

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Yates v. District of Columbia

Civil Action No. 26-02089 (UNA) (D.D.C. June 17, 2026) · No. Civil Action No. 26-02089 (UNA) · Decided June 17, 2026

SUMMARY

The District Court for the District of Columbia grants the plaintiff’s motion to proceed in forma pauperis, denies her motion for a temporary restraining order, and dismisses the complaint. The court concludes that it lacks jurisdiction to halt or review ongoing proceedings in the District of Columbia Superior Court and dismisses the action under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(h)(3).

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Columbia
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Tanya S. Chutkan
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Columbia
DECIDED	June 17, 2026
DOCKET	Civil Action No. 26-02089 (UNA)
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Pro se plaintiff filed a complaint seeking injunctive relief, a motion to proceed in forma pauperis, and a motion for a temporary restraining order aimed at halting a scheduling order in an ongoing Superior Court of the District of Columbia housing case.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court independently assessed its subject matter jurisdiction; a court lacking jurisdiction must dismiss under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(h)(3).
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published memorandum opinion; precedential effect not otherwise specified in the opinion text.

TOPICS

- subject matter jurisdiction
- injunctions
- civil procedure
- federalism

PRACTICE AREAS

- civil procedure
- federal jurisdiction
- injunctive relief

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the district court had subject matter jurisdiction to review or halt an ongoing Superior Court of the District of Columbia proceeding.
2. Whether the district court could issue a temporary restraining order concerning the local-court proceeding.
3. Whether the complaint had to be dismissed under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(h)(3).

HOLDINGS

1. The District Court for the District of Columbia lacked subject matter jurisdiction over the plaintiff's claims because the complaint sought review or appellate mandamus concerning proceedings in the local courts.
2. The district court could not issue a temporary restraining order because it lacked jurisdiction over the underlying case.
3. The complaint had to be dismissed for lack of subject matter jurisdiction.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Federal courts are courts of limited jurisdiction, possessing “only that power authorized by Constitution and statute,” and it is “presumed that a cause lies outside this limited jurisdiction.”” (2)

“a trial level court in the federal judicial system” (2)

“well settled doctrine that federal courts should not enjoin ongoing state [or District of Columbia] [judicial] proceedings” (2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Marie Yates had an ongoing housing case in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. She challenged a Superior Court scheduling order that granted a continuance but set a closure date that, in her view, shortened the time available to obtain counsel. Her federal complaint and temporary-restraining-order motion sought to halt or stay those local-court proceedings.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The plaintiff's housing case was pending in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. She filed this federal action seeking to halt or stay a Superior Court scheduling order. The district court granted the motion to proceed in forma pauperis, denied the motion for a temporary restraining order, and dismissed the complaint for lack of subject matter jurisdiction under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(h)(3).

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Kokkonen v. Guardian Life Insurance Co. of America, 511 U.S. 375, 377 (1994)
- Barwood, Inc. v. District of Columbia, 202 F.3d 290, 295 (D.C. Cir. 2000)
- United States v. Choi, 818 F. Supp. 2d 79, 85 (D.D.C. 2011)
- Lewis v. Green, 629 F. Supp. 546, 553 (D.D.C. 1986)
- Chen v. Raz, 172 F.3d 918 (D.C. Cir. 1999) (per curiam)
- Amiri v. Gelman Management Co., No. 08-cv-1864, 2010 WL 11575469, at *1 (D.D.C. Feb. 18, 2010), aff'd, 427 F. App'x 17 (D.C. Cir. Sept. 2, 2011)
- Younger v. Harris, 401 U.S. 37, 45 (1971)
- JMM Corp. v. District of Columbia, 378 F.3d 1117, 1120-1122 (D.C. Cir. 2004)

OPINION

PER CURIAM.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA MARIE YATES,)
) Plaintiff,)) Civil Action No. 26-02089 (UNA) v.)) DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA et al.,))
 Defendants.) MEMORANDUM OPINION Plaintiff, appearing pro se, has filed a complaint for
 injunctive relief, a motion to proceed in forma pauperis (IFP), and a motion for a temporary
 restraining order (TRO).

For the following reasons, the court grants the IFP motion, denies the TRO motion, and dismisses the complaint. Plaintiff's housing case is pending in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. See Yates v. N.H.P. Foundation, No. 2025-CAB-003982 (designating case as "open").

In both the TRO motion and instant complaint, Plaintiff seeks "to halt and stay" a Superior Court scheduling order. TRO Mot. ¶ 1, ECF No. 3; Compl., ECF No. 1 at 7; see TRO Mot. ¶ 2 ("[O]n May 29, 2026, the Associate Judge granted a 60-day continuance but explicitly set the closure date for July 24, 2026, stripping 4 critical days from Plaintiff's timeline to find counsel."). "Federal courts are courts of limited jurisdiction," possessing "only that power authorized by Constitution and statute," and it is "presumed that a cause lies outside this limited jurisdiction." Kokkonen v. Guardian Life Ins.

Co. of Am., 511 U.S. 375, 377 (1994) (citations omitted). A "court without jurisdiction over an underlying case cannot issue a TRO[.]" Barwood, Inc. v. District of Columbia, 202 F.3d 290, 295 (D.C. Cir. 2000). Plaintiff asserts that the events giving rise to this action occurred at her D.C. "residence and in the DC Superior Court and DC Court of Appeals." Id at 4.

Her factual allegations and demands for relief focus entirely on the proceedings in the local courts, see id. at 6-7, over which this court cannot exercise jurisdiction. See United States v. Choi, 818 F. Supp. 2d 79, 85 (D.D.C. 2011) (as "a trial level court in the federal judicial system," district courts "generally lack[] appellate jurisdiction over other judicial bodies, and cannot exercise appellate mandamus over other courts") (citing Lewis v. Green, 629 F. Supp. 546, 553 (D.D.C.

1986)); *Chen v. Raz*, 172 F.3d 918 (D.C. Cir. 1999) (per curiam) (affirming dismissal of complaint seeking review of Superior Court's decision in probate matter for lack of subject matter jurisdiction); see also *Amiri v. Gelman Management Company*, No. 08-cv-1864, 2010 WL 11575469, at *1 (D.D.C. Feb. 18, 2010), *aff'd*, 427 F. App'x 17 (D.C. Cir. Sept. 2, 2011), citing *Younger v. Harris*, 401 U.S. 37, 45 (1971) and *JMM Corp. v. District of Columbia*, 378 F.3d 1117, 1120-22 (D.C.

Cir. 2004) (It is "well settled doctrine that federal courts should not enjoin ongoing state [or District of Columbia] [judicial] proceedings" except in extraordinary circumstances). Therefore, this case will be dismissed by separate order. Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(h)(3).
_____/s/_____
TANYA S. CHUTKAN Date: June 17, 2026 United States District
Judge 2