

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF
ILLINOIS, EASTERN DIVISION

Michael Robins v. Elite Line Services

Robins · No. 1:24-cv-04185 · Decided March 20, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois considers Elite Line Services’ motion for summary judgment in Michael Robins’s Title VII race-discrimination and retaliation lawsuit. The court concludes that Robins did not present sufficient evidence of discriminatory motive or pretext, including because his proposed comparator did not engage in conduct of comparable seriousness. The motion for summary judgment is granted.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Lindsay C. Jenkins
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division
DECIDED	March 20, 2026
DOCKET	1:24-cv-04185
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Defendant moved for summary judgment on plaintiff's Title VII race-discrimination and retaliation claims.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Summary judgment is proper when the movant shows that there is no genuine dispute as to any material fact and that the movant is entitled to judgment as a matter of law. The evidence is viewed in the light most favorable to the nonmoving party, but defeating summary judgment requires evidence rather than speculation.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown
PARTIES	Michael Robins v. Elite Line Services

TOPICS

- employment discrimination
- title vii
- retaliation
- summary judgment
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

employment law

civil rights

civil procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Robins presented sufficient evidence for a reasonable jury to find that his termination and placement on leave were caused by race discrimination under Title VII.
2. Whether Jurishi was a valid comparator whose allegedly lesser discipline supported an inference that Daifuku's stated safety-related reasons for disciplining Robins were pretextual.
3. Whether Robins presented sufficient evidence to proceed under a cat's-paw theory based on alleged bias by supervisor Tim Croak or coworker Devin Jurishi.
4. Whether Robins presented sufficient evidence of a causal connection between his protected Title VII activity and his placement on leave or termination.

HOLDINGS

1. Robins failed to present evidence from which a reasonable jury could conclude that his race caused his placement on leave or termination. Daifuku's multiple admitted safety violations supplied a nondiscriminatory explanation, and Robins did not produce sufficient evidence that the explanation was pretextual.
2. Robins failed to establish a cat's-paw theory because the undisputed evidence showed independent investigations and independently sufficient reasons for the adverse employment actions, thereby breaking any causal chain from alleged discriminatory animus by Croak or Jurishi.
3. Robins failed to establish a causal connection between his protected report of discrimination and retaliation and either his placement on leave or his termination. Summary judgment was therefore proper on the retaliation claim.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Considering the evidence as a whole and eschewing any framework or formula, Robins has not come forward with evidence that would allow a reasonable juror to find that Daifuku’s justification for placing him on leave or terminating him was pretextual.” (Section III.A)

“The record does not show that his discrimination complaint caused him to be placed on leave or caused his termination.” (Section III.B)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Robins, who is Black, worked as a Maintenance Tech III at a Chicago facility operated by Daifuku Services America Corporation, formerly known as Elite Line Services. After reporting that a white coworker, Devin Jurishi, had violated the employer's clothing and personal-protective-equipment rules, Robins was investigated for multiple safety violations during a conveyor repair, including failing to complete his portion of a lock-out-tag-out procedure, failing to wear head protection, completing a pre-task plan after the work, and climbing onto an elevated conveyor without a fall harness. He was placed on decision-making leave on March 11, 2022,

reported race discrimination and retaliation to human resources on March 12, and was terminated effective April 28, 2022. The employer's investigations concluded that the discrimination allegations were unfounded and that the safety violations independently warranted termination.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Michael Robins sued his former employer, Elite Line Services, alleging race discrimination and retaliation under Title VII. After discovery, the defendant moved for summary judgment. The district court granted the motion, concluding that no reasonable jury could find for Robins on either claim.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Johnson v. Accenture LLP, 142 F.4th 536, 540, 543 (7th Cir. 2025)
- Wilson v. Kautex, Inc., 371 F. App'x 663, 664 (7th Cir. 2010)
- Keeton v. Morningstar, Inc., 667 F.3d 877, 884 (7th Cir. 2012)
- Celotex Corp. v. Catrett, 477 U.S. 317, 323 (1986)
- Anderson v. Liberty Lobby, Inc., 477 U.S. 242, 248 (1986)
- Birch|Rea Partners, Inc. v. Regent Bank, 27 F.4th 1245, 1249 (7th Cir. 2022)
- Lesiv v. Illinois Central Railroad Co., 39 F.4th 903, 911 (7th Cir. 2022)
- Weaver v. Champion Petfoods USA Inc., 3 F.4th 927, 934 (7th Cir. 2021)
- Carson v. Lake County, Indiana, 865 F.3d 526, 532 (7th Cir. 2017)
- Bostock v. Clayton County, Georgia, 590 U.S. 644, 659-60 (2020)
- Upchurch v. Indiana, 146 F.4th 579, 586-88 (7th Cir. 2025)
- Ortiz v. Werner Enterprises, Inc., 834 F.3d 760, 765-66 (7th Cir. 2016)
- Wince v. CBRE, Inc., 66 F.4th 1033, 1040 (7th Cir. 2023)
- McDonnell Douglas Corp. v. Green, 411 U.S. 792 (1973)
- Lewis v. Indiana Wesleyan University, 36 F.4th 755, 759, 761 (7th Cir. 2022)
- Vassileva v. City of Chicago, 118 F.4th 869, 874 (7th Cir. 2024)
- Napier v. Orchard School Foundation, 137 F.4th 884, 892, 894 (7th Cir. 2025)
- Anderson v. Street, 104 F.4th 646, 654 (7th Cir. 2024)
- Cunningham v. Austin, 125 F.4th 783, 789-90 (7th Cir. 2025)
- Coleman v. Donahoe, 667 F.3d 835, 846-47 (7th Cir. 2012)
- Dunlevy v. Langfelder, 52 F.4th 349, 354 (7th Cir. 2022)
- Reives v. Illinois State Police, 29 F.4th 887, 892-93 (7th Cir. 2022)
- Kailin v. Village of Gurnee, 77 F.4th 476, 481-82 (7th Cir. 2023)
- Saud v. DePaul, 154 F.4th 563, 568-69 (7th Cir. 2025)

- *Sinha v. Bradley University*, 995 F.3d 568, 574 (7th Cir. 2021)
- *Gaines v. Dart*, 158 F.4th 829, 835-37 (7th Cir. 2025)
- *Vesey v. Envoy Air, Inc.*, 999 F.3d 456, 462 (7th Cir. 2021)
- *Vavra v. Honeywell International, Inc.*, 106 F.4th 702, 705-06 (7th Cir. 2024)
- *Ferrill v. Oak Creek-Franklin Joint School District*, 860 F.3d 494, 501 (7th Cir. 2017)
- *O'Leary v. Accretive Health, Inc.*, 657 F.3d 625, 631 (7th Cir. 2011)
- *Davis v. Time Warner Cable of Southeastern Wisconsin, L.P.*, 651 F.3d 664, 674 (7th Cir. 2011)
- *McHale v. McDonough*, 41 F.4th 866, 871 (7th Cir. 2022)
- *Baines v. Walgreen Co.*, 863 F.3d 656, 666 (7th Cir. 2017)
- *Loudermilk v. Best Pallet Co.*, 636 F.3d 312, 315 (7th Cir. 2011)
- *Clark County School District v. Breeden*, 532 U.S. 268, 273 (2001)