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IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

STONE LYNN HUNT,

Petitioner,

No. 2:09-cv-1540 LKK KJN P

vs.

MATTHEW CATE, Secretary of
Corrections,

Respondent.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

_____/

Petitioner is a state prisoner proceeding without counsel with an application for a writ of habeas corpus pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2254. Petitioner claims that his federal constitutional right to due process was violated by a 2007 decision of the California Board of Parole Hearings (hereafter “the Board”) to deny him a parole date.¹

The Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment prohibits state action that deprives a person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law. A litigant alleging a due process violation must first demonstrate that he was deprived of a liberty or property interest

¹ Petitioner also claims that the decision violated his rights under the state constitution. That claim is not cognizable in this action as federal habeas corpus relief is available under 28 U.S.C. § 2254 only on the basis of some transgression of federal law binding on the state courts. Middleton v. Cupp, 768 F.2d 1083, 1085 (9th Cir. 1985)

1 protected by the Due Process Clause and then show that the procedures attendant upon the
2 deprivation were not constitutionally sufficient. Kentucky Dep't of Corrections v. Thompson,
3 490 U.S. 454, 459-60 (1989).

4 A protected liberty interest may arise from either the Due Process Clause of the
5 United States Constitution “by reason of guarantees implicit in the word ‘liberty,’” or from “an
6 expectation or interest created by state laws or policies.” Wilkinson v. Austin, 545 U.S. 209,
7 221 (2005) (citations omitted). The United States Constitution does not, of its own force, create
8 a protected liberty interest in a parole date, even one that has been set. Jago v. Van Curen,
9 454 U.S. 14, 17-21 (1981); Greenholtz v. Inmates of Neb. Penal, 442 U.S. 1, 7 (1979) (There is
10 “no constitutional or inherent right of a convicted person to be conditionally released before the
11 expiration of a valid sentence.”). However, “a state’s statutory scheme, if it uses mandatory
12 language, ‘creates a presumption that parole release will be granted’ when or unless certain
13 designated findings are made, and thereby gives rise to a constitutional liberty interest.”
14 Greenholtz, 442 U.S. at 12; see also Board of Pardons v. Allen, 482 U.S. 369, 376-78 (1987) (a
15 state’s use of mandatory language (“shall”) creates a presumption that parole release will be
16 granted when the designated findings are made.).

17 California’s parole statutes give rise to a liberty interest in parole protected by the
18 federal due process clause. Swarthout v. Cooke, 562 U.S. ____ (2011), No. 10-333, 2011 WL
19 197627, at *2 (Jan. 24, 2011). In California, a prisoner is entitled to release on parole unless
20 there is “some evidence” of his or her current dangerousness. In re Lawrence, 44 Cal.4th 1181,
21 1205-06, 1210 (2008); In re Rosenkrantz, 29 Cal.4th 616, 651-53 (2002). However, in
22 Swarthout the United States Supreme Court held that “[n]o opinion of [theirs] supports
23 converting California’s ‘some evidence’ rule into a substantive federal requirement.” Swarthout,
24 2011 WL 197627, at *3. In other words, the Court specifically rejected the notion that there can
25 be a valid claim under the Fourteenth Amendment for insufficiency of evidence presented at a
26 parole proceeding. Id. at *3. Rather, the protection afforded by the federal due process clause to

1 California parole decisions consists solely of the “minimal” procedural requirements set forth in
2 Greenholtz, specifically “an opportunity to be heard and . . . a statement of the reasons why
3 parole was denied.” Swarthout, at *2-3.

4 Here, the record reflects that petitioner was present at the 2007 parole hearing,
5 that he participated in the hearing, and that he was provided with the reasons for the Board’s
6 decision to deny parole. (Dkt. No. 1 at 33-92.) According to the United States Supreme Court,
7 the federal due process clause requires no more. Accordingly, petitioner’s application for a writ
8 of habeas corpus should be denied.

9 IT IS HEREBY RECOMMENDED that petitioner’s application for writ of habeas
10 corpus be denied.

11 These findings and recommendations are submitted to the United States District
12 Judge assigned to the case, pursuant to the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1). Within twenty-
13 one days after being served with these findings and recommendations, any party may file written
14 objections with the court and serve a copy on all parties. Such a document should be captioned
15 “Objections to Magistrate Judge’s Findings and Recommendations.” If petitioner files
16 objections, he shall also address whether a certificate of appealability should issue and, if so, why
17 and as to which issues. A certificate of appealability may issue under 28 U.S.C. § 2253 “only if
18 the applicant has made a substantial showing of the denial of a constitutional right.” 28 U.S.C.
19 § 2253(c)(3). Any response to the objections shall be filed and served within fourteen days after
20 service of the objections. The parties are advised that failure to file objections within the
21 specified time may waive the right to appeal the District Court’s order. Martinez v. Ylst,
22 951 F.2d 1153 (9th Cir. 1991).

23 DATED: February 14, 2011

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KENDALL J. NEWMAN
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE