

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF
NORTH CAROLINA, STATESVILLE DIVISION

Christopher Teran Walker v. Patricia Blackburn, et al.

No. 5:26-cv-00051-KDB (W.D.N.C. Mar. 18, 2026) · No. 5:26-cv-00051-KDB · Decided March 19, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Western District of North Carolina conducted an initial review of Christopher Teran Walker’s prisoner civil rights complaint under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e) and 1915A. The court dismissed the claims against Patricia Blackburn and dismissed the excessive-force claim against Billy Ellis, but allowed Walker’s individual-capacity Eighth Amendment medical deliberate-indifference claim against Ellis to proceed.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Western District of North Carolina, Statesville Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Kenneth D. Bell
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Western District of North Carolina, Statesville Division
DECIDED	March 19, 2026
DOCKET	5:26-cv-00051-KDB
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Initial review of a pro se prisoner's complaint filed in forma pauperis under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e) and 1915A.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2) and 1915A, the court reviews an in forma pauperis prisoner's complaint and must dismiss claims that are frivolous, malicious, fail to state a claim, or seek monetary relief from an immune defendant. The court liberally construes a pro se complaint but does not disregard a clear failure to allege facts supporting a cognizable federal claim.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished district court memorandum of decision and order on initial review; persuasive but not generally precedential.
PARTIES	Christopher Teran Walker v. Patricia Blackburn, Billy Ellis

TOPICS

prisoners rights

section 1983

cruel and unusual punishment

eleventh amendment immunity

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil rights litigation

prisoner civil rights

constitutional law

federal civil procedure

Section 1983 litigation

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the complaint stated a claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 against Blackburn in her official capacity for monetary damages.
2. Whether Walker's allegations stated an Eighth Amendment excessive-force claim against Ellis.
3. Whether Walker's allegations stated an Eighth Amendment medical deliberate-indifference claim against Ellis.
4. Whether the complaint should survive initial review under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e) and 1915A.

HOLDINGS

1. A state official sued in her official capacity is not a person subject to a damages action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, and the Eleventh Amendment independently bars monetary-damages claims against the State of North Carolina and its agencies. Walker's official-capacity claim against Blackburn therefore failed initial review and was dismissed.
2. The complaint did not state an Eighth Amendment excessive-force claim because Walker did not allege circumstances showing that Ellis acted with a sufficiently culpable state of mind when he used pepper spray.
3. Walker sufficiently stated an individual-capacity Eighth Amendment medical deliberate-indifference claim against Ellis to pass initial review.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“To establish an Eighth Amendment claim, an inmate must satisfy both an objective component—that the harm inflicted was sufficiently serious—and a subjective component—that the prison official acted with a sufficiently culpable state of mind.” (III)

“The Court, therefore, will dismiss this claim against Defendant Ellis on initial review. The Court will, however, allow Plaintiff’s medical deliberate indifference claim past initial review as not clearly frivolous.” (III)

“IT IS, THEREFORE, ORDERED that all claims asserted in this matter are hereby DISMISSED for failure to state a claim, except for Plaintiff’s individual capacity Eighth Amendment medical deliberate indifference claim against Defendant Ellis, which passes initial review.” (IV)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Walker, a state prisoner with type 2 insulin-dependent diabetes, alleged that Billy Ellis pepper-sprayed him on October 23, 2024, while Walker was experiencing elevated blood sugar and could not comply with commands. Walker further alleged that Ellis failed to provide medical treatment after the pepper spraying and that, after more than six hours without treatment, Walker lost all sight in his left eye. Walker sued Patricia Blackburn in her official capacity and Ellis in both his individual and official capacities, seeking monetary relief.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Walker filed a complaint alleging that prison officials violated the Eighth Amendment through excessive force and deliberate indifference to serious medical needs. The court conducted mandatory initial review, dismissed the official-capacity claims against Blackburn and the excessive-force claim against Ellis, dismissed the remaining claims, and allowed Walker's individual-capacity medical deliberate-indifference claim against Ellis to proceed. The clerk was directed to initiate waiver-of-service procedures for Ellis.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319, 327-28 (1989)
- Haines v. Kerner, 404 U.S. 519, 520 (1972)
- Weller v. Department of Social Services, 901 F.2d 387 (4th Cir.)
- American Manufacturers Mutual Insurance Co. v. Sullivan, 526 U.S. 40, 49-50 (1999)
- Health & Hospital Corp. of Marion County v. Talevski, 599 U.S. 166, 143 S. Ct. 1444 (2023)
- Will v. Department of State Police, 491 U.S. 58, 71 (1989)
- Allen v. Cooper, No. 1:19-cv-794, 2019 WL 6255220, at *2 (M.D.N.C. Nov. 22, 2019)
- Ballenger v. Owens, 352 F.3d 842, 844-45 (4th Cir.)
- Whitley v. Albers, 475 U.S. 312, 319-21 (1986)
- Williams v. Benjamin, 77 F.3d 756, 761 (4th Cir.)
- Wilkins v. Gaddy, 559 U.S. 34, 38 (2010)
- Estelle v. Gamble, 429 U.S. 97, 104 (1976)
- Farmer v. Brennan, 511 U.S. 825, 837 (1994)
- Johnson v. Quinones, 145 F.3d 164, 167 (4th Cir.)
- DePaola v. Clarke, 884 F.3d 481, 486 (4th Cir.)
- Iko v. Shreve, 535 F.3d 225, 241, 243 (4th Cir.)