

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

Thomas W. Croome v. Sandra Amoia, et al.

6:26-CV-6008 EAW · No. 6:26-CV-6008 EAW · Decided January 15, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Western District of New York administratively terminated Thomas W. Croome’s 42 U.S.C. § 1983 action because he neither paid the filing and administrative fees nor submitted an application to proceed in forma pauperis. The court granted him 30 days to reopen the action by submitting a complete in forma pauperis application or paying the required \$405 total, and deferred statutory screening until reopening.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Western District of New York
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Elizabeth A. Wolford
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Western District of New York
DECIDED	January 15, 2026
DOCKET	6:26-CV-6008 EAW
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Pro se prisoner filed a 42 U.S.C. § 1983 complaint without paying the filing and administrative fees or submitting an application to proceed in forma pauperis.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court order
PARTIES	Thomas W. Croome v. Sandra Amoia, et al.

TOPICS

- civil procedure
- prisoners rights
- section 1983

PRACTICE AREAS

- civil procedure
- prisoner civil rights
- in forma pauperis proceedings

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the court may administratively terminate a prisoner's civil action when the prisoner neither pays the required filing and administrative fees nor submits an application to proceed in forma pauperis.
2. Whether mandatory prisoner screening under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2) and 1915A should occur before the action is properly commenced.

HOLDINGS

1. When a prisoner commencing a civil action neither pays the required filing and administrative fees nor submits an application to proceed in forma pauperis, the Clerk may administratively terminate the action without filing the complaint or assessing a filing fee, subject to reopening upon compliance with the court's requirements.
2. The court may defer screening under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2) and 1915A until an administratively terminated prisoner action is reopened after proper commencement.
3. Administrative termination under the order is not a dismissal for statute-of-limitations purposes, and the action may be reopened within the specified period upon compliance with the order.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“the Clerk of Court shall administratively terminate this action without filing the complaint or assessing a filing fee” (ORDER)

“Such an administrative termination is not a “dismissal” for purposes of the statute of limitations.” (II n.5)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Thomas W. Croome, a prisoner confined at the Erie County Correctional Facility, filed a complaint asserting claims under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. He neither paid the \$350 filing fee and \$55 administrative fee nor submitted an application to proceed in forma pauperis. Because the action was not properly commenced, the court deferred statutory prisoner screening under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2) and 1915A.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff commenced a civil action in the Western District of New York but did not pay the required fees or submit an in forma pauperis application. The court ordered the Clerk to administratively terminate the action without filing the complaint or assessing a filing fee, while granting Plaintiff 30 days to reopen the case by submitting a complete in forma pauperis application or paying the required fees.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- *Houston v. Lack*, 487 U.S. 266 (1988)
- *McDowell v. Delaware State Police*, 88 F.3d 188, 191 (3d Cir. 1996)

- Williams-Guice v. Board of Education, 45 F.3d 161, 163 (7th Cir. 1995)

OPINION

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT WESTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK THOMAS W. CROOME, Plaintiff, ORDER v. 6:26-CV-6008 EAW SANDRA AMOIA, et al., Defendants. Pro se plaintiff Thomas W. Croome (“Plaintiff”) is confined at the Erie County Correctional Facility. He filed a complaint asserting claims under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, (Dkt. 1), but he did not pay the filing fee or submit an application to proceed in forma pauperis (that is, as someone who should have the prepayment of the ordinary filing fee waived because he cannot afford it).

As set forth below, the Clerk of Court shall administratively terminate this action. If Plaintiff wishes to reopen this case, he must notify the Court in writing within 30 days of the date of this Order and must include either (1) a complete application to proceed in forma pauperis or (2) the \$350.00 filing fee and the \$55.00 administrative fee (\$405.00 total).

DISCUSSION A party commencing a civil action in this Court ordinarily must pay a \$350.00 filing fee as well as a \$55.00 administrative fee.¹ See 28 U.S.C. § 1914; Judicial Conference Schedule of Fees, District Court Miscellaneous Fee Schedule;² Western District of New York, District Court Schedule of Fees.³ If a “prisoner” (as defined in 28 U.S.C. § 1915(h)) wishes to commence a civil action, the prisoner must either (1) pay those fees or (2) obtain permission to proceed in forma pauperis, under 28 U.S.C. § 1915.

I. REQUIREMENTS FOR IN FORMA PAUPERIS APPLICATION The Prison Litigation Reform Act of 1995, Pub. L. No. 104-134, 110 Stat. 1321 (April 26, 1996), which amended 28 U.S.C. § 1915, established certain requirements that a prisoner must meet in order to proceed in forma pauperis. Those requirements are summarized below. 1 Effective May 1, 2013, the Judicial Conference of the United States added an administrative fee to the cost of filing a civil lawsuit in district court.

See September 2012 Report of the Proceedings of the Judicial Conference of the United States, available at <http://www.uscourts.gov/about-federal-courts/reports-proceedings-judicial-conference-us>. But this additional administrative fee does not apply to prisoners who are granted permission to proceed in forma pauperis. See generally *id.* Effective December 1, 2023, this fee was increased to \$55.00.

See <https://www.uscourts.gov/services-forms/fees/district-court-miscellaneous-fee-schedule>. 2 Available at <http://www.uscourts.gov/services-forms/fees/district-court-miscellaneous-fee-schedule>. 3 Available at <http://www.nywd.uscourts.gov/fee-schedule>. A. Supporting Affidavit or Affirmation Under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(1), a prisoner seeking to bring a civil action in forma pauperis must submit an affidavit or affirmation detailing the prisoner’s assets and liabilities and swearing under oath that the prisoner is unable to pay the \$350.00 filing fee.

A motion to proceed in forma pauperis should be supported by such an affidavit or affirmation filed at the same time as the complaint. The United States District Court for the Western District of New York has made available a form motion to proceed in forma pauperis with supporting affirmation that is designed to help pro se litigants (such as the Plaintiff here) comply with 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(1).

B. Certification of Inmate Trust Fund Account Under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(2), a prisoner seeking to proceed in forma pauperis also must submit a certified copy of the prisoner's inmate trust fund account statement (or an institutional equivalent) for the six months immediately before the prisoner's complaint was filed.

The prisoner must obtain this certified account statement from the appropriate official at each correctional facility where the prisoner was confined during that six-month period. See 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(2). Alternatively, the prisoner may have prison officials complete and sign the "Prison Certification Section" of the court's form motion referred to above.

In the "Prison Certification Section," prison officials provide the information in the prisoner's trust fund account statement required by 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(2). C. Authorization Form A prisoner seeking to proceed in forma pauperis also is required to submit a signed authorization form,⁴ permitting the institution in which the prisoner is confined to pay—over time, if necessary—the \$350.00 filing fee from the prisoner's trust fund account (or institutional equivalent).

See 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1)-(4). In other words, even if the prisoner is granted in forma pauperis status, the prisoner must pay the full \$350.00 filing fee in installments. See 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1)-(2). The initial payment will be 20% of the average monthly deposits to the prisoner's account or 20% of the average monthly balance in the prisoner's account for the six-month period immediately preceding the filing of the complaint, whichever is greater.

See 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1). For each month after that, as long as the amount in the prisoner's account exceeds \$10.00, the agency having custody of the prisoner will deduct from the prisoner's account and forward to the Clerk of Court an installment payment equal to 20% of the preceding month's income that was credited to the prisoner's account. See 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(2).

Those payments continue until the \$350.00 fee is paid in full. Id. II. ADMINISTRATIVE TERMINATION OF THIS ACTION Here, Plaintiff did not pay the \$350.00 filing fee or the \$55.00 administrative fee that ordinarily is required to commence a civil action. Nor did he submit an application to proceed in forma pauperis. See 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(1)-(2).

Therefore, the Clerk of Court ⁴ Available at <http://www.nywd.uscourts.gov/pro-se-forms>. shall administratively terminate this action⁵ without filing the complaint or assessing a filing fee, as ordered below. As also ordered below, Plaintiff is granted leave to reopen this action no later than 30 days from the date of this Order. III. DEFERMENT OF SCREENING UNDER 28 U.S.C. §§

1915(e)(2) & 1915A The court is required to screen civil actions filed by prisoners and dismiss them if they: (1) are frivolous or malicious; (2) fail to state a claim upon which relief may be granted; or (3) seek monetary relief against a defendant who is immune from such relief.

See 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2); 28 U.S.C. § 1915A; see also 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(c) (dismissal of prisoner actions brought with respect to prison conditions). Because Plaintiff did not properly commence this action, this Court will defer the mandatory screening process until this case is reopened—if, in fact, it is reopened. If this action is reopened and then dismissed, installment payments of the filing fee under 28 U.S.C. § 1915 will not be suspended, and the prisoner will not be permitted to obtain a refund of the filing fee or any part of it that already has been paid.

5 Such an administrative termination is not a “dismissal” for purposes of the statute of limitations. Therefore, if the case is reopened under the terms of this order, it is not subject to the statute of limitations time bar as long as it originally was timely filed. See *Houston v. Lack*, 487 U.S. 266 (1988) (prisoner mailbox rule); *McDowell v. Del. State Police*, 88 F.3d 188, 191 (3d Cir.

1996); see also *Williams-Guice v. Bd. of Educ.*, 45 F.3d 161, 163 (7th Cir. 1995). ORDER IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the Clerk of Court shall administratively terminate this action without filing the complaint or assessing a filing fee; and it is further ORDERED that the Clerk of Court is directed to send to Plaintiff a form motion to proceed in forma pauperis and an authorization form; and it is further ORDERED that if Plaintiff wishes to reopen this action, he shall so notify this Court, in writing, no later than 30 days from the date of this Order.

This writing must include either (1) a complete application to proceed in forma pauperis or (2) the \$350.00 filing fee and the \$55.00 administrative fee (\$405.00 total); and it is further ORDERED that upon Plaintiff's submission of either (1) a complete application to proceed in forma pauperis or (2) the \$350.00 filing fee and the \$55.00 administrative fee (\$405.00 total) the Clerk of Court shall reopen this case without further order.

SO ORDERED. Dated: January 15, 2026 Rochester, New York) fi ELIZABETH 4/WOLRORD
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