

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLORADO**

Civil Action No. 08-cv-00251-MSK-KMT

KENNETH L. SMITH,

Plaintiff,

v.

HON. DAVID M. EBEL, in his official capacity as Judge of the UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLORADO, THE UNITED STATE DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLORADO, THE TENTH CIRCUIT COURT OF APPEALS, THE COLORADO COURT OF APPEALS, THE SUPREME COURT OF COLORADO, and JOHN DOES 1-99,

Defendants.

**COLORADO SUPREME COURT AND COLORADO COURT OF APPEALS’
BRIEF IN SUPPORT OF MOTION TO DISMISS FIRST AMENDED COMPLAINT**

Defendants, the Colorado Supreme Court and Colorado Court of Appeals (“the state courts”), by and through undersigned counsel and the Office of the Colorado Attorney General, hereby respectfully file this brief in support of their motion to dismiss this lawsuit as it is delineated in the First Amended Complaint (*Doc. 22*) (“complaint”), and as grounds therefor, state as follows. Undersigned counsel contacted Plaintiff Smith (“Smith”) regarding this motion; he opposes the relief requested herein

FACTS

Smith brings this action pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983. *Complaint (Doc. 22) at 1, ¶1.*

With regard to the state courts, the relief Smith requests in the complaint is preliminary and

permanent injunctive relief as follows. The state courts and their “agents, employees, and/or representatives” are to be enjoined “from engaging in or performing any of the following acts” with regard to appellate opinions:

1. “Issuing appellate opinions designated as being without precedential effect”;
2. Failing to directly address “all the legal arguments and/or contentions of fact raised in” briefs and at oral argument “in a manner sufficient to facilitate adequate appellate and/or en banc review”; and
3. Issuing rulings that “are at variance with federal and/or other [binding] precedent,” except if the ruling “clearly states the rationale for said variance” and “does so in a manner sufficient to ensure that [appellate courts and the public are] aware of the variance.”

Complaint (Doc. 22) at 22, ¶¶D.1.-3 .

The most significant facts about this matter concern Smith’s history of litigation.¹ For purposes of this motion, the summary contained in *Smith v. United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit*, 484 F.3d 1281 (10th Cir. 2007), *cert. denied*, 128 S. Ct. 1334 (2008), provides the following information.² That litigation concerned “the [federal] district court’s dismissal of two separate lawsuits stemming from the denial of [Smith’s] application for admission to the Colorado bar.” 484 F.3d at 1283. After Smith had completed law school

¹ This history will be presented in detail if the state courts seek filing restrictions.

² References to other litigation that Smith has been involved in go to jurisdictional facts, and this does not convert this motion to dismiss into a motion for summary judgment. *Holt v. United States*, 46 F.3d 1000, 1002-03 (10th Cir. 1995) (pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(b)(1), court has wide discretion to refer to evidence outside the pleadings to resolve disputed jurisdictional facts).

and other necessary prerequisites and had applied for admission to the Colorado bar, the state court bar admission officials required that he “submit to a mental status examination,” which he refused to do. *Id.* He then embarked on a wide-ranging course of overlapping federal and state court litigation. *Id.* at 1283-84. The instant action is barred on a number of grounds, any one of which independently supports dismissal of the lawsuit.

ARGUMENT

I. All claims against the state courts are barred by the Eleventh Amendment or sovereign immunity, so that this action must be dismissed pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(b)(1) for lack of subject matter jurisdiction.

A. Burden of proof: The burden of establishing subject-matter jurisdiction generally falls on the party asserting federal jurisdiction. *Montoya v. Chao*, 296 F.3d 952, 955 (10th Cir. 2002), citing *Kokkonen v. Guardian Life Ins. Co. of Am.*, 511 U.S. 375, 377 (1994). While it appears that the Tenth Circuit has not addressed this issue, other circuits have concluded that “the entity asserting Eleventh Amendment immunity has the burden to show that it is entitled to immunity.” *Woods v. Rondout Valley Cent. Sch. Dist. Bd. of Educ.*, 466 F.3d 232, 237-39 (2nd Cir. 2006) (collecting cases), quoting *Gragg v. Ky. Cabinet for Workforce Dev.*, 289 F.3d 958, 963 (6th Cir. 2002). However, when a defendant challenges a plaintiff’s assertion of jurisdiction, it is the plaintiff who has the burden of proving jurisdiction. “[I]f a plaintiff’s allegations of jurisdictional facts are challenged by the defendant, the plaintiff bears the burden of supporting the allegations by competent proof.” *Thomson v. Gaskill*, 315 U.S.

442, 446 (1942). By this token, it is Smith who must prove that an exception to Eleventh Amendment immunity is applicable.

B. Elements not supported by complaint: The complaint fails to allege or establish that any exception to the state courts' immunity is applicable herein. *Griess v. State of Colo.*, 841 F.2d 1042, 1044 (10th Cir. 1988).

