

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
VIRGINIA, RICHMOND DIVISION

Russell Robinson v. Warden J. Bienemy

Civil No. 3:25cv589 (DIN) (E.D. Va. Mar. 5, 2026) · No. 3:25cv589 (DIN) · Decided March 5, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia denied a federal prisoner’s 28 U.S.C. § 2241 claims concerning collection of a criminal fine through the Inmate Financial Responsibility Program and denial of First Step Act earned time credits. The court held that the fine-related claim was moot or otherwise entitled to no further relief because the Bureau of Prisons placed Robinson on exempt status and refunded an erroneous \$65 deduction. The court also held that Robinson was not entitled to credits for pre-sentence detention and that his refusal to complete the post-sentencing SPARC-13 assessment supported his non-earning status.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Richmond Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	David J. Novak
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Richmond Division
DECIDED	March 5, 2026
DOCKET	3:25cv589 (DIN)
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Federal prisoner Russell Robinson petitioned for habeas relief under 28 U.S.C. § 2241, challenging the execution of his sentence. The respondent moved for summary judgment, and Robinson moved for temporary injunctive relief.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Summary judgment is appropriate when the movant shows that there is no genuine dispute as to any material fact and the movant is entitled to judgment as a matter of law. The court draws justifiable inferences in favor of the nonmoving party, but a mere scintilla of evidence does not preclude summary judgment. On the habeas claims, the court reviewed whether the Bureau of Prisons violated Robinson's statutory rights in administering his fine and First Step Act credits.

PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential
PARTIES	Russell Robinson v. Warden J. Bienemy

TOPICS

federal habeas corpus summary judgment post-conviction relief sentencing civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

Federal habeas corpus Prisoner litigation First Step Act earned time credits Summary judgment

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the Bureau of Prisons violated Robinson's rights by administering his \$10,000 fine through the Inmate Financial Responsibility Program and by collecting \$65 from his account.
2. Whether Robinson was entitled to First Step Act earned time credits for activities performed before his federal sentence commenced.
3. Whether the Bureau of Prisons properly placed Robinson in opt-out or non-earning status after he refused to complete or retake the family/parenting portion of the SPARC-13 assessment.
4. Whether summary judgment was appropriate on Robinson's § 2241 claims.

HOLDINGS

1. Robinson was not entitled to further relief because the Bureau of Prisons placed him in IFRP-exempt status, did not impose adverse consequences for that status, returned the erroneously collected \$65, and allowed voluntary payments toward the fine.
2. A prisoner may not earn First Step Act earned time credits for qualifying programming or activities completed during official detention before the date the federal sentence commences under 18 U.S.C. § 3585(a).
3. The Bureau of Prisons may treat an inmate as ineligible to successfully participate in First Step Act programming or productive activities for credit purposes until the inmate completes the post-sentencing risk-and-needs assessment, and may place an inmate in opt-out or non-earning status after the inmate refuses to complete or retake the assessment.
4. Summary judgment was appropriate because Robinson failed to demonstrate a genuine dispute of material fact or entitlement to relief on either § 2241 claim.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“A prisoner may not earn time credits under this paragraph for an evidence-based recidivism reduction program that the prisoner successfully completed-- (ii) during official detention prior to the date that the prisoner’s sentence commences under section 3585(a).” (at 10)

“Indeed, the record rather plainly reflects that the bar to Mr. Robinson’s ability to earn sentence credits under FSA is not attributable to any administrative delay on the part of the BOP, but rather to his own intransigence

in refusing to take or retake the family/parenting portion of the SPARC-13.” (at 13)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Robinson is serving a 300-month federal sentence imposed by the United States District Court of the Virgin Islands on August 21, 2024, for conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute cocaine and possession with intent to distribute cocaine. His judgment imposed a \$10,000 fine and directed monthly payments of at least ten percent of his gross monthly income, while also recommending participation in the Bureau of Prisons' Inmate Financial Responsibility Program. The Bureau initially collected \$65 from Robinson's account, later placed him in IFRP-exempt status because of an apparent discrepancy between the judgment and the sentencing court's statements, and ultimately refunded the \$65. Robinson also sought First Step Act credits for pre-sentence detention and disputed his placement in non-earning status after refusing to complete or retake the family/parenting portion of the SPARC-13 assessment.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Robinson filed a § 2241 petition asserting that the Bureau of Prisons was improperly collecting his fine and refusing to award First Step Act earned time credits. The respondent submitted a motion for summary judgment, supporting declaration, and records; Robinson opposed and submitted affidavits and records. The court granted summary judgment, denied the temporary-injunction motions, denied the motion to dismiss as moot, and dismissed the action.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Celotex Corp. v. Catrett, 477 U.S. 317, 323-24 (1986)
- United States v. Carolina Transformer Co., 978 F.2d 832, 835 (4th Cir. 1992)
- Anderson v. Liberty Lobby, Inc., 477 U.S. 242, 251, 255 (1986)
- Improvement Co. v. Munson, 81 U.S. (14 Wall.) 442, 448 (1872)
- Forsyth v. Barr, 19 F.3d 1527, 1537 (4th Cir. 1994)
- Skotak v. Tenneco Resins, Inc., 953 F.2d 909, 915 n.7 (4th Cir. 1992)
- Valladares v. Ray, 130 F.4th 74, 77 (4th Cir. 2025)
- Francoeur v. Warden of Fed. Med. Ctr. Devens, No. CV 25-12381-MPK, 2025 WL 3158004, at *4-*5 (D. Mass. Nov. 12, 2025)
- Dane v. Bayless, No. 5:24-CV-157, 2024 WL 5150683, at *5 (N.D. W. Va. Nov. 20, 2024), report and recommendation adopted, 2024 WL 5150650 (N.D. W. Va. Dec. 17, 2024)
- Stevens v. Jacquez, No. 3:23-CV-01482-AA, 2024 WL 3200546, at *4 (D. Or. June 25, 2024)
- Harper v. FCI Waseca, No. 23-CV-2502 (JIRT/TNL), 2024 WL 3164981, at *6 (D. Minn. May 28, 2024), report and recommendation adopted sub nom. Harper v. Warden of FCI Waseca, 2024 WL 3163730 (D. Minn. June 25, 2024)

- *Brenneman v. Salmonson*, No. 5:22CV7-RWS-JBB, 2025 WL 957216, at *6 (E.D. Tex. Feb. 25, 2025), report and recommendation adopted, 2025 WL 914352 (E.D. Tex. Mar. 26, 2025)
- *Huihui v. Derr*, No. CV 22-00541 JAO-RT, 2023 WL 4086073, at *7 (D. Haw. June 20, 2023)
- *Jackson v. Doerer*, No. 5:24-01353 MRA (ADS), 2024 WL 4866812, at *8 (C.D. Cal. Oct. 28, 2024), report and recommendation adopted, 2024 WL 4719489 (C.D. Cal. Nov. 7, 2024)

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