

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Hill v. Fredeluces

No. 2:25-cv-00749-EFB (PC) (E.D. Cal. July 10, 2025) · No. No. 2:25-cv-00749-EFB (PC) · Decided July 11,
2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California grants Michael Hill’s application to proceed in forma pauperis. The court screens his 42 U.S.C. § 1983 complaint concerning alleged interference with jail grievances and dismisses it for failure to state a claim, while granting leave to amend within 30 days. The order explains that prisoners have rights against retaliation for filing grievances and interference with court access, but no constitutional right to a particular grievance system or its proper processing.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	July 11, 2025
DOCKET	No. 2:25-cv-00749-EFB (PC)
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	A county-jail detainee proceeding pro se under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 filed a complaint and an application to proceed in forma pauperis. The court screened the complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A and dismissed it for failure to state a claim, granting leave to amend.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court screened the prisoner complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A and evaluated whether the allegations stated a facially plausible claim under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8(a), Twombly, and Iqbal. In conducting the screening, the court accepted factual allegations as true and construed them in the light most favorable to plaintiff.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential

TOPICS

- section 1983
- prisoners rights
- first amendment
- civil procedure
- pleadings

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

prisoner civil rights

constitutional law

pleading and screening

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether plaintiff's allegations that defendant delayed or improperly processed grievances stated a First Amendment claim.
2. Whether the alleged violations of California Code of Regulations, title 15, section 1703 created a private cause of action under § 1983.
3. Whether the complaint should be dismissed with leave to amend after failing to allege retaliation or interference with access to the courts.

HOLDINGS

1. The First Amendment protects the right to petition the government for redress of grievances, including protection against retaliation for filing grievances and interference with access to the courts, but it does not entitle prisoners to a specific grievance system or to the proper processing of grievances.
2. Violations of title 15 of the California Code of Regulations do not create a private right of action.
3. The complaint failed to state a claim because plaintiff did not allege retaliation for filing grievances or that defendant's conduct prevented access to the courts.
4. Plaintiff was granted leave to file an amended complaint within 30 days to attempt to cure the identified pleading defects.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“This right protects prisoners from retaliation by prison staff for the filing of grievances and prohibits prison staff from interfering with prisoners’ access to the courts, but does not entitle prisoners to a specific grievance system or the proper processing of grievances.” (Opinion at 2)

“Because petitioner does not allege that he was subjected to retaliation for filing grievances or that Fedeluces’s conduct prevented him from accessing the courts, the complaint must be dismissed for failure to state a claim.” (Opinion at 2)

“Any amended complaint must contain facts – not legal conclusions – supporting each element of the claims alleged.” (Opinion at 3)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff alleged that correctional officer or sergeant Fedeluces received grievances concerning disciplinary reviews and intentionally delayed or obstructed their processing. He also alleged that the jail did not make grievance forms readily available, that Fedeluces returned a grievance response two days after responding to it, and that a new grievance form barred complaints about jail policies and rules. Plaintiff characterized these actions as interference with his First Amendment grievance rights.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed a § 1983 complaint alleging that defendant interfered with the processing and return of his jail grievances. Plaintiff also moved to proceed in forma pauperis. The magistrate judge granted in forma pauperis status, ordered collection of the filing fee, dismissed the complaint with leave to amend within 30 days, and warned that noncompliance could result in a recommendation of dismissal.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319, 325, 327-28 (1989)
- Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 554-55, 562-63, 570 (2007)
- Conley v. Gibson, 355 U.S. 41 (1957)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 678-79 (2009)
- Erickson v. Pardus, 551 U.S. 89 (2007)
- Scheuer v. Rhodes, 416 U.S. 232, 236 (1974)
- Turner v. Safley, 482 U.S. 78, 84 (1987)
- Rhodes v. Robinson, 408 F.3d 559, 567-68 (9th Cir. 2005)
- Silva v. Di Vittorio, 658 F.3d 1090, 1101-02 (9th Cir. 2011)
- Riley v. Roach, 572 F. App'x 504, 507 (9th Cir. 2014)
- Ramirez v. Galaza, 334 F.3d 850, 860 (9th Cir. 2003)
- Arellano v. Milton, No. 15-cv-2069-JAH-AGS, 2018 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 143804, at *12 (S.D. Cal. Aug. 23, 2018)
- Nible v. Fink, 828 F. App'x 463 (9th Cir. 2020)
- George v. Smith, 507 F.3d 605, 607 (7th Cir. 2007)
- Johnson v. Duffy, 588 F.2d 740, 743 (9th Cir. 1978)
- Forsyth v. Humana, 114 F.3d 1467, 1474 (9th Cir. 1997)
- Loux v. Rhay, 375 F.2d 55, 57 (9th Cir. 1967)

OPINION

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT 9 FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA 10 11 MICHAEL HILL, No. 2:25-cv-00749-EFB (PC) 12 Plaintiff, 13 v. ORDER
14 FEDELUCES, 15 Defendant. 16 17 Plaintiff is a county jail detainee proceeding without
counsel in an action brought pursuant 18 to 42 U.S.C. § 1983. This proceeding was referred to this
court by Local Rule 302 pursuant to 28 19 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1).

In addition to filing a complaint, plaintiff has filed an application to proceed 20 in forma pauperis
pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915. ECF No. 6. 21 I. Application to Proceed In Forma Pauperis 22
Plaintiff's application makes the showing required by 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(1) and (2). 23

Accordingly, by separate order, the court directs the agency having custody of plaintiff to collect 24 and forward the appropriate monthly payments for the filing fee as set forth in 28 U.S.C. § 25 1915(b)(1) and (2).

26 //// 27 //// 28 //// 1 II. Screening Requirement and Standards 2 Federal courts must engage in a preliminary screening of cases in which prisoners seek 3 redress from a governmental entity or officer or employee of a governmental entity. 28 U.S.C. 4 § 1915A(a).

The court must identify cognizable claims or dismiss the complaint, or any portion 5 of the complaint, if the complaint “is frivolous, malicious, or fails to state a claim upon which 6 relief may be granted,” or “seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such 7 relief.” Id. § 1915A(b). “[The] term ‘frivolous,’ when applied to a complaint, embraces not only 8 the inarguable legal conclusion, but also the fanciful factual allegation.” *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 9 U.S. 319, 325 (1989) (discussing the predecessor to modern § 1915(e)(2), former § 1915(d)).

10 Thus, § 1915(e)(2) allows judges to dismiss a claim based on factual allegations that are clearly 11 baseless, such as facts describing “fantastic or delusional scenarios.” Id. at 327-38. 12 A pro se plaintiff, like other litigants, must satisfy the pleading requirements of Rule 8(a) 13 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. Rule 8(a)(2) “requires a complaint to include a short and 14 plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief, in order to give the 15 defendant fair notice of what the claim is and the grounds upon which it rests.” *Bell Atl.*

Corp. v. 16 Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 554, 562-563 (2007) (citing *Conley v. Gibson*, 355 U.S. 41 (1957)). 17 While the complaint must comply with the “short and plain statement” requirements of Rule 8, 18 its allegations must also include the specificity required by *Twombly* and *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 19 U.S. 662, 679 (2009). 20 To avoid dismissal for failure to state a claim a complaint must contain more than “naked 21 assertions,” “labels and conclusions” or “a formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of 22 action.” *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555-557.

In other words, “[t]hreadbare recitals of the elements of 23 a cause of action, supported by mere conclusory statements do not suffice.” *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 24 678. 25 Furthermore, a claim upon which the court can grant relief must have facial plausibility. 26 *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 570. “A claim has facial plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual 27 content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the 28 misconduct alleged.” *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 678.

When considering whether a complaint states a 1 claim upon which relief can be granted, the court must accept the allegations as true, *Erickson v. 2 Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89 (2007), and construe the complaint in the light most favorable to the 3 plaintiff, see *Scheuer v. Rhodes*, 416 U.S. 232, 236 (1974). 4 III. Screening Order 5 Plaintiff alleges: 6 C/O/Sgt. Fredeluces received my grievances

regarding the disciplinary reviews and intentionally tried to thwart a response required under C.C.R.

15 § 1703 citing 7 more than 3 days, more than one problem/complaint. It took two days to get grievances. The jail deliberately does not make grievance available to thwart 8 detainees filing timely complaints. As in this case, and in this case [sic] Fredeluces replied on 2/19/25 but did not return the grievance response until 9 2/21/25 and provided no grievance to appeal which is another attempt to stymie my 1st Amendment right.

The jail created this new grievance form that stated we 10 cannot grieve jail policies and rules. They did this too to thwart our 1st Amendment right to grievance. The staff cares nothing of the law or detainee's 11 (pretrial) rights. 12 ECF No. 1 at 4. 13 The right to petition the government for redress of grievances is protected by the First 14 Amendment.

Turner v. Safley, 482 U.S. 78, 84 (1974). This right protects prisoners from 15 retaliation by prison staff for the filing of grievances (Rhodes v. Robinson, 408 F.3d 559, 567-68 16 (9th Cir. 2005)) and prohibits prison staff from interfering with prisoners' access to the courts 17 (Silva v. Di Vittorio, 658 F.3d 1090, 1101-02 (9th Cir. 2011)), but does not entitle prisoners to a 18 specific grievance system or the proper processing of grievances.

Riley v. Roach, 572 Fed. App'x 19 504, 507 (9th Cir. 2014); Ramirez v. Galaza, 334 F.3d 850, 860 (9th Cir. 2003); Arellano v. 20 Milton, No. 15-cv-2069-JAH-AGS, 2018 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 143804, at *12 (S.D. Cal. Aug. 23, 21 2018).

In addition, violations of Title 15 of the California Code of Regulations do not create 22 private right of action. Nible v. Fink, 828 Fed. Appx. 463 (9th Cir. 2020). 23 Because petitioner does not allege that he was subjected to retaliation for filing grievances 24 or that Fedeluces's conduct prevented him from accessing the courts, the complaint must be 25 dismissed for failure to state a claim.

26 Leave to Amend. The court will grant plaintiff an opportunity to file an amended 27 complaint to attempt to cure the defects identified in this order. 28 //// 1 Any amended complaint must comply with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8(a)'s 2 direction to state each claim in a short and plain manner.

The amended complaint must contain 3 facts – not legal conclusions – supporting each element of the claims alleged. 4 Any amended complaint must not join unrelated claims. Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 5 18(a) allows a plaintiff to assert multiple claims when they are against a single defendant. 6 Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 20(a)(2) allows a plaintiff to join multiple defendants to a lawsuit 7 where the right to relief arises out of the same “transaction, occurrence, or series of transactions 8 or occurrences” and “any question of law or fact common to all defendants will

arise in the 9 action.” Unrelated claims against different defendants must therefore be pursued in separate 10 lawsuits.

See *George v. Smith*, 507 F.3d 605, 607 (7th Cir. 2007). This rule is intended “not only 11 to prevent the sort of morass [a multiple claim, multiple defendant] suit produce[s], but also to 12 ensure that prisoners pay the required filing fees— for the Prison Litigation Reform Act limits to 13 3 the number of frivolous suits or appeals that any prisoner may file without prepayment of the 14 required fees.

28 U.S.C. § 1915(g).” *Id.* 15 Any amended complaint must identify as a defendant only persons who personally 16 participated in a substantial way in depriving him of a federal constitutional right. *Johnson v. 17 Duffy*, 588 F.2d 740, 743 (9th Cir. 1978) (a person subjects another to the deprivation of a 18 constitutional right if he does an act, participates in another’s act or omits to perform an act he is 19 legally required to do that causes the alleged deprivation).

20 It must also contain a caption including the names of all defendants. Fed. R. Civ. P. 10(a). 21 Plaintiff may not change the nature of this suit by alleging new, unrelated claims in the 22 amended complaint. *George v. Smith*, 507 F.3d 605, 607 (7th Cir. 2007). 23 Any amended complaint must be written or typed so that it so that it is complete in itself, 24 without reference to any earlier filed complaint.

E.D. Cal. L.R. 220. This is because an amended 25 complaint supersedes any earlier filed complaint, and once an amended complaint is filed, the 26 earlier filed complaint no longer serves any function in the case. See *Forsyth v. Humana*, 114 27 F.3d 1467, 1474 (9th Cir. 1997) (the ““amended complaint supersedes the original, the latter 28 being treated thereafter as non-existent.””) (quoting *Loux v. Rhay*, 375 F.2d 55, 57 (9th Cir.

1 } 1967)). 2 The court cautions plaintiff that failure to comply with the Federal Rules of Civil 3 || Procedure, this court’s Local Rules, or any court order may result in this action being dismissed. 4 | See Local Rule 110. 5 | IV. Summary of Order 6 Accordingly, it is ORDERED that: 7 1. Plaintiffs application to proceed in forma pauperis (ECF No. 6) is GRANTED.

8 2. Plaintiff shall pay the statutory filing fee of \$350. All payments shall be collected in 9 accordance with the notice to the El Dorado County Sheriffs Office filed concurrently 10 herewith. 11 3. The complaint is dismissed with leave to file an amended complaint within 30 days of 12 this order.

The amended complaint must bear the docket number assigned to this case 13 and be titled “Amended Complaint.” 14 4. Failure to comply with this order may result in a recommendation that this action be 15 dismissed for failure to state a claim and/or failure to prosecute. 16 17 || Dated: July 10, 2025 Lal = Dot Ee 47 18 UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28

