

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF MONTANA,
HELENA DIVISION

K.B. v. Austin Knudsen, Attorney General of the State of Montana;
Unknown SVORA Administrator

K.B. · No. CV 26-33-H-DWM · Decided April 29, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Montana dismissed K.B.’s habeas petition challenging a purported sexual-offender registration requirement arising from a juvenile disposition. The court held that the petition was untimely, alleged at most issues of state-law interpretation, and failed to satisfy the custody requirement for federal habeas jurisdiction because the juvenile disposition had expired. The court denied a certificate of appealability.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Montana, Helena Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Donald W. Molloy
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Montana, Helena Division
DECIDED	April 29, 2026
DOCKET	CV 26-33-H-DWM
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	A state prisoner filed a petition for a writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2254 challenging his alleged obligation to register as a sexual offender and asserting Fourteenth Amendment violations. The district court dismissed the petition for lack of jurisdiction and denied a certificate of appealability.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under Rule 4 governing § 2254 cases, a habeas petition may be summarily dismissed if it plainly appears from the petition and attached exhibits that the petitioner is not entitled to relief. A certificate of appealability requires a substantial showing of the denial of a constitutional right; for a procedural dismissal, reasonable jurists must also be able to debate the procedural ruling.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court order

PARTIES

K.B. v. Austin Knudsen, Attorney General of the State of Montana,
Unknown SVORA Administrator

TOPICS

federal habeas corpus subject matter jurisdiction statute of limitations state post-conviction relief
due process

PRACTICE AREAS

federal habeas corpus post-conviction relief constitutional law civil procedure civil rights

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the petition was barred by AEDPA's one-year statute of limitations.
2. Whether alleged errors by Montana courts in interpreting or applying state juvenile sentencing and sexual-offender-registration law were cognizable in a federal habeas proceeding under 28 U.S.C. § 2254.
3. Whether the district court had habeas jurisdiction when K.B. was no longer in custody under the juvenile disposition or sentence he sought to challenge.
4. Whether K.B. was entitled to a certificate of appealability.

HOLDINGS

1. The petition appeared untimely because, even accounting for potential statutory and equitable tolling and the alternative triggering dates in 28 U.S.C. § 2244(d)(1), K.B. filed more than one year after he could have discovered the factual predicate of his claims.
2. A federal writ of habeas corpus is not available to correct alleged errors in the interpretation or application of state law absent a constitutional violation.
3. The district court lacked habeas jurisdiction because K.B. was not in custody under the juvenile disposition or purported sentencing conditions when he filed the federal petition.
4. A certificate of appealability should be denied because reasonable jurists would not find the jurisdictional dismissal debatable or conclude that the claims deserved encouragement to proceed further.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“If it plainly appears from the face of the petition and any exhibits annexed to it that the petitioner is not entitled to relief in the district court.” (Analysis)

“A federal writ is not available for alleged errors in the interpretation or application of state law.” (Analysis)

“This Court’s habeas jurisdiction requires that a petitioner be in custody under the conviction or sentence under attack at the time his federal petition is filed.” (Analysis)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

K.B. was adjudicated a delinquent youth in Montana in 2003 for conduct that would have constituted criminal offenses if committed by an adult. After he reached majority, the State obtained a transfer of jurisdiction that extended his commitment and apparently required sexual-offender registration. His youth court disposition expired in 2011, and in 2015 the Eighteenth Judicial District Court determined that the expired youth court matter created no duty to register. K.B. filed the federal petition more than a decade after that determination, while challenging the state courts' treatment of the juvenile disposition and registration issue.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

K.B. was adjudicated delinquent in Montana youth court in 2003 and his juvenile disposition expired in 2011. In 2015, a Montana state district court determined that the expired youth court matter imposed no duty to register as a sexual offender. K.B. later challenged the registration issue in state proceedings, including a post-conviction petition and proceedings before the Montana Supreme Court, and then filed this federal habeas petition. The federal district court dismissed the petition for lack of jurisdiction and denied a certificate of appealability.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Wilson v. Corcoran, 562 U.S. 1, 5 (2010)
- Estelle v. McGuire, 502 U.S. 62, 67-68 (1991)
- Lewis v. Jeffers, 497 U.S. 764, 780 (1990)
- Jammal v. Van de Kamp, 926 F.2d 918, 920 (9th Cir. 1991)
- Maleng v. Cook, 490 U.S. 488, 490-91 (1989) (per curiam)
- K.B. v. State, DA 25-0294, Ord. (Mont. Feb. 17, 2026)
- Miller-El v. Cockrell, 537 U.S. 322, 327 (2003)
- Slack v. McDaniel, 529 U.S. 473, 484 (2000)
- Gonzalez v. Thaler, 132 S. Ct. 641, 648 (2012)