

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF OREGON

Dustin Allen Edblom v. Joshua Highberger

Case No. 6:23-cv-00177-IM (D. Or. Jan. 30, 2026) · No. 6:23-cv-00177-IM · Decided January 30, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Oregon considers Dustin Allen Edblom’s petition for habeas corpus relief under 28 U.S.C. § 2254. Edblom claimed that trial counsel provided inaccurate advice regarding Oregon’s presumptive life-sentence statute, ORS § 137.719, and that his guilty plea was consequently involuntary, while also raising claims concerning plea negotiations, investigation, and grand-jury witnesses. The court concludes that several claims are procedurally defaulted and that the state-court rulings on the remaining claims are entitled to deference under AEDPA.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Oregon
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Karin J. Immergut
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Oregon
DECIDED	January 30, 2026
DOCKET	6:23-cv-00177-IM
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Federal habeas corpus proceeding under 28 U.S.C. § 2254 challenging an Oregon conviction and post-conviction judgment. The district court denied the habeas petition, dismissed the proceeding with prejudice, and denied a certificate of appealability.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under AEDPA, relief is unavailable on a claim adjudicated on the merits in state court unless the state decision was contrary to, or involved an unreasonable application of, clearly established Supreme Court precedent, or was based on an unreasonable determination of the facts. State factual findings are presumed correct under 28 U.S.C. § 2254(e)(1) absent clear and convincing evidence to the contrary. Ineffective-assistance claims are reviewed under Strickland, with doubly deferential review when combined with AEDPA deference.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Nonprecedential district-court opinion

PARTIES

Dustin Allen Edblom v. Joshua Highberger

TOPICS

federal habeas corpus

post-conviction relief

ineffective assistance

plea bargaining

successive petitions

PRACTICE AREAS

federal habeas corpus

state post-conviction relief

ineffective assistance of counsel

plea bargaining

criminal procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Ground One should be liberally construed to include the ineffective-assistance claim concerning counsel's advice about the presumptive life sentence under ORS 137.719.
2. Whether the Oregon courts unreasonably applied federal law or unreasonably determined the facts in rejecting Edblom's ineffective-assistance claims concerning inaccurate advice about the possible life sentence and the voluntariness of his plea.
3. Whether Grounds Three, Four, and Five were procedurally defaulted.
4. Whether Edblom was entitled to a certificate of appealability.

HOLDINGS

1. The court liberally construed Ground One to encompass the ineffective-assistance claim presented to the Oregon state courts, rather than treating it solely as a procedurally defaulted stand-alone challenge to plea voluntariness.
2. Edblom was not entitled to habeas relief on Grounds One and Two because he failed to show that the Oregon Court of Appeals unreasonably applied clearly established federal law or unreasonably determined the facts in rejecting his ineffective-assistance claims.
3. Habeas relief on Grounds Three, Four, and Five was precluded because those claims were procedurally defaulted and Edblom did not address their merits or challenge the respondent's procedural-default arguments.
4. The court denied a certificate of appealability because Edblom had not made a substantial showing of the denial of a constitutional right.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Because Petitioner has failed to establish that the ruling was “so lacking in justification that there was an error well understood and comprehended in existing law beyond any possibility for fairminded disagreement[.]” (at 20)

“For the reasons stated, this Court DENIES the Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus (ECF No. 1), and DISMISSES this proceeding, with prejudice.” (at 22)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Edblom pleaded guilty to six counts of first-degree sexual abuse and one count of third-degree sexual abuse after Oregon prosecutors threatened to seek a presumptive life sentence under ORS 137.719 and offered a 270-month plea agreement. His trial counsel inaccurately advised him that he could be subject to the presumptive life sentence, although the state post-conviction court later determined that he did not satisfy the statute's predicate-offense requirements. The state courts nevertheless found that Edblom failed to prove prejudice because the prosecution's case was strong, he faced a substantially longer potential sentence after trial, and his testimony that he would have gone to trial was not credible.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Edblom pleaded guilty in Oregon state court to six counts of first-degree sexual abuse and one count of third-degree sexual abuse and received a 270-month sentence. The Oregon post-conviction relief court denied relief after finding deficient performance but no prejudice on the claim concerning advice about a potential life sentence under ORS 137.719. The Oregon Court of Appeals affirmed, the Oregon Supreme Court denied review, and Edblom then filed this federal habeas petition. The district court construed Ground One liberally to include the ineffective-assistance claim litigated in state court, deferred to the state-court merits decision on Grounds One and Two, and held Grounds Three through Five procedurally defaulted.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Church v. Gladden, 244 Or. 308, 311-12 (1966)
- State v. Thompson, 166 Or. App. 370 (2000)
- State v. Trice, 146 Or. App. 15 (1997)
- Edblom v. Cain, 322 Or. App. 527 (2022)
- Edblom v. Cain, 370 Or. 694 (2022)
- Smith v. Baldwin, 510 F.3d 1127, 1139 (9th Cir. 2007)
- Coleman v. Thompson, 501 U.S. 722, 732 (1991)
- Williams v. Taylor, 529 U.S. 362, 405-07, 409, 411-12 (2000)
- Thaler v. Haynes, 559 U.S. 43, 47 (2010)
- Andrews v. Davis, 798 F.3d 759, 773 (9th Cir. 2015)
- Moses v. Payne, 555 F.3d 742, 754 (9th Cir. 2009)
- Schriro v. Landrigan, 550 U.S. 465, 473 (2007)
- Taylor v. Maddox, 366 F.3d 992, 1000 (9th Cir. 2004)
- Cullen v. Pinholster, 563 U.S. 170, 181 (2011)
- White v. Wheeler, 577 U.S. 73, 76-77 (2015)
- Strickland v. Washington, 466 U.S. 668, 686-89, 693-94 (1984)

- Missouri v. Frye, 566 U.S. 134, 140 (2012)
- Hill v. Lockhart, 474 U.S. 52, 57, 59-60 (1985)
- Lafler v. Cooper, 566 U.S. 156, 163 (2012)
- Lee v. United States, 582 U.S. 357, 364, 367, 369 (2017)
- Harrington v. Richter, 562 U.S. 86, 101, 103, 105 (2011)
- In re Sealed Case, 488 F.3d 1011, 1017 (D.C. Cir. 2007)
- Wood v. Allen, 558 U.S. 290, 301 (2010)
- Mann v. Ryan, 828 F.3d 1143, 1161 n.4 (9th Cir. 2016)
- Silva v. Woodford, 279 F.3d 825, 835 (9th Cir. 2002)

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