

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Christopher Lloyd Mitchel v. Ford Motor Company et al.

Mitchel v. Ford Motor Co. · No. 5:25-cv-01466-DOC-DTB · Decided September 11, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Central District of California grants Plaintiff Christopher Lloyd Mitchel’s motion to remand a Song-Beverly Consumer Warranty Act action against Ford Motor Company. The court concludes that Ford failed to show by a preponderance of the evidence that the amount in controversy exceeded \$75,000, and therefore finds no diversity jurisdiction. The case is remanded to the Superior Court of Riverside County, California.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Central District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	David O. Carter
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Central District of California
DECIDED	September 11, 2025
DOCKET	5:25-cv-01466-DOC-DTB
DISPOSITION	remanded
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff moved to remand an action removed from Riverside County Superior Court on the ground that the amount-in-controversy requirement for diversity jurisdiction was not satisfied.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The removing defendant bears the burden of establishing federal subject matter jurisdiction by a preponderance of the evidence. When the complaint does not clearly and unambiguously allege more than \$75,000, the defendant must show that it is more likely than not that the amount in controversy exceeds the jurisdictional minimum.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Nonprecedential district court opinion; publication status is not identified, and the document is a civil minutes order.
PARTIES	Christopher Lloyd Mitchel v. Ford Motor Company, Does 1 through 10

TOPICS

subject matter jurisdiction

civil procedure

federalism

consumer protection

PRACTICE AREAS

Civil procedure

Federal jurisdiction

Removal and remand

Consumer warranty law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the district court had diversity subject matter jurisdiction when the complaint did not allege more than \$75,000 in damages and Ford's supported economic-damages calculation was \$63,636.42.
2. Whether speculative civil penalties and attorney's fees could be included to satisfy the amount-in-controversy requirement.

HOLDINGS

1. Ford failed to prove by a preponderance of the evidence that the amount in controversy exceeded \$75,000, so the district court lacked diversity jurisdiction.
2. The court declined to include speculative civil penalties or attorney's fees in determining whether the amount in controversy exceeded \$75,000.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"If at any time before final judgment it appears that the district court lacks subject matter jurisdiction, the case shall be remanded." (at 2)

"A removing defendant 'may not meet [its] burden by simply reciting some 'magical incantation' to the effect that 'the matter in controversy exceeds the sum of [\$75,000],' but instead, must set forth in the removal petition the underlying facts supporting its assertion that the amount in controversy exceeds [\$75,000].'" (at 3)

"Therefore, Defendant has only shown damages of \$63,636.42. Because Defendant has not satisfied its burden to show more than \$75,000 is at issue in this case, the Court lacks diversity jurisdiction." (at 5)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff purchased a Ford vehicle under a written warranty contract dated August 20, 2021. He alleged that the vehicle had transmission, engine, and other defects that manifested during the express warranty period and that Ford failed to repair, replace, or provide restitution for the vehicle under California's Song-Beverly Act. The complaint alleged damages of not less than \$35,001, while Ford calculated economic damages of \$63,636.42 after applying a mileage offset to the vehicle's purchase price.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed suit in Riverside County Superior Court on September 3, 2024, asserting California Song-Beverly Act, warranty, fraudulent-inducement, and negligent-repair claims. After Plaintiff dismissed previously named defendant Gosch Ford Hemet, Ford removed the action to the Central District of California on June 12, 2025.

The district court granted Plaintiff's motion to remand because Ford failed to prove by a preponderance of the evidence that more than \$75,000 was in controversy.

DISPOSITION

remanded

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

The case was remanded to the Superior Court of Riverside County, California. The Ex Parte Application to Continue the CMC/Scheduling Conference was mooted.

CASES CITED

- *Ethridge v. Harbor House Rest.*, 861 F.2d 1389, 1393 (9th Cir. 1988)
- *Exxon Mobil Corp. v. Allapattah Servs., Inc.*, 545 U.S. 546, 553 (2005)
- *Guglielmino v. McKee Foods Corp.*, 506 F.3d 696, 699 (9th Cir. 2007)
- *St. Paul Mercury Indem. Co. v. Red Cab Co.*, 303 U.S. 283, 288-89 (1938)
- *Crum v. Circus Enters.*, 231 F.3d 1129, 1131 (9th Cir. 2000)
- *Gaus v. Miles, Inc.*, 980 F.2d 564, 567 (9th Cir. 1992)
- *Sanchez v. Monumental Life Ins. Co.*, 102 F.3d 398, 403-04 (9th Cir. 1996)
- *Richmond v. Allstate Ins. Co.*, 897 F. Supp. 447, 450 (S.D. Cal. 1995)
- *Geographic Expeditions, Inc. v. Estate of Lhotka ex rel. Lhotka*, 599 F.3d 1102, 1106-07 (9th Cir. 2010)
- *Coleman v. Estes Express Lines, Inc.*, 730 F. Supp. 2d 1141, 1148-49 (C.D. Cal. 2010)
- *Matheson v. Progressive Specialty Ins. Co.*, 319 F.3d 1089, 1090-91 (9th Cir. 2003)
- *Singer v. State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co.*, 116 F.3d 373, 377 (9th Cir. 1997)
- *Gonzalez v. Crosby*, 545 U.S. 524, 534 (2005)
- *Steel Co. v. Citizens for a Better Env't*, 523 U.S. 83, 94, 101-02 (1998)
- *Snell v. Cleveland, Inc.*, 316 F.3d 822, 826 (9th Cir. 2002)
- *Lee v. FCA US, LLC*, No. CV 16-5190 PSG (MRWx), 2016 WL 11516754, at *2 (C.D. Cal. Nov. 7, 2016)
- *Galt G/S v. JSS Scandinavia*, 142 F.3d 1150, 1156 (9th Cir. 1998)