

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF UTAH

Itzel Cox v. Danny Quintana, et al.

Cox · No. 2:25-cv-00161-DBB-JCB · Decided June 24, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Utah overruled Plaintiff Itzel Cox’s objection and adopted in part the magistrate judge’s Report and Recommendation. The court held that the Rooker-Feldman doctrine barred most of Cox’s federal claims because they sought relief arising from or effectively undoing a prior state-court judgment, while concluding that her legal-malpractice claims against two former attorneys were not barred by that doctrine. Because the complaint provided no independent basis for subject-matter jurisdiction over those state-law claims, the court dismissed the amended complaint without prejudice and denied leave to amend as futile.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Utah
WRITING FOR THE COURT	David Barlow
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Utah
DECIDED	June 24, 2026
DOCKET	2:25-cv-00161-DBB-JCB
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff objected to a magistrate judge's report and recommendation recommending dismissal of her amended complaint for lack of subject-matter jurisdiction under the Rooker-Feldman doctrine and, alternatively, failure to state a claim. The district court reviewed the objections de novo, adopted the report and recommendation in part, overruled the objection, and dismissed the amended complaint without prejudice.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	De novo review of the portions of a magistrate judge's report and recommendation to which a timely and specific objection was made under 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(C).
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unknown
PARTIES	Itzel Cox v. Danny Quintana, Adam Wahlquist, Paul Jones, Armstrong Construction, Inc., Other named defendants

TOPICS

subject matter jurisdiction

civil procedure

pleadings

section 1983

due process

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

constitutional law

civil rights

real estate

remedies

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the Rooker-Feldman doctrine deprived the district court of subject-matter jurisdiction over Cox's claims arising from the adverse state-court judgment.
2. Whether Cox's constitutional and civil RICO claims against the attorneys and opposing parties were barred because the requested relief would effectively require review or reversal of the state-court judgment.
3. Whether Cox's legal-malpractice claims against her former attorneys were themselves barred by Rooker-Feldman.
4. Whether the district court could exercise supplemental jurisdiction over the state-law malpractice claims after dismissing the federal claims.
5. Whether Cox should be granted leave to amend her amended complaint.

HOLDINGS

1. Rooker-Feldman deprived the district court of subject-matter jurisdiction over Cox's claims against Armstrong Construction, Inc., Paul Jones, and the other defendants to the extent those claims arose from the state-court judgment and sought relief that would effectively reverse or undermine that judgment.
2. Rooker-Feldman barred Cox's constitutional and civil RICO claims against Adam Wahlquist and Danny Quintana because treating their participation in the underlying proceedings as constitutional or racketeering violations would require the federal court to find that the state proceedings and resulting judgment were defective.
3. Cox's legal-malpractice claims against Wahlquist and Quintana were not barred by Rooker-Feldman because, as pleaded, they sought to hold the attorneys liable for breaching fiduciary duties and causing injury, without necessarily requiring reversal or rejection of the state-court judgment.
4. The district court could not exercise supplemental jurisdiction over Cox's state-law malpractice claims because it lacked original jurisdiction over the federal claims; alternatively, it would decline supplemental jurisdiction after dismissal of all federal claims.
5. Leave to amend was denied as futile because Cox had already amended once, the factual basis of most claims remained subject to Rooker-Feldman, and amendment of the malpractice claim would not cure the absence of federal subject-matter jurisdiction.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The Rooker-Feldman doctrine ‘precludes lower federal courts ‘from effectively exercising appellate jurisdiction over claims actually decided by a state court and claims inextricably intertwined with a prior

state court judgment.””” (Discussion § I)

“A finding in Plaintiff’s favor on this claim would not reverse the state court judgment, it would merely hold Mr. Wahlquist and Mr. Quintana liable to the extent they breached their fiduciary duties and thereby injured Ms. Cox.” (Discussion § I)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Cox's claims arose from a dispute concerning the attempted development of real property and subsequent Utah state-court litigation. She alleged that opposing parties and attorneys engaged in misconduct, including presenting or concealing evidence, pursuing a lien, and using judicial processes that led to an adverse state-court judgment and the loss or sale of her property. She also alleged that her former attorneys breached fiduciary duties by failing to involve her adequately in the defense, failing to respond to summary judgment, and failing to use relevant evidence.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Cox initially filed suit and was granted leave to proceed in forma pauperis on a temporary basis. After screening the initial complaint, the magistrate judge recommended dismissal under Rooker-Feldman. Cox filed an amended complaint asserting due process, civil RICO, and legal-malpractice claims. The magistrate judge again recommended dismissal, and the district court reviewed Cox's timely objection and entered the memorandum decision and order dismissing the amended complaint without prejudice.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- United States v. One Parcel of Real Prop., 2121 E. 30th St., Tulsa, Oklahoma, 73 F.3d 1057, 1060 (10th Cir. 1996)
- PJ ex rel. Jensen v. Wagner, 603 F.3d 1182, 1193 (10th Cir. 2010)
- Mo's Express, LLC v. Sopkin, 441 F.3d 1229, 1233, 1237 (10th Cir. 2006)
- Exxon Mobil Corp. v. Saudi Basic Indus. Corp., 544 U.S. 280, 284 (2005)
- Bruce v. City & County of Denver, 57 F.4th 738, 746 (10th Cir. 2023)
- Kenmen Eng'g v. City of Union, 314 F.3d 468, 476 (10th Cir. 2002)
- Christensen & Jensen, P.C. v. Barrett & Daines, 2008 UT 64, ¶ 23, 194 P.3d 931, 938
- Kilpatrick v. Wiley, Rein & Fielding, 909 P.2d 1283, 1290 (Utah Ct. App. 1996)
- Kranendonk v. Gregory & Swapp, PLLC, 2014 UT App 36, ¶ 28, 320 P.3d 689, 696
- Hall v. Bellmon, 935 F.2d 1106, 1110 (10th Cir. 1991)
- United States v. Botefuhr, 309 F.3d 1263, 1273 (10th Cir. 2002)
- Moya v. Garcia, 895 F.3d 1229, 1239 (10th Cir. 2018)

