

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Kleinschmidt v. California Department of Corrections and
Rehabilitation

Kleinschmidt v. CDCR · No. No. 2:25-cv-1272 AC P · Decided May 20, 2025

SUMMARY

The court addresses venue and the potential transfer of a prisoner civil rights action from the Sacramento Division to the Fresno Division of the Eastern District of California. The court explains that CDCR is not a proper defendant under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 and orders the plaintiff to show cause within twenty-one days why the case should not be transferred based on the alleged events at Pleasant Valley State Prison in Fresno County.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Allison Claire
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	May 20, 2025
DOCKET	No. 2:25-cv-1272 AC P
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff filed a pro se prisoner civil-rights action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. The court issued an order to show cause why the action should not be transferred sua sponte from the Sacramento Division to the Fresno Division of the Eastern District of California.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	For a sua sponte venue transfer, the court may transfer under 28 U.S.C. § 1404(a) after giving the parties an opportunity to present their views; an intra-district transfer may be ordered for good cause under E.D. Cal. L.R. 120(f).
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential
PARTIES	Charles Trent Kleinschmidt v. California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

TOPICS

venue

forum non conveniens

section 1983

eleventh amendment immunity

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

prisoner civil rights

constitutional law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the court should consider transferring the action sua sponte under 28 U.S.C. § 1404(a) and E.D. Cal. L.R. 120(f) from the Sacramento Division to the Fresno Division.
2. Whether the alleged facts support transfer because the relevant conduct occurred in Fresno County.
3. Whether California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation is a proper defendant in a 42 U.S.C. § 1983 action.

HOLDINGS

1. A district court may transfer a case sua sponte under 28 U.S.C. § 1404(a), provided the parties are first given an opportunity to present their views.
2. Transfer to the Fresno Division appeared appropriate because Pleasant Valley State Prison is located in Fresno County and the alleged unlawful conduct occurred there.
3. The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation is not a proper defendant in a § 1983 action because the State and its arms, which traditionally enjoy Eleventh Amendment immunity, are not subject to suit under § 1983 in federal or state court.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“a district court may, on its own motion, “transfer a case sua sponte under the doctrine of forum non conveniens, as codified at 28 U.S.C. § 1404(a), so long as the parties are first given the opportunity to present their views on the issue.”” (1)

“Will[v. Mich. Dep’t of State Police, 491 U.S. 58 (1989)] establishes that the State and arms of the State, which have traditionally enjoyed Eleventh Amendment immunity, are not subject to suit under § 1983 in either federal court or state court.” (1)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff, a state prisoner, alleged that after reincarceration for a parole violation he was placed in general population at Pleasant Valley State Prison despite having previously been housed in a special-needs yard and informing prison personnel that he was in danger. He alleged that he was then stabbed fifteen times in the dining hall and barely survived. He also alleged that guards pepper-sprayed him, used a false name when booking him at the hospital, and interfered with his access to the courts.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

On May 2, 2025, plaintiff filed a complaint alleging that prison officials violated his Eighth Amendment rights by placing him in general population at Pleasant Valley State Prison despite his prior special-needs-yard

designation and warnings that he was in danger. The court determined that venue was proper in the Eastern District because CDCR was headquartered in Sacramento, but concluded that transfer to Fresno appeared appropriate because the alleged conduct occurred in Fresno County. The court gave plaintiff twenty-one days to show cause why the case should not be transferred; no final transfer was ordered in this opinion.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Costlow v. Weeks, 790 F.2d 1486, 1488 (9th Cir. 1986)
- Howlett v. Rose, 496 U.S. 356, 365 (1990)
- Will v. Michigan Department of State Police, 491 U.S. 58 (1989)

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