

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF ALASKA

Dustin Thomas House Darden v. Suzanne LaFrance, in her individual capacity and official capacity as Mayor of Anchorage, et al.

Darden v. LaFrance, Case No. 3:26-cv-00053-SLG (D. Alaska Mar. 16, 2026) · No. 3:26-cv-00053-SLG ·
Decided March 16, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Alaska considers five pending motions in Dustin Thomas House Darden v. Suzanne LaFrance, et al., arising from Darden’s removal from an Anchorage Assembly meeting and subsequent exclusion from another meeting. The court addresses requests for temporary and preliminary injunctive relief, expedited consideration, an extension of time, and entry of default. Based on the record excerpt, the court concludes that Darden had not shown a likelihood of success or irreparable harm sufficient to warrant preliminary relief.

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	March 16, 2026
DOCKET	3:26-cv-00053-SLG
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff sought a temporary restraining order and a preliminary injunction concerning his removal from an Anchorage Assembly meeting and exclusion from a later meeting. The court also considered motions concerning expedited consideration, an extension of time to answer the amended complaint, and entry of default.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	A temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction require the movant to establish likely success on the merits, likely irreparable harm absent relief, that the balance of equities favors relief, and that an injunction is in the public interest. When the government is a party, the balance-of-equities and public-interest factors merge. Under the Ninth Circuit's serious-questions approach, relief may issue upon serious questions going to the merits and a sharp balance of hardships in the plaintiff's favor, but all Winter factors must still be satisfied. A court

	may extend a filing deadline for good cause under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 6(b)(1), including excusable neglect.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown; district court order addressing interlocutory motions for emergency injunctive relief and case-management relief.
PARTIES	Dustin Thomas House Darden v. Suzanne LaFrance, in her individual and official capacities as Mayor of Anchorage, et al.

TOPICS

injunctions first amendment free speech open government civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

constitutional law civil rights civil procedure municipal law remedies

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Darden established a likelihood of success or serious questions on his First Amendment claim that his removal from the January 13, 2026 Anchorage Assembly meeting was unconstitutional.
2. Whether Darden established a likelihood of success or serious questions on his claims under the Alaska Open Meetings Act and related Anchorage municipal provisions.
3. Whether Darden demonstrated likely irreparable harm absent a temporary restraining order or preliminary injunction.
4. Whether Municipal Defendants showed good cause and excusable neglect warranting an extension of time to respond to the amended complaint.
5. Whether entry of default was appropriate after the court extended Municipal Defendants' response deadline.

HOLDINGS

1. Darden did not establish a likelihood of success or serious questions on the merits because the Assembly's restriction of his speech to the subject matter of the pending ordinance was reasonable and viewpoint neutral, and his removal followed repeated warnings that his testimony was not germane.
2. Darden did not establish a likelihood of success or serious questions on his claims that his removal from the January 13 meeting and exclusion from the January 27 meeting violated the Alaska Open Meetings Act or related Anchorage provisions.
3. Darden failed to demonstrate that irreparable harm was likely absent emergency injunctive relief.
4. Municipal Defendants demonstrated good cause and excusable neglect, so the court extended their deadline to respond to the amended complaint to March 24, 2026.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The Court finds that Plaintiff is not likely to succeed, nor has he shown serious questions on the merits, on his claim that his removal from the January 13, 2026 Assembly meeting violated the First Amendment.” (First Amendment discussion)

“A mere possibility of irreparable harm is not sufficient.” (Irreparable Harm discussion)

“Municipal Defendants shall respond to Plaintiff’s Amended Complaint by March 24, 2026.” (Conclusion)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

On January 13, 2026, Darden spoke during public-comment periods on four Anchorage Assembly agenda items. During the fourth item, concerning expansion of a streetlight service area, he discussed religious beliefs, citizenship, the pledge of allegiance, and constitutional rights after repeatedly being warned to keep his testimony germane to the ordinance; the Assembly chair then ordered security to remove him. Darden alleges that he was later excluded from the January 27 Assembly meeting, which included matters of interest to him as a declared school-board candidate. He sought emergency relief based on alleged speech restrictions, exclusion from meetings, and the anticipated printing of municipal-election ballots.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed an amended complaint asserting First, Fourth, and Fourteenth Amendment claims, municipal liability, declaratory and injunctive claims, and claims under Alaska and Anchorage law. He moved for emergency injunctive relief, while Municipal Defendants moved for extensions of time to respond. The court denied the temporary restraining order, preliminary injunction, and expedited-consideration motion; granted the extension to respond to the amended complaint; and denied the request for default.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Insight Psych. & Addiction, Inc. v. City of Costa Mesa, 801 F. Supp. 3d 942, 954 (C.D. Cal. 2025)
- Stuhlbarg Int’l Sales Co., Inc. v. John D. Brush & Co., Inc., 240 F.3d 832, 839 n.7 (9th Cir. 2001)
- Winter v. Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc., 555 U.S. 7, 20, 22 (2008)
- Drakes Bay Oyster Co. v. Jewell, 747 F.3d 1073, 1092 (9th Cir. 2014)
- Mazurek v. Armstrong, 520 U.S. 968, 972 (1997) (per curiam)
- All. for the Wild Rockies v. Cottrell, 632 F.3d 1127, 1131–32, 1135 (9th Cir. 2011)
- Friends of the Wild Swan v. Weber, 767 F.3d 936, 942 (9th Cir. 2014)
- Shell Offshore, Inc. v. Greenpeace, Inc., 709 F.3d 1281, 1291 (9th Cir. 2013)
- Ass’n des Eleveurs de Canards et d’Oies du Quebec v. Harris, 729 F.3d 937, 944 (9th Cir. 2013)
- United States v. Odessa Union Warehouse Co-op., 833 F.2d 172, 175 (9th Cir. 1987)
- Kindt v. Santa Monica Rent Control Bd., 67 F.3d 266, 271 (9th Cir. 1995)
- White v. City of Norwalk, 900 F.2d 1421, 1425 (9th Cir. 1990)

- Anchorage Sch. Dist. v. Anchorage Daily News, 779 P.2d 1191, 1193 (Alaska 1989)
- Monell v. Department of Social Services, 436 U.S. 658 (1978)
- Pioneer Inv. Servs. Co. v. Brunswick Assocs. Ltd. P'ship, 507 U.S. 380, 395 (1993)

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