The state courts assert Eleventh Amendment or sovereign immunity from suit in this matter.³ The Eleventh Amendment states as follows:

The Judicial power of the United States shall not be construed to extend to any suit in law or equity, commenced or prosecuted against one of the United States by Citizens of another State, or by citizens or subjects of any foreign state.

U.S. Const. amend. XI. Thus, by its very terms, the amendment provides that federal courts have no jurisdiction to hear claims against a state.

This withdrawal of jurisdiction effectively confers an immunity from suit. [The Supreme Court] has consistently held that an unconsenting State is immune from suits brought in federal courts by her own citizens as well as by citizens of another State. Absent waiver, neither a State nor agencies acting under its control may be subject to suit in federal court.

³ The Supreme Court has said that it sometimes refers to the States' immunity from suit as "Eleventh Amendment immunity," but that the phrase is merely "convenient shorthand but something of a misnomer, for the sovereign immunity of the States neither derives from, nor is limited by, the terms of the Eleventh Amendment." *Alden v. Maine*, 527 U.S. 706, 711 (1999). The Court's "recognition of sovereign immunity has not been limited to the suits described in the text of the Eleventh Amendment," but instead respects "the broader concept of immunity, implicit in the Constitution, which we have regarded the Eleventh Amendment as evidencing and exemplifying." *Idaho v. Coeur d'Alene Tribe*, 521 U.S. 261, 267-68 (1997). This motion will employ the term "Eleventh Amendment immunity" with this understanding in mind.

Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Auth. v. Metcalf & Eddy, Inc., 506 U.S. 139, 144 (1993)
(internal quotation marks and citations omitted).

The Eleventh Amendment was enacted early on in this country's history. The amendment was a response to and rejection of the Supreme Court's assertion of jurisdiction over an action in which a South Carolina citizen sued the State of Georgia. *Chisholm v. Georgia*, 2 U.S. 419, 2 Dall. 419 (1793). The holding in *Chisholm* created "such a shock of surprise that the Eleventh Amendment was at once proposed and adopted." *Principality of Monaco v. Mississippi*, 292 U.S. 313, 325 (1934).

A motion to dismiss on Eleventh Amendment grounds "involves a claim to a fundamental constitutional protection." *Puerto Rico Aqueduct*, 506 U.S. at 145. Any exception to such immunity is "narrow," and "has no application in suits against the States and their agencies, which are barred regardless of the relief sought." *Id.* at 146. "The very object and purpose of the 11th Amendment were to prevent the indignity of subjecting a State to the coercive process of judicial tribunals at the instance of private parties." *Id.*, quoting *In re Ayers*, 123 U.S. 443, 505 (1887). *See also Elam Constr., Inc. v. Regional Transp. Dist.*, 129 F.3d 1343, 1345 (10th Cir. 1997), *cert. denied*, 523 U.S. 1047 (1998) ("The Eleventh Amendment immunizes states from suits in law or equity, including injunctive relief.").

This immunity from suit is enjoyed not only by the state itself, but by entities that are considered an alter-ego or arm of the state. The Supreme Court has consistently drawn a distinction between an arm of the state which "partake[s] of the State's Eleventh amendment immunity" versus municipal corporations, counties, and "other political subdivision[s] to

which the Eleventh Amendment does not extend.” *Mt. Healthy City Sch. Dist. Bd. of Educ. v. Doyle*, 429 U.S. 274, 280 (1977). Colorado’s state appellate courts, defendants herein, are by their very nature an actual component of the State; it is surely beyond cavil that they, in fact, make up one of the actual branches of State government. The question of whether a state’s judicial branch enjoys Eleventh Amendment immunity has apparently not even frequently arisen in the case law. *Cf. Greater L.A. Council on Deafness, Inc. v. Zolin*, 812 F.2d 1103, 1110 (9th Cir. 1987) (Superior Court of State of California enjoys Eleventh Amendment immunity: it “derives its power from the State and is ultimately regulated by the State, [j]udges are appointed by California’s governor, and their salaries are established and paid by the State.”).

The Constitution of Colorado distributes the power of the State into three branches:

The powers of the government of this state are divided into three distinct departments, - the legislative, executive and judicial; and no person or collection of persons charged with the exercise of powers properly belonging to one of these departments shall exercise any power properly belonging to either of the others, except as in this constitution expressly directed or permitted.

Colo. Const., art. III. The “Executive Department” is established in Article IV; the “Legislative Department” in Article V; and the “Judicial Department” in Article VI. Article VI provides:

The judicial power of the state shall be vested in a supreme court, district courts, a probate court in the city and county of Denver, a juvenile court in the city and county of Denver, county courts, and such other courts or judicial officers with jurisdiction inferior to the supreme court, as the general assembly may, from time to time establish

Colo. Const., art. VI, § 1. Pursuant to this constitutional grant of authority, the Colorado General Assembly has created the Colorado Court of Appeals. *Colo. Rev. Stat. § 13-4-101.* Thus the state courts, constituting one of the branches of the State of Colorado, have Eleventh Amendment immunity.

There are only two instances in which a state's sovereign immunity is overcome.

While this immunity from suit is not absolute, [the Supreme Court has] recognized only two circumstances in which an individual may sue a State. First, Congress may authorize such a suit in the exercise of its power to enforce the Fourteenth Amendment - an Amendment enacted after the Eleventh Amendment and specifically designed to alter the federal-state balance. Second, a State may waive its sovereign immunity by consenting to suit.

College Sav. Bank v. Florida Prepaid Postsecondary Educ. Expense Bd., 527 U.S. 666, 670 (1999) (internal citations omitted).

The Supreme Court has determined that in enacting § 1983 Congress did not intend to override the States' Eleventh Amendment immunity. *Quern v. Jordan*, 440 U.S. 332, 342 (1979). With regard to the second instance, a waiver will be found only in very narrow and stringent circumstances.

[S]olicitude for States' sovereign immunity underlies the standard that [the Supreme] Court employs to determine whether a State has waived that immunity. The Court will give effect to a State's waiver of Eleventh Amendment immunity only where stated by the most express language or by such overwhelming implication from the text as [will] leave no room for any other reasonable construction.

Port Auth. Trans-Hudson Corp. v. Feeney, 495 U.S. 299, 307 (1990).

The test for determining whether a State has waived its immunity from federal-court jurisdiction is a stringent one. Generally, we will find a waiver either if the State voluntarily invokes our jurisdiction, or else if the State makes a clear declaration that it intends to submit itself to our jurisdiction. [A] State's consent to suit must be unequivocally expressed. Thus, a State does not consent to suit in federal court merely by consenting to suit in the courts of its own creation. Nor does it consent to suit in federal court merely by stating its intention to sue and be sued, or even by authorizing suits against it in any court of competent jurisdiction. We have even held that a State may, absent any contractual commitment to the contrary, alter the conditions of its waiver and apply those changes to a pending suit.

College Sav. Bank, 527 U.S. at 675-76 (alterations, internal citations, and quotation marks omitted). Neither the state courts, nor the State of Colorado, meet any of these tests, and they have not waived their immunity. The state courts and the State of Colorado have not invoked federal jurisdiction herein, and there has been no declaration of submission to federal jurisdiction. *Cf. Crumpacker v. Kansas Dep't of Human Resources*, 338 F.3d 1163 (10th Cir. 2003), *cert. denied*, 540 U.S. 1180 (2004).

II. Smith lacks standing to bring this action.

A. Burden of proof:

The party invoking federal jurisdiction bears the burden of establishing [the elements of standing]. At the pleading stage, general factual allegations of injury resulting from the defendant's conduct may suffice, for on a motion to dismiss we presume that general allegations embrace those specific facts that are necessary to support the claim.

Lujan v. Defenders of Wildlife, 504 U.S. 555, 561 (1992) (alterations, internal citations, and quotation marks omitted).

B. Elements not supported by complaint: The complaint contains no general factual allegations of injury resulting from the state courts' conduct. While the complaint begins with the conclusory allegation that defendants (assumedly including the state courts) are engaging in "current and imminent violations of [Smith's] rights," this is nowhere borne out by any allegations (general or specific) in the text of the complaint. *Complaint (Doc. 22) at 1, ¶1*.

The complaint does state that "Smith is the plaintiff in a matter currently before the Colorado Court of Appeals," in *Smith v. Mullarkey*, No. 04-CA-949, filed May 14, 2004. *Complaint (Doc. 22) at 4, ¶11*. Upon information and belief, this is incorrect. On August 18, 2005, due to the nature of the issues raised, the Colorado Supreme Court assumed jurisdiction over Colorado Court of Appeals No. 04 CA 949, *Smith v. Mullarkey*, as Case No. 05 SA 238. In an opinion announced on October 17, 2005, the Colorado Supreme Court affirmed the state trial court's holding concerning a lack of jurisdiction. *Smith v. Mullarkey*, 121 P.3d 890 (Colo. 2005), *cert. denied*, 547 U.S. 1071. Smith filed a petition for writ of *certiorari* with the United States Supreme Court, No. 05-1055, which was denied on April 17, 2006. *Smith v. Mullarkey*, 547 U.S. 1071 (2006). See copies of opinions attached hereto. Thus as of the date he filed this federal complaint, February 6, 2008, he had no case pending before the state courts.

Article III of the United State Constitution confines the judicial power of the federal courts to “cases” and “controversies.” *U.S. Const. art. III, § 2*.

Article III standing enforces the Constitution’s case-or-controversy requirement. No principle is more fundamental to the judiciary’s proper role in our system of government than the constitutional limitation of federal-court jurisdiction to actual cases or controversies.

Hein v. Freedom From Religion Found., Inc., 127 S. Ct. 2553, 2562 (2007) (ellipsis, internal quotation marks, and citations omitted). Standing is one of “the controlling elements in the definition of a case or controversy under Article III.” 127 S. Ct. at 2562.

The requisite elements of Article III standing are well established: A plaintiff must allege personal injury fairly traceable to the defendant's allegedly unlawful conduct and likely to be redressed by the requested relief.

Id. (internal quotation marks omitted). Federal courts have no freestanding jurisdiction to decide issues in the absence of a plaintiff with standing.

[F]ederal courts sit solely to decide on the rights of individuals, and must refrain from passing upon the constitutionality of an act unless obliged to do so in the proper performance of [their] judicial function, when the question is raised by a party whose interests entitle him to raise it.

Id. (ellipses, alterations, internal quotation marks, and citations omitted).

Stated another way, there are three “irreducible constitutional minimums” required to confer standing on a federal plaintiff. *Lujan*, 504 U.S. at 560. First, the plaintiff must have suffered an “injury in fact,” which is an invasion of a legally protected interest. This injury in fact must be concrete and particularized to the plaintiff; and it must be actual or imminent, not conjectural or hypothetical. Second, there must be a causal connection between the

injury and the conduct complained of. Third, it must be likely that the injury complained of will be redressed by the court's favorable decision. *Id.* at 560-61. These elements "are not mere pleading requirements but rather an indispensable part of the plaintiff's case," and "[t]he party invoking federal jurisdiction bears the burden of establishing these elements." *Id.* at 561. The requirement that the injury in fact must be particularized means that "the injury must affect the plaintiff in a personal and individual way." *Id.* at 560, n.1.

In the instant case, Smith is unable to demonstrate standing. Aside from the initial conclusory allegation that defendants are engaging in "current and imminent violations of [Smith's] rights" (*Complaint [Doc. 22] at 1, ¶1*), the complaint fails to meet the first prong of the standing test, injury in fact that is particularized, imminent, and not conjectural. Imminence "cannot be stretched beyond its purpose, which is to ensure that the alleged injury is not too speculative for Article III purposes - that the injury is certainly impending." *Lujan*, 504 U.S. at 564, n.2 (internal quotation marks and ellipses omitted).

There is no reason to suppose that Smith is unfamiliar with the concept of standing. In *Smith v. United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit*, 484 F.3d 1281 (10th Cir. 2007), *cert. denied*, 128 S. Ct. 1334 (2008), Smith sued the 10th Circuit, various judges thereof, a Colorado federal district court judge, a Colorado state district court judge, and the justices of the Colorado Supreme Court, objecting "to the resolution of cases by non-precedential unpublished decisions" in both federal and state courts, as he does herein. 484 F.3d at 1283. Having consolidated two separate federal district court cases "stemming from the denial of [Smith's] application for admission to the Colorado bar," Judge Blackburn then

dismissed the case. *Id.* With regard to standing, in that case Smith “had just taken his state appeal when he filed [that] action.” *Id.* at 1285. This is in contrast to the instant case, where no actions are pending in the state courts. However, even when there *was* an action pending in the state courts, the appellate court found him to be without standing, and that holding is dispositive herein:

[Smith] was in no position to challenge the adequacy of state appellate review in cases culminating in unpublished opinions unless he could show that he would in fact receive such review from the state court of appeals (and from the state supreme court as well, if it took the case on certiorari).

Id.

Relying on *Lujan*, and quoting from *Nova Health Sys. v. Gandy*, 416 F.3d 1149 (10th Cir. 2005), the circuit court stated:

[A]n injury in fact must be actual or imminent, not conjectural or hypothetical. Allegations of possible future injury do not satisfy the requirements of Article III. A threatened injury must be certainly impending to constitute injury in fact. An Article III injury must be more than a possibility. The threat of injury must be both real and immediate. Mr. Smith cannot make this required showing because the manner of resolution of his future appeals is entirely speculative.

484 F.3d at 1285 (ellipses, internal quotation marks, and citations omitted). The circuit court affirmed “the [federal] district court’s order dismissing Mr. Smith’s challenge to Colorado’s non-publication practice,” on the basis that he lacked standing with respect to an actual or imminent injury in fact (as opposed to a conjectural and hypothetical one), and termed his claim as being “so speculative and riddled with assumptions that it cannot serve as the basis for standing.” *Id.*

The circuit court explicitly affirmed the district court's disposition on the issue of standing. The district court had invoked Article III and held that Smith lacked standing to challenge the state's non-publication practice.

