

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF
FLORIDA, OCALA DIVISION

Velvet Ann Saulsberry v. Billy Woods, in his official capacity as
Sheriff of Marion County

Saulsberry v. Woods · No. 5:23-cv-377-TJC-PRL · Decided December 10, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida granted Sheriff Billy Woods’s amended motion for final summary judgment in Velvet Ann Saulsberry’s action. The court rejected Saulsberry’s retaliation claims under Title VII and the Florida Civil Rights Act, finding no causal connection between her prior litigation and the Sheriff’s conduct, and rejected her inverse-condemnation claim concerning disputed access to her property. The court denied as moot Saulsberry’s motion to bifurcate trial and directed the Clerk to close the case.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida, Ocala Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Timothy J. Corrigan
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida, Ocala Division
DECIDED	December 10, 2025
DOCKET	5:23-cv-377-TJC-PRL
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Defendant moved for amended final summary judgment on the plaintiff's retaliation and inverse-condemnation claims.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 56(a), summary judgment is proper when there is no genuine dispute as to any material fact and the movant is entitled to judgment as a matter of law. The evidence is construed in the light most favorable to the nonmovant, but the court need not draw implausible inferences and may disregard testimony clearly contradicted by a valid recording.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Nonprecedential federal district court order; precedential status not identified in the source metadata.

PARTIES

Velvet Ann Saulsberry v. Billy Woods, in his official capacity as Sheriff of Marion County

TOPICS

retaliation

title vii

summary judgment

civil rights

real estate

PRACTICE AREAS

employment law

civil rights

constitutional law

real property

civil procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Saulsberry presented sufficient evidence of a causal connection between her protected activity and an adverse action to survive summary judgment on her Title VII and Florida Civil Rights Act retaliation claim.
2. Whether the Sheriff's failure to issue or maintain trespass warnings and his warning concerning blockage of the disputed roadway constituted a compensable temporary taking of Saulsberry's property.

HOLDINGS

1. Summary judgment was warranted because Saulsberry failed to present evidence connecting her prior discrimination litigation or other protected activity to the alleged adverse actions by the Sheriff.
2. The Sheriff's refusal or failure to resolve the disputed access rights, including not issuing or rescinding trespass warnings and cautioning Saulsberry against blocking access, did not constitute a taking of her property.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The interaction with officers was more than three years after Saulsberry’s employment ended and well over a year after her lawsuit was filed.” (II.B)

“In short, the property rights were unclear, and the Sheriff did not take a side—it deferred to the county’s opinion.” (II.C)

“Defendant Woods’ Amended Motion for Final Summary Judgment, Doc. 64, is GRANTED. The Clerk should enter judgment in favor of Defendant Billy Woods and against Plaintiff Velvet Ann Saulsberry.” (Order)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Saulsberry, a Black former employee of the Marion County Sheriff's Office, had filed an earlier lawsuit alleging race discrimination in her failure to receive a promotion and her 2018 termination. After purchasing nearly three acres in 2021, she disputed neighbors' use of a dirt roadway on or near her property and installed fence posts to block access. Sheriff’s deputies and county employees responded; county personnel concluded the posts should be removed based on records, signage, safety concerns, and ongoing public use, and a deputy warned that blocking a roadway deemed public could result in arrest. The Sheriff later declined or rescinded some trespass

warnings against neighbors, and Saulsberry alleged that these actions retaliated against her and effected a temporary taking of her property.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Saulsberry sued Sheriff Billy Woods alleging retaliation for her earlier employment-discrimination litigation and interference with her property rights. The court considered the parties' summary-judgment briefing and granted Woods's amended motion for final summary judgment on both remaining claims, denied the plaintiff's motion to bifurcate and modify the scheduling order as moot, entered judgment for Woods, and closed the case.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Caldwell v. Warden, FCI Talladega, 748 F.3d 1090, 1098 (11th Cir. 2014)
- Brooks v. Miller, 78 F.4th 1267, 1278 (11th Cir. 2023)
- Mize v. Jefferson City Bd. of Ed., 93 F.3d 739, 743 (11th Cir. 1996)
- Kidd v. Mando Am. Corp., 731 F.3d 1196, 1211 (11th Cir. 2013)
- King v. HCA, 825 F. App'x 733, 736 n.2 (11th Cir. 2020)
- Burlington N. & Santa Fe Ry. Co. v. White, 548 U.S. 53, 68 (2006)
- Muldrow v. City of St. Louis, 601 U.S. 346, 357 (2024)
- Grant v. Miami-Dade Cnty. Water & Sewer Dep't, 636 F. App'x 462, 468-69 (11th Cir. 2015)
- Higdon v. Jackson, 393 F.3d 1211, 1220 (11th Cir. 2004)
- Chandler v. Sheriff, Walton Cnty., No. 22-13698, 2023 WL 7297918, at *2 (11th Cir. Nov. 6, 2023)
- Drago v. Jenne, 453 F.3d 1301, 1308 (11th Cir. 2006)
- Wideman v. Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., 141 F.3d 1453, 1457 (11th Cir. 1998)
- Chmielewski v. City of St. Pete Beach, 890 F.3d 942, 949 (11th Cir. 2018)
- Cedar Point Nursery v. Hassid, 594 U.S. 139, 149 (2021)
- Alford v. Walton Cnty., 159 F.4th 844 (11th Cir. 2025)
- United States v. Miller, 659 F.2d 1029 (10th Cir. 1981)