

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF
LOUISIANA, MONROE DIVISION

Frederick Johnson v. Warden Jergens

Civil Action No. 26-0585, Section P (W.D. La. Mar. 10, 2026) (report and recommendation) · No. 3:26-cv-00585 · Decided March 10, 2026

SUMMARY

This Report and Recommendation addresses Frederick Johnson’s 28 U.S.C. § 2241 petition challenging his pretrial detention in Louisiana state criminal proceedings. The magistrate judge recommends dismissal without prejudice because Johnson had not exhausted available state remedies and federal abstention principles counseled against interference with the pending state prosecution.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Western District of Louisiana, Monroe Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Kayla D. McClusky
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Western District of Louisiana, Monroe Division
DECIDED	March 10, 2026
DOCKET	3:26-cv-00585
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Petitioner, a state pretrial detainee proceeding pro se and in forma pauperis, filed a petition for a writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 challenging the lack of a speedy trial, failure to arraign him on all charges, and failure to set bond. The magistrate judge issued a report and recommendation that the petition be dismissed without prejudice.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Review of a state pretrial habeas petition under 28 U.S.C. § 2241, including exhaustion of available state remedies and abstention principles governing federal interference with pending state criminal proceedings.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential
PARTIES	Frederick Johnson v. Warden Jergens

TOPICS

federal habeas corpus

speedy trial

sixth amendment

bail

federalism

PRACTICE AREAS

federal habeas corpus

criminal procedure

constitutional law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether a federal court may grant pretrial § 2241 habeas relief based on an alleged violation of the Sixth Amendment speedy-trial right when the petitioner has not been tried, convicted, or exhausted available state remedies.
2. Whether a federal court should intervene in a pending state criminal proceeding to order release or otherwise grant relief based on the state trial court's alleged failure to set bond.
3. Whether the petition should be dismissed without prejudice because federal habeas relief is not an appropriate vehicle for disrupting the pending state prosecution absent special circumstances.

HOLDINGS

1. Pretrial federal habeas relief is generally unavailable to adjudicate a claim that a state is barred from trying a petitioner because of an alleged Sixth Amendment speedy-trial violation, particularly where the petitioner has not been tried or convicted and has not exhausted available state remedies.
2. Pretrial federal habeas corpus is not an appropriate vehicle for adjudicating a claim seeking release from a pending state prosecution based on the state trial court's failure to set bond, absent special circumstances.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“There is ‘an important distinction between a petitioner who seeks to abort a state proceeding or to disrupt the orderly functioning of state judicial processes by litigating a speedy trial defense to a prosecution prior to trial, and one who seeks only to enforce the state’s obligation to bring him promptly to trial.’” (at 3)

“The constitutional right to a speedy trial does not qualify as ‘a per se ‘special circumstance’ which would obviate the exhaustion requirement.’” (at 4)

“Here, Petitioner clearly seeks to ‘disrupt the orderly functioning of state judicial processes’ or to otherwise ‘derail’ or ‘abort’ his pending state-court proceeding, seeking release from confinement free from any bond obligations.” (at 5)

“Federal habeas corpus should not be used as a ‘pretrial motion forum for state prisoners.’” (at 6)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Johnson was a pretrial detainee at the Ouachita Parish Correctional Center while Louisiana prosecuted him on criminal charges. He alleged that he had been incarcerated for eleven months, that the state trial court had not

arraigned him on all charges, and that the court had failed to set bond despite his repeated requests. He sought release from confinement without bond obligations and had not pursued relief in the state appellate courts.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Louisiana was prosecuting Johnson in the Fourth Judicial District Court for Ouachita Parish under case number 25-CR-1914. Johnson filed the federal § 2241 petition on February 19, 2026, alleging that he had been incarcerated for eleven months without a complete arraignment, a speedy trial, or a bond hearing. He acknowledged that he had not sought relief from the Louisiana appellate courts. The magistrate judge recommended dismissal without prejudice because the claims were unexhausted and federal intervention would improperly disrupt the pending state criminal proceeding.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Amir-Sharif v. Commissioners of Dallas, Tex., 2007 WL 1138806, at *2 (N.D. Tex. Apr. 17, 2007)
- County of Riverside v. McLaughlin, 500 U.S. 44, 57 (1991)
- State v. Williams, 2025-00575, 420 So. 3d 674 (La. Oct. 14, 2025)
- Braden v. 30th Judicial Circuit Court of Kentucky, 410 U.S. 484 (1973)
- Brown v. Estelle, 530 F.2d 1280, 1283 (5th Cir. 1976)
- Dickerson v. State of Louisiana, 816 F.2d 220, 223-27 (5th Cir. 1987)
- Easterly v. Smith, 30 F.3d 1491 (5th Cir. 1994)
- Hartfield v. Osborne, 808 F.3d 1066, 1070 (5th Cir. 2015)
- Tooten v. Shevin, 493 F.2d 173, 177 (5th Cir. 1974)
- Rose v. Lundy, 455 U.S. 509 (1982)
- Minor v. Lucas, 697 F.2d 697 (5th Cir. 1983)
- Resendez v. McKaskle, 722 F.2d 227, 231 (5th Cir. 1984)
- Shute v. State of Tex., 117 F.3d 233, 237 (5th Cir. 1997)
- Younger v. Harris, 401 U.S. 37 (1971)
- Kolski v. Watkins, 544 F.2d 762, 766 (5th Cir. 1977)
- Douglass v. United Services Automobile Association, 79 F.3d 1415 (5th Cir. 1996)

