

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF
INDIANA, SOUTH BEND DIVISION

Zachary Taylor Ingram v. Bradford, et al.

Ingram · No. 3:25-CV-72-CCB-SJF · Decided April 29, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of Indiana granted the defendants’ motion for summary judgment in Zachary Taylor Ingram’s Eighth Amendment excessive-force action. The court held that Ingram failed to exhaust available administrative remedies before filing suit under the Prison Litigation Reform Act and had not shown that the grievance process was unavailable. The court directed the clerk to enter judgment for the defendants and close the case.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of Indiana, South Bend Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Cristal C. Brisco
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of Indiana, South Bend Division
DECIDED	April 29, 2026
DOCKET	3:25-CV-72-CCB-SJF
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	In a prisoner civil-rights action alleging excessive force in violation of the Eighth Amendment, defendants moved for summary judgment based on failure to exhaust available administrative remedies. The plaintiff filed no opposition, and the court granted summary judgment for defendants.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Summary judgment is required when there is no genuine dispute as to any material fact and the movant is entitled to judgment as a matter of law. The court construes facts and reasonable inferences in favor of the nonmoving party, but an opposing party must identify evidence supporting its position rather than rely on allegations or denials. On exhaustion, defendants bear the burden of proving the affirmative defense.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential district court opinion

TOPICS

summary judgment

prisoners rights

civil rights

civil procedure

affirmative defenses

PRACTICE AREAS

prisoner civil rights

federal civil procedure

summary judgment

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether defendants were entitled to summary judgment because Ingram failed to exhaust available administrative remedies before filing his prisoner-conditions action.
2. Whether post-filing attempts to pursue the prison grievance process could satisfy the exhaustion requirement.

HOLDINGS

1. Defendants were entitled to summary judgment because the undisputed evidence showed that the grievance process was available to Ingram and that he did not complete it, or submit any relevant grievance, before filing suit.
2. Post-filing attempts to submit grievances did not satisfy the exhaustion requirement and were irrelevant to whether Ingram exhausted administrative remedies before filing suit.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Summary judgment must be granted when “there is no genuine dispute as to any material fact and the movant is entitled to judgment as a matter of law.”” (Opinion and Order text)

“The fact that Ingram attempted to submit relevant grievances after he filed this lawsuit is not relevant to the exhaustion analysis.” (Opinion and Order text)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Ingram, an Indiana prisoner, alleged that Sgt. Brett Laurie, Sgt. Smith, and Lt. Bradford used excessive force against him at Westville Correctional Facility on June 3, 2024. The facility's grievance process was available to Ingram and required a formal grievance, a Level I appeal to the warden, and a Level II appeal to the Department Grievance Manager. Although Ingram had successfully submitted grievances in the past, he submitted no grievance concerning the alleged excessive force before filing this lawsuit; grievances submitted afterward were rejected as untimely.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Zachary Taylor Ingram filed suit against correctional officers seeking compensatory and punitive damages for alleged excessive force on June 3, 2024. Defendants moved for summary judgment on November 25, 2025, asserting that Ingram had not exhausted the prison grievance process before filing suit. After the court extended Ingram's response deadline and he still filed no response, the court granted the motion, directed entry of judgment for defendants, and ordered the case closed.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Anderson v. Liberty Lobby, Inc., 477 U.S. 242, 248 (1986)
- Heft v. Moore, 351 F.3d 278, 282 (7th Cir. 2003)
- Goodman v. National Security Agency, Inc., 621 F.3d 651, 654 (7th Cir. 2010)
- Perez v. Wisconsin Department of Corrections, 182 F.3d 532, 535 (7th Cir. 1999)
- King v. McCarty, 781 F.3d 889, 893 (7th Cir. 2015)
- Lockett v. Bonson, 937 F.3d 1016, 1025 (7th Cir. 2019)
- Mayberry v. Schlarf, No. 3:23-CV-64-JD-JEM, 2024 WL 4274856, at *3 (N.D. Ind. Sept. 24, 2024)
- Ford v. Johnson, 362 F.3d 395, 398 (7th Cir. 2004)

OPINION

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT NORTHERN DISTRICT OF INDIANA SOUTH BEND DIVISION ZACHARY TAYLOR INGRAM, Plaintiff, v. CAUSE NO. 3:25-CV-72-CCB-SJF BRADFORD, et al., Defendants. OPINION AND ORDER Zachary Taylor Ingram, a prisoner without a lawyer, is proceeding in this case against Sgt. Brett Laurie, Sgt. Smith, and Lt. Bradford “for compensatory and punitive damages for using excessive force against Ingram on June 3, 2024, in violation of the Eighth Amendment[.]” ECF 16 at 3.

On November 25, 2025, the defendants filed a motion for summary judgment, arguing Ingram did not exhaust his available administrative remedies before filing this lawsuit. ECF 25. With the motion, the defendants provided Ingram the notice required by N.D. Ind. L.R. 56-1(a)(4). ECF 28. Attached to the notice was a copy of Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 56 and Northern District of Indiana Local Rule 56-1.

Pursuant to Local Rule 56-1(b), a party opposing a summary judgment motion must, within 28 days after the movant serves the motion, separately file (1) a response brief; and (2) a Response to Statement of Material Facts, which includes a citation to evidence supporting each dispute of fact.

The court extended Ingram’s deadline to respond until March 19, 2026. ECF 34. That extended deadline has passed, but Ingram still has not filed any response. Therefore, the court will now rule on the defendants’ summary judgment motion. Summary judgment must be granted when “there is no genuine dispute as to any material fact and the movant is entitled to judgment as a matter of law.” Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 56(a).

A genuine issue of material fact exists when “the evidence is such that a reasonable [factfinder] could [find] for the nonmoving party.” Anderson v. Liberty Lobby, Inc., 477 U.S. 242, 248 (1986).

To determine whether a genuine issue of material fact exists, the court must construe all facts in the light most favorable to the non-moving party and draw all reasonable inferences in that party's favor.

Heft v. Moore, 351 F.3d 278, 282 (7th Cir. 2003). A party opposing a properly supported summary judgment motion may not rely merely on allegations or denials in its own pleading but must “marshal and present the court with the evidence she contends will prove her case.” *Goodman v. Nat’l Sec. Agency, Inc.*, 621 F.3d 651, 654 (7th Cir. 2010). Prisoners are prohibited from bringing an action in federal court with respect to prison conditions “until such administrative remedies as are available are exhausted.” 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(a). “[A] suit filed by a prisoner before administrative remedies have been exhausted must be dismissed; the district court lacks discretion to resolve the claim on the merits, even if the prisoner exhausts intra-prison remedies before judgment.” *Perez v. Wisconsin Dep’t of Corr.*, 182 F.3d 532, 535 (7th Cir.

1999). “Failure to exhaust is an affirmative defense that a defendant has the burden of proving.” *King v. McCarty*, 781 F.3d 889, 893 (7th Cir. 2015). The law takes a “strict compliance approach to exhaustion.” *Lockett v. Bonson*, 937 F.3d 1016, 1025 (7th Cir. 2019).

To exhaust remedies, “a prisoner must file complaints and appeals in the place, and at the time, the prison’s administrative rules require.” *Id.* The defendants provide an affidavit from the Grievance Specialist at Westville Correctional Facility (“WCF”) and Ingram’s grievance records, which show the following facts: During all relevant times, an Offender Grievance Process was in place at WCF and available to Ingram.

ECF 25-1 at 2, 5. The Offender Grievance Process required Ingram to complete three steps before filing this lawsuit: (1) a formal grievance; (2) a Level I appeal to the warden; and (3) a Level II appeal to the Department Grievance Manager. *Id.* at 2. Ingram has successfully submitted grievances at WCF in the past. *Id.* at 7.

However, he did not submit any grievance related to his claim that the defendants used excessive force against him at any point before he filed this lawsuit. *Id.* at 7-8. Ingram did attempt to submit relevant grievances after he filed this lawsuit, which the grievance office rejected as untimely. *Id.* at 8.

Here, the defendants have provided undisputed evidence showing Ingram did not exhaust his available administrative remedies before filing this lawsuit. Specifically, it is undisputed the Offender Grievance Process was available to Ingram, but he did not submit any relevant grievance before he filed this lawsuit.

The fact that Ingram attempted to submit relevant grievances after he filed this lawsuit is not relevant to the exhaustion analysis. See *Mayberry v. Schlarf*, No. 3:23-CV-64-JD-JEM, 2024 WL 4274856, at *3 (N.D. Ind. Sept. 24, 2024) (noting the relevant date for exhaustion purposes is the

date the inmate filed the lawsuit); Perez, 182 F.3d at 535 (“a suit filed by a prisoner before administrative remedies have been exhausted must be dismissed; the district court lacks discretion to resolve the claim on the merits, even if the prisoner exhausts intra-prison remedies before judgment”); Ford v. Johnson, 362 F.3d 395, 398 (7th Cir.

2004) (a prisoner cannot file a lawsuit first and finish exhausting his administrative remedies later). Ingram did not respond to the defendants’ summary judgment motion, and the record contains no evidence he submitted any relevant grievance before filing this lawsuit or that his administrative remedies were in any way unavailable.

Therefore, the defendants have met their burden to show Ingram did not exhaust his available administrative remedies before filing this lawsuit. Summary judgment is warranted in their favor. For these reasons, the court: (1) GRANTS the defendants’ motion for summary judgment (ECF 25); and (2) INSTRUCTS the clerk to enter judgment in favor of the defendants and against Zachary Taylor Ingram and to close this case.

SO ORDERED on April 29, 2026. /s/Cristal C. Brisco CRISTAL C. BRISCO, JUDGE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT