

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF
INDIANA

Ryan S. Watts v. Jackson and Liaw

Watts · No. 3:26-CV-121-PPS-AZ · Decided February 3, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of Indiana found that Ryan S. Watts's prisoner complaint concerning alleged healthcare issues was confusing and failed to state a claim for relief. The court granted Watts until March 9, 2026, to file an amended complaint and cautioned that the case would otherwise be dismissed under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of Indiana
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Philip P. Simon
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of Indiana
DECIDED	February 3, 2026
DOCKET	3:26-CV-121-PPS-AZ
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Screening of a pro se prisoner complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A. The court found that the complaint failed to state a claim but granted the plaintiff leave to amend.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The complaint must contain sufficient factual matter to state a claim for relief that is plausible on its face; conclusory allegations and allegations establishing only a mere possibility of misconduct are insufficient.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court opinion
PARTIES	Ryan S. Watts v. Jackson, Liaw

TOPICS

- pleadings
- motion to amend
- prisoners rights
- section 1983
- health law

PRACTICE AREAS

- civil procedure
- civil rights
- prisoner civil rights
- health law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the pro se prisoner's complaint alleged sufficient factual matter to state a plausible claim for relief.
2. Whether Watts should be given leave to amend rather than having the action dismissed immediately.

HOLDINGS

1. The complaint failed to state a claim for which relief can be granted because it did not clearly identify the claims, explain what happened, or allege how either defendant was involved in violating Watts's rights.
2. Watts was granted leave to file an amended complaint by March 9, 2026, because the court could not conclude that amendment would necessarily be futile at this early stage.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“A complaint must contain sufficient factual matter “to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.””

“A claim has facial plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged.”

“This complaint does not state a claim for which relief can be granted.”

“The usual standard in civil cases is to allow defective pleadings to be corrected, especially in early stages, at least where amendment would not be futile.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Watts alleged that he was approved for hernia surgery after being stabbed, apparently in 2024, and identified Dr. Jackson as the physician who approved the surgery. He did not clearly state whether the surgery occurred or explain Dr. Liaw's involvement. He also described other medical conditions, including a sharp bone under his right eye and sagging skin, but did not explain how those conditions related to the alleged healthcare violations.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Ryan S. Watts, a prisoner proceeding without a lawyer, filed a complaint concerning alleged deficiencies in his healthcare and the involvement of Drs. Jackson and Liaw. The district court concluded that the complaint was confusing and did not contain sufficient factual matter to state a plausible claim for relief. Rather than dismissing immediately, the court granted Watts until March 9, 2026, to file an amended complaint and warned that failure to do so would result in dismissal under § 1915A.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007)

- *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678-79 (2009)
- *Swanson v. Citibank, N.A.*, 614 F.3d 400, 403 (7th Cir. 2010)
- *Abu-Shawish v. United States*, 898 F.3d 726, 738 (7th Cir. 2018)

OPINION

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT NORTHERN DISTRICT OF INDIANA SOUTH BEND DIVISION RYAN S. WATTS, Plaintiff, v. CAUSE NO. 3:26-CV-121-PPS-AZ JACKSON, and LIAW, Defendants. OPINION AND ORDER Ryan S. Watts, a prisoner without a lawyer, filed a confusing complaint. ECF 1. It is clear he is concerned with his healthcare, but it is not clear what claims he is raising.

He says he was approved for hernia surgery after he was stabbed. It appears this happened in 2024 and that Dr. Jackson approved the surgery. Watts says he thought he might have a problem with his appendix. It is unclear if he ever had surgery. He mentions Dr. Liaw, but it is unclear how he was involved. He mentions two prior cases he filed in this court, 3:25-cv-467 and 3:25-cv-920, but it is unclear how they are related to this case or why he mentions them.

He says he can feel a sharp bone under his right eye and that his skin sags as if he had a stroke. It is unclear if or how this is related to his hernia surgery. It is clear Watts believes the defendants violated his rights, but I do not understand why because he has not fully explained what happened and how the defendants were involved. A complaint must contain sufficient factual matter “to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.” *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007). “A claim has facial plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged.” *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009) (citing *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 556). “Factual allegations must be enough to raise a right to relief above the speculative level, on the assumption that all the allegations in the complaint are true (even if doubtful in fact).” *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555 (quotation marks, citations and footnote omitted). “[W]here the well-pleaded facts do not permit the court to infer more than the mere possibility of misconduct, the complaint has alleged—but it has not shown—that the pleader is entitled to relief.” *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 679 (quotation marks and brackets omitted).

Thus, “a plaintiff must do better than putting a few words on paper that, in the hands of an imaginative reader, might suggest that something has happened to her that might be redressed by the law.” *Swanson v. Citibank, N.A.*, 614 F.3d 400, 403 (7th Cir. 2010) (emphasis in original). This complaint does not state a claim for which relief can be granted. If Watts believes he can state a claim based on (and consistent with) the events described in this complaint, he may file an amended complaint because “[t]he usual standard in civil cases is to allow defective pleadings to be corrected, especially in early stages, at least where amendment would not be futile.” *Abu-Shawish v. United States*, 898 F.3d 726, 738 (7th Cir.

2018). To file an amended complaint, he needs to write this cause number on a Pro Se 14 (INND Rev. 2/20) Prisoner Complaint form which is available from his law library. He needs to write the word “Amended” on the first page above the title “Prisoner Complaint” and send it to the court after he properly completes the form.

For these reasons, the court: (1) GRANTS Ryan S. Watts until March 9, 2026, to file an amended complaint; and (2) CAUTIONS Ryan S. Watts if he does not respond by the deadline, this case will be dismissed under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A without further notice because the current complaint does not state a claim for which relief can be granted. SO ORDERED. ENTERED: February 3, 2026. /s/ Philip P. Simon PHILIP P. SIMON, JUDGE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT