

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF
ILLINOIS

Charles Carpenter v. United States Postal Service, Lisa Pittman, and
Joseph Junti

Carpenter · No. 26-cv-00217-JPG · Decided March 13, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Southern District of Illinois considers Charles Carpenter’s motion to proceed in forma pauperis in an employment-related action against the United States Postal Service and two individuals. The court finds that the allegations do not state a claim under a federal employment discrimination statute and that diversity jurisdiction cannot be determined because the defendants’ citizenship is not alleged. The court orders Carpenter to show cause by April 13, 2026, reserves ruling on the in forma pauperis motion, and permits him to file an amended complaint.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Southern District of Illinois
WRITING FOR THE COURT	J. Phil Gilbert
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Southern District of Illinois
DECIDED	March 13, 2026
DOCKET	26-cv-00217-JPG
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff moved for leave to proceed in forma pauperis. The district court found that the complaint failed to state a claim within its subject matter jurisdiction, ordered Plaintiff to show cause why the case should not be dismissed, permitted him to file an amended complaint, and reserved ruling on the in forma pauperis motion.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	On a motion to proceed in forma pauperis, the court may assess whether the action is frivolous, malicious, or fails to state a claim; an action fails to state a claim when it does not plead enough facts to state a plausible claim for relief.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown; district court memorandum and order with no reporter citation

PARTIES

Charles Carpenter v. United States Postal Service, Lisa Pittman,
Joseph Junti

TOPICS

subject matter jurisdiction

pleadings

employment discrimination

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

federal employment law

civil rights

employment discrimination

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Plaintiff's allegations stated a federal employment discrimination claim sufficient to invoke federal-question jurisdiction.
2. Whether diversity jurisdiction could be determined when Plaintiff had not alleged the citizenship of all defendants.
3. Whether Plaintiff should be permitted to proceed in forma pauperis before curing the jurisdictional and pleading deficiencies.

HOLDINGS

1. Allegations that a defendant misrepresented whether an injury occurred on the job and that another defendant attempted to obstruct OWCD benefits were insufficient to state a claim under a federal employment discrimination statute.
2. The court could not determine whether diversity jurisdiction existed because Plaintiff had not alleged the citizenship of all defendants.
3. Although Plaintiff established indigency, the court reserved ruling on his motion to proceed in forma pauperis and required him to show cause why the action should not be dismissed or to file an amended complaint curing the deficiencies.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"An action fails to state a claim if it does not plead 'enough facts to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.'" (at 2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Carpenter alleged that Lisa Pittman told medical staff that his injury did not occur on the job and that Joseph Junti attempted to obstruct his OWCD benefits. He characterized these allegations as employment discrimination based on manager misconduct. He did not allege the citizenship of all defendants, preventing the court from determining whether complete diversity existed.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Carpenter filed an employment-related action in the Southern District of Illinois and moved to proceed in forma pauperis. The court found him indigent but concluded that his allegations did not state a federal employment discrimination claim and that diversity jurisdiction could not be determined because he did not allege the citizenship of all defendants. Rather than dismiss immediately, the court issued an order to show cause and allowed an amended complaint by April 13, 2026.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319, 325 (1989)
- Corgain v. Miller, 708 F.2d 1241, 1247 (7th Cir. 1983)
- Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 547 (2007)
- Lucien v. Roegner, 682 F.2d 625, 626 (7th Cir. 1982)

OPINION

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS
CHARLES CARPENTER, Plaintiff, v. Case No. 26-cv-00217-JPG UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE, LISA PITTMAN, and JOSEPH JUNTI, Defendants. MEMORANDUM AND ORDER
This case is before the Court on Plaintiff Charles Carpenter’s Motion for Leave to Proceed in Forma Pauperis (Doc. 4). A federal court may permit an indigent party to proceed without prepayment of fees.

28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(1). Nevertheless, a court can deny a qualified plaintiff leave to file in forma pauperis or can dismiss a case if the action is clearly frivolous or malicious or fails to state a claim. Id. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(i) & (ii).

The test for determining if an action is frivolous or without merit is whether the plaintiff can make a rational argument on the law or facts in support of the claim. Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319, 325 (1989); Corgain v. Miller, 708 F.2d 1241, 1247 (7th Cir. 1983). An action fails to state a claim if it does not plead “enough facts to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.” Bell Atl.

Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 547 (2007). When assessing a motion to proceed in forma pauperis, a district court should inquire into the merits of the plaintiff’s claims, and if the court finds them to be frivolous, it should deny leave to proceed in forma pauperis. Lucien v. Roegner, 682 F.2d 625, 626 (7th Cir. 1982).

The Court is satisfied from Plaintiff’s affidavit that he is indigent. However, it finds that he fails to state a claim within the Court’s subject matter jurisdiction. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction over cases that arise under federal law, 28 U.S.C. § 1331, and cases where the parties

are completely diverse and where more than \$75,000, exclusive of interests and costs, is in issue, 28 U.S.C. § 1332(a).

Here, Plaintiff attempts to bring an employment discrimination claim for manager misconduct. To support his claim, Plaintiff alleges that he has evidence that: (1) Defendant Lisa Pittman lied to medical staff by saying that his injury did not happen on the job; and (2) Defendant Joe Junti tried to obstruct his OWCD benefits. These allegations are not sufficient to state a claim under any federal employment discrimination statute.

See e.g., 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-5 (prohibiting employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin); 29 U.S.C. § 623 (prohibiting employment discrimination based on age); 42 U.S.C. § 12101 (prohibiting employment discrimination based on disability).

As such, Plaintiff fails to state a claim within the Court's federal question jurisdiction. In addition, the Court is unable to determine whether it has diversity jurisdiction over this case because Plaintiff has not alleged the citizenship of all the defendants.

The Court is satisfied that Plaintiff is indigent, but it finds that he fails to state a claim within its subject matter jurisdiction. Therefore, the Court ORDERS Plaintiff to SHOW CAUSE on or before April 13, 2026, why it should not dismiss this case for lack of jurisdiction.

In response to this order to show cause, Plaintiff may file an amended complaint with sufficient facts to state a claim within the Court's subject matter jurisdiction. If Plaintiff fails to respond to this order to show cause, the Court will dismiss this case. It RESERVES RULING on Plaintiff Charles Carpenter's Motion for Leave to Proceed in Forma Pauperis (Doc.

4). IT IS SO ORDERED. DATED: March 13, 2026 2 s/ J. Phil Gilbert J. PHIL GILBERT United States District Judge 3