

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF
TENNESSEE

Kevin Francisco Estrada Morales v. Christopher Bullock

Estrada Morales v. Bullock · No. 2:26-cv-02450-SHL-cgc · Decided May 19, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Western District of Tennessee granted Kevin Francisco Estrada Morales’s petition for a writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2241. The court held that mandatory detention under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A) did not apply because he was not actively seeking admission, and excused exhaustion of administrative remedies. The court ordered his immediate release, enjoined detention under that provision, and required a compliance status report.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Western District of Tennessee
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Thomas L. Parker
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Western District of Tennessee
DECIDED	May 19, 2026
DOCKET	2:26-cv-02450-SHL-cgc
DISPOSITION	writ_granted
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Petition for a writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 challenging continued immigration detention without a bond hearing.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court order; nonprecedential
PARTIES	Kevin Francisco Estrada Morales v. Christopher Bullock, New Orleans Field Office Director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Enforcement and Removal Operations

TOPICS

- immigration detention
- immigration
- removal proceedings
- injunctions
- statutory interpretation

PRACTICE AREAS

- immigration detention
- habeas corpus
- administrative exhaustion
- immigration remedies

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A) authorizes mandatory detention of an applicant for admission who is not actively seeking admission.
2. Whether the Court should require exhaustion of administrative remedies before deciding the § 2241 detention challenge.
3. Whether Estrada Morales was entitled to immediate release rather than a future custody redetermination hearing.

HOLDINGS

1. Section 1225(b)(2)(A)'s mandatory detention scheme does not apply to an applicant for admission who is not actively seeking admission; ICE therefore violated Estrada Morales's liberty interest by detaining him without a bond hearing under that provision.
2. Failure to exhaust administrative remedies is excused where the legal questions are fit for prompt judicial resolution and administrative exhaustion would be futile because the petitioner cannot obtain meaningful and timely relief.
3. Where ICE detained Estrada Morales under § 1225(b)(2)(A) without a bond hearing in violation of his liberty interest, he was entitled to immediate release rather than merely a future custody redetermination hearing.

KEY QUOTATIONS

*“that 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A)’s mandatory detention scheme does not apply to ‘applicants for admission’ who are not actively ‘seeking admission.’” (at *11)*

*“rightfully state[s] that [he has] a liberty interest to be free from detention.” (at *13)*

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Estrada Morales, a citizen of Mexico, entered the United States in 2005 as a two-year-old and later graduated from a United States high school. His wife and six-month-old child are United States citizens. ICE detained him on March 12, 2026, at the Tipton County jail, where he had been held on a charge of driving without a license; he otherwise had no known criminal history. He remained detained at the West Tennessee Detention Facility without a bond hearing.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Estrada Morales filed a § 2241 petition on April 21, 2026, challenging his detention as an arriving alien and seeking immediate release. Respondent opposed the petition, but after the Court requested a position in light of *Lopez-Campos v. Raycraft*, Respondent conceded that decision controlled the outcome while arguing that administrative exhaustion should be required. The Court excused exhaustion, granted the petition, ordered immediate release, enjoined detention under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A), and required a compliance status report.

DISPOSITION

writ_granted

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

Respondent must release Petitioner immediately, refrain from pursuing Petitioner's detention under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A), and file a status report within two business days certifying compliance.

CASES CITED

- Lopez-Campos v. Raycraft, 2026 WL 1283891 (6th Cir. 2026)
- McCarthy v. Madigan, 503 U.S. 140, 144 (1992)
- Lopez Soza v. U.S. Dep't of Homeland Sec., No. 26-CV-02224, 2026 WL 1104329, at *3 (W.D. Tenn. Apr. 23, 2026)
- Contreras-Lomeli v. Raycraft, No. 25-cv-12826, 2025 WL 2976739, at *3 (E.D. Mich. Oct. 21, 2025)
- Villafranca Lara v. Ladwig, No. 26-CV-02079, 2026 WL 401204, at *10 (W.D. Tenn. Feb. 12, 2026)

OPINION

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE WESTERN DIVISION KEVIN FRANCISCO ESTRADA) MORALES,))
Petitioner,)) v.) No. 2:26-cv-02450-SHL-cgc) CHRISTOPHER BULLOCK, New Orleans)
Field Office Director of Immigration and) Customs Enforcement, Enforcement and) Removal
Operations,) Respondent.) ORDER GRANTING PETITION Before the Court is Petitioner Kevin
Francisco Estrada Morales's Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2241, filed
April 21, 2026.

