

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF  
CALIFORNIA

Travis Sulton v. B. M. Trate

Sulton v. Trate · No. 1:23-cv-00709-CDB (HC) · Decided December 23, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California dismissed Travis Sulton’s 28 U.S.C. § 2241 habeas petition without prejudice. The dismissal was based on Petitioner’s failure to update his address, comply with court orders and local rules, and prosecute the action after court mail was returned as undeliverable. The court applied the factors governing dismissal for failure to prosecute and failure to obey court orders.

CASE DETAILS

|                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| COURT              | United States District Court for the Eastern District of California                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| JURISDICTION       | United States District Court for the Eastern District of California                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| DECIDED            | December 23, 2025                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| DOCKET             | 1:23-cv-00709-CDB (HC)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| DISPOSITION        | dismissed                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| PROCEDURAL POSTURE | Federal prisoner filed a pro se petition for a writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2241. After court orders and an order to show cause were returned as undeliverable, and the petitioner failed to update his address or respond, the district court dismissed the petition without prejudice for failure to obey court orders and local rules and for failure to prosecute. |
| STANDARD OF REVIEW | The court weighed the Ninth Circuit's five factors governing dismissal for failure to prosecute or failure to comply with court orders: the public interest in expeditious resolution, the court's need to manage its docket, the risk of prejudice to the respondent, the public policy favoring disposition on the merits, and the availability of less drastic alternatives.   |
| PRECEDENTIAL VALUE | Unpublished, nonprecedential district-court order                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| PARTIES            | Travis Sulton v. B. M. Trate                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

TOPICS

federal habeas corpus

civil procedure

sanctions

## PRACTICE AREAS

Habeas corpus

Federal civil procedure

## QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the court could dismiss the § 2241 petition without prejudice after petitioner failed to update his address, obey court orders and local rules, and prosecute the action.

## HOLDINGS

1. A district court may dismiss an action without prejudice when a pro se petitioner fails to maintain a current address, comply with court orders and local rules, and prosecute the action, after consideration of the applicable dismissal factors and less drastic alternatives.

## KEY QUOTATIONS

*“Accordingly, the Court DISMISSES this action, without prejudice, for Petitioner’s failure to obey the Court’s orders and Local Rules and failure to prosecute.” (at 5)*

## FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Petitioner filed a § 2241 habeas petition while incarcerated at United States Penitentiary, Atwater, alleging that approximately 270 days of earned time credit had not been applied to shorten his supervised release. Court orders mailed to petitioner were returned as undeliverable because he was no longer at the facility, and petitioner did not notify the court of a new address. A Bureau of Prisons database search showed that petitioner had been released from custody on November 26, 2024, but he still failed to respond to the court's order to show cause or otherwise prosecute the case.

## PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Petitioner filed the § 2241 petition on May 8, 2023. The court conducted preliminary review, ordered a response and briefing schedule, and later issued an order to show cause after court mail was returned as undeliverable and petitioner failed to provide a current address. The order to show cause was also returned, and petitioner did not respond. The court dismissed the action without prejudice and directed the Clerk to close the case.

## DISPOSITION

dismissed

## CASES CITED

- Thompson v. Housing Auth., City of Los Angeles, 782 F.2d 829, 831 (9th Cir. 1986)
- Ferdik v. Bonzelet, 963 F.2d 1258, 1260-62 (9th Cir. 1992)
- Malone v. U.S. Postal Service, 833 F.2d 128, 130-31 (9th Cir. 1987)

- Henderson v. Duncan, 779 F.2d 1421, 1424 (9th Cir. 1986)
- Carey v. King, 856 F.2d 1439, 1440-41 (9th Cir. 1988)
- In re Phenylpropanolamine (PPA) Products Liability Litigation, 460 F.3d 1217, 1226, 1228 (9th Cir. 2006)
- Applied Underwriters, Inc. v. Lichtenegger, 913 F.3d 884, 891 (9th Cir. 2019)
- Yourish v. Cal. Amplifier, 191 F.3d 983, 990 (9th Cir. 1999)
- Pagtalunan v. Galaza, 291 F.3d 639, 642-43 (9th Cir. 2002)
- Anderson v. Air W., 542 F.2d 522, 524 (9th Cir. 1976)