The district court concluded that Mr. Smith could not relate the practice he challenges to any cognizable injury to himself. In its view, Mr. Smith “ha[d] alleged nothing more than an interest in the problem concerning the defendants' rules and practices [on publication],” and “[t]hat interest, unaccompanied by a showing that the application of the rule or practice has somehow personally and actually harmed the plaintiff, cannot alone constitute the injury-in-fact contemplated by the standing doctrine.”

Id. at 1284-85. This 10th Circuit case controls, and Smith has no standing herein.

Finally, Smith appears to be seeking “not remediation of [his] own injury...but vindication of the rule of law - the undifferentiated public interest in faithful execution” of the law. *Steel Co. v. Citizens for a Better Env't*, 523 U.S. 83, 106 (1998). The *Steel Co.* Court concluded, “This does not suffice [for purposes of standing].” *Id.* Since Smith makes no cognizable or identifiable claim of actual or imminent future violation with respect to himself, “Nothing supports the requested injunctive relief except [a] generalized interest in deterrence, which is insufficient for purposes of Article III.” 523 U.S. at 108-09.

III. The complaint fails to allege that a constitutional right has been violated.

A. Burden of proof: The plaintiff must establish that the defendant's actions violated a constitutional or statutory right. *Kirkland v. St. Vrain Valley Sch. Dist.*, 464 F.3d 1182, 1188 (10th Cir. 2006).

B. Elements not supported by complaint: The complaint fails to allege or establish that Smith has any constitutional right to have published opinions; or to have the state courts address all legal arguments and/or contentions of fact raised in briefs and at oral argument; or for rulings that are (to his mind) not at variance with federal and/or other binding precedent.

In disposing of Smith's challenge to the federal court's non-publication practice, the 10th Circuit stated that Smith's federal litigation had never even argued that "the use of unpublished decisions was unconstitutional," apart from an unsupported statement that he had "a right to insist" that his case be decided "in a published opinion with precedential value." *Smith*, 484 F.3d at 1286, n.4. This is exactly the case herein. No constitutional violations have been properly identified. The 10th Circuit also recognized Smith's failure to follow accepted appellate procedure, instead "generating an entirely new stream of litigation." *Id.* at 1286. This same characterization is equally applicable to the instant case. Smith is a recalcitrant litigant who apparently seeks to burden both state and federal courts with mischievous, duplicative lawsuits until he gets the answer he wants. The complaint does not establish that there is any constitutional right to the practices Smith seeks.

IV. The requests for relief with regard to the state courts do not qualify for injunctive relief, and are also too vague to support such relief.

A. Burden of proof: A party requesting injunctive relief bears the burden of proof. *Fisher v. Oklahoma Health Care Auth.*, 335 F.3d 1175, 1180 (10th Cir. 2003). Further, requests for injunctive relief must comply with Rule 65's specificity requirement and cannot be too vague

to be understood. *Keyes v. Denver Sch. Dist. No. 1*, 895 F.2d 659, 668 (10th Cir. 1990), *cert. denied*, 498 U.S. 1082 (1991).

B. Elements not supported by complaint: The complaint does not meet even the first test for issuance of injunctive relief. Also, requests for relief D.2. and D.3. are too vague to qualify for injunctive relief. *Complaint (Doc. 22) at 22, ¶¶D.2. and D.3.*

The standards for granting a preliminary injunction and those for granting a permanent injunction are essentially the same.

The only measurable difference between the two is that a permanent injunction requires showing actual success on the merits, whereas a preliminary injunction requires showing a substantial likelihood of success on the merits.

Prairie Band of Potawatomi Nation v. Wagon, 476 F.3d 818, 822 (10th Cir. 2007). The four standards that a moving party must show in order to obtain injunctive relief are “well established.” *Dominion Video Satellite, Inc. v. Echostar Satellite Corp.*, 356 F.3d 1256, 1260 (10th Cir. 2004). The first and paramount showing is that of probable irreparable harm.

Because a showing of probable irreparable harm is the single most important prerequisite for the issuance of a preliminary injunction, the moving party must first demonstrate that such injury is likely before the other requirements for the issuance of an injunction will be considered.

Id. at 1260, quoting *Reuters Ltd. v. United Press Int’l, Inc.*, 903 F.2d 904, 907 (2nd Cir. 1990) (internal quotation marks and alteration omitted). Also, because such relief constitutes an extraordinary remedy, “the right to relief must be clear and unequivocal.” *Greater Yellowstone Coalition v. Flowers*, 321 F.3d 1250, 1256 (10th Cir. 2003).

Because Smith has no litigation currently pending before the state courts (and even if he had, pursuant to *Smith*, 484 F.3d 1284), he cannot show probable irreparable injury. *See also* discussion in II. above regarding standing. The complaint in no way shows that Smith is subject to probable irreparable harm, and therefore the other standards need not be considered. The complaint also fails to show a clear and unequivocal right to relief.