(ECF No. 1.) Estrada Morales challenges his continued detention in the West Tennessee Detention Facility as an “arriving alien” without a bond hearing. (ECF No. 1-3 at PageID 17.) He seeks immediate release from Respondent's custody. (Id.) Respondent responded in opposition on April 28. (ECF No. 8.) Estrada Morales replied the next day. (ECF No. 10.)

After the Court directed Respondent to update his position in light of the Sixth Circuit's recent decision in Lopez-Campos v. Raycraft, -- - F.4th ---, 2026 WL 1283891 (6th Cir. 2026) (ECF No. 11), Respondent conceded that Lopez- Campos “controls the outcome of this matter” (ECF No. 12 at PageID 58). BACKGROUND Estrada Morales is a citizen of Mexico who entered the United States in 2005 as a two- year-old child.

(ECF No. 1-3 at PageID 12.) He graduated high school in the United States. (Id. at PageID 13.) His wife and six-month-old child are United States citizens. (Id.) On March 12, 2026, he was detained by ICE at the Tipton County jail, where he had been held on a charge of driving without a license. (ECF No. 8 at PageID 25.) Except for that one charge, he has no known criminal history.

(ECF No. 1-3 at PageID 13.) ANALYSIS Estrada Morales challenges his “indefinite detention” in the West Tennessee Detention Facility “without a meaningful custody review.” (Id.) He seeks immediate release from Respondent’s custody. (Id. at PageID 17.) Respondent concedes that the Sixth Circuit’s holding in Lopez-Campos, 2026 WL 1283891, “controls the outcome of this matter.” (ECF No. 12 at PageID 58.)

That decision held “that 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A)’s mandatory detention scheme does not apply to ‘applicants for admission’ who are not actively ‘seeking admission.’” (Id. (citing Lopez-Campos, 2026 WL 1283891, at *11).) Nevertheless, Respondent “maintains that the Court should require Petitioner to exhaust his administrative remedies.” (Id. at PageID 59 n.1 (citing McCarthy v. Madigan, 503 U.S. 140, 144 (1992))).

However, as the Court has ruled in recent immigration habeas petitions, e.g., Lopez Soza v. U.S. Dep’t of Homeland Sec., No. 26-CV-02224, 2026 WL 1104329, at *3 (W.D. Tenn. Apr. 23, 2026), Petitioner’s failure to exhaust administrative remedies is EXCUSED.

The legal questions presented by the Petition are fit for prompt resolution, and exhaustion would be futile because Petitioner cannot seek meaningful and timely administrative relief. McCarthy, 503 U.S. at 144 (explaining that where a statute is silent as to exhaustion, requiring exhaustion is within a court’s discretion); Contreras-Lomeli v. Raycraft, No. 25-cv-12826, 2025 WL 2976739, at *3 (E.D.

Mich. Oct. 21, 2025) (“Bond denial appeals ‘typically take six months or more to be resolved at the BIA.’” (citation omitted)). Respondent further contends that, “[i]n accordance with the remedy affirmed in Lopez- Campos, if the Court does not first require exhaustion, the Court should order that Petitioner be provided a custody redetermination hearing within 10 business days, and if that does not occur, Petitioner should be released from custody.” (ECF No. 12 at PageID 59.)

However, Petitioner “rightfully state[s] that [he has] a liberty interest to be free from detention.” Lopez-Campos, 2026 WL 1283891, at *13. ICE’s decision to detain him without a bond hearing violated that liberty interest, which cannot be casually tossed aside.

Thus, he is entitled to immediate release. See Villafranca Lara v. Ladwig, No. 26-CV-02079, 2026 WL 401204, at *10 (W.D. Tenn. Feb. 12, 2026) (“Because ICE purported to detain [Petitioner] under § 1225(b)(2)(A), which includes no provision for a bond hearing, the Court will not now order a bond hearing under § 1226(a).”).

Therefore, consistent with Lopez-Campos and this Court’s decision in Villafranca Lara, 2026 WL 401204, and after consideration of the record, the Petition is GRANTED. CONCLUSION For the reasons stated above, the Petition is GRANTED. Respondent is ORDERED to release Petitioner immediately. Respondent is ENJOINED from pursuing Petitioner’s detention under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A).

Respondent is further ORDERED to file a Status Report with this Court within two business days, to certify compliance with this Order. IT IS SO ORDERED, this 19th day of May, 2026. s/ Thomas L. Parker THOMAS L. PARKER UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

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