

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF MINNESOTA

Shelton v. Schnell et al.

Shelton · No. No. 26-CV-00050 (MJD/ECW) · Decided February 6, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Minnesota directs Plaintiff Victor Shelton to file a focused Second Amended Complaint because his existing pleading violates Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8 and improperly joins unrelated claims and defendants under Rule 20. The court also recommends denying Shelton’s motions for a temporary restraining order, preliminary injunction, and partial summary judgment as moot and without prejudice to refiling. The order and recommendation was issued by Magistrate Judge Elizabeth Cowan Wright on February 6, 2026.

CASE DETAILS

|                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| COURT                 | United States District Court for the District of Minnesota                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| WRITING FOR THE COURT | Elizabeth Cowan Wright                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| JURISDICTION          | United States District Court for the District of Minnesota                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| DECIDED               | February 6, 2026                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| DOCKET                | No. 26-CV-00050 (MJD/ECW)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| DISPOSITION           | other                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| PROCEDURAL POSTURE    | The court considered Plaintiff's Amended Complaint, motion for a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction, and motion for partial summary judgment. The court ordered Plaintiff to file a Second Amended Complaint complying with Rules 8 and 20 and recommended denying the pending motions as moot and without prejudice.                 |
| PRECEDENTIAL VALUE    | unpublished                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| PARTIES               | Victor Shelton v. Paul Schnell, William Bolin, Dan Moe, Marisa Williams, Michael Warner, Nicole Riemenschneider, Cornelius Emily, Scott Gary, Tonja Tidgwell, Brady Scott, Scott Roffers, Tara Rathman, Susan Norton, Lana Jensen, Sue Armstrong, Amanda Hofer, Davd Spets, Christian Kline, Kevin Poliszuk, Thomas Domagala, Jacob Winberg, John Doe 1–4 |

TOPICS

pleadings

joinder

civil procedure

injunctions

summary judgment

## PRACTICE AREAS

Civil procedure

Prisoner civil rights

Federal pleadings and joinder

## QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the Amended Complaint violated Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8 by failing to provide a short, plain, clear, concise, and direct statement of the claims.
2. Whether the Amended Complaint improperly joined unrelated claims and defendants under Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 18 and 20.
3. Whether Shelton's motion for a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction and motion for partial summary judgment should be denied as moot while the pleading was being amended.

## HOLDINGS

1. The Amended Complaint violated Rule 8 because its excessive length, repetition, and complexity obscured the substance of Shelton's claims and failed to provide a short, plain, simple, concise, and direct statement of the allegations.
2. The Amended Complaint improperly joined unrelated claims against different defendants and could not proceed as a single action under Rules 18 and 20.
3. The motion for a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction and the motion for partial summary judgment should be denied as moot, without prejudice to refiling after Shelton files a proper Second Amended Complaint.

## KEY QUOTATIONS

*“The words ‘short and plain’ are themselves short and plain, and they mean what they say: A complaint must be concise, and it must be clear.”*

*“Unrelated claims against different defendants belong in different suits.”*

## FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Shelton's Amended Complaint was approximately 71 single-spaced pages and was accompanied by a 42-page memorandum, a 61-page declaration, and more than 390 pages of exhibits. The pleading alleged distinct events involving disciplinary proceedings, alleged harassment or retaliation, denial of access to legal materials while in segregation, and other conduct involving different groups of defendants. The court concluded that the allegations obscured the claims and did not arise from one transaction, occurrence, or related series of occurrences.

## PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Shelton initiated the action on January 5, 2026, and later filed the pleading treated by the court as his Amended Complaint. The magistrate judge determined that the pleading was excessively long, unclear, and improperly joined unrelated claims and defendants. The court ordered a compliant Second Amended Complaint within 28

days and recommended that Shelton's motions for injunctive relief and partial summary judgment be denied as moot.

## DISPOSITION

other

## REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

Shelton must file a complete Second Amended Complaint within 28 days of the February 6, 2026 Order. It must be short, plain, clear, concise, and direct; identify the defendants and conduct associated with each claim; and limit the action to one event or series of related occurrences. Unrelated claims must be brought in separate actions.

## CASES CITED

- United States v. Lockheed-Martin Corp., 328 F.3d 374, 378 (7th Cir. 2003)
- Gurman v. Metro Hous. & Redevelopment Auth., 842 F. Supp. 2d 1151, 1152 (D. Minn. 2012)
- Iverson v. City of Brooklyn Ctr., No. 23-CV-0917 (NEB/LIB), 2024 WL 3178041, at \*1 (D. Minn. Mar. 11, 2024)
- Iverson v. City of Brooklyn Ctr., No. 24-2691, 2024 WL 5415776 (8th Cir. Oct. 16, 2024)
- George v. Smith, 507 F.3d 605, 607 (7th Cir. 2007)
- Palmer v. Anoka County, No. 25-CV-2340 (ECT/DJF), 2025 WL 2506132, at \*2 (D. Minn. Sept. 2, 2025)
- Shelton v. McLeod County, No. 16-CV-0466 (JRT/SER), 2016 WL 11486911, at \*2 (D. Minn. Apr. 19, 2016)
- Broussard v. Hollenhorst, No. 22-CV-0342 (SRN/ECW), 2022 WL 748470, at \*3 (D. Minn. Mar. 11, 2022)
- Broussard v. Hollenhorst, No. 22-1774, 2022 WL 10557060 (8th Cir. Sept. 9, 2022)
- Devisme v. Ctr. City Hous. Co., No. 22-CV-1472 (ECT/LIB), 2022 WL 2759092, at \*1 n.1 (D. Minn. July 14, 2022)
- Edner v. Dietrich, No. 22-CV-0070 (JRT/LIB), 2022 WL 981367, at \*4 n.7 (D. Minn. Feb. 24, 2022)
- Edner v. Dietrich, No. 22-1664, 2022 WL 4483131 (8th Cir. Aug. 9, 2022)
- Jackson v. Hennepin Hosp., No. 19-CV-2392 (PJS/ECW), 2020 WL 532973, at \*1 n.3 (D. Minn. Jan. 3, 2020)
- Jackson v. Hennepin Hosp., 2020 WL 528898 (D. Minn. Feb. 3, 2020)