

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF MINNESOTA

Joel Lopez, Jr. v. FMC Rochester and Jared Rardin, Warden

Lopez · No. 25-cv-4659 (JWB/LIB) · Decided February 6, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States Magistrate Judge recommends denying Joel Lopez, Jr.’s amended habeas petition and dismissing the case. The recommendation concludes that the petition does not adequately identify or plead a claim for relief and that any implied insufficiency-of-the-evidence claim was not exhausted through Bureau of Prisons administrative procedures. The document also explains that Lopez’s prior Appointments Clause challenge resulted in vacatur and rehearing of the disciplinary proceedings, but did not support relief from the second disciplinary sanction.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Minnesota
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Leo I. Brisbois
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Minnesota
DECIDED	February 6, 2026
DOCKET	25-cv-4659 (JWB/LIB)
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Report and recommendation on preliminary review of an amended petition for a writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2241. The magistrate judge recommended denying the amended petition and dismissing the case.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Preliminary review under Rule 4 of the Rules Governing Section 2254 Cases, applied to this habeas proceeding through Rule 1(b). The court assessed whether the petition identified grounds for relief and stated supporting facts, and whether any suggested claim had been administratively exhausted.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential
PARTIES	Joel Lopez, Jr. v. FMC Rochester, Jared Rardin, Warden

TOPICS

- federal habeas corpus
- pleadings
- exhaustion of remedies
- post-conviction relief
- due process

PRACTICE AREAS

Federal habeas corpus

prison disciplinary proceedings

administrative exhaustion

constitutional due process

pleading requirements

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the amended habeas petition satisfied Rule 2(c)'s requirement that it specify the grounds for relief and state the facts supporting each ground.
2. Whether the potential insufficiency-of-the-evidence claim suggested by the amended petition was administratively exhausted.
3. Whether the amended petition should be denied and the action dismissed.

HOLDINGS

1. The amended petition failed to satisfy the basic pleading requirements because it did not identify a specific ground for habeas relief or state facts supporting the possible insufficiency-of-the-evidence claim.
2. Any insufficiency-of-the-evidence claim suggested by the amended petition was unexhausted because Lopez did not present that claim to the Bureau of Prisons through the administrative-review process.
3. The amended petition should be denied and the case dismissed because the petition failed to plead a cognizable claim with supporting facts and the only possible claim was unexhausted.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“specify all the grounds for relief available to the petitioner” (Rule 2(c) discussion)

“state the facts supporting each ground.” (Rule 2(c) discussion)

“supported by some evidence in the record.” (footnote 3)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

In June 2024, prison guards found twenty-eight strips of Suboxone in Lopez's sock, and the Bureau of Prisons imposed a 41-day loss of good-time credit. An earlier disciplinary proceeding was vacated after Lopez challenged the appointment of the Discipline Hearing Officer under the Appointments Clause, and the matter was remanded for a rehearing before a different adjudicator. The rehearing imposed the same sanction, but Lopez's subsequent habeas petition did not clearly identify a legal claim or provide facts supporting one; the closest potential claim alleged that the rewritten charge was inconsistent with the truth of events.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Lopez received a 41-day loss of good-time credit after a disciplinary proceeding concerning possession of Suboxone. He previously challenged the proceeding based on an alleged Appointments Clause defect, and the Bureau of Prisons vacated the disciplinary proceeding and ordered a rehearing; the earlier habeas case was then denied as moot. After the rehearing imposed the same sanction, Lopez filed this habeas action. The court ordered

an amended petition because the original petition did not identify the grounds for relief or supporting facts, and the report and recommendation concluded that the amended petition remained deficient and that any possible insufficiency-of-the-evidence claim was unexhausted.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Lopez v. Rardin, No. 24-cv-3285 (KMM/DJF) (D. Minn.)
- Mayle v. Felix, 545 U.S. 644, 655 (2005)
- Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544 (2007)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662 (2009)
- Ross v. Williams, 950 F.3d 1160, 1170 n.11 (9th Cir. 2020)
- Superintendent, Mass. Corr. Inst., Walpole v. Hill, 472 U.S. 445, 454 (1985)
- Orebaugh v. Caspari, 910 F.2d 526, 528 (8th Cir. 1990)
- Brown v. Frey, 807 F.2d 1407, 1414 (8th Cir. 1986)
- Mathena v. United States, 577 F.3d 943, 946 (8th Cir. 2009)
- United States v. Chappel, 208 F.3d 1069, 1069 (8th Cir. 2000) (per curiam)

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