Further, both case law and Fed. R. Civ. P 65(d) require that “an injunction must describe the prohibited conduct with reasonable specificity.” *United States v. Pentrack*, 428 F.3d 986, 990 (10th Cir. 2005). The reasons for such a requirement are both obvious and compelling:

[B]oth to give notice to the defendant of what is prohibited, and to guide an appellate court in reviewing the defendant's compliance or noncompliance with the injunction. An injunction too vague to be understood violates [Rule 65] and, generally, injunctions simply requiring the defendant to obey the law are too vague.

Keyes, 895 F.2d at 668 (internal quotation marks and citations omitted). The complaint's requests for relief concerning appellate opinions addressing all arguments and contentions of fact, and not conflicting with precedent are vague and indefinite.

Therefore, the complaint does not satisfy even the first standard for injunctive relief, likely irreparable injury that will affect Smith in a personal and individualized way. The second and third requests for relief from the state courts are too indefinite and vague to support issuance of injunctive relief.

V. Issue preclusion bars this lawsuit.

A. Burden of proof: The party asserting issue preclusion bears the burden of proof. *Dodge v. Cotter Corp.*, 203 F.3d 1190, 1199 (10th Cir.), *cert. denied*, 531 U.S. 825 (2000).

B. Elements not supported by complaint: The complaint does not in any way dispute that Smith has previously litigated the issue involved herein.

Repetitive litigation is barred under the concept of *res judicata*. *Res judicata* is “central to the purpose for which civil courts have been established, namely the conclusive resolution of disputes within [the courts’] jurisdictions.” *Park Lake Resources LLC v. United States Dep’t of Agriculture*, 378 F.3d 1132, 1135 (10th Cir. 2004) (internal citation and quotation marks omitted). It “encompasses two distinct barriers to repeat litigation: claim preclusion and issue preclusion.” 378 F.3d at 1135. Issue preclusion “bars a party from relitigating an issue once it has suffered an adverse determination on the issue.” 378 F.3d at 1136. There are four factors to be considered when assessing issue preclusion:

- (1) the issue previously decided is identical with the one presented in the action in question,
- (2) the prior action has been finally adjudicated on the merits,
- (3) the party against whom the doctrine is invoked was a party, or in privity with a party, to the prior adjudication, and
- (4) the party against whom the doctrine is raised had a full and fair opportunity to litigate the issue in the prior action.

Id.

The Circuit Court’s holding in *Smith v. United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit*, 484 F.3d 1281 (10th Cir. 2007), *cert. denied*, 128 S. Ct. 1334 (2008), constitutes

issue preclusion that is applicable to the instant case. There the court affirmed the trial court holding that Smith lacks “standing to challenge the [state court’s] non-publication practice.” 484 F.3d at 1284. Thus factors 1 and 3 above are clearly met: the issue is identical and Smith was a party to that adjudication.

With regard to the second factor, that the prior action has been finally adjudicated on the merits, there is an “important exception” for jurisdictional dismissals that is applicable herein. An adjudication on the merits is not necessary because:

[D]ismissals for lack of jurisdiction preclude relitigation of the issues determined in ruling on the jurisdiction question. The same question of jurisdiction cannot be reopened in a second action. When the question of the tribunal's jurisdiction is raised in the original action, in a modern procedural regime there is no reason why the determination of the issue should not thereafter be conclusive under the usual rules of issue preclusion.

378 F.3d at 136 (internal citations, quotation marks, parentheses, and ellipsis omitted).

Therefore, even if the earlier case “did not result in an adjudication on the merits, it has issue-preclusive consequences with respect to the issue decided.” *Id.* A party will not be permitted to raise the same claim, but add a different argument or legal theory. 378 F.3d at 1138. Thus the second factor for issue preclusion is also met.

Finally, Smith can make no valid claim that he did not have a full and fair opportunity to litigate the issue of standing. The opinion dealt decisively with his “two alternative arguments for standing.” 484 F.3d at 1285. First, it squarely rejected the same jurisdictional allegation Smith makes herein, i.e., that:

[E]very citizen has standing to challenge judicial practices that render the law less certain, based on the chilling effect such uncertainty has on everyone's exercise of free speech rights.

Id. It found that no First Amendment rights were implicated, so that such a “chilling effect” could not “serve as a redressable injury.” *Id.* Second, the 10th Circuit opinion also concluded that Smith’s dispute was not one that was capable of repetition but evading review, which would allow a federal court to consider the matter “despite the lack of a presently justiciable case or controversy.” *Id.*

The 10th Circuit holding concerning Smith’s lack of standing is also applicable to his two other claims against the state courts, i.e., concerning opinions addressing all facts and arguments, and rulings that (to his mind) do not follow precedent; these are just two more examples of “judicial practices” that Smith lacks standing to challenge because he is unable to demonstrate the actual or imminent nature of his alleged injury with regard to these practices.

