

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA

Christian Thomas Nealson v. Lt. Day, et al.

Nealson · No. 7:25-cv-00719 · Decided December 18, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia denied Christian Thomas Nealson’s motion requesting a three-judge panel and an order requiring his release from incarceration. The court held that 28 U.S.C. § 2284 did not authorize a three-judge panel in this § 1983 action and that habeas corpus, rather than § 1983, is the exclusive federal remedy for a state prisoner seeking release from confinement.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Michael F. Urbanski
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia
DECIDED	December 18, 2025
DOCKET	7:25-cv-00719
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The court considered the plaintiff's motion for a three-judge panel and for an order requiring his release from incarceration in a pending 42 U.S.C. § 1983 action.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court applied the statutory requirements governing convening a three-judge district court and the legal rule governing the availability of § 1983 relief for a prisoner seeking release from confinement.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown
PARTIES	Christian Thomas Nealson v. Lt. Day, et al.

TOPICS

- section 1983
- federal habeas corpus
- prisoners rights
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the court was required or authorized to convene a three-judge panel under 28 U.S.C. § 2284.
2. Whether an order requiring a state prisoner's release from incarceration is available as relief in a 42 U.S.C. § 1983 action.

HOLDINGS

1. A three-judge panel was not required because Nealson did not challenge the constitutionality or apportionment of a congressional district or statewide legislative body and identified no other statute authorizing such a panel.
2. An order requiring a state prisoner's actual release from confinement is not available under § 1983; habeas corpus is the exclusive federal remedy for that relief.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"A district court of three judges shall be convened when otherwise required by Act of Congress, or when an action is filed challenging the constitutionality or the apportionment of congressional districts or the apportionment of any statewide legislative body."

"Habeas corpus, and not § 1983, is the exclusive federal remedy for state prisoners seeking actual release from confinement."

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Christian Thomas Nealson is a Virginia inmate incarcerated at Green Rock Correctional Center. He filed a § 1983 action against correctional officers and sought a three-judge panel and an order requiring his release from prison.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Nealson, a Virginia inmate proceeding pro se, filed a § 1983 action against correctional officers at Green Rock Correctional Center. He then moved for a three-judge panel to hear a release motion; the district court denied the motion in its entirety.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Griffin v. Baltimore Police Department, 804 F.3d 692, 694-95 (4th Cir. 2015)
- Preiser v. Rodriguez, 411 U.S. 475, 487-90 (1973)
- Skinner v. Switzer, 562 U.S. 521, 525 (2011)

- *Wilkinson v. Dotson*, 544 U.S. 74, 82 (2005)

OPINION

Nealson

PER CURIAM.

CLERK'S OFFICE U.S. DIST. COL

AT ROANOKE, VA

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FILED

FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA December 18, 2025

ROANOKE DIVISION LAURA A. AUSTIN, CLERK

s/A. Beeson

CHRISTIAN THOMAS NEALSON, _) DEPUTY CLERK

Plaintiff,) Civil Action No. 7:25-cv-00719)) By: Michael F. Urbanski LT. DAY, et al.,) Senior
United States District Judge Defendants.)

ORDER

Christian Thomas Nealson, a Virginia inmate proceeding pro se, filed this civil action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 against correctional officers at Green Rock Correctional Center. The case is presently before the court on Nealson's "motion for three judge panel for release order." ECF No. 9. For the following reasons, the motion is DENIED. The requirements for a three-judge panel are set forth in 28 U.S.C. § 2284. The statute provides that "[a] district court of three judges shall be convened when otherwise required by Act of Congress, or when an action is filed challenging the constitutionality or the apportionment of congressional districts or the apportionment of any statewide legislative body." 28 U.S.C. § 2284(a). In the pending motion, Nealson does not challenge the constitutionality or apportionment of a congressional district or a statewide legislative body. Nor does he identify any other statute that would authorize the appointment of a three-judge panel. Accordingly, his motion requesting that the court convene "three judges to hear a motion for a release order" is DENIED. The motion is also DENIED to the extent it requests an order requiring that Nealson be released from incarceration. It is well settled that "[h]abeas corpus, and not § 1983, is the exclusive federal remedy for state prisoners seeking actual release from confinement." *Griffin vy. Balt. Police Dep't*, 804 F.3d 692, 694-95 (4th Cir. 2015) (citing *Preiser v. Rodriguez*, 411 USS. 475, 487-90 (1973)); see also *Skinner v. Switzer*, 562 U.S. 521, 525 (2011) ("Habeas is the exclusive remedy . . . for the prisoner who seeks 'immediate or speedier release' from confinement.") (quoting *Wilkinson v. Dotson*, 544 U.S. 74, 82 (2005)). Accordingly, the relief sought by Nealson—an order requiring his release from prison—is not available in this § 1983 action. For these reasons, Nealson's "motion for three judge panel for release order," ECF No. 9, is DENIED. The Clerk is directed to send a copy of this order to Nealson. It is so ORDERED. Entered: December 18, 2025 Michael F. Urbanski U.S. District Judge 2025.12.18 17:34:22 -05'00' Michael PF. Urbanski Senior United States District Judge

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