

SUMMARY STATEMENT
Beck v. Elmore County Magistrate Court
Case No. 48475

In a petition invoking the Idaho Supreme Court’s original jurisdiction, the Court issued a writ of prohibition against the Elmore County magistrate court and two Elmore County magistrate judges (collectively “magistrate court”) prohibiting them from issuing unconstitutional warrants of attachment against Roxana Beck and other similarly situated individuals for failure to pay court-ordered fines and fees.

In her petition, Beck alleged that the magistrate court exceeded its jurisdiction in initiating criminal contempt proceedings and issuing a warrant of attachment against her after she failed to pay fines, court costs, and restitution owed pursuant to a sentencing order in a criminal misdemeanor case. Specifically, Beck argued that the magistrate court exceeded its jurisdiction by issuing the warrant of attachment without making an adequate probable cause determination, conducting an ability-to-pay analysis, and considering whether reasonable cause existed to believe that she would have disregarded a written notice to appear. Beck further argued that the magistrate court exceeded its jurisdiction by issuing a warrant of attachment with an unconstitutional bail schedule and initiating a contempt prosecution against her based upon a motion and affidavit filed by the deputy court clerk. Beck requested that the Court enjoin the magistrate court from issuing future warrants of attachment, against her or other similarly situated parties, in the same manner and with the same alleged deficiencies as the first warrant.

After briefing and oral arguments, the Court concluded that the magistrate court acted without or in excess of its jurisdiction in issuing a warrant of attachment against Beck, and that she was without a plain, speedy and adequate remedy in the ordinary course of law. Specifically, the Court reasoned that the magistrate court acted in excess of its jurisdiction in issuing the warrant because it made a probable cause determination that was based upon an insufficient supporting affidavit, failed to inquire into Beck’s ability to pay the fines and fees, failed to determine whether it was reasonable to believe that Beck would disregard a written notice to appear, issued the warrant with an unconstitutional bail schedule, and initiated contempt proceedings against Beck based upon an affidavit filed by the deputy court clerk rather than the appropriate prosecuting attorney. Accordingly, the Court granted Beck’s petition for writ of prohibition and issued a writ prohibiting the magistrate court from issuing future warrants of arrest or warrants of attachment against Beck and other similarly situated parties in a manner inconsistent with its opinion.

***This summary constitutes no part of the opinion of the Court, but has been prepared
by court staff for the convenience of the public.***