

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF
MICHIGAN, SOUTHERN DIVISION

Dennis Lonnie Alfred Ward v. G. Griffiths, et al.

Ward v. Griffiths · No. 1:25-cv-844 · Decided February 4, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Western District of Michigan lifts the stay entered for early mediation after the action was not resolved. The order addresses installment payment of the filing fee, directs the Clerk to forward the complaint for service on Defendant G. Griffiths, and sets deadlines for service and appearance.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Western District of Michigan, Southern Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Ray Kent
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Western District of Michigan, Southern Division
DECIDED	February 4, 2026
DOCKET	1:25-cv-844
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Prisoner civil-rights action in which the court had screened the complaint, granted leave to proceed in forma pauperis, referred the matter to early mediation, and stayed the case pending mediation. After mediation failed, the court lifted the stay and entered orders concerning payment of the filing fee and service of process.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential
PARTIES	Dennis Lonnie Alfred Ward v. G. Griffiths, et al.

TOPICS

service of process prisoners rights civil rights mediation civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

prisoner civil rights civil procedure in forma pauperis procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the stay entered to facilitate early mediation should be lifted after mediation failed.
2. What filing-fee payment obligations apply to a prisoner proceeding in forma pauperis.
3. When the service period begins and what procedures govern service through the U.S. Marshals Service.
4. Whether the defendant must file an answer or other responsive motion before filing an appearance of counsel.

HOLDINGS

1. Because the early mediation program did not resolve the case, the court lifted the stay.
2. A prisoner granted leave to proceed in forma pauperis remains responsible for paying the entire filing fee in installments, including monthly payments of 20 percent of the preceding month's income when the prison trust account exceeds \$10.
3. The 90-day period for service under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 4(m) begins on the date of the order, and the Clerk must forward the complaint to the U.S. Marshals Service for waiver-request procedures and, if waiver is unsuccessful, formal service.
4. The defendant must file an appearance of counsel within 21 days after service, or within 60 days after a waiver request was sent, but is not required to file an answer or motion in response to the complaint until directed by the court.

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Dennis Lonnie Alfred Ward brought a prisoner civil-rights action against G. Griffiths and other defendants. The complaint was screened and Ward was granted leave to proceed in forma pauperis. The case was referred to early mediation, but the mediation did not resolve the action.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The court reviewed the complaint under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e) and 1915A and 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(c), referred the action to the Pro Se Prisoner Civil Rights Litigation Early Mediation Program, and stayed proceedings for mediation. The mediation did not resolve the case. The court therefore lifted the stay, directed installment payment of the filing fee, and ordered service procedures to begin.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- McGore v. Wigglesworth, 114 F.3d 601, 604 (6th Cir. 1997)
- LaFountain v. Harry, 716 F.3d 944, 951 (6th Cir. 2013)
- Hampton v. Hobbs, 106 F.3d 1281 (6th Cir. 1997)

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