supplemental jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1367(c) (4).

HOLDINGS

1. The court concluded that it appeared to have supplemental jurisdiction over the Unruh Act, California Disabled Persons Act, California Health and Safety Code, and negligence claims under 28 U.S.C. § 1367(a).
2. The court did not yet decide whether to exercise supplemental jurisdiction; instead, it ordered plaintiff to show cause why jurisdiction should be exercised and warned that failure to respond could result in declining jurisdiction and dismissing the state-law claims under § 1367(c).

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The supplemental jurisdiction statute “reflects the understanding that, when deciding whether to exercise supplemental jurisdiction, ‘a federal court should consider and weigh in each case, and at every stage of the litigation, the values of judicial economy, convenience, fairness, and comity.’” (1)

“Failure to timely or adequately respond to this Order to Show Cause may, without further warning, result in the Court declining to exercise supplemental jurisdiction over the Unruh Act claim, California’s Disabled Persons Act claim, California Health & Safety Code claim, and negligence claim, and the dismissal of any such claims pursuant to 28 U.S.C. section 1367(c).” (2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

The complaint alleges an ADA violation and seeks injunctive relief, along with damages under California disability-access and related state laws. The court focused on California's heightened pleading requirements for Unruh Act construction-access claims and its high-frequency-litigant fee provisions, which were enacted to address allegedly baseless or vexatious disability-access litigation. The court required plaintiff and counsel to provide facts concerning their possible status as high-frequency litigants.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed a federal ADA claim for injunctive relief and state-law claims under the Unruh Civil Rights Act, California's Disabled Persons Act, the California Health and Safety Code, and negligence. The court determined that it appeared to have supplemental jurisdiction over the state-law claims and ordered plaintiff to explain why the court should exercise that jurisdiction. The court required a response identifying the statutory damages sought and declarations addressing whether plaintiff and counsel qualified as high-frequency litigants.

DISPOSITION

CASES CITED

- City of Chicago v. International College of Surgeons, 522 U.S. 156, 173, 118 S. Ct. 523, 534 (1997)
- Carnegie-Mellon University v. Cohill, 484 U.S. 343, 350 (1988)
- Schutza v. Cuddeback, 262 F. Supp. 3d 1025, 1031 (S.D. Cal. 2017)
- Arroyo v. Rosas, 19 F.4th 1202, 1211 (9th Cir. 2021)

OPINION

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA CIVIL MINUTES—GENERAL Case No. CV 25-03205-DMG (AGR) Date April 23, 2025 Title Ana Ventura v. Francisco Flores, et al. Page 1 of 2 Present: The Honorable DOLLY M. GEE, CHIEF UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE DEREK DAVIS NOT REPORTED Deputy Clerk Court Reporter Attorneys Present for Plaintiff(s) Attorneys Present for Defendant(s) None Present None Present Proceedings: IN CHAMBERS— ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE WHY THE COURT SHOULD NOT DECLINE TO EXERCISE SUPPLEMENTAL JURISDICTION OVER PLAINTIFF’S STATE LAW CLAIMS The Complaint filed in this action asserts a claim for injunctive relief arising out of an alleged violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”), 42 U.S.C. sections 12010- 12213, and a claim for damages pursuant to California’s Unruh Civil Rights Act (“Unruh Act”), Cal. Civ.

Code sections 51-53. It appears that the Court has supplemental jurisdiction over the Unruh Act claim, California’s Disabled Persons Act claim, California Health & Safety Code claim, and negligence claim. See 28 U.S.C. section 1367(a).

The supplemental jurisdiction statute “reflects the understanding that, when deciding whether to exercise supplemental jurisdiction, ‘a federal court should consider and weigh in each case, and at every stage of the litigation, the values of judicial economy, convenience, fairness, and comity.’” City of Chicago v. Int’l Coll. of Surgeons, 522 U.S. 156, 173, 118 S. Ct.

523, 534 (1997) (emphasis added) (quoting Carnegie-Mellon Univ. v. Cohill, 484 U.S. 343, 350 (1988)). In 2012, California adopted a heightened pleading standard for lawsuits brought under the Unruh Act to combat the influx of baseless claims and vexatious litigation in the disability access litigation sphere. Cal. Civ. Code § 55.52(a)(1).

The stricter pleading standard requires a plaintiff bringing construction-access claims to file a verified complaint alleging specific facts concerning the plaintiff’s claim, including the specific barriers encountered or how the plaintiff was deterred and each date on which the plaintiff encountered each barrier or was deterred. See Cal. Civ. Proc. Code § 425.50(a).

California also imposed a “high-frequency litigant fee” in 2015 in response to the “special and unique circumstances” presented by certain plaintiffs and law firms filing an outsized number of Unruh Act lawsuits. Cal. Gov’t Code § 70616.5.

In recognition of California’s efforts to reduce the abuse of California’s disability access laws, some district courts within the state have determined that the interests of fairness and comity, UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA CIVIL MINUTES—GENERAL Case No. CV 25-03205-DMG (AGR) Date April 23, 2025 Title Ana Ventura v. Francisco Flores, et al. Page 2 of 2 counsel against exercising supplemental jurisdiction over construction-access claims brought under the Unruh Act.

See, e.g., *Schutz v. Cuddeback*, 262 F. Supp. 3d 1025, 1031 (S.D. Cal. 2017) (“[T]he Court finds it would be improper to allow Plaintiff [a high frequency litigant] to use federal court as an end-around to California’s pleading requirements.

Therefore, as a matter of comity, and in deference to California’s substantial interest in discouraging unverified disability discrimination claims, the Court declines supplemental jurisdiction over Plaintiff’s Unruh Act claim.”); see also *Arroyo v. Rosas*, 19 F.4th 1202, 1211 (9th Cir. 2021) (“The district court’s principal justification for declining supplemental jurisdiction was that the distinctive configuration of California-law rules... would be rendered ineffectual if the district court were to exercise supplemental jurisdiction.

We hold that the district court did not abuse its discretion in concluding that, for this reason, this case presents ‘exceptional circumstances’ within the meaning of § 1367(c)(4).”). In light of the foregoing, the Court orders Plaintiff to show cause in writing why the Court should exercise supplemental jurisdiction over the Unruh Act, California’s Disabled Persons Act claim, California Health & Safety Code claim, and negligence claim.

See 28 U.S.C. § 1367(c). In responding to this Order to Show Cause, Plaintiff shall identify the amount of statutory damages Plaintiff seeks to recover. Plaintiff and her counsel shall also support their responses to the Order to Show Cause with declarations, signed under penalty of perjury, providing all facts necessary for the Court to determine if they satisfy the definition of a “high-frequency litigant” as provided by California Civil Procedure Code sections 425.55(b)(1) & (2).

Plaintiff shall file a Response to this Order to Show Cause by May 5, 2025. Failure to timely or adequately respond to this Order to Show Cause may, without further warning, result in the Court declining to exercise supplemental jurisdiction over the Unruh Act claim, California’s Disabled Persons Act claim, California Health & Safety Code claim, and negligence claim, and the dismissal of any such claims pursuant to 28 U.S.C. section 1367(c).

IT IS SO ORDERED.

