

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Douglas v. Shirley

No. 1:23-cv-00653-KES-EPG (PC) · No. No. 1:23-cv-00653-KES-EPG (PC) · Decided August 29, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California adopted the magistrate judge’s findings and recommendations in a 42 U.S.C. § 1983 action. The court denied defendants’ costs and denied plaintiff’s construed motion for reconsideration, reaffirming that summary judgment had been entered on the merits of plaintiff’s Eighth Amendment conditions-of-confinement claims.

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	August 29, 2025
DOCKET	No. 1:23-cv-00653-KES-EPG (PC)
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The district court conducted de novo review of a magistrate judge's findings and recommendations concerning defendants' bill of costs and plaintiff's construed motion for reconsideration after summary judgment had been entered for defendants.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	De novo review under 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1) of the magistrate judge's findings and recommendations.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished district-court order; precedential status unknown.
PARTIES	Roger Douglas v. Heather Shirley, et al.

TOPICS

- motion for reconsideration
- summary judgment
- section 1983
- prisoners rights
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

- Civil procedure
- Civil rights litigation
- Prisoner civil-rights litigation
- Federal courts

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether plaintiff established grounds for reconsideration of the order granting defendants summary judgment.
2. Whether the case could be closed without prejudice after a final judgment on the merits.
3. Whether defendants should be awarded costs in light of the relevant discretionary factors.

HOLDINGS

1. Plaintiff did not establish grounds for reconsideration because he had received multiple extensions to oppose summary judgment, failed to timely raise his medical condition as a basis for an extension, and his pro se status did not excuse compliance with procedural rules.
2. The case could not be closed without prejudice because the prior summary-judgment ruling was a final judgment on the merits and therefore operated as a dismissal with prejudice.
3. Defendants were denied costs.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“A *“final judgment on the merits is synonymous with dismissal with prejudice.”*” (at 1)

“Although we construe pleadings liberally in their favor, pro se litigants are bound by the rules of procedure.” (at 1)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Roger Douglas, a state prisoner proceeding pro se and in forma pauperis, brought a 42 U.S.C. § 1983 action alleging that defendants violated his Eighth Amendment right to be free from cruel and unusual conditions of confinement. After the court granted defendants summary judgment on the merits, Douglas sought to have the case closed without prejudice, asserting that cancer testing and treatment and his indigency had impaired his ability to litigate and obtain counsel. The court noted that Douglas had received multiple extensions to oppose summary judgment and had previously attributed his request for an extension to the law library's holiday closure rather than medical treatment.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The magistrate judge recommended granting defendants' motion for summary judgment, and the district court adopted those recommendations and entered judgment for defendants on May 30, 2025. Plaintiff later moved to strike defendants' costs and requested that the case be closed without prejudice; the magistrate judge construed those requests as objections to the bill of costs and a motion for reconsideration, recommended denying defendants costs and denying reconsideration, and plaintiff filed objections. The district court conducted de novo review, adopted the findings and recommendations in full, denied defendants costs, and denied plaintiff's construed motion for reconsideration.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Ghazali v. Moran, 46 F.3d 52, 54 (9th Cir. 1995)
- Hells Canyon Pres. Council v. U.S. Forest Serv., 403 F.3d 683, 686 (9th Cir. 2005)

OPINION

(PC) Douglas v. Shirley

PER CURIAM.

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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

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EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

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11 ROGER DOUGLAS, No. 1:23-cv-00653-KES-EPG (PC)

12 Plaintiff, ORDER ADOPTING FINDINGS AND

RECOMMENDATIONS AND DENYING

13 v. DEFENDANTS' COSTS AND DENYING

PLAINTIFF'S CONSTRUED MOTION FOR

14 HEATHER SHIRLEY, et al., RECONSIDERATION

15 Defendants. Docs. 44, 45, 48 16 17 Plaintiff Roger Douglas is a state prisoner proceeding pro
se and in forma pauperis in 18 this civil rights action filed pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983. The
matter was referred to a United 19 States magistrate judge pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(B)
and Local Rule 302. 20 On May 30, 2025, judgment was entered in favor of defendants and this
case was closed 21 following the Court's order adopting the assigned magistrate judge's findings
and 22 recommendations to grant defendants' motion for summary judgment. Docs. 42, 43. On
23 June 20, 2025, plaintiff filed a motion to strike costs, Doc. 45, construed by the magistrate
24 judge as objections to defendants' bill of costs submitted on June 6, 2025, Doc. 44. Plaintiff's
25 motion also included a request for the Court to "close [the] case without prejudice," construed
26 by the magistrate judge as a motion for reconsideration of the Court's order granting 27
defendants' motion for summary judgment, Doc. 42. 1 On July 15, 2025, the assigned magistrate
judge issued findings and recommendations 2 recommending that defendants be denied costs and
that plaintiff's construed motion for 3 reconsideration be denied. Doc. 48. Specifically, the
magistrate judge found that the relevant 4 factors for consideration when exercising a court's
discretion to refuse to award costs weighed 5 in favor of plaintiff. Id. at 2–4. As to plaintiff's
motion for reconsideration, the magistrate 6 judge found that his request for the Court to "close
[this] case without prejudice," as he intends 7 to obtain counsel and pursue a class action in the
future, is unwarranted given that this case 8 was already litigated on the merits. The findings and
recommendations were served on 9 plaintiff and contained notice that any objections were to be
filed within thirty (30) days of the 10 date of service. Id. at 6. Plaintiff filed objections, Doc. 49, as

to which defendants filed a 11 reply, Doc. 50. Defendants did not file objections as to the magistrate judge's findings and 12 recommendations with respect to the denial of costs. 13 In his objections, plaintiff now contends that his cancer testing and treatment impeded his 14 ability to litigate the case, and that his indigency hindered his ability to secure legal counsel.

15 Doc. 49 at 1–2. Given that plaintiff was provided multiple extensions to file an opposition to 16 defendants' motion for summary judgment, he fails to establish grounds for reconsideration in 17 this case. See Docs. 37, 40. Moreover, plaintiff's stated reason at the time for requesting an 18 extension of time to file an opposition was the law library's closure over the Christmas 19 holiday, rather than medical treatment, and plaintiff fails to explain his failure to timely raise 20 his medical condition as a basis for an extension of time. 21 Additionally, plaintiff's pro se status does not warrant leniency with procedural rules or 22 otherwise serve as a basis for reconsideration. See *Ghazali v. Moran*, 46 F.3d 52, 54 (9th Cir. 23 1995) ("Although we construe pleadings liberally in their favor, pro se litigants are bound by 24 the rules of procedure."). 25 Plaintiff further contends that dismissal without prejudice is warranted because, he 26 claims, defendants were granted summary judgment based on his failure to file an opposition.

27 Doc. 49 at 3. However, the Court's ruling on defendants' motion was not based on plaintiff's 1 | recommendations, the magistrate judge duly analyzed plaintiffs claims, considered the 2 | allegations set forth in his complaint and the evidence set forth by defendants in their motion, 3 | and found that there was no genuine dispute of material fact as to whether defendants violated 4 | plaintiff's Eighth Amendment right to be free from cruel and unusual conditions of 5 | confinement. See generally Doc. 41. Following a de novo review, the Court adopted the 6 | magistrate judge's findings and recommendations in full and granted defendants' motion, 7 | issuing a final judgment on the merits. Doc. 42. A "final judgment on the merits is 8 | synonymous with dismissal with prejudice." *Hells Canyon Pres. Council v. U.S. Forest Serv.*, 9 | 403 F.3d 683, 686 (9th Cir. 2005) (internal citations omitted). 10 In accordance with the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1), the Court conducted a de 11 | novo review of this matter. Having carefully reviewed the file, including plaintiffs objections 12 | and defendants' reply, the Court concludes that the findings and recommendations are 13 | supported by the record and proper analysis. 14 Accordingly, 15 1. The findings and recommendations issued on July 15, 2025, Doc. 48, are 16 ADOPTED in full; 17 2. Defendants are DENIED costs, Doc. 44; and 18 3. Plaintiff's construed motion for reconsideration, Doc. 45, is DENIED. 19

20 T IS SO ORDERED. _

Dated: _ August 29, 2025

22 UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

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