## OPINION

Trate

PER CURIAM.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

9 EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

10

11 TRAVIS SULTON, No. 1:23-cv-00709-CDB (HC)

12 Petitioner, ORDER DISMISSING PETITION FOR WRIT

OF HABEAS CORPUS WITHOUT

13 v. PREJUDICE FOR PETITIONER’S FAILURE

TO OBEY THE COURT’S ORDERS AND

14 B. M. TRATE, LOCAL RULES AND FOR FAILURE TO

PROSECUTE

15 Respondent. 16

17 Petitioner Travis Sulton (“Petitioner”) is a federal prisoner proceeding pro se and in forma 18  
 pauperis with a petition for writ of habeas corpus pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2241. 19 I. Background  
 20 Petitioner filed the instant habeas petition on May 8, 2023, while in custody of the Bureau 21 of  
 Prisons (“BOP”) at United States Penitentiary, Atwater. (Doc. 1). On August 20, 2025, the 22  
 Court completed a preliminary review of the petition under Rule 4 of the Rules Governing Section  
 23 2254 Cases<sup>1</sup>. (Doc. 5). Petitioner argues he was denied approximately 270 days of earned time  
 24 credit that should have been applied to shorten his period of supervised release. (See generally  
 25 Doc. 1). Upon review, because it does not plainly appear that Petitioner is not entitled to relief,  
 the

26 Court ordered Respondent to respond to the petition and set a briefing schedule. (See Doc. 5).  
 The 27 1 The Habeas Rules may be applied to petitions for writ of habeas corpus other than those  
 28 brought under § 2254 at the Court’s discretion. See Habeas Rule 1. 1 Court’s order was served  
 upon Petitioner. (See 8/20/2025 dkt. entry). 2 On October 15, 2025, the Court’s order served upon  
 Petitioner was returned by the U.S. 3 Postal Service marked, “Undeliverable, No Longer at  
 Facility.” (See 10/15/2025 dkt. entry). On

4 December 2, 2025, a subsequent order of the Court served upon Petitioner similarly was returned

5 by the U.S. Postal Service marked, “Undeliverable, No Longer at Facility.” (See 12/2/2025 dkt. 6 entry). Accordingly, on December 4, 2025, the Court issued an order to show cause, noting that 7 more than 30 days had passed yet Petitioner had failed to update his address with the Court, and 8 directing Petitioner to respond in writing why the action should not be dismissed for failure to obey 9 this Court’s Local Rules and failure to prosecute the action. (Doc. 13). The Court served the order 10 upon Petitioner on December 4, 2025, and on December 16, 2025, the order served upon Petitioner 11 was returned by the U.S. Postal Service marked, “Undeliverable, No Longer at Facility.” See 12 (12/16/2025 dkt. entry). 13 II. Discussion 14 Applicable Legal Standards 15 The Local Rules of this Court, corresponding with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 11, 16 provide, “[f]ailure of counsel or of a party to comply with these Rules or with any order of the 17 Court may be grounds for the imposition by the Court of any and all sanctions authorized by statute 18 or Rule or within the inherent power of the Court.” Local Rule 110. “District courts have inherent 19 power to control their dockets” and, in exercising that power, may impose sanctions, including 20 dismissal of an action. *Thompson v. Housing Auth., City of Los Angeles*, 782 F.2d 829, 831 (9th

21 Cir. 1986). A court may dismiss an action based on a party’s failure to prosecute an action, obey a

22 court order, or comply with local rules. See, e.g., *Ferdik v. Bonzelet*, 963 F.2d 1258, 1260-61 (9th

23 Cir. 1992) (dismissal for failure to comply with a court order to amend a complaint); *Malone v.* 24 *U.S. Postal Service*, 833 F.2d 128, 130-31 (9th Cir. 1987) (dismissal for failure to comply with a 25 court order); *Henderson v. Duncan*, 779 F.2d 1421, 1424 (9th Cir. 1986) (dismissal for failure to 26 prosecute and to comply with local rules). 27 Local Rule 182(f) provides that a “pro se party is under a continuing duty to notify the Clerk 28 and all other parties of any change of address .... Absent such notice, service of documents at the 1 prior address of the ... pro se party shall be fully effective.” Further, Local Rule 183(b) provides 2 that a “party appearing in propria persona shall keep the Court and opposing parties advised as to 3 his or her current address. If mail directed to a plaintiff in propria persona by the Clerk is returned 4 by the U.S. Postal Service, and if such plaintiff fails to notify the Court and opposing parties within 5 thirty (30) days thereafter of a current address, the Court may dismiss the action without prejudice 6 for failure to prosecute.” 7 “In determining whether to dismiss an action for lack of prosecution, the district court is 8 required to weigh several factors: (1) the public’s interest in expeditious resolution of litigation; (2) 9 the court’s need to manage its docket; (3) the risk of prejudice to the defendants; (4) the public 10 policy favoring disposition of cases on their merits; and (5) the availability of less drastic 11 sanctions.” *Carey v. King*, 856 F.2d 1439, 1440-41 (9th Cir. 1988) (internal quotation marks & 12 citation omitted). These factors guide a court in deciding what to do and are not

