

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF  
VIRGINIA, ROANOKE DIVISION

Thomas Jeff Henry v. S.W.V.R.J. — Duffield

Henry · No. 7:25-cv-00341 · Decided April 21, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia dismisses Thomas Jeff Henry’s 42 U.S.C. § 1983 complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A for failure to state a claim. The court concludes that the named jail is not a person subject to suit under § 1983 and that the complaint contains only conclusory allegations without factual details regarding the alleged unlawful arrest or civil-rights violations.

CASE DETAILS

|                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| COURT                 | United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia, Roanoke Division                                                                                                                                                     |
| WRITING FOR THE COURT | Robert S. Ballou                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| JURISDICTION          | United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia, Roanoke Division                                                                                                                                                     |
| DECIDED               | April 21, 2026                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| DOCKET                | 7:25-cv-00341                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| DISPOSITION           | dismissed                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| PROCEDURAL POSTURE    | A Virginia prisoner proceeding pro se filed a 42 U.S.C. § 1983 complaint. Upon preliminary screening under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, the district court dismissed the complaint for failure to state a claim upon which relief may be granted. |
| STANDARD OF REVIEW    | At § 1915A screening, the court accepts factual allegations as true but need not accept legal conclusions or conclusory statements; the complaint must state a claim upon which relief may be granted.                                  |
| PRECEDENTIAL VALUE    | nonprecedential                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| PARTIES               | Thomas Jeff Henry v. S.W.V.R.J. — Duffield                                                                                                                                                                                              |

TOPICS

- prisoners rights
- section 1983
- pleadings
- civil procedure

## PRACTICE AREAS

prisoner civil rights

civil procedure

constitutional law

## QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the complaint stated a claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 against the named jail.
2. Whether the complaint contained sufficient factual allegations to state a claim for relief under § 1983.

## HOLDINGS

1. A jail is not a person within the meaning of 42 U.S.C. § 1983 and lacks the capacity to be sued under that statute.
2. A § 1983 complaint must provide factual allegations supporting an entitlement to relief, including facts identifying the alleged constitutional violation and, where applicable, each defendant's personal involvement; conclusory assertions that an arrest was unlawful and rights were violated are insufficient.

## KEY QUOTATIONS

*“A jail is not a person within the meaning of § 1983 and lacks the capacity to be sued.”*

*“The Complaint is lacking any factual allegations, only the legal conclusion that his arrest was unlawful and that his rights have been violated.”*

## FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Henry, a Virginia prisoner, alleged only that he had been unlawfully arrested and detained and that his civil rights had been violated. He named S.W.V.R.J. — Duffield, a jail, as the defendant. The complaint did not identify facts concerning the arrest, the alleged civil-rights violation, the constitutional rights implicated, or any defendant's personal involvement.

## PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Henry filed a complaint alleging that he had been unjustly and illegally arrested and detained and that his civil rights had been violated. The district court conducted the required preliminary review under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A and dismissed the action because the complaint named a jail that is not a suable person under § 1983 and contained no factual allegations supporting a constitutional violation.

## DISPOSITION

dismissed

## CASES CITED

- Loftus v. Bobzien, 848 F.3d 278, 284-85 (4th Cir. 2017)
- McCoy v. Chesapeake Corr. Ctr., 788 F. Supp. 890, 893-94 (E.D. Va. 1992)
- Wilcox v. Brown, 877 F.3d 161, 170 (4th Cir. 2017)

- Langford v. Joyner, 62 F.4th 122, 124 (4th Cir. 2023)

## OPINION

CLERKS OFFICE US DISTRICT COURT AT ROANOKE, VA FILED IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT April 21, 2026 FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA aay f MP. BY: /S, » FO ROANOKE DIVISION DEPUTY CLERK” THOMAS JEFF HENRY, ) Plaintiff, ) Civil Action No. 7:25cv00341 ) v. ) MEMORANDUM OPINION ) S.W.V.R.J. — DUFFIELD, ) By: Robert S. Ballou Defendant. ) United States District Judge Thomas Jeff Henry, a Virginia prisoner proceeding pro se, has filed this action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, alleging that he has “unjustly and illegally been arrested and detained, and civil rights have been violated.” Compl., p. 2.

Having preliminarily reviewed this matter as required by 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, I will dismiss his Complaint for failing to state a claim upon which relief may be granted. Section 1983 provides a cause of action against a “person” who, acting under color of state law violates the constitutional rights of another. 42 U.S.C. § 1983; Loftus v. Bobzien, 848 F.3d 278, 284-85 (4th Cir.

2017). A jail is not a person within the meaning of § 1983 and lacks the capacity to be sued. McCoy v. Chesapeake Corr. Ctr, 788 F. Supp. 890, 893-94 (E.D. Va. 1992). Further, if Henry identified proper defendants, he would be required to plead factual details about each defendant’s personal involvement in the violation of his rights. Wilcox v. Brown, 877 F.3d 161, 170 (4th Cir.

2017). In determining whether his Complaint states a valid cause of action, I must accept all of Henry’s factual allegations as true, but I am not required to accept legal conclusions or conclusory statements. Langford v. Joyner, 62 F.4th 122, 124 (4th Cir. 2023).

The Complaint is lacking any factual allegations, only the legal conclusion that his arrest was unlawful and that his rights have been violated. He provides no facts from which the court can infer that he is entitled to relief, no facts about what happened during his arrest to make it unlawful, no facts about how his civil rights have been violated, and no indication of which rights have been violated.

I will dismiss this case for failing state a claim for which relief may be granted. An appropriate order will be entered this day. Enter: April 21, 2026 //s/ Robert S. Ballou Robert S. Ballou United States District Judge