

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF ALASKA

Loren J. Larson Jr. v. Jonathan Barcus, et al.

Larson v. Barcus · No. 3:25-cv-00296-SLG · Decided February 12, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Alaska screened Loren J. Larson Jr.'s complaint alleging violations of the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act. The court found plausible claims sufficient to proceed, directed the defendants to answer or otherwise respond within 21 days, and issued instructions concerning filings, service, copies, address changes, and compliance with court rules.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Alaska
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Sharon L. Gleason
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Alaska
DECIDED	February 12, 2026
DOCKET	3:25-cv-00296-SLG
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Screening order in a removed action originally filed in state court by a self-represented prisoner. The court screened the First Amended Complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e) and directed the defendants to answer or otherwise respond.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court applied the screening standard under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e), liberally construing the self-represented prisoner's allegations and determining whether the complaint stated plausible claims sufficient to proceed past the screening stage.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown; district court screening order designated per curiam, with no reporter citation or published precedential designation in the source.

TOPICS

- pleadings
- motions to dismiss
- service of process
- prisoners rights
- civil rights

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the First Amended Complaint stated a plausible claim under the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act sufficient to proceed past screening under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e).
2. Whether Barcus's appearance through counsel affected service or otherwise supported directing the defendants to respond.
3. What procedural and filing requirements should govern the action going forward.

HOLDINGS

1. Liberally construed, the First Amended Complaint states a plausible claim under the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act and may proceed to the next stage of litigation.
2. The preliminary screening determination does not preclude defendants from challenging the sufficiency of the complaint through a motion to dismiss under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6) or another appropriate motion.
3. A notice of appearance filed in federal court does not by itself waive service of process, but an appearance ordinarily constitutes an overt act by which a party comes into court and submits to the court's jurisdiction.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Liberally construed, Plaintiff’s Complaint states a plausible claim under the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act, 42 U.S.C. §2000cc et seq.”

“The Court’s preliminary screening determination does not preclude Defendants from challenging the sufficiency of the complaint by way of a motion to dismiss under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6) or other appropriate motion.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Self-represented prisoner Loren J. Larson Jr. alleged that Zane Nighswonger and Jonathan Barcus violated his rights under the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act. Nighswonger removed the action from state court to federal court, and Barcus appeared through counsel. The court determined that the First Amended Complaint contained some plausible claims.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff originally filed the action in state court, and Defendant Zane Nighswonger removed it to federal court on October 23, 2025. Plaintiff alleged that Nighswonger and Jonathan Barcus violated the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act. After screening the First Amended Complaint, the court found some plausible claims and allowed the case to proceed, while preserving defendants' ability to file a motion to dismiss or another appropriate motion.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- *Hebbe v. Pliler*, 627 F.3d 338, 342 (9th Cir. 2010)
- *Wilhelm v. Rotman*, 680 F.3d 1113, 1123 (9th Cir. 2012)
- *Benny v. Pipes*, 799 F.2d 489, 492 (9th Cir. 1986), amended, 807 F.2d 1514 (9th Cir. 1987)
- *Norsworthy v. Beard*, 87 F. Supp. 3d 1104, 1111 n.4 (N.D. Cal. 2015)
- *Teahan v. Wilhelm*, 481 F. Supp. 2d 1115, 1119 (S.D. Cal. 2007)

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