VI. The statute of limitations bars this lawsuit.

A. Burden of proof: Assertion that a plaintiff’s claims are barred by a statute of limitations is an affirmative defense upon which the defendant bears the burden of proof. *Rajala v. Allied Corp.*, 919 F.2d 610, 626 (10th Cir. 1990), *cert. denied*, 500 U.S. 905 (1991).

B. Elements not supported by complaint: Smith’s only potentially actual injury was the Colorado Supreme Court’s rejection of his application to be admitted to the Colorado bar.

Since this occurred well over two years ago, any such claim is barred by the statute of limitations.

All of Smith's recent litigation, including the instant case, stems at heart from the Colorado Supreme Court's rejection of his application to be admitted to the Colorado bar. This point is again made clear by reference to *Smith v. United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit*, 484 F.3d 1281 (10th Cir. 2007), *cert. denied*, 128 S. Ct. 1334 (2008). That opinion begins with the following revealing statement:

Kenneth L. Smith appeals the [federal] district court's dismissal of two separate lawsuits stemming from the denial of his application for admission to the Colorado bar. The present litigation focuses on asserted deficiencies he alleges existed in the judicial process provided to him in his previous legal challenges.

484 F.3d at 1283.

In Colorado the period of limitations for § 1983 suits is two years.

Limitations periods in § 1983 suits are to be determined by reference to the appropriate state statute of limitations and the coordinate tolling rules. We have made clear that the statute of limitations for § 1983 actions brought in Colorado is two years from the time the cause of action accrued. A § 1983 action accrues when facts that would support a cause of action are or should be apparent.

Fogle v. Pierson, 435 F.3d 1252, 1258 (10th Cir.), *cert. denied*, 127 S. Ct. 675 (2006)

(ellipsis, internal citations, and quotation marks omitted).

The Colorado Supreme Court denied Smith's application for admission to the Colorado bar in January, 2000. Instead of petitioning the United States Supreme Court for

certiorari to review that denial, he embarked on a series of state and federal lawsuits, including the instant case.

The [Colorado] supreme court issued an order denying Mr. Smith's application for admission on January 13, 2000. Mr. Smith did not seek *certiorari* review of that decision with the United States Supreme Court.

Rather, he filed a series of lawsuits, first in federal district court and then in Denver District [State] Court. In those actions, he challenged the denial of his application for admission under 42 U.S.C. section 1983, as a violation of his First, Fourth and Fourteenth Amendment rights.

Smith v. Mullarkey, 121 P.3d 890, 891 (Colo. 2005), *cert. denied*, 547 U.S. 1071 (2006). In January, 2000, the facts that would support a cause of action were apparent. Thus, Smith's ability to bring a civil rights claim concerning denial of his application for admission to the Colorado bar expired in early 2002. This federal lawsuit was filed on February 6, 2008.

Colorado statute does provide for tolling of statutes of limitations, but only for "minor[s] under eighteen years of age, mental incompetent[s], or a person under other legal disability." *Colo. Rev. Stat.* § 13-81-101(3). Upon information and belief, Smith does not qualify under any of these categories. Colorado law also allows for equitable tolling, which:

[A]pplies when flexibility is required to accomplish the goals of justice, such as when plaintiffs did not timely file their claims because of extraordinary circumstances or because defendants' wrongful conduct prevented them from doing so.

Fogle, 435 F.3d at 1258, quoting *Morrison v. Goff*, 91 P.3d 1050, 1053 (Colo. 2004)

(internal quotation marks omitted). Unlike in *Fogle*, where the plaintiff alleged he was locked in a prison cell for from 23-24 hours per day, Smith does not (and cannot) assert any such extraordinary circumstances. Nor can he assert that the state courts prevented him from

pursuing his claims, especially given the fact that he was able to file various other state and federal lawsuits.

Once all the smoke and mirrors are dispensed with, it is clear that the injury Smith believes he has suffered is simply the Colorado Supreme Court's refusal to admit him to the Colorado bar. That occurred in 1996. 121 P.3d at 891. He cannot use the kinds of generalized challenges to the state (and federal) court system he makes herein to bootstrap his stale claims into being timely.

VII. The *Rooker-Feldman* doctrine deprives this court of subject matter jurisdiction to hear this lawsuit.

A. Burden of proof: Although there appears to be no authority directly on point with regard to the burden of proof for *Rooker-Feldman* purposes, since the doctrine is one that limits the jurisdiction of the lower federal courts, the burden of proof would typically be on the party that asserts jurisdiction. "Because the jurisdiction of federal courts is limited, there is a presumption against our jurisdiction, and the party invoking federal jurisdiction bears the burden of proof." *Marcus v. Kansas Dep't of Revenue*, 170 F.3d 1305, 1309 (10th Cir. 1999), citing *Basso v. Utah Power & Light Co.*, 495 F.2d 906, 909 (10th Cir. 1974) (internal quotation marks omitted).

