

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Oscar Ramos v. Metro by T-Mobile; Gong Investments, LLC,
individually and d/b/a Metro by T-Mobile; and Does 1 to 50 inclusive

Ramos · No. 2:24-cv-03062-DJC-CKD · Decided May 15, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California granted Techno CA LLC's motion to intervene in Oscar Ramos's action alleging violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act and related California statutes. The court declined to dismiss T-Mobile USA, Inc. or Metro by T-Mobile because the identity of the store's operator during the relevant period required discovery. The court also denied the motions to dismiss for lack of jurisdiction and for sanctions, finding that the ADA claims were non-frivolous and that bad faith had not been shown.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Daniel J. Calabretta
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	May 15, 2025
DOCKET	2:24-cv-03062-DJC-CKD
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Non-party Techno CA LLC moved to intervene, dismiss the complaint for lack of subject matter jurisdiction, and impose sanctions. The district court granted intervention but denied dismissal and sanctions.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	For intervention under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 24(a), the court applied the four-factor intervention standard and assessed the factors liberally in favor of the movant. For the jurisdictional motion, the court assessed whether the complaint presented a non-frivolous federal claim sufficient to establish federal-question jurisdiction under Rule 12(b)(1). Sanctions were evaluated under the court's inherent authority to sanction bad-faith conduct.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished district court order; precedential status not identified

TOPICS

intervention

subject matter jurisdiction

motions to dismiss

sanctions

ada / disability

PRACTICE AREAS

Civil procedure

Americans with Disabilities Act

Disability access

Federal jurisdiction

Sanctions

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Techno CA LLC satisfied the requirements for intervention as of right under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 24(a).
2. Whether the complaint should be dismissed for lack of subject matter jurisdiction because the alleged accessible parking space was not a public accommodation under the ADA.
3. Whether the complaint should be dismissed for lack of subject matter jurisdiction because the store counter was allegedly ADA-compliant and the claim was therefore moot or lacked standing.
4. Whether sanctions were warranted based on alleged bad-faith pleading or failure to name the correct defendant.
5. Whether T-Mobile USA, Inc. or Metro by T-Mobile should be dismissed from the action at that stage of the proceedings.

HOLDINGS

1. Techno CA LLC could intervene as of right because its motion was timely, it asserted a significantly protectable interest in the store involved in the action, disposition could impair its ability to protect that interest, and the existing defendants did not adequately represent its interests.
2. The court had subject matter jurisdiction because Ramos asserted a non-frivolous ADA claim, and an accessible parking lot can constitute a place of public accommodation under the ADA.
3. The disputed facts concerning whether the service counter complied with the ADA during Ramos's 2024 visits did not defeat subject matter jurisdiction or justify dismissal at that stage.
4. The court declined to dismiss T-Mobile USA, Inc. or Metro by T-Mobile because the record did not definitively establish which entity operated the store during Ramos's visits, and discovery could resolve that issue.
5. Sanctions were not warranted because the record did not show that Ramos or his counsel acted in bad faith by naming the defendants or declining to amend the complaint as requested.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“A parking lot can be a public space that would be covered by the ADA.” (at 5)

“a valid disagreement over the facts of the case does not render a claim frivolous” (at 6)

“Because the Court does not find Plaintiff acted in bad faith by naming parties beyond Techno CA LLC in the complaint, or amending the complaint per Techno CA LLC's request, Intervenor's request for sanctions is DENIED.” (at 7)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Ramos, who uses a wheelchair, alleged that he encountered inaccessible features at a Metro by T-Mobile store in Fairfield, California, during visits on March 8, June 13, and September 24, 2024. He alleged that the accessible parking space was improperly located, designated, signed, and sized, that a ramp impeded access, and that the service counter was too narrow and high. Techno CA LLC asserted that it was the current tenant and operator of the store but did not begin operating it until after October 2024. Photographs purportedly showing an ADA-compliant counter in January 2025 did not resolve whether the counter complied during Ramos's 2024 visits.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Oscar Ramos filed claims under the Americans with Disabilities Act and related California statutes based on alleged accessibility barriers at a Metro by T-Mobile store. T-Mobile USA, Inc. answered and asserted that it had been erroneously sued and did not operate the store during the relevant period. Techno CA LLC, which claimed to be the current tenant and operator, moved to intervene and sought dismissal and sanctions. The motion was submitted without oral argument under Local Rule 230(g).

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Nat'l Fed'n of the Blind of Cal. v. Uber Techs., Inc., 103 F. Supp. 3d 1073, 1078 (N.D. Cal. 2015)
- White v. Lee, 227 F.3d 1214, 1242 (9th Cir. 2000)
- Safe Air for Everyone v. Meyer, 373 F.3d 1035, 1039 (9th Cir. 2004)
- Thompson v. McCombe, 99 F.3d 352, 353 (9th Cir. 1996)
- Arbaugh v. Y&H Corp., 546 U.S. 500, 506 (2006)
- Sw. Ctr. for Biological Diversity v. Berg, 268 F.3d 810, 818, 820 (9th Cir. 2001)
- Idaho Farm Bureau Fed'n v. Babbitt, 58 F.3d 1392, 1397 (9th Cir. 1995)
- United States v. State of Or., 913 F.2d 576, 588 (9th Cir. 1990)
- Kalani v. Castle Vill. LLC, 14 F. Supp. 3d 1359, 1370 (E.D. Cal. 2014)
- Bollard v. Cal. Province of the Soc'y of Jesus, 196 F.3d 940, 951 (9th Cir. 1999)
- Markel v. Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of Am., 124 F.4th 796 (9th Cir. 2024)
- Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. v. Haeger, 581 U.S. 101, 102 (2017)

OPINION

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT 9 EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA 10 11 OSCAR RAMOS, No. 2:24-cv-03062-DJC-CKD 12 Plaintiff, 13 v. ORDER
14 METRO BY T-MOBILE; GONG INVESTMENTS, LLC, individually and 15 d/b/a METRO
BY T-MOBILE; and DOES 1 to 50 inclusive, 16 Defendants. 17 18 19 Plaintiff Oscar Ramos sued
Defendant Metro by T-Mobile, alleging various 20 violations of the Americans with Disabilities

Act and related state statutes related to a 21 physical store purportedly owned and operated by Defendant.

Non-party Techno CA 22 LLC now seeks to intervene and moves for the Court to dismiss Plaintiff's complaint 23 and to levy sanctions against Plaintiff. The Court GRANTS Techno CA LLC's request to 24 intervene and DENIES its Motion to Dismiss and Motion for Sanctions. 25 BACKGROUND 26 Plaintiff is a "person with a disability" who uses a wheelchair. (ECF No. 1, 27 Compl. ¶ 6.)

On or about March 8, 2024, June 13, 2024, and September 24, 2024, 28 Plaintiff visited a Metro by T-Mobile store in Fairfield, California, to purchase 1 telecommunication accessories. (Id. ¶¶ 3, 7, 12.) Plaintiff alleges that the Metro by T- 2 Mobile store's disability-accessible parking space was improperly designated, placed 3 too far from the entrance to the store, and was not the proper size.

(Id. ¶ 4a.) 4 Specifically, he asserts that the store's disability-accessible parking spot was not on the 5 shortest accessible route to the main entrance, that the parking spot lacked proper 6 signage, and that a ramp impeded access to and from the parking spot. (Id.) He also 7 alleges that a service counter inside the store was narrower than 36 inches and taller 8 than 34 inches, forcing Plaintiff to strain to conduct his transactions.

(Id. ¶ 4b.) Plaintiff 9 argues that these hindrances denied him equal access to public facilities and 10 engendered various forms of emotional and mental distress. (Id. ¶ 17.) 11 Plaintiff brings the following claims: 12 1. Violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA") 42 U.S.C. § 12101 et 13 seq., alleging that the Metro by T-Mobile store's disability-accessible parking 14 space and service counter deny people with disabilities access to public 15 accommodation and that remedying these barriers is "readily achievable." (Id.

16 ¶¶ 18–35.) 17 2. Violation of California Health and Safety Code § 19955 et seq., alleging that the 18 Metro by T-Mobile store's disability-accessible parking space and service 19 counter deny people with disabilities access to public accommodation. (Id. 20 ¶¶ 36–51.) 21 3. Violation of California Civil Code §§ 54, 54.1, 54.3, alleging that the Metro by T- 22 Mobile store's disability-accessible parking space and service counter deny 23 people with disabilities access to public facilities and seeking statutory 24 damages and injunctive relief.

(Id. ¶¶ 52–64.) 25 4. Violation of California Civil Code §§ 51 and 51.5 (California "Unruh Civil Rights 26 Act"), alleging that Metro by T-Mobile store's disability-accessible parking 27 space and service counter deny people with disabilities full and equal access to 28 accommodations. (Id. ¶¶ 65–71.) 1 T-Mobile USA, Inc. filed an Answer to Defendant's Complaint asserting that it is 2 being erroneously sued as Metro by T-Mobile, and denying that it operated the Metro 3 by T-Mobile store during the period when Plaintiff allegedly visited.

(ECF No. 10 at ¶¶ 4 1, 3–4.) Techno CA LLC moves to intervene in the case, requests that Defendant T- 5 Mobile be dismissed, and moves for sanctions against Plaintiff. (ECF No. 13, 6 hereinafter “Mot.”) Techno CA LLC asserts that it, rather than T-Mobile USA, Inc. or 7 Metro by T-Mobile, currently operates the physical Metro by T-Mobile store, but states 8 that it did not begin operation of the location until sometime after October 2024, after 9 Plaintiff’s alleged visit.

(Id. at 1.) Prior to the filing of this motion, the parties were 10 referred to the Court’s Voluntary Dispute Resolution Program and all previous 11 deadlines were stayed; the parties have not fully engaged in discovery as a result. 12 (ECF No. 11.)

On March 27, 2025, the matter was submitted without oral argument 13 pursuant to Local Rule 230(g). (ECF No. 16.) 14 LEGAL STANDARD 15 A. Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 24(a) 16 Under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 24(a), a party may intervene if it timely 17 claims an interest related to the property that is subject to the action and existing 18 parties to the litigation do not adequately represent the movant’s interest.

Fed. R. Civ. 19 P. 24(a). 20 B. Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(1) 21 A party may move to dismiss a complaint for lack of subject matter jurisdiction 22 under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(1).¹ See Nat’l Fed’n of the Blind of Cal. v. 23 Uber Techs., Inc., 103 F. Supp. 3d 1073, 1078 (N.D. Cal. 2015). A Rule 12(b)(1) 24 jurisdictional attack may be facial or factual.

White v. Lee, 227 F.3d 1214, 1242 (9th 25 Cir. 2000) (citation omitted). “In a facial attack, the challenger asserts that the 26 1 Intervenor Techno CA LLC cites Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(h)(3) for the proposition that the 27 Court should dismiss the claim for lack of subject matter jurisdiction. (Mot. at 6–7.)

The Court assesses the claim under Rule 12(b)(1), as that is the usual vehicle for challenging subject matter jurisdiction. See 28 Arbaugh v. Y&H Corp., 546 U.S. 500, 506 (2006). 1 allegations contained in a complaint are insufficient on their face to invoke federal 2 jurisdiction. By contrast, in a factual attack, the challenger disputes the truth of the 3 allegations that, by themselves, would otherwise invoke federal jurisdiction.” Safe Air 4 for Everyone v. Meyer, 373 F.3d 1035, 1039 (9th Cir.

2004). “[The] party invoking the 5 federal court’s jurisdiction has the burden of proving the actual existence of subject 6 matter jurisdiction.” Thompson v. McCombe, 99 F.3d 352, 353 (9th Cir. 1996). 7 DISCUSSION 8 Techno CA LLC’s Motion to Intervene is supported by caselaw and unopposed. 9 The Court has subject matter jurisdiction over this case because Plaintiff raises a claim 10 under the federal Americans with Disabilities Act.

Techno CA LLC’s Motion for 11 Sanctions is unsupported by the record and cannot be granted. 12 A. Techno CA LLC May Intervene In The Case 13 There are four factors courts assess when weighing a motion for intervention 14 under Rule 24(a): “(1) the application for intervention must

be timely; (2) the applicant must have a significantly protectable interest relating to the property or transaction that is the subject of the action; (3) the applicant must be so situated that the disposition of the action may, as a practical matter, impair or impede the applicant's ability to protect that interest; and (4) the applicant's interest must not be adequately represented by the existing parties in the lawsuit.” Sw.

