NONPRECEDENTIAL DISPOSITION
To be cited only in accordance with FED. R. APP. P. 32.1

United States Court of Appeals

For the Seventh Circuit
Chicago, Illinois 60604

Submitted January 4, 2024*
Decided January 8, 2024

Before

ILANA DIAMOND ROVNER, *Circuit Judge*

DIANE P. WOOD, *Circuit Judge*

AMY J. ST. EVE, *Circuit Judge*

No. 23-2113

MITCHELL LUDVIGSEN, *Plaintiff-Appellant*,	Appeal from the United States District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin.
v.	No. 23-cv-265-wmc
LINCOLN COUNTY, et al., *Defendants-Appellees*.	James D. Peterson, *Chief Judge*.

O R D E R

Mitchell Ludvigsen believes that his constitutional and state-law rights were violated when he was required to remit child-support payments to the mother of his child. He brought this civil-rights action against Lincoln County and several other defendants. *See* 42 U.S.C. § 1983. The district court screened his complaint and dismissed his suit for lack of subject-matter jurisdiction. We affirm.

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* We have agreed to decide the case without oral argument the briefs and record adequately present the facts and legal arguments, and oral argument would not significantly aid the court. FED. R. APP. P. 34(a)(2)(C).

In 2017, Meghan Snyder, one of the defendants who works for the Lincoln County Child Support Agency, sent Ludvigsen a summons and a petition to establish paternity. Ludvigsen says that he went to her office, provided a DNA sample, and was later told he was the "legal father" of the child in question. Snyder then told him to sign a child-support order, which a state court entered. Further motions and hearings modifying the state court's order have continued through August 2023.

In April 2023, Ludvigsen brought this suit in federal court. He alleged that Snyder lacked authority to pronounce him the legal father, that the county child-support agency engaged in an unconstitutional scheme to garnish his income, and that neither the agency nor Wisconsin's state courts have legal authority to issue child-support orders. In his view, the contract between the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families and Lincoln County meant that all of the defendants are contractors rather than government officials with legal authority over him. He sought monetary damages, a declaration that the defendants violated his constitutional rights, and an injunction preventing the defendants from further "bad faith prosecution."

At screening, 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B), the district court concluded that it lacked subject-matter jurisdiction under abstention principles. Relying on our decision in *J.B. v. Woodard*, 997 F.3d 714 (7th Cir. 2021), the court explained that adjudicating Ludvigsen's claims would affect his ongoing child-support dispute in Wisconsin's state court. The court acknowledged that abstention typically would result in a stay of proceedings, but here the *Rooker-Feldman* doctrine, *see District of Columbia Ct. of Appeals v. Feldman*, 460 U.S. 462 (1983); *Rooker v. Fidelity Tr. Co.*, 263 U.S. 413 (1923), as well as the domestic relations exception to federal court subject matter jurisdiction, *see Ankenbrandt v. Richards*, 504 U.S. 689 (1992), deprived it of jurisdiction to address any challenge Ludvigsen wished to raise in regard to the child-support order, even if the state court's proceedings had ended.

On appeal, Ludvigsen challenges the district court's application of *Woodard* based on his belief that his state-court action is no longer pending. He asserts that his state-court action is not ongoing because the state courts will not "accept" the constitutional claims he brings here.

But this argument misapprehends the application of abstention doctrines. Generally, a case is considered "ongoing" when proceedings are still occurring in the state court at the time of filing in the district court. *See Woodard*, 997 F.3d at 723. Ludvigsen does not dispute that his child-support proceedings were ongoing in state

court when he filed this action. Indeed, state-court records show that—months after he filed this action—a hearing took place about a modification of the child-support order. In *Woodard*, we held that the principles underlying the abstention doctrines—comity, equity, and federalism—command federal courts to abstain from cases that might interfere with state domestic-court proceedings, even when none of the abstention doctrines fit to the letter. *Id.* at 722, 724. As in that case, a federal ruling here would inappropriately insert the federal courts into an ongoing state family-court proceeding—an area of law traditionally reserved for the states. *Id.* at 722–23. In such circumstances, federal courts must "stay on the sidelines." *Id*. at 723.

We have reviewed Ludvigsen's remaining jurisdictional arguments, and none has merit.

AFFIRMED