

COURT OF APPEALS OF OHIO, SIXTH APPELLATE DISTRICT, LUCAS COUNTY

State ex rel. Harris v. Copley

2025-Ohio-5558 · No. L-25-00224 · Decided December 12, 2025

SUMMARY

The Sixth District Court of Appeals dismissed John Harris’s petition for a writ of mandamus against a Toledo Correctional Institution business office supervisor. The court held that Harris’s requests for the full names of three officers sought information rather than specific public records and therefore did not constitute valid requests under Ohio’s Public Records Act. The court dismissed the petition with prejudice and assessed costs to Harris.

CASE DETAILS

|                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| COURT                 | Court of Appeals of Ohio, Sixth Appellate District, Lucas County                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| WRITING FOR THE COURT | Charles E. Sulek, P.J.; Christine E. Mayle, J.; Myron C. Duhart, J.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| JURISDICTION          | Ohio Court of Appeals, Sixth Appellate District, Lucas County                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| DECIDED               | December 12, 2025                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| DOCKET                | L-25-00224                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| DISPOSITION           | dismissed                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| PROCEDURAL POSTURE    | Original mandamus action in which the respondent moved under Civ.R. 12(B)(6) to dismiss the relator's petition seeking access to the names of three correctional officers as public records.                                                                                                                               |
| STANDARD OF REVIEW    | On a Civ.R. 12(B)(6) motion, the court tests the sufficiency of the complaint, accepts factual allegations as true, and draws reasonable inferences in favor of the nonmoving party; dismissal is proper only when it appears beyond doubt that the plaintiff can prove no set of facts entitling the plaintiff to relief. |
| PRECEDENTIAL VALUE    | published                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| PARTIES               | John Harris, relator v. R. Copley, respondent                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

TOPICS

- motions to dismiss
- appellate procedure
- remedies
- statutory interpretation
- civil procedure

## PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

appellate procedure

public records

mandamus

statutory interpretation

## QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Harris's requests for the full names of three officers constituted valid public-records requests under R.C. 149.43.
2. Whether Harris could establish a clear legal right to the requested information and a clear legal duty requiring Copley to provide it.
3. Whether Copley's Civ.R. 12(B)(6) motion should be granted.

## HOLDINGS

1. A request for the names of three officers, without requesting a specific existing record such as the database or list maintained under R.C. 149.434(A), is a request for information rather than a valid public-records request under R.C. 149.43.
2. Because Harris did not submit a valid public-records request, he could not demonstrate a clear legal right to the requested information or a clear legal duty on Copley's part to provide it.
3. The Civ.R. 12(B)(6) motion was well taken, and Harris's mandamus petition was dismissed with prejudice.

## KEY QUOTATIONS

*"These are requests for information, not for the list required to be maintained under R.C. 149.434(A)." (¶ 8)*

*"Accordingly, because Harris did not submit a valid public-records request under R.C. 149.43, he cannot demonstrate a clear legal right to the information and a clear legal duty on the part of Copley to provide it." (¶ 9)*

## FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Harris, an inmate, requested the full names of three officers from the Toledo Correctional Institution. His requests sought "Officer Soto whole name," "Officer William's whole name," and "Officer Rector's whole name," rather than a specified database, list, or other record. Copley argued that the requests sought information and would require creation of a new record, while Harris argued that they sought records maintained under Ohio's public-records statutes.

## PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Harris filed an original petition for a writ of mandamus to compel Copley to comply with public-records requests for the full names of three officers. The court previously ordered Harris to file the required Financial Disclosure/Affidavit of Indigency, but he did not do so. Although the motion to dismiss was filed before issuance of an alternative writ and before the filing deadline expired, the court reached the merits because the parties had fully briefed the issue and dismissed the petition with prejudice.

## DISPOSITION

dismissed

## CASES CITED

- Fisher v. Smith & Lehrer Co., L.P.A., 2024-Ohio-1177, ¶ 11
- NZR Retail of Toledo, Inc. v. Beck Suppliers, Inc., 2016-Ohio-3205, ¶ 12
- Ohio Bur. of Workers' Comp. v. McKinley, 2011-Ohio-4432, ¶ 12
- Alford v. Collins-McGregor Operating Co., 2018-Ohio-8, ¶ 10
- State ex rel. Snodgrass v. Trumbull Correctional Institution, 2025-Ohio-4688, ¶ 10
- State ex rel. Clark v. Dept. of Rehab. & Corr., 2024-Ohio-770, ¶ 6
- State ex rel. Ware v. Akron Police Dept., 2025-Ohio-1198, ¶ 14
- State ex rel. Griffin v. Sehlmeier, 2021-Ohio-3624, ¶ 5

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