

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Michael Sandoval v. Visionworks of America, Inc. et al.

Sandoval v. Visionworks · No. 8:25-cv-02682-DOC-KES · Decided December 5, 2025

SUMMARY

The court sua sponte remands the action to the Superior Court of California, County of Orange, because the defendant did not establish that the amount in controversy satisfied the requirements for diversity jurisdiction. The court concludes that the plaintiff's claimed statutory damages, injunctive relief, and attorneys' fees were insufficiently supported by factual evidence to meet the \$75,000 threshold. The underlying action concerns alleged website accessibility barriers affecting a visually impaired plaintiff under California's Unruh Act.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Central District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	David O. Carter
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Central District of California
DECIDED	December 5, 2025
DOCKET	8:25-cv-02682-DOC-KES
DISPOSITION	remanded
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Defendant removed Plaintiff's California Unruh Act action from the Superior Court of California, County of Orange, asserting federal diversity jurisdiction. The district court sua sponte determined that Defendant had not established the amount-in-controversy requirement and remanded the action to state court.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The removing defendant bears the burden of establishing federal subject matter jurisdiction. When the complaint does not clearly allege more than \$75,000 in controversy, the defendant must establish by a preponderance of the evidence that the jurisdictional minimum is satisfied.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court opinion

TOPICS

- subject matter jurisdiction
- civil procedure
- federalism
- ada / disability

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

federal jurisdiction

removal and remand

disability access

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the district court had diversity jurisdiction when Plaintiff alleged an amount in controversy of \$74,999 and Defendant failed to provide facts showing that statutory damages, injunctive relief, or attorney fees would cause the amount in controversy to exceed \$75,000.
2. Whether the action should be remanded sua sponte for lack of subject matter jurisdiction.

HOLDINGS

1. Defendant failed to establish by a preponderance of the evidence that the amount in controversy exceeded \$75,000.
2. The action was required to be remanded to the Superior Court of California, County of Orange, because the district court lacked subject matter jurisdiction.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"If at any time before final judgment it appears that the district court lacks subject matter jurisdiction, the case shall be remanded." (2)

"But a bare contention of similarity is not enough to demonstrate that the value will reach these amounts in the instant case." (4)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Michael Sandoval, who is visually impaired and legally blind, uses screen-reading software to access website content. He alleged that Visionworks's website contained unlabeled or incorrectly labeled graphics, links, buttons, and product descriptions that prevented the software from providing access to goods and services. Sandoval alleged that he intended to order sunglasses for pickup at a Fullerton, California, location but could not do so because of the website's inaccessibility. He sought injunctive relief, statutory damages, attorney fees, and costs under California's Unruh Act.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed suit in the Superior Court of California, County of Orange, on October 6, 2025, alleging that Defendant's website was inaccessible to a visually impaired user and asserting a claim under California's Unruh Civil Rights Act. Defendant removed the case on November 14, 2025, asserting diversity jurisdiction. The federal district court found that Defendant failed to show by a preponderance of the evidence that the amount in controversy exceeded \$75,000 and remanded the case sua sponte.

DISPOSITION

remanded

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

The Clerk shall serve the minute order on the parties. The case is remanded to the Superior Court of Orange County, California.

CASES CITED

- *Ethridge v. Harbor House Rest.*, 861 F.2d 1389, 1393 (9th Cir. 1988)
- *Exxon Mobil Corp. v. Allapattah Servs., Inc.*, 545 U.S. 546, 553 (2005)
- *Guglielmino v. McKee Foods Corp.*, 506 F.3d 696, 699 (9th Cir. 2007)
- *St. Paul Mercury Indem. Co. v. Red Cab Co.*, 303 U.S. 283, 288-89 (1938)
- *Crum v. Circus Enters.*, 231 F.3d 1129, 1131 (9th Cir. 2000)
- *Gaus v. Miles, Inc.*, 980 F.2d 564, 567 (9th Cir. 1992)
- *Sanchez v. Monumental Life Ins. Co.*, 102 F.3d 398, 403-04 (9th Cir. 1996)
- *Richmond v. Allstate Ins. Co.*, 897 F. Supp. 447, 450 (S.D. Cal. 1995)
- *Geographic Expeditions, Inc. v. Estate of Lhotka ex rel. Lhotka*, 599 F.3d 1102, 1106-07 (9th Cir. 2010)
- *Coleman v. Estes Express Lines, Inc.*, 730 F. Supp. 2d 1141, 1148-49 (C.D. Cal. 2010)
- *Matheson v. Progressive Specialty Ins. Co.*, 319 F.3d 1089, 1090-91 (9th Cir. 2003)
- *Singer v. State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co.*, 116 F.3d 373, 377 (9th Cir. 1997)
- *Gonzalez v. Crosby*, 545 U.S. 524, 534 (2005)
- *Steel Co. v. Citizens for a Better Env't*, 523 U.S. 83, 94, 101-02 (1998)
- *Snell v. Cleveland, Inc.*, 316 F.3d 822, 826 (9th Cir. 2003)
- *Corral v. Select Portfolio Servicing, Inc.*, 878 F.3d 770, 775 (9th Cir. 2018)
- *Galt G/S v. JSS Scandinavia*, 142 F.3d 1150, 1156 (9th Cir. 1998)

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