OPINION

Jergens

PER CURIAM.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

WESTERN DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA

MONROE DIVISION

SECTION P

VS.

JUDGE TERRY A. DOUGHTY

WARDEN JERGENS MAG. JUDGE KAYLA D. MCCLUSKY

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Petitioner Frederick Johnson, a pre-trial detainee at Ouachita Parish Correctional Center proceeding pro se and in forma pauperis, filed this Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2241, on February 19, 2026.¹ For reasons below, the Court should dismiss Petitioner's petition. Background The State of Louisiana is prosecuting Petitioner on criminal charges in the Fourth Judicial District Court, Ouachita Parish (25-CR-1914). [doc. # 1, p. 2]. Suggesting that he is being denied a speedy trial, Petitioner claims that he has been incarcerated for eleven months and the trial court has yet to arraign him on all charges.² [doc. # 1, p. 6]. ¹ This matter has been referred to the undersigned for review, report, and recommendation under 28 U.S.C. § 636, and the standing orders of the Court. ² See *Amir-Sharif v. Commissioners of Dallas, Tex.*, 2007 WL 1138806, at *2 (N.D. Tex. Apr. 17, 2007) (“*In County v. Riverside v. McLaughlin*, 500 U.S. 44, 57, 111 S.Ct. 1661, 114 L.Ed.2d 49

(1991), the Supreme Court held that a determination of probable cause for an arrestee's continued confinement by a judicial officer must ordinarily be made within 48 hours of the person's arrest. However, there is no correlative right to a speedy arraignment.”); see also *State v. Williams*, 2025-00575, 420 So. 3d 674 (La. 10/14/25) (observing that in Louisiana, release from Petitioner next claims that “the trial court has failed to set bond.” [doc. # 1, p. 6]. He has repeatedly asked the trial court to set a bond, but the trial court has not held a hearing on any of his motions. *Id.* at 5-6. He has not attempted to seek relief from any state appellate court. *Id.* at 2-7]. For relief, Petitioner seeks release from confinement free from “all bond obligations.” [doc. # 1, p. 7]. Law and Analysis

1. Speedy Trial

Petitioner does not ask this Court to order the State or the state trial court to bring him promptly to trial. Rather, he seeks habeas corpus relief: release from incarceration. In other words, he does not seek to enforce the State's obligation to promptly provide him a state court forum, he seeks to forestall the state prosecution. See *Braden v. 30th Judicial Circuit Court of Kentucky*, 410 U.S. 484 (1973). There is “an important distinction between a petitioner who seeks to abort a state proceeding or to disrupt the orderly functioning of state judicial processes by litigating a speedy trial defense to a prosecution prior to trial, and one who seeks only to enforce the state's obligation to bring him promptly to trial. This distinction apparently turns upon the type of relief sought: an attempt to dismiss an indictment or otherwise prevent a prosecution is of the first type, while an attempt to force the state to go to trial is of the second. While the former objective is normally not attainable through federal habeas corpus, the latter is, although the requirement detainment is the

remedy for failing to timely file an indictment or bill of information, but noting that “[n]o such remedy is provided in [LA. CODE CRIM. PROC. art. 701] for a trial court’s failure to arraign a defendant within thirty days, as required by subpart C.”). of exhaustion of state remedies still must be met.” *Brown v. Estelle*, 530 F.2d 1280, 1283 (5th Cir. 1976) (internal quotation marks and quoted sources omitted). “[P]re-trial habeas relief is generally not available to consider a petitioner’s claim that a state is barred from trying him because it has violated his sixth amendment right to a speedy trial.” *Dickerson v. State of La.*, 816 F.2d 220, 226 (5th Cir. 1987). “[F]ederal habeas corpus does not lie, absent ‘special circumstances,’ to adjudicate the merits of an affirmative defense to a state criminal charge prior to a judgment of conviction by a state court.”³ *Braden*, 410 U.S. at 489; see also *Easterly v. Smith*, 30 F.3d 1491 (5th Cir. 1994). In *Dickerson*, the Fifth Circuit indicated that there are two possible “frameworks” to apply when a petitioner claims that a state is “barred from trying him because it has violated his sixth amendment right to a speedy trial”: (1) that “federalism concerns” dictate that such a claim is simply “not attainable through federal habeas corpus”; or (2) that “the exhaustion requirement” necessitates a trial on the merits before a petitioner can bring such a claim. *Dickerson*, 816 F.2d at 226. The *Dickerson* court then suggested that either framework was 3 The Fifth Circuit “has not clarified what ‘special circumstances’ might warrant an exception from this rule.” *Hartfield v. Osborne*, 808 F.3d 1066, 1070 (5th Cir. 2015). That said, in *Dickerson*, the court noted: “In his dissent in *Braden*, Justice Rehnquist suggests that pre-trial habeas which interferes with state criminal processes is justified when there is a ‘lack of jurisdiction, under the Supremacy Clause, for the state to bring any criminal charges against the petitioner.’ We need not decide in this case whether this might be the only situation in which pre-trial habeas is available.” *Dickerson*, 816 F.2d at 226 (internal citation omitted). In another opinion, the Fifth Circuit opined: “In the somewhat analogous area of abstention a pending state criminal prosecution will not be enjoined absent ‘very unusual situations, . . . necessary to prevent immediate irreparable injury.’ Irreparable injury will not ordinarily be deemed to be present where the threat to the plaintiff’s federally protected rights can be eliminated by the defense of a single criminal prosecution. Furthermore, special circumstances are not necessarily established by the alleged infallibility of the federal claim. Indeed, without reaching the merits of appellant’s constitutional argument we take note of the fact that if her position is as clearly correct as she suggests, the Florida courts are surely capable of recognizing and vindicating her position.” *Tooten v. Shevin*, 493 F.2d 173, 177 (5th Cir. 1974) (internal footnotes omitted). acceptable because “[r]egardless of which framework of analysis is used, however, the result is the same: pre-trial habeas relief is generally not available to consider a petitioner’s claim that a state is barred from trying him because it has violated his sixth amendment right to a speedy trial.” *Id.* But thereafter the court appeared to rely on the latter ‘framework’ above, stating that the petitioner failed to present any special circumstances to “obviate the exhaustion requirement” of a “judgment of conviction[.]” *Id.* at 226-27 (*italics added*). The court also stated that it would not consider the merits of the petitioner’s claim “before he has been

tried.” A petitioner seeking federal habeas corpus relief must first exhaust all available state remedies.⁴ See *Rose v. Lundy*, 455 U.S. 509 (1982); *Minor v. Lucas*, 697 F.2d 697 (5th Cir. 1983). If the record, or the face of the federal habeas corpus petition, reveals that the petitioner has not complied with the exhaustion requirement, courts are expressly authorized to dismiss the petition. See *Resendez v. McKaskle*, 722 F.2d 227, 231 (5th Cir. 1984); *Shute v. State of Tex.*, 117 F.3d 233, 237 (5th Cir. 1997). Here, Petitioner has yet to have a trial on the merits or be convicted, and he does not identify any ‘special circumstances’ which would require the Court to except him from this initial step of the exhaustion requirement (i.e., a judgment of conviction). See *Easterly*, 30 F.3d at 1491. The constitutional right to a speedy trial does not qualify as “a per se ‘special circumstance’ which would obviate the exhaustion requirement.” *Id.*; *Dickerson*, 816 F.3d at 227 (declining to accept the argument “that the sixth amendment right to a speedy trial is a per se ‘special circumstance’ because to do so would eliminate the careful distinction . . . between a 4 “[I]t has long been settled that a Section 2241 petitioner must exhaust available state court remedies before a federal court will entertain a challenge to state detention.” *Montano v. Texas*, 867 F.3d 540, 542 (5th Cir. 2017). defendant disrupting the orderly functioning of a state’s judicial processes as opposed to enforcing his right to have the state bring him promptly to trial.”). Because Petitioner has yet to have a trial, his claim is unexhausted.⁵ Accordingly, the Court should abstain from interfering in Petitioner’s state court proceeding and should, consequently, dismiss this claim.⁶