B. Elements not supported by complaint: The closest the complaint comes to specifying an actual injury to Smith is the denial of his admission to the Colorado bar. The complaint does nothing to dispel the notion that this injury occurred when the Colorado Supreme Court

issued an order denying him admission to the bar. Therefore, *Rooker-Feldman* deprives this court of jurisdiction to hear the matter.

As discussed in VI. above, the Colorado Supreme Court denied Smith's application for admission to the Colorado bar in January, 2000, and he did not petition the United States Supreme Court for *certiorari* review of that denial. Instead he embarked on a series of state and federal lawsuits, some of which purport to be generalized challenges to state and federal judicial practices (such as the instant case). They are instead thinly-veiled attempts to un-do the Colorado Supreme Court's decision.

Therefore, this federal complaint constitutes a challenge to the validity of a state court judgment, which is barred by the *Rooker-Feldman* doctrine. This doctrine holds that the lower federal courts are deprived of jurisdiction to hear suits that "amount to appeals of state-court judgments." *Bolden v. City of Topeka*, 441 F.3d 1129, 1139 (10th Cir. 2006).

While the scope of *Rooker-Feldman* has been narrowed in recent times, this case still fits squarely within its current parameters. Smith is a "state-court [loser] complaining of injuries caused by [a] state-court [judgment] rendered before the [federal] district court proceedings commenced and inviting district court review and rejection of those judgments." *Exxon Mobil Corp. v. Saudi Basic Indus. Corp.*, 544 U.S. 280, 284 (2005); *Lance v. Dennis*, 546 U.S. 459 (2006). The Colorado Supreme Court judgment was dated January 13, 2000, and this lawsuit was filed February 6, 2008.

Thus it is clear that this federal complaint, when viewed as a challenge to the Colorado Supreme Court's denial of Smith's application for admission to the Colorado bar was

brought after the conclusion of any permissible appeals thereof, and is barred by *Rooker-Feldman*. *Mann v. Boatright*, 477 F.3d 1140, 1146 (10th Cir. 2007), *cert. denied*, 128 S.Ct. 897 (2008). A subsequent federal complaint that seeks review and reversal of a state-court judgment is properly dismissed under *Rooker-Feldman*. *Id.* at 1147. Smith’s request that this court issue injunctive relief to control certain judicial practices of the state courts thus does, in fact, seek “review and reversal” of the state district court judgment, and is “precisely the [type] of [claim] encompassed by the *Rooker-Feldman* doctrine.” *Id.* The complaint should be dismissed for lack of subject matter jurisdiction.

Even if it were acknowledged for purposes of this motion only that one or more of Smith’s lawsuits was incorrectly decided, this can no longer serve as a basis to challenge these determinations.

[H]aving lost in [state] court, [a party] cannot file a federal complaint seeking review and reversal of the unfavorable judgment. Even if the [state court's] decision was wrong, that does not make its judgment void, but merely leaves it open to reversal or modification in an appropriate and timely appellate proceeding.

477 F.3d at 1146, citing *Exxon Mobil*, 544 U.S. at 284 (internal quotation marks omitted).

CONCLUSION

WHEREFORE, based on the above-stated authority and argument, the state courts respectfully request that their motion to dismiss be granted and that this action be dismissed.

Dated: June 10, 2008

Respectfully submitted,

JOHN W. SUTHERS
Attorney General

Original signature on file:

s/ Dianne E. Eret

DIANNE E. ERET*

Assistant Attorney General

State Services Section

Attorneys for Defendant Colorado Courts

1525 Sherman Street, 7th Floor

Denver, Colorado 80203

Telephone: (303) 866-5380

FAX: (303) 866-5671

E-Mail: dianne.eret@state.co.us

*Counsel of Record

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

This is to certify that on June 10, 2008, I electronically filed this **COLORADO SUPREME COURT AND COLORADO COURT OF APPEALS' BRIEF IN SUPPORT OF MOTION TO DISMISS FIRST AMENDED COMPLAINT** with the Clerk of court using the CM/ECF system, and I hereby certify that I have mailed this document to the following individuals by U.S. mail as indicated below:

Kenneth L. Smith
23636 Genesee Village Rd.
Golden, CO 80401

and that a courtesy copy was sent to:

Hon. Kathleen M. Tafoya
United States Magistrate Judge
Alfred A. Arraj United States Courthouse
A641
901 19th Street
Denver, CO 80294-3589

s/ Pamela Ponder
PAMELA PONDER