conditions that 13 must be met in order for a court to take action. In *re* Phenylpropanolamine (PPA) Products 14 Liability Litigation, 460 F.3d 1217, 1226 (9th Cir. 2006) (citation omitted). 15 Similarly, Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 41(b) allows the Court to dismiss an action if the 16 petitioner fails to comply with a court order. Fed. R. Civ. P. 41(b). “By its plain text, a Rule 41(b) 17 dismissal . . . requires a court order with which an offending [petitioner] failed to comply.” *Applied* 18 *Underwriters, Inc. v. Lichtenegger*, 913 F.3d 884, 891 (9th Cir. 2019) (internal quotation marks, 19 citation, and footnote omitted). The Court must analyze five factors before dismissing a case 20 pursuant to Rule 41(b): “(1) the public’s interest in expeditious resolution of litigation; (2) the 21 court’s need to manage its docket; (3) the risk of prejudice to the [respondents]; (4) the public policy 22 favoring disposition of cases on their merits; and (5) the availability of less drastic alternatives.” 23 *Id.* (quoting *Yourish v. Cal. Amplifier*, 191 F.3d 983, 990 (9th Cir. 1999)); *Pagtalunan v. Galaza*, 24 291 F.3d 639, 642 (9th Cir. 2002). These factors guide a court in deciding what to do and are not 25 conditions that must be met in order for a court to take action. In *re* Phenylpropanolamine (PPA) 26 Products Liability Litigation, 460 F.3d 1217, 1226 (9th Cir. 2006) (citation omitted) 27 Analysis 28 Here, Petitioner has failed to file a notice of change of address or to otherwise advise the 1 Court of his current address. A search of the BOP’s inmate database shows Petitioner was released 2 from custody as of November 26, 2024.2 3 Thus, Petitioner has failed to comply with the Court’s order to show cause and Local Rules 4 and, as Petitioner has failed to provide the Court an address at which to effect service, there are no 5 other reasonable alternatives available to address Petitioner’s failure to respond and otherwise obey 6 this Court’s orders. Thus, the first and second factors—the expeditious resolution of litigation and 7 the Court’s need to manage its docket—weigh in favor of dismissal. *Carey*, 856 F.2d at 1440. The 8 third factor, risk of prejudice to Respondent, also weighs fairly in favor of dismissal since a 9 presumption of injury arises from the occurrence of unreasonable delay in prosecuting an action. 10 See *Anderson v. Air W.*, 542 F.2d 522, 524 (9th Cir. 1976). This matter cannot proceed further 11 without Petitioner’s participation to prosecute the case by, among other things, providing an address 12 at which Respondent can serve documents. The presumption of injury holds given Petitioner’s 13 unreasonable delay in prosecuting this action. Thus, the third factor—a risk of prejudice to the 14 Respondent—also weighs in favor of dismissal. *Carey*, 856 F.2d at 1440. 15 The fourth factor usually weighs against dismissal because public policy favors disposition 16 on the merits. *Pagtalunan*, 291 F.3d at 643. However, “this factor lends little support to a party 17 whose responsibility it is to move a case toward disposition on the merits but whose conduct 18 impedes progress in that direction.” In *re* PPA, 460 F.3d at 1228. Petitioner has not moved this 19 case forward toward disposition on the merits. Rather, his failure to comply with this Court’s orders 20 and Local Rules prevents the action from progressing given his failure to provide a current address 21 within the timeframe set forth in Local Rule 183(b). Therefore, the fourth factor — the public 22 policy favoring disposition of cases on their merits — also weighs in favor of dismissal. *Carey*, 23 856 F.2d at 1440. Finally, the Court’s warning to a party that failure to obey

the court's order will 24 result in dismissal satisfies the "considerations of the alternatives" requirement. Ferdik, 963 F.2d 25 at 1262. Here, as discussed above, the Court's order to show cause cautioned Petitioner that failure 26 to comply would result in dismissal of the action. (Doc. 13 at 3). The case opening documents 27 2 Federal Bureau of Prisons Inmate Locator, available at <https://www.bop.gov/inmateloc/> 28 (last accessed on December 23, 2025). 1 | advised Petitioner that, absent notice to the Court of any change of address, "service at the prior 2 || address shall be fully effective." (Doc. 3 at 2); see Local Rule 182(f). 3 In sum, Petitioner has failed to comply with this Court's orders and Local Rules, and in 4 | doing so, has failed to prosecute this action. Having weighed the equities and considered the 5 | relevant factors noted above, the undersigned concludes that dismissal of this action is warranted. 6 III. Conclusion and Order 7 Accordingly, the Court DISMISSES this action, without prejudice, for Petitioner's failure 8 || to obey the Court's orders and Local Rules and failure to prosecute. 9 The Clerk of the Court is directed to close this case and terminate any deadlines. 10 | ITIS SOORDERED. Dated: \_ December 23, 2025 | Vv Vv R~

12 UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28