

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

Cristin D. Taylor, Sr. v. Akron Police Department, et al.

Taylor v. Akron Police Department · No. 5:25-cv-2704 · Decided February 5, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio denied pro se plaintiff Cristin D. Taylor, Sr.’s motion for appointment of counsel in his 42 U.S.C. § 1983 action against the Akron Police Department and related defendants. The court held that Taylor had not demonstrated the exceptional circumstances required for appointed counsel because the claims were not unusually complex and his lack of legal training and financial hardship were insufficient.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio, Eastern Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Sara Lioi
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio, Eastern Division
DECIDED	February 5, 2026
DOCKET	5:25-cv-2704
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff brought a 42 U.S.C. § 1983 action and moved for appointment of counsel.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court applied the exceptional-circumstances standard governing appointment of counsel in civil cases, considering the type and complexity of the case and the plaintiff's ability to represent himself.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished district court memorandum opinion and order; nonprecedential.
PARTIES	Cristin D. Taylor, Sr. v. Akron Police Department, Akron police officers, City of Akron, Mayor of Akron, Akron Municipal Prosecutor's Office

TOPICS

civil rights

section 1983

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

Civil rights

Federal civil procedure

Appointment of counsel

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether exceptional circumstances justified appointing counsel for the pro se plaintiff in this civil § 1983 action.

HOLDINGS

1. A civil litigant has no constitutional right to appointed counsel, and appointment under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e) is warranted only in exceptional circumstances. Taylor's lack of legal training, indigence, and generalized assertions about the difficulty of proceeding pro se did not establish exceptional circumstances, so the motion for appointment of counsel was denied.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Rather, the authority to make such an appointment derives from 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e), and the right “is a privilege that is justified only by exceptional circumstances.”” (at 2)

“Ultimately, Taylor has failed to point to any extraordinary circumstances that would warrant the appointment of counsel.” (at 4)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Taylor operated a bar in Akron, Ohio, where Akron police officers responded to an incident on December 16, 2023. He alleged that officers entered the premises without a warrant or legally sufficient justification and used physical force against him, causing injuries. Taylor was later charged in Akron Municipal Court with hindering an inspection, obstructing official business, and resisting arrest, and then filed this § 1983 action.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Taylor filed this civil-rights action on December 12, 2025, alleging unlawful entry and seizure, excessive force, malicious prosecution, fabrication of evidence, municipal liability, prosecutorial misconduct, and fraud upon the Court. He filed a motion for appointment of counsel on December 16, 2025. The district court denied the motion.

DISPOSITION

other

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

None. The motion for appointment of counsel was denied.

CASES CITED

- Lavado v. Keohane, 992 F.2d 601, 605-06 (6th Cir. 1993)
- Lanier v. Bryant, 332 F.3d 999, 1006 (6th Cir. 2003)
- Redd v. Conway, 160 F. App'x 858, 863 (11th Cir. 2005)
- Buchanan v. Lee, 618 F. Supp. 3d 707, 712 (M.D. Tenn. 2022)
- Mackey v. DiCaprio, 312 F. Supp. 2d 580, 582 (S.D.N.Y. 2004)
- Hymas v. United States Dep't of State, No. 3:23-cv-336, 2025 WL 1136067, at *3 (E.D. Tenn. Apr. 17, 2025)
- Edwards v. Simpson, 833 F.2d 1012 (6th Cir. 1987)
- Brubaker v. Barrett, 801 F. Supp. 2d 743, 763 (E.D. Tenn. 2011)
- Horacek v. Carter, No. 1:20-cv-11682, 2022 WL 21841898, at *2 (E.D. Mich. July 15, 2022)
- Cavin v. Michigan Department of Corrections, Cavin v. Michigan Dep't of Corr., 927 F.3d 455, 461 (6th Cir. 2019)

OPINION

Cristin D. Taylor, Sr. v. Akron Police Department, et al.

PER CURIAM.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

NORTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO

EASTERN DIVISION

CRISTIN D. TAYLOR, SR.,) CASE NO. 5:25-cv-2704

)) Plaintiff,)

) CHIEF JUDGE SARA LIOI

) vs.)

) MEMORANDUM OPINION

) AND ORDER

AKRON POLICE DEPARTMENT, et al.,)) Defendants.) This is a 42 U.S.C. § 1983 action filed by pro se plaintiff Cristin D. Taylor, Sr. (“Taylor”) against the Akron Police Department, numerous named Akron police officers, the City of Akron, the Mayor of Akron, and the Akron Municipal Prosecutor’s Office (collectively, “defendants”). (Doc. No. 1 (Complaint).) Before the Court is Taylor’s motion for appointment of counsel. (Doc. No. 3 (Motion).) For the reasons that follow, the motion for appointment of counsel is DENIED.

I. BACKGROUND

Taylor operates a bar located at or near 451 N. Main St. in Akron, Ohio. (Doc. No. 1 ¶ 10.) Taylor represents that on December 16, 2023, Akron police officers responded to an incident at his establishment. (Id.) Taylor refused the officers entrance, informing them that they could not enter his private premises without a warrant. (Id. ¶ 11.) Taylor alleges that one of the officers forced open the door and entered the establishment “without a warrant and without a legally sufficient justification[.]” (Id. ¶ 12.) Officers also allegedly “forcibly grabbed, punched, and kicked

Plaintiff.” (Id. ¶ 13.) Taylor states that he sustained physical injuries and was transported to Akron City Hospital by emergency medical services. (Id. ¶ 14.) He was later charged in Akron Municipal Court with hindering an inspection, obstructing official business, and resisting arrest. (Id. ¶ 15.) On December 12, 2025, Taylor filed this § 1983 action alleging: (i) unlawful entry and seizure; (ii) excessive force; (iii) malicious prosecution; (iv) fabrication of evidence; and (v) municipal liability under Monell. (Id. ¶¶ 20–29.) Taylor also alleges that the Akron Municipal Prosecutor’s Office engaged in prosecutorial misconduct and perpetuated fraud upon the Court. (Id. ¶¶ 30–31.) Taylor seeks “[c]ompensatory damages in the amount of Thirty Million Dollars[,]” “[p]unitive damages against the individual Defendants in their individual capacities[,]” and “[r]easonable attorney’s fee and costs of this action pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1988[.]” (Id. at 4.)¹ On December 16, 2025, Taylor filed a motion for appointment of counsel. (Doc. No. 3.) He states that his “[lack of] formal legal training[] . . . significantly hinders [his] ability to manage the complexities of this case.” (Id. ¶ 1.) Taylor contends that “[d]ue to the legal intricacies and potential impact [of this case], professional legal assistance is crucial for a fair trial and proper evidence presentation.” (Id. ¶ 5.) Yet, Taylor writes that “[he has] been unsuccessful in every attempt to secure legal representation as no one will take the case for reasons unknown to [him]” and “[his] financial situation mak[es] it impossible for [him] to afford private counsel.” (Id. ¶¶ 6– 7.) He therefore seeks the appointment of counsel. (See generally id.)¹ All page number references herein are to the consecutive page numbers applied to each individual document by the Court’s electronic filing system.²

II. DISCUSSION

There is no constitutional right to the appointment of counsel in a civil case. *Lavado v. Keohane*, 992 F.2d 601, 605 (6th Cir. 1993) (citation omitted). Rather, the authority to make such an appointment derives from 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e), and the right “is a privilege that is justified only by exceptional circumstances.” Id. at 606 (citation omitted); see *Lanier v. Bryant*, 332 F.3d 999, 1006 (6th Cir. 2003). To determine whether exceptional circumstances warrant the appointment of counsel, courts should examine the type of case involved and the plaintiff’s ability to represent himself. See *Lanier*, 332 F.3d at 1006 (citation omitted); *Lavado*, 992 F.2d at 606 (citations omitted). Here, Taylor has failed to identify any exceptional circumstances that would justify the appointment of counsel. The claims involved in this § 1983 action are not complex, nor do the issues appear to involve any novel legal arguments. See, e.g., *Redd v. Conway*, 160 F. App’x 858, 863 (11th Cir. 2005) (district court did not abuse its discretion in refusing to appoint counsel where the issues raised in plaintiff’s § 1983 excessive force and deliberate indifference action were not too novel or complex for plaintiff to represent himself); *Buchanan v. Lee*, 618 F. Supp. 3d 707, 712 (M.D. Tenn. 2022) (plaintiff did not demonstrate entitlement to appointment of counsel for § 1983 ex post facto challenge of a state law because the issues presented were not overly complex); *Mackey v. DiCaprio*, 312 F. Supp. 2d 580, 582 (S.D.N.Y. 2004) (plaintiff did not demonstrate entitlement to appointment of counsel for § 1983 excessive force action where the case did not

present any complex or novel legal issues). 3 Taylor instead makes general reference to the challenges of proceeding pro se. He states that his lack of formal legal training “significantly hinders [his] ability to manage the complexities of this case.” (Doc. No. 3 § 1.) But generalized arguments such as this “[are] not enough to make the ‘fact-specific’ showing that exceptional circumstances justify the appointment of counsel.” *Hymas vy. United States Dep’t of State*, No. 3:23-cv-336, 2025 WL 1136067, at *3 (E.D. Tenn. Apr. 17, 2025) (citing *Edwards v. Simpson*, 833 F.2d 1012 (6th Cir. 1987); *Brubaker v. Barrett*, 801 F. Supp. 2d 743, 763 (E.D. Tenn. 2011)), reconsideration denied, No. 3:23-cv-336, 2025 WL 1347319 (E.D. Tenn. May 8, 2025). And Taylor’s indigence alone is not an exceptional circumstance. See *Buchanan*, 618 F. Supp. 3d at 712; *Horacek v. Carter*, No. 1:20-cv-11682, 2022 WL 21841898, at *2 (E.D. Mich. July 15, 2022). Because Taylor has not sufficiently explained why exceptional circumstances justify the appointment of counsel, his motion must be denied.

CONCLUSION

Only in exceptional circumstances must the Court provide a party in a civil case with an attorney. *Cavin v. Michigan Dep’t of Corr.*, 927 F.3d 455, 461 (6th Cir. 2019) (citing *Lavado*, 992 F.2d at 606). Ultimately, Taylor has failed to point to any extraordinary circumstances that would warrant the appointment of counsel. Thus, Taylor’s motion (Doc. No. 3) is DENIED. IT IS SO ORDERED. Dated: February 5, 2026 Bs we

HONORABLE SARA LIOI

CHIEF JUDGE

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT