

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Kenneth Lamont Davis v. Steven Smith, Warden

No. 5:25-cv-01858-SPG-AGR, United States District Court for the Central District of California (January 5, 2026)

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Central District of California accepted the magistrate judge’s findings and recommendation in Kenneth Lamont Davis’s habeas corpus action. The court denied the Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus, denied the requests for discovery and an evidentiary hearing, and dismissed the action with prejudice.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Central District of California
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Central District of California
DECIDED	January 5, 2026
DOCKET	5:25-cv-01858-SPG-AGR
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Petitioner sought federal habeas corpus relief under 28 U.S.C. § 2254, objected to a magistrate judge's Report and Recommendation, and requested discovery and an evidentiary hearing. The district court conducted de novo review of the portions of the Report to which objections were made, accepted the Report's findings and recommendation, denied the petition, and dismissed the action with prejudice.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The district court conducted de novo review of the portions of the magistrate judge's Report and Recommendation to which objections were made. Discovery in a habeas action requires good cause, and an evidentiary hearing is unwarranted when the petitioner's factual allegations would not entitle him to habeas relief.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished district court order; precedential status is not stated in the opinion.
PARTIES	Kenneth Lamont Davis v. Steven Smith, Warden

TOPICS

federal habeas corpus

post-conviction relief

discovery dispute

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

federal habeas corpus

post-conviction relief

civil procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the district court should accept the magistrate judge's Report and Recommendation after conducting de novo review of the portions challenged by Davis's objections.
2. Whether Davis demonstrated good cause for discovery in his habeas action when he already possessed the requested police-interview recording.
3. Whether an evidentiary hearing was warranted when Davis's factual allegations would not entitle him to habeas relief.

HOLDINGS

1. Discovery was properly denied because Davis did not show good cause: he acknowledged that he already possessed the requested recording, and the discovery was not essential to developing his grounds for relief.
2. An evidentiary hearing was unwarranted because Davis's factual allegations would not entitle him to habeas relief.
3. The court accepted the findings and recommendation of the magistrate judge's Report and Recommendation after conducting de novo review of the portions to which Davis objected.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"A habeas petitioner, unlike the usual civil litigant in federal court, is not entitled to discovery as a matter of ordinary course." (at 1)

"To show good cause, a petitioner must demonstrate that "specific allegations before the court show reason to believe that the petitioner may, if the facts are fully developed, be able to demonstrate that he is . . . entitled to relief."" (at 1)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

The opinion provides no substantive facts concerning the underlying criminal conviction or habeas claims. Davis stated that he sought discovery of a recording of his police interview but acknowledged that he already possessed the recording. The court further determined that his factual allegations, for the reasons stated in the Report and Recommendation, would not entitle him to habeas relief.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The case was referred to a United States magistrate judge, who issued a Report and Recommendation concerning Davis's habeas petition. Davis filed objections and sought discovery and an evidentiary hearing. The

district court reviewed the challenged portions de novo, accepted the Report and Recommendation, denied the petition, and dismissed the action with prejudice.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Bracy v. Gramley, 520 U.S. 899, 904, 909 (1997)
- Schriro v. Landrigan, 550 U.S. 465, 473–74 (2007)

OPINION

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT 9 CENTRAL DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA 10 Case No. 5:25-cv-01858-SPG-AGR 11 KENNETH LAMONT DAVIS,
ORDER ACCEPTING FINDINGS AND 12 Petitioner, RECOMMENDATION OF UNITED 13 v.
STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE 14 STEVEN SMITH, Warden, 15 16 Respondent. 17 18
Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636, the Court has reviewed the Petition for Writ of Habeas 19 Corpus,
(ECF No. 1 (“Petition”)); the other records on file herein; the Report and 20 Recommendation of
the United States Magistrate Judge, (ECF No. 4 (“Report”)); and 21 Petitioner Kenneth Lamont
Davis’s Objections to the Report, (ECF No. 8 (“Objections”)).

22 Further, the Court has engaged in a de novo review of those portions of the Report to which 23
objections have been made. The Court accepts the findings and recommendation of the 24 Report.
25 In addition to the Objections, Petitioner has moved for discovery and an evidentiary 26 hearing.
See (Objections at 6–8). “A habeas petitioner, unlike the usual civil litigant in 27 federal court, is
not entitled to discovery as a matter of ordinary course.” Bracy v. Gramley, 28 520 U.S. 899, 904
(1997).

In a habeas action, a court “may, for good cause, authorize a 1 || party to conduct discovery.” Rule
6(a), Rules Governing Section 2254 Cases in the United 2 || States District Courts. To show good
cause, a petitioner must demonstrate that “specific 3 || allegations before the court show reason to
believe that the petitioner may, if the facts are 4 || fully developed, be able to demonstrate that he
is... entitled to relief.” Bracy, 520 U.S. 5 909.

Although Petitioner states that he seeks discovery, he concedes that the requested 6 || recording of
his interview with police is already in his possession. See (Objections at 7). 7 || Thus, Petitioner
has not shown good cause for discovery and the requested discovery is not 8 || essential to develop
his grounds for relief.

Moreover, an evidentiary hearing is 9 || unwarranted because Petitioner’s factual allegations would
not entitle him to habeas relief 10 || for the reasons explained in the Report. See Schriro v.

Landrigan, 550 U.S. 465, 473-74 11 (2007). 12 IT THEREFORE IS ORDERED that judgment be entered denying the Petition for 13 || Writ of Habeas Corpus and dismissing this action with prejudice.

14 15 || DATED: January 5, 2026 ☐☐. 16 17 UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE 18 19 20 21 22
23 24 25 26 27 28

Retrieved from lawtools.ai · <https://lawtools.ai/cases/state/united-states-district-court-for-the-central-district-of-california-united-states-district-court-for/2026/kenneth-lamont-davis-v-steven-smith-warden-nl8kmh60>