Ctr. for Biological Diversity v. 20 Berg, 268 F.3d 810, 818 (9th Cir. 2001) (internal quotations omitted). These factors are assessed liberally in favor of the movant. *Idaho Farm Bureau Fed'n v. Babbitt*, 582 F.3d 1392, 1397 (9th Cir. 1995). When considering a movant's timeliness, a court considers the stage of the proceeding, prejudice to other parties, and the reasons for and length of any delay in filing.

United States v. State of Or., 913 F.2d 576, 588 (9th Cir. 1990). Courts take well-pleaded, non-conclusory allegations in a motion to intervene as true, absent sham, frivolity, or other objections. Sw. *Ctr. for Biological Diversity*, 268 F.3d at 820. Techno CA LLC's request to intervene is timely; it comes at a very early stage in the litigation, before any hearings or rulings on substantive matters; and does not prejudice or present a disadvantage for another party.

See *Idaho Farm Bureau Fed'n*, 582 F.3d at 1397. Further, Techno CA LLC, by claiming that it is the current tenant and operator of the store involved in the underlying dispute in this case, has properly invoked an interest in the litigation.

As the current tenant and operator of the store, disposition of this case without Techno CA LLC's participation would undoubtedly affect its interests, including whether its disability-accessible parking space or service counter engender liability under the ADA. And finally, in line with these assertions, none of the named Defendants would properly represent Techno CA LLC's interests, as, if Techno CA LLC's uncontested allegations are true, the named parties are not present or past operators of the store.

After weighing these factors, and noting no party, including Plaintiff, contests Techno CA LLC's request to intervene (see generally, ECF No. 14, hereinafter “Opp'n.”), the Court hereby GRANTS Techno CA LLC's Motion to Intervene. The Court declines to dismiss T-Mobile USA, Inc. and/or Metro by T-Mobile as a party to this litigation, at least at this juncture.

Plaintiff has pled that Metro by T-Mobile operated the business during his visits, and no other party has provided evidence definitively disproving that assertion. (See *id.* ¶¶ 5–7 (asserting that an entity named Metro by T-Mobile held a business operation license for the store during the time period when Plaintiff allegedly visited); see also Mot. at 3 (arguing that relevant information related to T-Mobile USA, Inc. and Techno CA LLC's relationship or lease of the premises is proprietary).)

Nor has T-Mobile USA, Inc. and/or Metro by T-Mobile 24 itself moved to be dismissed from the litigation. The Court determines that the 25 question of which entity operated the business at the time of Plaintiff's visit would 26 benefit from discovery, and therefore will not dismiss any party at this stage. 27 //// 28 //// 1 B. Plaintiff Has Properly Invoked This Court's Jurisdiction 2 Plaintiff brings claims under the ADA and similar state statutes that he was 3 denied equal access to the Metro by T-Mobile store due to both its improper 4 disability-accessible parking space and its incorrectly sized service desk.

(Compl. 5 ¶¶ 18–71.) Intervenor counters that the disability-accessible parking space “is not a 6 public accommodation under the ADA” and that “there was and always has been an 7 ADA-complaint counter in the store such that Plaintiff's claim... is moot and Plaintiff 8 lacks standing.” (Mot. at 1–2.) 9 1. A Parking Lot Can Be A Public Accommodation Under The ADA 10 The ADA prohibits, inter alia, discrimination “on the basis of disability in the full 11 and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or 12 accommodations of any place of public accommodation or by any person who owns, 13 leases (or leases to), or operates a place of public accommodation.” 42 U.S.C. 14 § 12182(a).

15 Plaintiff does not meaningfully respond to Intervenor's claim regarding whether 16 the parking lot is a public accommodation, except to note that he contests 17 Intervenor's assertion that, as of February 2025 (after this litigation had been initiated 18 and some months after his alleged initial visits), the disability-accessible parking space 19 was compliant with the ADA.

(See Opp'n. at ¶¶ 25–28.) Turning to Intervenor's 20 argument, however, the Court notes that a parking lot can be a public space that 21 would be covered by the ADA. See, e.g., *Kalani v. Castle Vill. LLC*, 14 F. Supp. 3d 22 1359, 1370 (E.D. Cal. 2014) (“Finally, the parking lot and restroom are plainly places of 23 public accommodation.”) While this specific issue has not been fully examined by the 24 parties, the Court deems that, at least at this initial stage in the litigation, Plaintiff's 25 claim regarding the disability-accessible parking space is viable and should not be 26 dismissed.

27 //// 28 //// 1 2. The Court Has Jurisdiction To Hear This Case And Whether The Store's 2 Counter Is Or Was ADA Compliant Is A Disputed Fact 3 As noted in the preceding section, the ADA prohibits discrimination on the 4 basis of disability that would prevent equal enjoyment of a public accommodation. 42 5 U.S.C. § 12182(a).

In the context of the ADA, discrimination can include “a failure to 6 remove architectural barriers” that impede access. *Id.* § 12182(b)(2)(A)(iv). Defendant 7 appears to contest this Court's jurisdiction over this case, arguing that “Plaintiff lacks 8 standing and/or the ADA claim of a non-compliant counter is moot.” (Mot. at 7.)

The 9 crux of Defendant's argument is that the counter has always been ADA compliant, and 10 thus, there is no viable claim under the ADA or federal jurisdiction provided by the 11 statute. (See id. at 1, 6–7, citing Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(h)(3).) 12 Defendant's contention that the underlying facts do not enable Plaintiff a claim 13 under the ADA have no bearing on this Court's jurisdiction.

That is because any "non- 14 frivolous assertion of a federal claim suffices to establish federal question jurisdiction, 15 even if that claim is later dismissed on the merits under Rule 12(b)(6)." *Bollard v. Cal. 16 Province of the Soc'y of Jesus*, 196 F.3d 940, 951 (9th Cir. 1999), overruled on other 17 grounds by *Markel v. Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of Am.*, 124 F.4th 796 18 (9th Cir.

2024). A valid disagreement over the facts of the case does not render a 19 claim frivolous, and so the Court determines that its jurisdiction here is proper. 20 In any event, the disputed underlying facts, including the debate of whether the 21 store's counter was too high or too wide at the time of Plaintiff's alleged visit, have not 22 been resolved by the parties and remain contested.

Intervenor presents photographs 23 purporting to show that, on January 2, 2025, the counter's measurements were within 24 the ADA's requirements. (See Mot. at 7.) Regardless of the veracity of these 25 photographs, they do little to respond to Plaintiff's allegations that on March 8, 2024, 26 June 13, 2024, and September 24, 2024, the counter was non-compliant.

Simply put, 27 a core thrust of Plaintiff's allegations are still live, and thus, Intervenor's argument that 28 "the counter is compliant" and "there is no live case or controversy under the ADA" is 1 incorrect. (See id. at 7-8.) Defendant has not addressed, let alone disposed of, 2 | Plaintiff's claims, and thus dismissal at this juncture is not appropriate.

3 3. Sanctions Are Not Appropriate 4 Intervenor moves for sanctions against Plaintiff's counsel, arguing that Plaintiff's 5 | claims were brought in bad faith. (/d. at 8-10.) A federal court possesses inherent 6 || powers to assess sanctions "against a party that acts in bad faith." *Goodyear Tire & 7 | Rubber Co. v. Hager*, 581 U.S. 101, 102 (2017). 8 The crux of Intervenor's argument appears to be that Plaintiff acted in bad faith 9 | by failing to sue the right defendant and dismiss T-Mobile USA, Inc. as a defendant 10 | upon that entity's and Intervenor's request.

But as noted above, Plaintiff originally 11 | identified the captioned list of Defendants via publicly available licenses for the store. 12 | (See Opp'n. at 1915-7.) This is hardly acting in bad faith. Further, the parties have not 13 | yet engaged in discovery, and relevant documentation related to who was operating 14 | the store at the time of Plaintiff's alleged visit may exist but may not have yet been 15 | made available.

Because the Court does not find Plaintiff acted in bad faith by naming 16 | parties beyond Techno CA LLC in the complaint, or amending the complaint per 17 | Techno CA LLC's request, Intervenor's request for sanctions is DENIED. 18 CONCLUSION 19 The Court GRANTS Techno

CA LLC's request to intervene and DENIES its 20 | Motion to Dismiss and Motion for Sanctions (ECF No. 13).

21 99 IT IS SO ORDERED. 23 | Dated: _May 15, 2025 "Daneel J CDbnettr Hon. Daniel alabretta
24 UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE 25 26 | - Ramos24cv03062.MTI/MTD/MS 27 28

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