

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Dennis Cooper v. Martinez Meats Incorporated, et al.

Cooper v. Martinez Meats · No. 5:25-cv-02084-WLH-SP · Decided September 2, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Central District of California orders Plaintiff Dennis Cooper to show cause why the court should exercise supplemental jurisdiction over claims under California’s Unruh Civil Rights Act and related state law. The order discusses 28 U.S.C. § 1367(c), California’s restrictions on disability-access litigation, and the interests of fairness and comity. Plaintiff must identify the statutory damages sought and submit declarations addressing whether he and counsel qualify as high-frequency litigants.

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	September 2, 2025
DOCKET	5:25-cv-02084-WLH-SP
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The court issued an order to show cause why it should exercise supplemental jurisdiction over Plaintiff's California Unruh Civil Rights Act claim and related state-law claims.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Discretionary consideration under 28 U.S.C. § 1367(c), weighing judicial economy, convenience, fairness, and comity.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court order; precedential status not stated
PARTIES	Dennis Cooper v. Martinez Meats Incorporated, et al.

TOPICS

- subject matter jurisdiction
- civil procedure
- public accommodations discrimination
- ada / disability

PRACTICE AREAS

- Civil procedure
- Americans with Disabilities Act
- California Unruh Civil Rights Act
- Supplemental jurisdiction

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the court should exercise supplemental jurisdiction over Plaintiff's Unruh Civil Rights Act claim and any related state-law claims under 28 U.S.C. § 1367.
2. What information Plaintiff and counsel must provide to permit the court to evaluate whether declining supplemental jurisdiction is appropriate, including the amount of statutory damages sought and whether Plaintiff qualifies as a high-frequency litigant.

HOLDINGS

1. Supplemental jurisdiction is discretionary rather than a right of the plaintiff, and the district court may decline to exercise it under the circumstances identified in 28 U.S.C. § 1367(c), while weighing judicial economy, convenience, fairness, and comity.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“is a doctrine of discretion, not of plaintiff’s right” (at 2)

“a federal court should consider and weigh in each case, and at every stage of the litigation, the values of judicial economy, convenience, fairness, and comity.” (at 2)

“In light of the foregoing, the Court ORDERS Plaintiff to show cause in writing why the court should exercise supplemental jurisdiction over the Unruh Act claim and any related state law claims.” (at 2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

The complaint alleges a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act involving access to a place of public accommodation and seeks injunctive relief. It also asserts a California Unruh Civil Rights Act claim for damages and asks the federal court to exercise supplemental jurisdiction over that claim. The court focused on California's statutory measures addressing allegedly abusive or high-frequency disability-access litigation, including heightened pleading requirements and a high-frequency litigant fee.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed a complaint asserting an Americans with Disabilities Act claim for injunctive relief and an Unruh Civil Rights Act claim for damages. Plaintiff requested supplemental jurisdiction over the state-law claim under 28 U.S.C. § 1367. Before deciding whether to exercise that jurisdiction, the court ordered Plaintiff and counsel to provide a written response and declarations addressing the statutory damages sought and whether Plaintiff qualifies as a high-frequency litigant.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Carnegie-Mellon Univ. v. Cohill, 484 U.S. 343, 350 (1988)
- Acri v. Varian Assocs., 114 F.3d 999, 1000 (9th Cir. 1997)

- Schutza v. Cuddeback 262 F. Supp. 3d 1025, 1031 (S.D. Cal. 2017)

OPINION

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT 9 CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
10 11 DENNIS COOPER Case No. 5:25-cv-02084-WLH-SP Plaintiff(s), 12 v. 13 ORDER TO
SHOW CAUSE MARTINEZ MEATS 14 INCORPORATED, et al. WHY THE COURT SHOULD
15 Defendant(s). EXERCISE 16 SUPPLEMENTAL JURISDICTION OVER THE 17 STATE
LAW CLAIMS 18 19 The Complaint filed in this action asserts a claim for injunctive relief arising
20 out of an alleged violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (the “ADA”) and 21 claim for
damages pursuant to California’s Unruh Civil Rights Act (the “Unruh 22 Act”), Cal. Civ.

Code §§ 51-53. In the Complaint, Plaintiff requests the court 23 exercise supplemental jurisdiction
over the Unruh Act claim pursuant to 24 28 U.S.C. § 1367. 25 The United States Supreme Court
has recognized supplemental jurisdiction 26 “is a doctrine of discretion, not of plaintiff’s right, and
that district courts can 27 2 The supplemental jurisdiction statute codifies these principles.

After 3 establishing that supplemental jurisdiction encompasses “other claims” in the same 4 case
or controversy as a claim within the district courts’ original jurisdiction, 5 § 1367(a), the statute
confirms the discretionary nature of supplemental 6 jurisdiction by enumerating the circumstances
in which district courts can refuse 7 its exercise: 8 (c) The district courts may decline to exercise
supplemental jurisdiction over a claim under subsection (a) if -- 9 (1) the claim raises a novel or
complex issue of State law, 10 (2) the claim substantially predominates over the claim or claims 11
over which the district court has original jurisdiction, 12 (3) the district court has dismissed all
claims over which it has 13 original jurisdiction, or 14 (4) in exceptional circumstances, there are
other compelling reasons for declining jurisdiction.

15 16 28 U.S.C. § 1367(c). 17 Depending on a host of factors, then -- including the circumstances
of the 18 particular case, the nature of the state law claims, the character of the governing 19 state
law, and the relationship between the state and federal claims -- district 20 courts may decline to
exercise jurisdiction over supplemental state law claims. 21 The statute thereby reflects the
understanding that, when deciding whether to 22 exercise supplemental jurisdiction, “a federal
court should consider and weigh 23 in each case, and at every stage of the litigation, the values of
judicial economy, 24 convenience, fairness, and comity.” *Id.* at 173 (quoting Carnegie-Mellon
Univ.

25 v. Cohill, 484 U.S. 343, 350 (1988)); see also *Acri v. Varian Assocs.*, 114 F.3d 26 999, 1000
(9th Cir. 1997) (recognizing district courts have discretion to decline 27 2 brought under the Unruh
Act to combat the influx of baseless claims and 3 vexatious litigation in the disability access
litigation sphere. Cal. Code Civ. Proc. 4 § 425.50.

The stricter pleading standard requires a plaintiff bringing construction- 5 access claims¹ to file a verified complaint alleging specific facts concerning the 6 plaintiff's claim, including the specific barriers encountered or how the plaintiff 7 was deterred and each date on which the plaintiff encountered each barrier or 8 was deterred. See id. § 425.50(a).

California also imposed a "high-frequency 9 litigant fee" in 2015 in response to the "special and unique circumstances" 10 presented by certain plaintiffs and law firms filing an outsized number of Unruh 11 Act lawsuits. Cal. Gov't Code § 70616.5. 12 In recognition of California's efforts to reduce the abuse of California's 13 disability access laws, district courts within the state have determined that the 14 interests of fairness and comity counsel against exercising supplemental jurisdiction 15 over construction-access claims brought under the Unruh Act.

See, e.g., *Schutza 16 v. Cuddeback* 262 F. Supp. 3d 1025, 1031 (S.D. Cal. 2017) ("[T]he Court finds it 17 would be improper to allow Plaintiff [a high frequency litigant] to use federal court 18 as an end-around to California's pleading requirements.

Therefore, as a matter of 19 20 21 1 "Construction-related accessibility claim' means any civil claim in a civil action with respect to a place of public accommodation, including, but not limited to, a 22 claim brought under [Cal. Civ. Code] Section 51, 54, 54.1, or 55, based wholly or in part on an alleged violation of any construction-related accessibility standard, as 23 defined in paragraph (6)." Cal. Civ.

Code § 55.52(a)(1). "Construction-related accessibility standard' means a provision, standard, or regulation under state or 24 federal law requiring compliance with standards for making new construction and existing facilities accessible to persons with disabilities, including, but not 25 limited to, any provision, standard, or regulation set forth in Section 51, 54, 54.1, or 55 of this code, Section 19955.5 of the Health and Safety Code, the California 26 Building Standards Code (Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations), the federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-336; 27 I comity, and in aererence to Cahtromia § substantial interest 1n discouraging 2 unverified disability discrimination claims, the Court declines supplemental 3 jurisdiction over Plaintiff's Unruh Act claim.").

4 In light of the foregoing, the Court ORDERS Plaintiff to show cause in writing 5 why the court should exercise supplemental jurisdiction over the Unruh Act claim 6 and any related state law claims. See 28 U.S.C. § 1367(c).

In responding to this 7 Order to Show Cause, Plaintiff shall identify the amount of statutory damages 8 || Plaintiff seeks to recover. Plaintiff and his or her counsel also shall support their || responses to the Order to Show Cause with declarations, signed under penalty 10|| of perjury, providing all facts necessary for the court to determine if they satisfy || the definition of a "high-frequency litigant" as provided by Cal. Code Civ.

Proc. § 425.55(b)(1) & (2). 13 Plaintiff shall file a Response to this Order to Show Cause within fourteen 14|| (14) days of this Order. Failure to timely or adequately respond to this Order to 15|| Show Cause may result in the court declining to exercise supplemental jurisdiction 16|| over the Unruh Act claim and any related state law claims and dismissing such 17|| claim or claims without further notice, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1367(c).

The || Court may set a hearing on the Order to Show Cause after reviewing the 19|| parties' responses, if necessary. 20 21 IT IS SO ORDERED. 22 24 ||Dated: September 2, 2025 25 26
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE 27 28