

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF
KENTUCKY, PADUCAH DIVISION

Keith B. Harris v. Garrick Lamb, et al.

Harris · No. 5:25-CV-161-JHM · Decided January 13, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Western District of Kentucky reviewed Keith B. Harris’s pro se civil-rights complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A. The court allowed Harris’s Fourth Amendment wrongful-arrest claim against Deputy Garrick Lamb to proceed, but stayed it pending resolution of Harris’s related state criminal case. The court dismissed claims against the City of Princeton and a private store manager, as well as Harris’s requests for release and dismissal of the criminal charges.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Western District of Kentucky, Paducah Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Joseph H. McKinley, Jr.
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Western District of Kentucky, Paducah Division
DECIDED	January 13, 2026
DOCKET	5:25-CV-161-JHM
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	A pro se pretrial detainee brought a civil-rights action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. The district court conducted the required initial screening under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, allowed a Fourth Amendment wrongful-arrest claim against Deputy Garrick Lamb to proceed but stayed it pending resolution of the related state criminal case, and dismissed the claims against the City of Princeton, Zachary Payne, and the requests for release and dismissal of criminal charges.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, the court must dismiss a prisoner complaint or any portion of it that is frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief from an immune defendant. For failure to state a claim, the complaint must contain sufficient factual matter, accepted as true, to state a plausible claim for relief; well-pleaded factual allegations are viewed in the light

	most favorable to the plaintiff, but bare legal conclusions need not be accepted.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court opinion
PARTIES	Keith B. Harris v. Garrick Lamb, Princeton Police Department, Zachary Payne

TOPICS

section 1983 prisoners rights fourth amendment civil procedure remedies

PRACTICE AREAS

civil rights constitutional law criminal procedure civil procedure prisoner litigation

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the complaint stated a § 1983 claim against the Princeton Police Department or City of Princeton.
2. Whether Dollar General manager Zachary Payne acted under color of state law for purposes of § 1983.
3. Whether Harris's Fourth Amendment wrongful-arrest claim against Deputy Lamb should proceed while the related state criminal case was pending.
4. Whether § 1983 permitted Harris to obtain release from confinement or dismissal of the state criminal charges.

HOLDINGS

1. A municipal police department is not a person subject to suit under § 1983; the claim was properly construed as a claim against the City of Princeton.
2. The claims against the City of Princeton failed because Harris did not allege that a municipal policy or custom was the moving force behind the alleged constitutional violations.
3. Payne, a private store manager who called police regarding suspected possession of drugs, was not a state actor for purposes of § 1983, so the claims against him were dismissed.
4. The Fourth Amendment wrongful-arrest claim against Lamb could proceed but had to be stayed pending completion of Harris's state criminal case.
5. Release from confinement and dismissal of the pending criminal charges were unavailable remedies in this § 1983 action, so Harris's injunctive-relief claims were dismissed.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Such claims in pending civil cases should be stayed pending the outcome of the criminal case.” (Section III.D)

“The Court will allow Plaintiff’s Fourth Amendment claims of wrongful arrest to proceed against Defendant Lamb in his individual capacity. This claim is STAYED pending completion of his pending state-court criminal case.” (Order ¶ 1)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Harris, a pretrial detainee, alleged that Deputy Garrick Lamb arrested him on January 30, 2024, for possession of methamphetamine after a Dollar General employee found a substance on the store floor and reported that it had fallen from Harris's pocket. Harris contended that the substance had not been field-tested, that its chain of custody had been broken, and that Lamb lacked conclusive evidence of possession. Harris was later indicted in Caldwell Circuit Court, and that criminal case remained pending when he filed this action.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Harris filed this § 1983 action while his state criminal prosecution for possession of methamphetamine was pending in Caldwell Circuit Court. On initial review under § 1915A, the court construed the claim against the Princeton Police Department as a claim against the City of Princeton, dismissed the municipal, private-party, and injunctive-relief claims, and stayed the wrongful-arrest claim against Lamb until completion of the state criminal case.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- *McGore v. Wigglesworth*, 114 F.3d 601, 604 (6th Cir. 1997)
- *Jones v. Bock*, 549 U.S. 199 (2007)
- *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009)
- *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007)
- *Tackett v. M & G Polymers, USA, LLC*, 561 F.3d 478, 488 (6th Cir. 2009)
- *Gunasekera v. Irwin*, 551 F.3d 461, 466 (6th Cir. 2009)
- *Columbia Natural Res., Inc. v. Tatum*, 58 F.3d 1101, 1109 (6th Cir. 1995)
- *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519, 520-21 (1972)
- *Jourdan v. Jabe*, 951 F.2d 108, 110 (6th Cir. 1991)
- *McDonald v. Hall*, 610 F.2d 16, 19 (1st Cir. 1979)
- *Flint ex rel. Flint v. Ky. Dep't of Corr.*, 270 F.3d 340, 351 (6th Cir. 2001)
- *Gomez v. Toledo*, 446 U.S. 635, 640 (1980)
- *West v. Atkins*, 487 U.S. 42, 48 (1988)
- *Christy v. Randlett*, 932 F.2d 502, 504 (6th Cir. 1991)
- *Rhodes v. McDannel*, 945 F.2d 117, 120 (6th Cir. 1991)
- *Marbry v. Corr. Med. Servs.*, No. 99-6706, 238 F.3d 422, 2000 WL 1720959, at *2 (6th Cir. Nov. 6, 2000)

- *Smallwood v. Jefferson Cnty. Gov't*, 743 F. Supp. 502, 503 (W.D. Ky. 1990)
- *Matthews v. LMPD*, No. 3:19-CV-P581-RGJ, 2019 WL 5549209, at *2 (W.D. Ky. Oct. 25, 2019)
- *Collins v. City of Harker Heights, Tex.*, 503 U.S. 115, 120 (1992)
- *Monell*, 436 U.S. at 691
- *Searcy v. City of Dayton*, 38 F.3d 282, 286 (6th Cir. 1994)
- *Polk Cnty. v. Dodson*, 454 U.S. 312, 326
- *Tahfs v. Proctor*, 316 F.3d 584, 590 (6th Cir. 2003)
- *Am. Mfrs. Mut. Ins. Co. v. Sullivan*, 526 U.S. 40, 50 (1999)
- *Boykin v. Van Buren Twp.*, 479 F.3d 444, 452 (6th Cir. 2007)
- *Heck v. Humphrey*, 512 U.S. 477, 486 (1994)
- *Wilkinson v. Dotson*, 544 U.S. 74, 81-82 (2005)
- *Wallace v. Kato*, 549 U.S. 384, 393 (2007)
- *Stiff v. Straman*, No. 3:24-CV-P609-JHM, 2025 WL 837076, at *2 (W.D. Ky. Mar. 17, 2025)
- *Demis v. Snizek*, 558 F.3d 508, 513 n.2 (6th Cir. 2009)
- *Granader v. Public Bank*, 417 F.2d 75, 82-83 (6th Cir. 1969)