

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF
ALABAMA, NORTHERN DIVISION

Nathan Wallace v. Warden Headly, et al.

Wallace · No. 2:26-CV-170-WKW · Decided April 27, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Middle District of Alabama dismisses Nathan Wallace’s 42 U.S.C. § 1983 action without prejudice. The dismissal is based on his failure to pay the filing and administrative fees or submit an application to proceed in forma pauperis and a certified prison account statement, despite a court order and warning.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Middle District of Alabama, Northern Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	W. Keith Watkins
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Middle District of Alabama, Northern Division
DECIDED	April 27, 2026
DOCKET	2:26-CV-170-WKW
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff's pro se 42 U.S.C. § 1983 action was dismissed without prejudice after he failed to pay the filing and administrative fees or submit an application to proceed in forma pauperis with a certified prison account statement.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	A district court may dismiss under its inherent authority for failure to comply with court orders or prosecute; dismissal with prejudice requires a clear record of delay or willful contempt and a finding that lesser sanctions would not suffice, while dismissal without prejudice does not require willfulness or bad faith.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court order; nonprecedential

TOPICS

- sanctions
- civil procedure
- section 1983

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

civil rights

prisoner litigation

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the district court could dismiss the action without prejudice for failure to comply with its order requiring payment of filing fees or submission of an in forma pauperis application.
2. Whether dismissal without prejudice for failure to prosecute and failure to comply with a court order required a finding of willfulness or bad faith.

HOLDINGS

1. A district court may dismiss an action under its inherent authority to manage its docket when a plaintiff fails to comply with a court order or fails to prosecute.
2. Dismissal without prejudice for failure to comply with a court order or prosecute does not require a finding of willfulness or bad faith.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“A district court “may dismiss a case under its inherent authority, which it possesses as a means of managing its own docket so as to achieve the orderly and expeditious disposition of cases.””

“A dismissal without prejudice, by contrast, doesn’t require a finding of willfulness or bad faith because its consequences are less severe.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Wallace was one of twenty inmates who jointly filed a pro se § 1983 complaint concerning conditions at Staton Correctional Facility. After the court directed that separate actions be opened, Wallace was ordered either to pay the filing and administrative fees or to submit an in forma pauperis application with a certified prison account statement. Despite an express deadline and warning of dismissal, he did neither.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The complaint was initially filed by twenty inmates in a single action. The court ordered separate civil actions opened for nineteen plaintiffs, including Wallace, and then ordered Wallace to pay the required fees or file an in forma pauperis application by April 10, 2026, warning that noncompliance would result in dismissal. Wallace did neither, so the district court dismissed the action without prejudice for failure to prosecute and failure to comply with a court order.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- McCoy v. Headly, 2:26-cv-84-RAH-SMD (M.D. Ala. filed Feb. 5, 2026)

- *McNair v. Johnson*, 143 F.4th 1301, 1306–07 (11th Cir. 2025)
- *Link v. Wabash R.R. Co.*, 370 U.S. 626, 629–30 (1962)
- *Moon v. Newsome*, 863 F.2d 835, 837 (11th Cir. 1989)
- *Mingo v. Sugar Cane Growers Co-Op of Fla.*, 864 F.2d 101, 102 (11th Cir. 1989) (per curiam)
- *Goforth v. Owens*, 766 F.2d 1533, 1535 (11th Cir. 1985)

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