

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF
PENNSYLVANIA, ERIE DIVISION

John Lewis Rush v. G. Thompson, Correctional Officer; T. Stafford,
Lieutenant/Grievance Officer; P. Thompson, Facility Manager; and
D. Varner, Chief Grievance Officer

Rush v. Thompson · No. 1:25-CV-00277-RAL · Decided January 21, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania denied John Lewis Rush’s motion for a preliminary injunction and/or temporary restraining order. The court held that the requested relief was unrelated to the claims in the complaint and that Rush had not shown a likelihood of success on the merits or immediate irreparable harm. The court stated that claims concerning the later incident would need to be brought in a separate action.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania, Erie Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Richard A. Lanzillo
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania, Erie Division
DECIDED	January 21, 2026
DOCKET	1:25-CV-00277-RAL
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff, a state prisoner proceeding under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, moved for a preliminary injunction and/or temporary restraining order based on prison incidents occurring after the events alleged in his complaint.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court applied the preliminary-injunction and temporary-restraining-order standards, requiring a reasonable probability of success on the merits, immediate and irreparable harm, consideration of harm to the nonmoving party, and consideration of the public interest. The movant bears the burden on the first two factors.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court memorandum order; nonprecedential

PARTIES

John Lewis Rush v. G. Thompson, Correctional Officer, T. Stafford, Lieutenant/Grievance Officer, P. Thompson, Facility Manager, D. Varner, Chief Grievance Officer

TOPICS

injunctions

prisoners rights

civil rights

first amendment

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

prisoner civil rights

constitutional law

equitable relief

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Rush was entitled to a preliminary injunction or temporary restraining order based on incidents unrelated to the claims pleaded in his complaint.
2. Whether Rush demonstrated a likelihood of success on the merits and immediate irreparable harm sufficient to obtain preliminary injunctive relief.

HOLDINGS

1. A plaintiff is not entitled to preliminary injunctive relief based on unrelated incidents and claims that are not tethered to the claims in the complaint.
2. Rush was not entitled to preliminary injunctive relief because he failed to allege facts showing either a likelihood of success on the merits or immediate irreparable harm.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Because Plaintiff has failed to allege facts to support that he is likely to succeed on the merits of his claims or that he faces immediate irreparable harm if injunctive relief is not granted, his motion for injunctive relief must be denied.” (Discussion)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Rush, an inmate at SCI-Albion, alleged that on December 18, 2024, a correctional officer opened, read aloud, and confiscated his attorney-client privileged legal mail. His complaint asserted First Amendment legal-mail, Fourth Amendment search, due-process, and equal-protection claims. His motion for emergency injunctive relief was based instead on unrelated incidents in his housing unit in October or November 2025 and a later misconduct charge, and sought body cameras for Pennsylvania Department of Corrections personnel and his transfer to SCI-Phoenix.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Rush's complaint alleged interference with attorney-client legal mail and related constitutional violations arising from a December 2024 incident. His motion for injunctive relief instead concerned unrelated events in October

or November 2025, including a subsequent misconduct charge, and sought mandatory relief requiring prison personnel to wear body cameras and requiring his transfer. The district court denied the motion.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- *Alues v. Main*, 747 Fed. Appx. 111, 112 n.3 (8d Cir.)
- *Holland v. Rosen*, 895 F.3d 272, 285 (8d Cir.)
- *Council of Alternative Political Parties v. Hooks*, 121 F.3d 876, 879 (8d Cir.)
- *Opticians Ass'n of America v. Independent Opticians of America*, 920 F.2d 187, 191-92 (3d Cir.)
- *Acierno v. New Castle County*, 40 F.3d 645, 653 (3d Cir.)
- *Adams v. Freedom Forge Corp.*, 204 F.3d 475, 484 (8d Cir.)
- *United States v. Stazola*, 893 F.2d 34, 37 n.3 (8d Cir.)
- *Hohe v. Casey*, 868 F.2d 69, 72 (3d Cir.)
- *ECRI v. McGraw-Hill, Inc.*, 809 F.2d 228, 226 (8d Cir.)
- *Wetzel v. Edwards*, 635 F.2d 2838, 286 (4th Cir.)
- *American Telephone & Telegraph Co. v. Winback and Conserve Program, Inc.*, 42 F.3d 1421 (8d Cir.)
- *Frank's GMC Truck Center, Inc. v. General Motor Corp.*, 847 F.2d 100, 102 (3d Cir.)
- *Goff v. Harper*, 60 F.3d 518, 520 (8d Cir.)
- *Rogers v. Scurr*, 676 F.2d 1211, 1214 (8d Cir.)
- *Stiel v. Federal Bureau of Prisons*, 2017 WL 2656646, at *4 (D.N.J. June 19, 2017)
- *Muhammad v. Director of Corrections*, 2009 WL 161075, at *1 (E.D. Cal. Jan. 22, 2009)
- *Rizzo v. Goode*, 423 U.S. 362, 379 (1976)
- *Wolff v. McDonnell*, 418 U.S. 539, 566 (1974)
- *Cromer v. Doe #1*, 2025 WL 1765922, at *1-2 (W.D. Pa. June 26, 2025)
- *Cromer v. Doe*, 2025 WL 2030662 (W.D. Pa. July 21, 2025)