

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF KANSAS

Roderick Coulter v. State of Kansas, et al.

Coulter v. State of Kansas, Case No. 26-3024-JWL · No. 26-3024-JWL · Decided May 29, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Kansas provisionally grants Roderick Coulter leave to proceed in forma pauperis but orders him to continue seeking the required inmate account statement. The court identifies deficiencies in his 42 U.S.C. § 1983 complaint, including insufficient factual allegations, failure to specify requested relief, and the naming of immune defendants. Coulter is granted until June 29, 2026, to show cause why the action should not be dismissed, file a complete amended complaint, and provide his current address.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Kansas
WRITING FOR THE COURT	John W. Lungstrum
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Kansas
DECIDED	May 29, 2026
DOCKET	26-3024-JWL
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Pro se prisoner civil-rights action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. The court issued a memorandum and order requiring Plaintiff to show cause why the complaint should not be dismissed and permitting him to file an amended complaint.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court screened the prisoner complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A and applied the Rule 12(b)(6)-type plausibility standard, accepting well-pleaded factual allegations as true and liberally construing the pro se pleading, while requiring sufficient factual matter to state a plausible claim for relief.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown; memorandum and order to show cause
PARTIES	Roderick Coulter v. State of Kansas, Judge Cameron

TOPICS

- section 1983
- prisoners rights
- pleadings
- civil procedure
- sovereign immunity

PRACTICE AREAS

civil rights

prisoner litigation

federal procedure

habeas corpus

constitutional law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the complaint stated a plausible claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 despite providing only bare and conclusory factual allegations.
2. Whether the complaint identified a cognizable remedy, including whether a challenge to the fact or duration of confinement must proceed under habeas rather than § 1983.
3. Whether the State of Kansas and a state court judge were proper defendants in a § 1983 action.
4. Whether Plaintiff should be given an opportunity to show cause and amend the complaint before dismissal.

HOLDINGS

1. The complaint was deficient because it did not adequately explain the factual basis of the claim, identify what each defendant did, or allege sufficient facts showing a federal constitutional violation.
2. A claim challenging the fact or duration of confinement, or seeking release or speedier release, must be brought through habeas corpus rather than § 1983; a § 1983 action may proceed for conditions-of-confinement claims.
3. If Plaintiff seeks damages for allegedly overserving his sentence and alleges only mental or emotional injury, 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(e) bars compensatory damages absent a prior showing of physical injury or the commission of a sexual act.
4. The State of Kansas is immune from suits for money damages under the Eleventh Amendment, and the state judge is absolutely immune from § 1983 liability for judicial acts unless acting in the clear absence of all jurisdiction.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“To state a claim under § 1983, a plaintiff must allege the violation of a right secured by the Constitution and laws of the United States, and must show that the alleged deprivation was committed by a person acting under color of state law.”

“A § 1983 action is a proper remedy for a state prisoner who is making a constitutional challenge to the conditions of his prison life, but not to the fact or length of his custody.”

“When the legality of a confinement is challenged so that the remedy would be release or a speedier release, the case must be filed as a habeas corpus proceeding rather than under 42 U.S.C. § 1983.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Coulter alleged that he served 720 days of jail time that he was not required to serve and stated that the State owed him those days. The opinion reviewed a Kansas appellate decision indicating that Coulter was entitled to credit on both charges for all time spent awaiting resolution of his case and that the matter was remanded for

resentencing. Coulter named the State of Kansas and a state district court judge but did not specify the relief sought or provide facts explaining each defendant's conduct.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed the action on February 11, 2026, and was directed to provide financial information supporting his motion to proceed in forma pauperis. The court provisionally granted in forma pauperis status after Plaintiff reported difficulty obtaining his inmate account statement, but required him to continue attempting to obtain it. Because an order was returned as undeliverable and Plaintiff had not responded to an order to show cause concerning his address, the court extended the response deadline and ordered Plaintiff to show cause or file a complete amended complaint curing the identified deficiencies.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- State v. Coulter, 2025 WL 2018351 (Kan. App. July 18, 2025)
- West v. Atkins, 487 U.S. 42, 48 (1988)
- Northington v. Jackson, 973 F.2d 1518, 1523 (10th Cir. 1992)
- Erickson v. Pardus, 551 U.S. 89, 94 (2007)
- Anderson v. Blake, 469 F.3d 910, 913 (10th Cir. 2006)
- Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 555, 558, 570 (2007)
- Hall v. Bellmon, 935 F.2d 1106, 1110 (10th Cir. 1991)
- Nasious v. Two Unknown B.I.C.E. Agents, 492 F.3d 1158, 1163 (10th Cir. 2007)
- Whitney v. New Mexico, 113 F.3d 1170, 1173-74 (10th Cir. 1997)
- Kay v. Bemis, 500 F.3d 1214, 1218 (10th Cir. 2007)
- Smith v. United States, 561 F.3d 1090, 1098 (10th Cir. 2009)
- Robbins v. Oklahoma, 519 F.3d 1242, 1247 (10th Cir. 2008)
- McIntosh v. U.S. Parole Commission, 115 F.3d 809, 811 (10th Cir. 1997)
- Preiser v. Rodriguez, 411 U.S. 475, 499 (1973)
- Heck v. Humphrey, 512 U.S. 477, 482 (1994)
- Garza v. Davis, 596 F.3d 1198, 1203 (10th Cir. 2010)
- Searles v. Van Bebber, 251 F.3d 869, 876 (10th Cir. 2001)
- Livingston v. Unified Government of Wyandotte County, 2023 WL 4560901, at *6 (D. Kan. July 17, 2023)
- Turner v. Schultz, 130 F. Supp. 2d 1216, 1222-24 (D. Colo. 2001)
- Livingston v. Unified Government of Wyandotte County, 2023 WL 567201, at *3 (D. Kan. Sept. 1, 2023)
- Archuleta v. Marshall, No. 00-2033, 2000 WL 1005245 (10th Cir. July 20, 2000)
- Hailey v. Kaiser, No. 99-7046, 1999 WL 1009614 (10th Cir. Nov. 8, 1999)

- Flanery v. Wagner, No. 98-3235, 1999 WL 314615 (10th Cir. May 19, 1999)
- Craig v. Eberly, 164 F.3d 490 (10th Cir. 1998)
- Peterson v. Martinez, 707 F.3d 1197, 1205 (10th Cir. 2013)
- Wagoner County Rural Water District No. 2 v. Grand River Dam Authority, 577 F.3d 1255, 1258 (10th Cir. 2009)
- Pennhurst State School & Hospital v. Halderman, 465 U.S. 89, 100 (1984)
- Quern v. Jordan, 440 U.S. 332, 338-45 (1979)
- Ruiz v. McDonnell, 299 F.3d 1173, 1181 (10th Cir. 2002)
- Stump v. Sparkman, 435 U.S. 349, 356-57 (1978)
- Hunt v. Bennett, 17 F.3d 1263, 1266 (10th Cir. 1994)

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