UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

Rosa Estela Saucedo Serna v. Target Corporation

Saucedo Serna v. Target · No. 2:25-cv-05710-FLA (MBKx) · Decided August 7, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Central District of California remanded this premises-liability and negligence action to state court for lack of subject matter jurisdiction. The court held that Defendant failed to establish by a preponderance of the evidence that the amount in controversy exceeded $75,000 because Plaintiff's $10 million general-damages demand was an unsupported optimistic prediction and the remaining $49,909 in special damages was insufficient.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Central District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Fernando L. Aenlle-Rocha
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Central District of California
DECIDED	August 7, 2025
DOCKET	2:25-cv-05710-FLA (MBKx)
DISPOSITION	remanded
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Defendant removed a California state-court negligence and premises-liability action based on diversity jurisdiction. The federal court ordered the parties to show cause why the action should not be remanded and then remanded for failure to establish the amount-in-controversy requirement.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The removing defendant bears the burden of establishing subject matter jurisdiction by a preponderance of the evidence when the jurisdictional allegations are contested or questioned. Removal statutes are strictly construed against removal jurisdiction, and doubts are resolved in favor of remand.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district-court order; precedential status unknown

TOPICS

subject matter jurisdiction · civil procedure · premises liability · negligence · personal injury

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure · removal jurisdiction · diversity jurisdiction · premises liability · negligence

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Defendant established by a preponderance of the evidence that the amount in controversy exceeded $75,000 for purposes of diversity jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1332.
2. Whether Plaintiff's $10 million general-damages demand constituted a reasonable estimate of the amount in controversy or merely a bold optimistic prediction.

HOLDINGS

1. A damages statement does not establish the amount in controversy when it is unsupported by specific facts and appears to be only a bold optimistic prediction rather than a reasonable estimate of the plaintiff's claims.
2. Defendant failed to establish by a preponderance of the evidence that the amount in controversy exceeded $75,000, so the federal court lacked subject matter jurisdiction and was required to remand the action.

KEY QUOTATIONS

> *"Having reviewed the Notice of Removal and Defendant's response to the OSC, and for the following reasons, the court finds Defendant fails to establish subject matter jurisdiction by a preponderance of the evidence."* (1)

> *"A defendant's notice of removal must include "a plausible allegation that the amount in controversy exceeds the jurisdictional threshold.""* (1)

> *"Courts "strictly construe the removal statute against removal jurisdiction," and "[f]ederal jurisdiction must be rejected if there is any doubt as to the right of removal in the first instance.""* (1)

> *"It is clear the $10 million in general damages stated in Plaintiff's Statement of Damages is nothing more than a "bold optimistic prediction" and not a reasonable estimate of Plaintiff's claims."* (2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff brought negligence and premises-liability claims against Target in California state court. Her statement of damages demanded $10 million in general damages, including $5 million for pain, suffering, and inconvenience and $5 million for emotional distress, plus $49,909 in special damages. The complaint, notice of removal, and statement of damages did not provide specific facts explaining or supporting the $10 million general-damages estimate.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed the action in Los Angeles County Superior Court on October 1, 2024. Target removed the case to the Central District of California on June 23, 2025, alleging diversity jurisdiction based principally on Plaintiff's statement seeking $10 million in general damages and $49,909 in special damages. After issuing an order to show cause, the court concluded Defendant had not proven by a preponderance of the evidence that the amount in controversy exceeded $75,000 and remanded the action.

DISPOSITION

remanded

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

The action is remanded to the Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 24TRCV03288. All dates and deadlines in the federal court are vacated, and the clerk is directed to close the action administratively.

CASES CITED

- Kokkonen v. Guardian Life Ins. Co. of Am., 511 U.S. 375, 377 (1994)
- DaimlerChrysler Corp. v. Cuno, 547 U.S. 332, 342 n.3 (2006)
- Ruhrgas AG v. Marathon Oil Co., 526 U.S. 574, 583 (1999)
- Dart Cherokee Basin Operating Co. v. Owens, 574 U.S. 81, 88–89 (2014)
- Gaus v. Miles, Inc., 980 F.2d 564, 566 (9th Cir. 1992)
- Cohn v. Petsmart, Inc., 281 F.3d 837, 840 (9th Cir. 2002)
- Romsa v. Ikea U.S. W., Inc., Case No. 2:14-cv-05552-MMM (JEMx), 2014 WL 4273265, at *2 (C.D. Cal. Aug. 28, 2014)
- Schroeder v. Petsmart, Inc., Case No. 2:19-cv-01561-FMO (AGRx), 2019 WL 1895573, at *2 (C.D. Cal. Apr. 29, 2019)
- Mata v. Home Depot U.S.A., Inc., Case No. 2:22-cv-01758-FMO (AFMx), 2022 WL 3586206, at *2 (C.D. Cal. Aug. 22, 2022)