

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF
PENNSYLVANIA

Gregory Wyatt v. Bernadette Mason, et al.

Wyatt · No. 1:25-cv-01918 · Decided December 22, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania addressed Gregory Wyatt’s application to proceed in forma pauperis and his petition for habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2254. The court granted in forma pauperis status but dismissed the petition without prejudice for lack of subject-matter jurisdiction because it was an unauthorized second or successive petition. The court declined to issue a certificate of appealability and directed the Clerk to close the case.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Yvette Kane
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania
DECIDED	December 22, 2025
DOCKET	1:25-cv-01918
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Petitioner filed an application to proceed in forma pauperis and a petition for a writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2254. The district court granted in forma pauperis status but dismissed the habeas petition without prejudice for lack of subject-matter jurisdiction because it was an unauthorized second or successive petition.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court conducted preliminary screening under Rule 4 governing § 2254 cases and determined whether it had subject-matter jurisdiction over an unauthorized second or successive petition. For the transfer question, the court considered whether transfer to the court of appeals would be in the interest of justice, including whether the petition alleged facts satisfying the gatekeeping requirements of 28 U.S.C. § 2244(b)(2).
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished
PARTIES	Gregory Wyatt v. Bernadette Mason, et al.

TOPICS

federal habeas corpus successive petitions subject matter jurisdiction post-conviction relief due process

PRACTICE AREAS

federal habeas corpus post-conviction relief civil procedure constitutional law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the present § 2254 petition was an unauthorized second or successive habeas petition requiring prior authorization from the Third Circuit.
2. Whether the district court had subject-matter jurisdiction to consider the petition absent authorization from the court of appeals.
3. Whether the petition should be transferred to the Third Circuit under 28 U.S.C. § 1631 in the interest of justice.
4. Whether a certificate of appealability should issue after dismissal on procedural grounds.

HOLDINGS

1. A § 2254 petition challenging the same conviction and sentence is second or successive when the petitioner previously filed a § 2254 petition that was adjudicated on the merits, including by dismissal as untimely under AEDPA's one-year statute of limitations.
2. A district court lacks subject-matter jurisdiction over a second or successive § 2254 petition filed without prior authorization from the appropriate court of appeals.
3. Transfer was not in the interest of justice because Wyatt did not allege facts suggesting that his claims satisfied the gatekeeping requirements for a second or successive petition.
4. A certificate of appealability should not issue because reasonable jurists would not debate the determination that the petition was an unauthorized second or successive petition subject to dismissal.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“If the petitioner fails to first obtain approval from the appropriate court of appeals, a district court lacks subject-matter jurisdiction to consider the second or successive habeas petition.”

“Accordingly, this Court does not have subject-matter jurisdiction to consider them.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Wyatt is serving a twenty-five-to-fifty-year Pennsylvania sentence imposed after he pleaded guilty to third-degree murder, robbery, possession of a firearm prohibited, and carrying a firearm without a license. He pursued multiple Pennsylvania PCRA petitions, all of which were dismissed or denied. He previously challenged the same convictions and sentence in a federal § 2254 petition, which the Middle District of Pennsylvania dismissed as untimely in 2022. His present petition again challenges those convictions and sentence and asserts due process, equal protection, invalid-plea, and ineffective-assistance claims.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Wyatt pleaded guilty in the Dauphin County Court of Common Pleas in 2014 and later filed multiple state post-conviction petitions. He previously filed a federal § 2254 petition challenging the same convictions and sentence; the district court dismissed that petition as untimely in 2022. Wyatt then filed the present § 2254 petition in 2025 without obtaining authorization from the Third Circuit to file a second or successive petition. The district court dismissed the petition without prejudice, declined to transfer it to the Third Circuit, denied a certificate of appealability, and directed the Clerk to close the case.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Commonwealth v. Wyatt, No. 1982 MDA 2015, 2016 WL 6199542 (Pa. Super. Ct. Oct. 24, 2016)
- Commonwealth v. Wyatt, No. 458 MDA 2019, 2020 WL 201708 (Pa. Super. Ct. Jan. 13, 2020)
- Commonwealth v. Wyatt, No. 870 MDA 2020, 2021 WL 798900 (Pa. Super. Ct. Mar. 2, 2021)
- Commonwealth v. Wyatt, 266 A.3d 442 (Pa. 2021) (table)
- Zedonis v. Lynch, 233 F. Supp. 3d 417, 422 (M.D. Pa. 2017)
- Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319, 324 (1989)
- Deutsch v. United States, 67 F.3d 1080, 1084 (3d Cir. 1995)
- Douris v. Middletown Township, 293 F. App'x 130, 131-32 (3d Cir. 2008)
- Preiser v. Rodriguez, 411 U.S. 475, 498-99 (1973)
- Leamer v. Fauver, 288 F.3d 532, 542-44 (3d Cir. 2002)
- Estelle v. McGuire, 502 U.S. 62, 67-68 (1991)
- Benchoff v. Colleran, 404 F.3d 812, 816-17 (3d Cir. 2005)
- Felker v. Turpin, 518 U.S. 651, 657 (1996)
- Burton v. Stewart, 549 U.S. 147, 157 (2007)
- Christy v. Horn, 115 F.3d 201, 208 (3d Cir. 1997)
- In re Cain, 137 F.3d 234, 235 (5th Cir. 1998)
- Stewart v. Martinez-Villareal, 523 U.S. 637, 643 (1998)
- In re Stitt, 598 F. App'x 810, 811 n.1 (3d Cir. 2015)
- Rohn v. Horton, 508 F. App'x 170, 171 (3d Cir. 2013)
- Villaneuva v. United States, 346 F.3d 55, 61 (2d Cir. 2003)
- Altman v. Benik, 337 F.3d 764, 766 (7th Cir. 2003)
- Robertson v. Pennsylvania, 2022 WL 4238094, at *2 (M.D. Pa. Sept. 14, 2022)
- Lundy v. Superintendent Frackville SCI, 2022 WL 18301487 (3d Cir. Nov. 23, 2022)
- Robinson v. Johnson, 313 F.3d 128, 139-40 (3d Cir. 2002)
- Lee v. Lane, 2017 WL 3167410, at *3 (M.D. Pa. June 23, 2017)

- Hatches v. Schultz, 381 F. App'x 134, 137 (3d Cir. 2010)
- Slack v. McDaniel, 529 U.S. 473, 484 (2000)

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