2. Bond

The Court should also abstain from Petitioner’s remaining claim that the trial court has “failed to set bond.” Federal courts should abstain “if the issues raised in the petition may be resolved either by trial on the merits in the state court or by other state procedures available to the petitioner.” *Dickerson*, 816 F.2d at 225. While the thrust of the court’s opinion in *Dickerson* concerned a Sixth Amendment speedy trial claim, the petitioner there also argued that his pre-indictment delay violated his “due process rights under the fourteenth amendment” *Id.* at 223. The court opined: The fact that the due process clause plays some role in protecting against the prejudice of preindictment delay, however, does not mean that a petition for habeas corpus relief filed before commencement of the defendant’s trial is the proper vehicle to protect this right. We believe that the same federalism reasons that prevent a defendant’s sixth amendment claims from “derailing” a pending state proceeding unless “special circumstances” exist also renders pretrial habeas corpus relief an inappropriate vehicle to consider the merits of *Dickerson*’s due process claim. *Dickerson* can present both his fourteenth ⁵ Even assuming arguendo that Petitioner asked this Court to order the State to grant him a prompt trial (he does not), he has not exhausted any such claim. Petitioner does not indicate that he petitioned—or asked his counsel (if any) to petition—the state appellate courts to bring him promptly to trial. ⁶ The *Dickerson* court concluded that the petitioner failed to exhaust his claims. That said, exhaustion is a form of judicial abstention: “The exhaustion doctrine . . . was judicially crafted on federalism grounds in order to protect the state courts’ opportunity to

confront and resolve initially any constitutional issues arising within their jurisdictions as well as to limit federal interference in the state adjudicatory process.” Dickerson, 816 F.2d at 225. amendment due process claim as well as his sixth amendment speedy trial claim in the state court at trial where they can be considered. Id. Here, Petitioner clearly seeks to ‘disrupt the orderly functioning of state judicial processes’ or to otherwise ‘derail’ or ‘abort’ his pending state-court proceeding, seeking release from confinement free from any bond obligations. Pre-trial habeas corpus is not an appropriate means by which to consider the merits of this claim.⁷ While federal habeas relief may be available prior to trial or conviction if “special circumstances” exist, Petitioner’s filings do not reveal any special circumstances. “Federal habeas corpus should not be used as a ‘pretrial motion forum for state prisoners.’” *Tooten v. Shevin*, 493 F.2d 173, 177 (5th Cir. 1974) (quoting *Braden*, 410 U.S. at 508). Petitioner suggests that the state trial court refuses to adjudicate his claim. To this extent Petitioner can seek relief before the appropriate state appellate court, before the Supreme Court of Louisiana, and via post-conviction review in the state courts. A habeas corpus remedy in federal court remains available to Petitioner “after the conclusion of the state proceedings against 7 Even assuming Dickerson only applied to affirmative defenses—for instance, cases in which petitioners seek to abort state court trials due to alleged speedy-trial or double-jeopardy violations—the undersigned would recommend that the Court abstain under *Younger v. Harris*, 401 U.S. 37 (1971), which is not limited to proceedings in which petitioners seek relief grounded in affirmative defenses. Also, the undersigned would recommend applying *Younger* even though Petitioner seeks dismissal of his charges and release from confinement rather than the precise injunction the plaintiff sought in *Younger*. In *Kolski v. Watkins*, 544 F.2d 762, 766 (5th Cir. 1977), the court opined: “We do not believe that the mere fact that the relief sought by Petitioner here federal habeas relief prior to a pending state criminal trial is different from the type of relief sought in *Younger* makes the requirements announced in *Younger* any less applicable to this case. There is no practical difference between granting federal habeas relief from a pending state criminal trial and enjoining the same trial. The principles of federalism and comity which underlie *Younger* are present in both. Thus, we conclude that Petitioner must satisfy the *Younger* abstention hurdles before we may give federal habeas relief.” him, if he is in custody pursuant to conviction and has exhausted his state remedies.” See *Dickerson*, 816 F.2d at n.16. Accordingly, the Court should abstain and, consequently, dismiss this claim without prejudice. Conclusion For the reasons above, IT IS RECOMMENDED that Petitioner Frederick Johnson’s petition be DISMISSED WITHOUT PREJUDICE. Under the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(C) and Rule 72(b), parties aggrieved by this recommendation have fourteen (14) days from service of this Report and Recommendation to file specific, written objections with the Clerk of Court. A party may respond to another party’s objections within fourteen (14) days after being served with a copy of any objections or response to the district judge at the time of filing. Failure to file written objections to the proposed factual findings and/or the proposed legal conclusions reflected in this Report and Recommendation within fourteen

(14) days following the date of its service, or within the time frame authorized by Fed. R. Civ. P. 6(b), shall bar an aggrieved party from attacking either the factual findings or the legal conclusions accepted by the District Court, except upon grounds of plain error. See *Douglass v. United Services Automobile Association*, 79 F.3d 1415 (5th Cir. 1996). In *Chambers*, Monroe, Louisiana, this 10 day of March, 2026. fyi Kayla Dye MyChisky United States Magistrate Judge

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