

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN  
SOUTHERN DIVISION**

RUDDENE MILLER,

Petitioner,

v.

NICK LUDWICK,

Respondent.

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CASE NO. 2:10-CV-10237

HONORABLE LAWRENCE P. ZATKOFF  
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

**OPINION AND ORDER HOLDING IN ABEYANCE THE PETITION FOR WRIT OF  
HABEAS CORPUS AND ADMINISTRATIVELY CLOSING THE CASE.**

Ruddene Miller, (“Petitioner”), confined at the St. Louis Correctional Facility in St. Louis, Michigan, filed a *pro se* petition for writ of habeas corpus pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2254, in which he challenges his conviction for first-degree premeditated murder, M.C.L.A. 750.316(1)(a); first-degree felony murder, M.C.L.A. 750.316(1)(b); and felony firearm, M.C.L.A. 750.227b. On July 13, 2010, petitioner filed a motion to hold the petition in abeyance so that he could return to the state courts to file a post-conviction motion for relief from judgment to exhaust additional claims. On March 15, 2011, petitioner filed a motion to amend the habeas petition in which he sought to add four new claims for relief to his petition.

This Court denied the motion to amend the petition and gave petitioner thirty days to inform the Court whether he wished to return to the state courts to present his unexhausted claims or whether he wished to proceed only on his exhausted claims. The Court further advised petitioner that if he informed the Court that he wished to pursue his unexhausted claims, the Court would then decide whether to dismiss the petition without prejudice or stay further proceedings and hold the

petition in abeyance pending the exhaustion of state court remedies. *Miller v. Ludwick*, No. 2011 WL 1188745 (E.D. Mich. March 30, 2011). Petitioner has now informed the Court that he wishes to pursue his unexhausted claims in the state courts and has again asked this Court to hold the petition in abeyance pending his return to the state courts.

### **I. Discussion**

In order to stay federal proceedings and hold a habeas petition in abeyance pending resolution of state court proceedings, there must be exceptional or unusual circumstances. *See Sitto v. Bock*, 207 F. Supp. 2d 668, 676 (E.D. Mich. 2002). A federal district court is authorized to stay fully exhausted federal habeas petitions pending the exhaustion of other claims in the state courts. *See Nowaczyk v. Warden, New Hampshire State Prison*, 299 F.3d 69, 77-79 (1<sup>st</sup> Cir. 2002)(holding that district courts should “take seriously any request for a stay.”); *See also Bowling v. Haeberline*, 246 Fed. Appx. 303, 306 (6<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2007)(A habeas court is entitled to delay a decision in a habeas petition that contains only exhausted claims “when considerations of comity and judicial economy would be served”)(quoting *Nowaczyk*, 299 F. 3d at 83).

The Court will grant petitioner’s motion to hold the petition in abeyance while he returns to the state courts to exhaust additional claims. In this case, the outright dismissal of the petition, albeit without prejudice, might result in preclusion of consideration of the petitioner's claims in this Court due to the expiration of the one year statute of limitations contained in the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA). *See* 28 U.S.C. § 2244(d)(1). A common circumstance calling for abating a habeas petition arises when the original petition was timely filed, as was the case here, but a second, exhausted habeas petition would be time barred by the AEDPA’s statute of limitations. *See Hargrove v. Brigano*, 300 F. 3d 717, 720-21 (6<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2002). The U.S. Supreme

Court has suggested that a habeas petitioner who is concerned about the possible effects of his state post-conviction filings on the AEDPA's statute of limitations could file a "protective" petition in federal court and then ask for the petition to be held in abeyance pending the exhaustion of state post-conviction remedies. *See Pace v. DiGuglielmo*, 544 U.S. 408, 416 (2005)(citing *Rhines v. Weber*, 544 U.S. 269 (2005)). A federal court may stay a federal habeas petition and hold further proceedings in abeyance pending resolution of state court post-conviction proceedings, provided there is good cause for failure to exhaust claims and that the unexhausted claims are not "plainly meritless." *Rhines*, 544 U.S. at 278.

However, even where a district court determines that a stay is appropriate pending exhaustion of state court remedies, the district court "should place reasonable time limits on a petitioner's trip to state court and back." *Rhines*, 544 U.S. at 278. Therefore, to ensure that there are no delays by petitioner in exhausting his state court remedies, this Court will impose upon petitioner time limits within which he must proceed with his state court post-conviction proceedings. *See Palmer v. Carlton*, 276 F. 3d 777, 781 (6<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2002). Petitioner must present his claims in state court within sixty days from the date of this Order. *See id.* Further, he must ask this Court to lift the stay within sixty days of exhausting his state court remedies. *See id.*

## II. ORDER

**IT IS HEREBY ORDERED** that the proceedings are **STAYED** and the Court will hold the habeas petition in abeyance. Petitioner must file a motion for relief from judgment in state court within sixty days of receipt of this order. He shall notify this Court in writing that such motion papers have been filed in state court. If he fails to file a motion or notify the Court that he has done so, the Court will lift the stay and will reinstate the original petition for writ of habeas corpus to the

Court's active docket and will proceed to adjudicate only those claims that were raised in the original petition. After petitioner fully exhausts his new claims, he shall file an amended petition that includes the new claims within sixty days after the conclusion of his state court post-conviction proceedings, along with a motion to lift the stay. Failure to do so will result in the Court lifting the stay and adjudicating the merits of the claims raised in petitioner's original habeas petition.

To avoid administrative difficulties, the Court **ORDERS** the Clerk of Court to **CLOSE** this case for statistical purposes only. Nothing in this order or in the related docket entry shall be considered a dismissal or disposition of this matter. *See Sitto*, 207 F. Supp. 2d at 677.

It is further **ORDERED** that upon receipt of a motion to reinstate the habeas petition following exhaustion of state remedies, the Court may order the Clerk to reopen this case for statistical purposes.

S/Lawrence P. Zatkoff  
LAWRENCE P. ZATKOFF  
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

Dated: May 26, 2011

#### CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

The undersigned certifies that a copy of this Order was served upon the attorneys of record by electronic or U.S. mail on May 26, 2011.

S/Marie E. Verlinde  
Case Manager  
(810) 984-3290