

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Steven Quinn Singleton v. Aldridge Pite LLP for Valley Strong Credit
Union

Singleton · No. 1:25-cv-01433-CDB · Decided November 3, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California ordered Plaintiff Steven Quinn Singleton to show cause within 21 days regarding his unsigned complaint, the apparent absence of subject matter jurisdiction, and potentially improper venue. The court found that the complaint did not adequately allege diversity or federal-question jurisdiction and appeared to concern property and proceedings in Georgia. The court warned that failure to comply could result in sanctions, including a recommendation that the action be dismissed without prejudice.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	November 3, 2025
DOCKET	1:25-cv-01433-CDB
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff filed a federal complaint, which the court reviewed sua sponte for compliance with signature requirements, subject matter jurisdiction, and venue. The court issued an order directing Plaintiff to show cause within 21 days why the action should not be dismissed for lack of subject matter jurisdiction and, if jurisdiction exists, transferred for improper venue.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court independently examined subject matter jurisdiction and venue. Subject matter jurisdiction must be considered sua sponte, and an action over which the court lacks jurisdiction must be dismissed. Plaintiff bears the burden of establishing that venue is proper.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unknown

TOPICS

- subject matter jurisdiction
- venue
- pleadings
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

federal jurisdiction

venue

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the unsigned complaint must be stricken unless Plaintiff promptly corrects the signature deficiency.
2. Whether the complaint adequately establishes federal subject matter jurisdiction through diversity jurisdiction or federal-question jurisdiction.
3. Whether venue is proper in the Eastern District of California under 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b), and whether the case may be transferred if venue is improper.

HOLDINGS

1. An unsigned pleading must be stricken unless the party promptly corrects the deficiency after notice.
2. The complaint did not adequately establish federal subject matter jurisdiction because it failed to allege the amount in controversy required for diversity jurisdiction, did not establish complete diversity, and did not plead a cognizable federal-question claim.
3. Plaintiff failed to plead facts establishing that venue was proper in the Eastern District of California under 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b), and the court required Plaintiff to show cause why the action should not be transferred if jurisdiction exists.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“To proceed in federal court, a plaintiff’s pleading must establish the existence of subject matter jurisdiction.” (p. 2)

“Any failure by Plaintiff to comply with this Order will result in the imposition of sanctions, including a recommendation to dismiss the entire action without prejudice.” (p. 5)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff alleged that Aldridge Pite LLP acted for Valley Strong Credit Union to obtain a writ of possession involving real property and that multiple parties had colluded to acquire the property unlawfully. The complaint identified an address in Bakersfield, California, apparently belonging to Valley Strong Credit Union, and separately identified an Aldridge Pite LLP address in Atlanta, Georgia. The attached exhibits primarily concerned state-court proceedings and property located in the Northern District of Georgia. Plaintiff alleged that he was a California resident but did not allege an amount in controversy or clearly identify the claims and defendants.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff initiated the action on October 27, 2025, using a third-party complaint form and attaching voluminous exhibits concerning state-court proceedings in Georgia. The court determined that the complaint was unsigned, did not adequately plead either diversity or federal-question jurisdiction, and did not establish that venue was

proper in the Eastern District of California. The court deferred final disposition and ordered a written response within 21 days, warning that failure to comply could result in sanctions, including a recommendation that the action be dismissed without prejudice.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Morongo Band of Mission Indians v. Cal. State Bd. of Equalization, 858 F.2d 1376, 1380 (9th Cir. 1988)
- Kokkonen v. Guardian Life Ins. Co., 511 U.S. 375 (1994)
- Martinez v. Hoff, No. 1:19-cv-00923-LJO-SKO, 2019 WL 3564178, at *1 (E.D. Cal. Aug. 6, 2019)
- Caterpillar Inc. v. Lewis, 519 U.S. 61, 67-68 (1996)
- Johnson v. Columbia Props. Anchorage, LP, 437 F.3d 894, 899 (9th Cir. 2006)
- Gonzalez v. Thaler, 565 U.S. 134, 141 (2012)
- Hertz Corp. v. Friend, 559 U.S. 77, 80 (2010)
- Republican Party of Guam v. Gutierrez, 277 F.3d 1086, 1088-89 (9th Cir. 2002)
- Franchise Tax Bd. v. Constr. Laborers Vacation Tr., 463 U.S. 1, 8-9, 27-28 (1983)
- Caterpillar Inc. v. Williams, 482 U.S. 386, 392 (1987)
- Merrell Dow Pharms. Inc. v. Thompson, 478 U.S. 804, 813 (1986)
- Grable & Sons Metal Prods., Inc. v. Darue Eng'g & Mfg., 545 U.S. 308, 314 (2005)
- Piedmont Label Co. v. Sun Garden Packing Co., 598 F.2d 491, 496 (9th Cir. 1979)
- Decker Coal Co. v. Commonwealth Edison Co., 805 F.2d 834, 842 (9th Cir. 1986)
- Gulf Ins. Co. v. Glasbrenner, 417 F.3d 353, 357 (2d Cir. 2005)
- Goldlawr, Inc. v. Heiman, 369 U.S. 463, 465-67 (1962)
- Costlow v. Weeks, 790 F.2d 1486, 1488 (6th Cir. 1986)
- Starnes v. McGuire, 512 F.2d 918, 934 (D.C. Cir. 1974)
- Minichino v. Sutidze, No. C 11-02484 SBA, 2012 WL 621459, at *2 (N.D. Cal. 2012)

OPINION

Singleton

PER CURIAM.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

9 EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

10 11 STEVEN QUINN SINGLETON, Case No.: 1:25-cv-01433-CDB 12 Plaintiff, ORDER
DIRECTING PLAINTIFF TO
SHOW CAUSE REGARDING UNSIGNED

13 v. COMPLAINT, LACK OF SUBJECT

MATTER JURISDICTION, AND

14 ALDRIDGE PITE LLP FOR VALLEY IMPROPER VENUE

STRONG CREDIT UNION,

15 (Doc. 1) Defendant.

16 21-DAY DEADLINE

17 Plaintiff Steven Quinn Singleton (“Plaintiff”) initiated this action with the filing of a 18
complaint on October 27, 2025. (Doc. 1). 19 Background 20 Plaintiff, using a third-party
complaint form, purports to sue “Aldridge Pite LLP for Valley 21 Strong Credit Union.” In the
complaint, Plaintiff asserts that “Aldridge Pite LLP used Valley 22 Strong Credit Union, with a
principle place of business in Bakersfield, California[,] as a [p]laintiff 23 and intentionally
misrepresented numerous elements of a civil matter to obtain a writ of possession 24 on a property.
The interstate matter involves multiple parties, known and unknown, who have 25 colluded to
illegally acquire real property.” Id. at 4. 26 Plaintiff asserts that, on September 30, 2025, “the
exhibited complaint was filed. Attempts 27 to prepare and file an answer was [sic] met with heavy
device intrusions and corruption of the 28 [s]tate e-filing system’s processes. The 10/17/2 025
[a]nswer and [c]ounterclaim was served. 1 Along the way, a family member was used to submit
papers to produce an intentionally negligent 2 disposal.” Id. In the form’s section for providing
information for defendants and third-party 3 plaintiffs, Plaintiff names “Aldridge Pite LLP for
Valley Strong Credit Union,” with a listed address 4 of 11500 Bolthouse Drive, Bakersfield,
California 93311. Based on the Court’s review of open- 5 source information, this address appears
to be, in fact, a location of Valley Strong Credit Union. In 6 the section for providing information
relating to third-party defendants, Plaintiff names Aldridge 7 Pite, LLP, with a listed address of 6
Piedmont Center, 3535 Piedmont Road, Suite 700, Atlanta,
8 Georgia 30305. Id. at 2.

9 Plaintiff attaches to his complaint voluminous exhibits, the majority of which relate to state 10
court proceedings in the state of Georgia. Id. at 6-131. 11 Discussion 12 A. Unsigned Complaint
13 As a preliminary matter, Plaintiff’s complaint is unsigned. See (Doc. 1 at 5). Under the 14
Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, every pleading must be signed either by an attorney or a party if
15 the party is unrepresented. Fed. R. Civ. P. 11(a). Similarly, this Court’s Local Rule 131(b)
requires 16 that “[a]ll pleadings and non-evidentiary documents shall be signed ... by the party
involved if that 17 party is appearing in propria persona.” Local Rule 131(b). The Local Rules
define a signature as 18 a handwritten signature on a paper document or an electronic signature on
an electronically-filed 19 document. Local Rule 100. This Court must strike an unsigned pleading
unless the deficiency is 20 promptly corrected after notice to the party. Fed. R. Civ. P. 11(a). 21
Thus, as Plaintiff’s complaint is unsigned, the Court must strike it unless Plaintiff corrects 22 the
deficiency. 23 B. Jurisdiction 24 The Court must satisfy itself that it may exercise subject matter
jurisdiction over an action, 25 regardless of whether the issue of jurisdiction is raised by the

