

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Michael Thomas v. Gomez, et al.

Thomas v. Gomez · No. 1:24-cv-00508-KES-SKO · Decided September 18, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California granted Plaintiff Michael Thomas’s motion to stay his civil rights action pending transfers between correctional facilities and his receipt of legal materials. The court stayed the action for 120 days, vacated the existing Discovery and Scheduling Order, and stated that it would issue a new scheduling order after the stay was lifted.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Sheila K. Oberto
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	September 18, 2025
DOCKET	1:24-cv-00508-KES-SKO
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff moved to stay his civil rights action pending transfers between correctional facilities and his receipt of legal materials. The court granted the motion.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Abuse-of-discretion framework governing a district court's decision to stay proceedings as an incident of its authority to control its docket; the party seeking the stay bears the burden of establishing its need.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential district court order
PARTIES	Michael Thomas v. Gomez, et al.

TOPICS

- civil procedure
- prisoners rights
- section 1983
- motions to dismiss

PRACTICE AREAS

- civil procedure
- prisoner civil rights
- case management

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether good cause supported staying the civil rights action for 120 days while Plaintiff was transferred among correctional facilities and lacked access to his legal materials.
2. Whether the court should vacate the existing Discovery and Scheduling Order as a consequence of the stay.

HOLDINGS

1. A district court may stay proceedings under its broad discretion to control its docket, and Plaintiff established good cause for a temporary 120-day stay because his anticipated transfers and lack of access to legal materials would impair his ability to prosecute the action.
2. The court vacated the previously issued Discovery and Scheduling Order and will issue a new scheduling order after the stay is lifted.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The district court “has broad discretion to stay proceedings as an incident to its power to control its own docket.”” (at 2)

“Generally, stays should not be indefinite in nature.” (at 2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff was incarcerated at the Minnehaha County Jail in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and anticipated transfers to a South Dakota state prison and then to multiple federal facilities following sentencing in an underlying federal criminal case. He stated that he lacked, or would lack during transit, access to the legal materials needed to litigate this action. Plaintiff estimated that reaching his permanent federal facility would take approximately 120 to 150 days and agreed to notify the court of address changes and request that the stay be lifted upon reaching his final destination.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The action was filed under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. After issuing a Discovery and Scheduling Order on May 5, 2025, the court considered Plaintiff’s August 26, 2025 motion to stay. Defendants filed neither an opposition nor a statement of non-opposition. The court granted a 120-day stay, vacated the prior scheduling order, and directed that a new scheduling order issue after the stay is lifted.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Clinton v. Jones, 520 U.S. 681, 706, 708 (1997)
- Landis v. North American Co., 299 U.S. 248, 254 (1936)
- Dependable Highway Exp., Inc. v. Navigators Ins. Co., 498 F.3d 1059, 1066-67 (9th Cir. 2007)

- Yong v. I.N.S., 208 F.3d 1116, 1119 (9th Cir. 2000)

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