

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Colton James Rood v. Secretary of CDCR, et al.

Rood v. Secretary of CDCR · No. 1:22-cv-00449-SAB (PC) · Decided May 27, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California denied without prejudice Plaintiff Colton James Rood’s motion to file two inmate declarations under seal. The court held that the motion did not provide specific reasons, authority, duration, access information, or document-by-document justification sufficient to overcome the presumption of public access, and ordered the Clerk to return the documents to Plaintiff.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Stanley A. Boone
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	May 27, 2025
DOCKET	1:22-cv-00449-SAB (PC)
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff, proceeding pro se and in forma pauperis in a 42 U.S.C. § 1983 civil rights action, moved to file two inmate declarations under seal. The district court denied the motion without prejudice and ordered the Clerk to return the documents.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	A party seeking to seal a judicial record must overcome the strong presumption of public access by showing compelling reasons supported by specific factual findings. When the material is only tangentially related to the merits, the good-cause standard applies. The court balances the public's interests against the interests of the party seeking secrecy.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished and nonprecedential district court order

TOPICS

- civil procedure
- public records
- prisoners rights
- civil rights

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

prisoner civil rights

public access to judicial records

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Plaintiff established sufficient grounds under the applicable public-access and sealing standards to file two inmate declarations under seal.
2. Whether the court should accept and retain the declarations as evidence before they were submitted in connection with a motion for summary judgment, trial, or at the court's request.

HOLDINGS

1. Plaintiff failed to overcome the presumption of public access or otherwise demonstrate good cause for sealing the declarations because he did not articulate specific reasons supporting the sealing of each document and did not provide the information required by Local Rule 141(b).
2. The court would not serve as a repository for evidence improperly submitted before it was needed in connection with a motion for summary judgment, trial, or a court request, and the Clerk was ordered to return the documents to Plaintiff.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“A party seeking to seal a judicial record ... bears the burden of overcoming the strong presumption by meeting the ‘compelling reasons standard.’” (at 1)

“The Court will not serve as a repository for evidence. The parties may not file evidence (prison, disciplinary or medical records, witness affidavits, etc.) with the Court until it becomes necessary to do so in connection with a motion for summary judgment, trial or the Court requests otherwise.” (at 2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff sought to seal two declarations from inmate witnesses in his § 1983 action. He asserted generally that disclosure of the witnesses' names and CDCR numbers could expose them to retaliation or harm. The motion did not identify specific reasons for sealing each item, did not establish how the declarations related to the claims, and did not provide the information required by Local Rule 141(b).

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed a motion on May 9, 2025, seeking to file two inmate declarations under seal because they allegedly contained witnesses' full names and CDCR numbers. The court found that the motion did not provide specific reasons for sealing each document or the information required by Local Rule 141(b), and denied the motion without prejudice. The court also ordered the Clerk to return the documents to Plaintiff.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- *Kamakana v. City & County of Honolulu*, 447 F.3d 1172, 1178 (9th Cir. 2006)
- *Nixon v. Warner Communications, Inc.*, 435 U.S. 589, 597 & n.7 (1978)
- *Foltz v. State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Co.*, 331 F.3d 1122, 1135 (9th Cir. 2003)

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