parties, and must dismiss an action over which it lacks jurisdiction. See *Morongo Bank of Mission Indians v. Cal. State Bd. of Equalization*, 858 F.2d 1376, 1380 (9th Cir. 1988); Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(h)(3). Federal courts have limited jurisdiction and can adjudicate only those cases which the United States Constitution and 1 Congress authorize them to adjudicate. *Kokkonen v. Guardian Life Ins. Co.*, 551 U.S. 375 (1994). 2 “To proceed in federal court, a plaintiff’s pleading must establish the existence of subject matter jurisdiction. Generally, there are two potential bases for the federal subject matter jurisdiction: (1) federal question jurisdiction, or (2) diversity jurisdiction.” *Martinez v. Hoff*, No. 1:19-cv-00923- 5 LJO-SKO, 2019 WL 3564178, at *1 (E.D. Cal. Aug. 6, 2019). 6 As set forth below, it does not appear that this Court may exercise subject matter jurisdiction over Plaintiff’s claims as the complaint does not adequately allege either complete diversity among the parties or a federal question. 9 i. Diversity Jurisdiction 10 28 U.S.C. § 1332(a) vests district courts with original jurisdiction over all civil actions 11 where the amount in controversy exceeds \$75,000 and is between citizens of different states.

12 Section 1332 requires complete diversity, i.e., that “the citizenship of each plaintiff is diverse from

13 the citizenship of each defendant.” *Caterpillar Inc. v. Lewis*, 519 U.S. 61, 67-68 (1996). A limited liability partnership is a citizen of every state of which its partners are citizens. *Johnson v. Columbia Props. Anchorage, LP*, 437 F.3d 894, 899 (9th Cir. 2006). “Subject-matter jurisdiction 16 can never be waived or forfeited,” and “courts are obligated to consider sua sponte” subject matter 17 jurisdiction even when not raised by the parties. *Gonzalez v. Thaler*, 565 U.S. 134, 141 (2012). 18 Plaintiff here has not alleged any amount in controversy, and as such, fails to satisfy the 19 requirement that it exceed \$75,000. See (Doc. 1). 20 Separately, although unclear from the complaint, it appears Plaintiff intends to name 21 Aldridge Pite, LLP, as Defendant. A review of open-source information that Alridge Pite, LLP 22 maintains office locations in California and partners located within the state.¹ Thus, it appears that 23 Alridge Pite, LLP, is a citizen of California and, as Plaintiff asserts his residence to be Merced, 24 California (Doc. 1 at 2), diversity of citizenship does not exist. See *Johnson*, 437 F.3d at 899. 25 Additionally, a review of one of the listed addresses for Defendant in the complaint (11500 26 Bolthouse Drive, Bakersfield, California 93311) does not evidence it to be an address for Alridge 27 28 1 See “Attorney Listings,” Aldridge Pite LLP, available at <https://aldrigepite.com/attorneys/> (last 1 Pite, LLP, but rather for Valley Strong Credit Union. Valley Strong Credit Union is a federally- 2 insured credit union chartered as a nonprofit California corporation.² A corporation is a citizen of 3 both its state of incorporation and the state where it has its principal place of business. *Hertz Corp. v. Friend*, 559 U.S. 77, 80 (2010) (quoting 28 U.S.C. § 1332(c)(1)). Thus, Valley Strong Credit 5 Union is a citizen of the state of California. Though it is unclear whether Plaintiff intends to name 6 Valley Strong Credit Union as a defendant, in the event Plaintiff intends to do so, diversity of 7 citizenship does not exist. 8 ii. Federal Question Jurisdiction 9 A case “arises” under federal law either where federal law itself creates the cause of action 10 or where the vindication

of a state law right would “necessarily [turn] on some construction of 11 federal law.” *Republican Party of Guam v. Gutierrez*, 277 F.3d 1086, 1088-89 (9th Cir. 2002) 12 (quoting *Franchise Tax Bd. v. Construction Laborers Vacation Trust*, 463 U.S. 1, 8-9 (1983)). 13 Stated otherwise, a claim arises under federal law if the complaint cognizably pleads that federal 14 law created the claim asserted or the plaintiff’s right to relief necessarily depends on resolving a 15 substantial question of federal law. *Franchise Tax Bd.*, 463 U.S. at 27-28. Courts determine 16 whether they have federal question jurisdiction by applying the “well-pleaded complaint rule.” 17 *Caterpillar, Inc. v. Williams*, 482 U.S. 386, 392 (1987). “[F]ederal jurisdiction exists only when a 18 federal question is presented on the face of the plaintiff’s properly pleaded complaint.” *Id.* Federal 19 question jurisdiction does not arise from the “mere presence of a federal issue in a state cause of 20 action.” *Merrell Dow Pharms., Inc. v. Thompson*, 478 U.S. 804, 813 (1986); see *Grable & Sons Metal Prods., Inc. v. Darue Eng’g & Mfg.*, 545 U.S. 308, 314 (2005) (holding that passing 22 references to federal issues are not a “password opening federal courts to any state action embracing 23 a point of federal law”). 24 Here, Plaintiff’s complaint is unclear as to the precise allegations and does not provide 25 discrete claims or causes of action. Plaintiff’s complaint does not reference any federal statutes 26 and the Court does not perceive any federal question claim plainly arising from the complaint’s 27 2 See “Business Search,” California Secretary of State, available at 28 <https://bizfileonline.sos.ca.gov/search/business> (last visited October 30, 2025); “Credit Union Details,” 1 allegations. 2 C. Improper Venue 3 Even if the Court were to assume subject matter jurisdiction exists, venue in the Eastern 4 District of California may be improper. Venue in this action is governed by 28 U.S.C. § 1391, 5 which provides in relevant part: 6 A civil action may be brought in—(1) a judicial district in which any defendant resides, if all defendants are residents of the State in which the district is located; 7

