

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

William D. Lawson Jr. v. B. Cates

Lawson v. Cates · No. 25-cv-06661-SVK · Decided October 16, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of California transfers a California prisoner’s 28 U.S.C. § 2254 habeas petition to the Eastern District of California. The court holds that venue is proper in the federal district encompassing the county of conviction, Butte County, and orders the Clerk to transfer the case in the interest of justice.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Susan van Keulen
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
DECIDED	October 16, 2025
DOCKET	25-cv-06661-SVK
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	A California state prisoner proceeding pro se filed a petition for a writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2254 in the Northern District of California, challenging his Butte County Superior Court conviction. The court transferred the petition to the Eastern District of California because Butte County is in that district.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished district court transfer order; limited precedential value.

TOPICS

- federal habeas corpus
- venue
- post-conviction relief
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

- Federal habeas corpus
- Federal civil procedure
- Venue and transfer

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

- Whether the Northern District of California should transfer a § 2254 habeas petition challenging a Butte County conviction to the Eastern District of California, the federal district encompassing the county of

conviction.

HOLDINGS

1. Although a state habeas petition may be filed in either the district of confinement or the district of conviction, the district of conviction is the proper venue for a petition challenging the validity of the conviction; because Butte County is in the Eastern District of California, transfer to that district was appropriate.

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

William D. Lawson Jr., a California prisoner proceeding without counsel, challenged the validity of his conviction in Butte County Superior Court through a petition under 28 U.S.C. § 2254. Because Butte County lies within the Eastern District of California, the Northern District of California determined that the district of conviction was the proper venue for the habeas petition.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Petitioner filed a federal habeas petition challenging the validity of a conviction entered in Butte County Superior Court. The Northern District of California determined that the district of conviction was the proper venue and ordered transfer to the Eastern District of California in the interest of justice.

DISPOSITION

other

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

The Clerk was directed to transfer the matter forthwith to the United States District Court for the Eastern District of California.

CASES CITED

- Dannenberg v. Ingle, 831 F. Supp. 767, 768 (N.D. Cal. 1993)
- Laue v. Nelson, 279 F. Supp. 265, 266 (F.D. Cal. 1968)

OPINION

1 2 3 4 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT 5 NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA 6 7
WILLIAM D. LAWSON JR., Case No. 25-cv-06661-SVK 8 Plaintiff, ORDER OF TRANSFER v.
9 10 B. CATES, Defendant. 11 12 Petitioner, a California prisoner proceeding without an attorney,
filed this petition for a 13 writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2254.

The petition challenges the validity of Petitioner's 14 conviction in Butte County Superior Court.
15 A petition for a writ of habeas corpus made by a person in custody under the judgment 16 and

sentence of a state court of a state which contains two or more federal judicial districts may be filed in either the district of confinement or the district of conviction.

See 28 U.S.C. § 2241(d). Each of such districts shall have concurrent jurisdiction to entertain the petition; however, the district court for the district where the petition is filed may transfer the petition to the other district in the furtherance of justice. See *id.* Federal courts in California traditionally have chosen to hear petitions challenging a conviction or sentence in the district of conviction.

See *Dannenberg v. Ingle*, 831 F. Supp. 767, 768 (N.D. Cal. 1993); *Laue v. Nelson*, 279 F. Supp. 265, 266 (N.D. Cal. 1968); see also N.D. Cal. Habeas L.R. 2254-3(b) (mandating transfer to the district of conviction). As Petitioner challenges the validity of his conviction, the proper venue for his petition is the district in which he was convicted.

Butte County is located within the venue of the Eastern District of California. See 28 U.S.C. § 84(b). Accordingly, in the interest of justice, this case is hereby TRANSFERRED to the United States District Court for the Eastern District of California. The Clerk shall transfer this matter forthwith. SO ORDERED. Dated: October 16, 2025
Samm veh Susan van Keulen United States Magistrate Judge
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