(2) a judicial district in which a substantial part of the events or omissions giving 8 rise to the claim occurred, or a substantial part of property that is the subject of the action is situated; or (3) if there is no district in which an action may otherwise be 9 brought as provided in this section, any judicial district in which any defendant is subject to the court’s personal jurisdiction with respect to such action. 10 11 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b). 12 Plaintiff bears the burden of showing that venue is proper. See *Piedmont Label Co. v. Sun 13 Garden Packing Co.*, 598 F.2d 491, 496 (9th Cir. 1979). Venue may be proper in multiple districts 14 so long as “a substantial part of the events or omission giving rise to the claim” took place in each 15 district. See *Decker Coal Co. v. Commonwealth Edison Co.*, 805 F.2d 834, 842 (9th Cir. 1986) (“A 16 claim arises in any district in which a substantial part of the acts, events, or omissions occurred that 17 gave rise to the claim”). Though section 1391 does not require that a majority of events have 18 occurred within the district where the action is filed, “significant events or omissions material to 19 the plaintiff’s claim must have occurred in the district in question, even if other material events 20 occurred elsewhere.” *Gulf Ins. Co. v. Glasbrenner*, 417 F.3d 353, 357 (2d Cir. 2005). 21 Here, Plaintiff has failed to plead any facts establishing that the Eastern District of 22 California is

where a “substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise” to the claim occurred, 23 nor that this is where a “substantial part of the property” at issue is situated. To the contrary, it 24 appears from exhibits attached to Plaintiff’s complaint that the operative events giving rise to 25 Plaintiff’s claims occurred in the Northern District of Georgia, where the property in dispute is 26 located. (Doc. 1 at 13). 27 A court may dismiss an action brought in an improper venue or, in the interest of justice, 28 may transfer an action to the correct district. 28 U.S.C. § 1406(a); *Goldlawr, Inc. v. Heiman*, 369 1 | US. 463, 465-67 (1962). While it appears plain from the complaint that this district is an improper 2 | venue for the action, even assuming that jurisdiction exists and venue is in fact proper, the Court 3 || may sua sponte transfer this case to another district under 28 U.S.C. § 1404(a), so long as parties 4 | are first given the opportunity to present their views on the issue. *Costlow v. Weeks*, 790 F.2d 1486, 5 | 1488 (Oth Cir. 1986) (citing *Starnes v. McGuire*, 512 F.2d 918, 934 (D.C. Cir. 1974)) (where neither 6 | party has requested transfer, the district court, should, at a minimum, issue an order to show cause 7 | why the case should not be transferred); see *Minichino v. Sutidze*, No. C 11-02484 SBA, 2012 WL 8 | 621459, at *2 (N.D. Cal. 2012) (“The Court may sua sponte transfer an action under § 1404(a).”). 9 Accordingly, the Court orders Plaintiff to show cause in writing why, if jurisdiction in fact 10 | exists, this case should not be transferred for improper venue pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b). 11 | Conclusion and Order 12 For the foregoing reasons, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that: 13 1. Within 21 days of the date of service of this Order, Plaintiff SHALL show cause in 14 writing as to the following: 15 a. Why this action should not be dismissed for lack of subject matter jurisdiction; and 16 b. Inthe event subject matter jurisdiction exists, why this case should not be transferred 17 for improper venue pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b). 18 2. In the event Plaintiff makes a sufficient showing establishing that this Court has subject 19 matter jurisdiction and is a proper venue, Plaintiff will be directed to file a signed copy of 20 the complaint pursuant to Rule 11 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and Local Rules 21 100 and 131(b). 22 Any failure by Plaintiff to comply with this Order will result in the imposition of 23 | sanctions, including a recommendation to dismiss the entire action without prejudice. 24 | IT IS SO ORDERED. 25 Dated: _ November 3, 2025 | Ww VV KD

26 UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

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