

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Edward Clayton Whittaker v. Christine Carringer, et al.

Whittaker v. Carringer · No. 2:25-cv-1862-TLN-JDP (PS) · Decided December 19, 2025

SUMMARY

A magistrate judge recommends dismissing Edward Clayton Whittaker’s amended civil rights complaint against three state court judges and a mediator. The recommendation concludes that the allegations are insufficiently particular and that the defendants are protected by judicial or quasi-judicial immunity, making further amendment futile.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Jeremy D. Peterson
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	December 19, 2025
DOCKET	2:25-cv-1862-TLN-JDP (PS)
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Findings and recommendations on screening of a pro se plaintiff's first amended complaint filed in forma pauperis.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e), the court screens an in forma pauperis complaint and must dismiss claims that are frivolous, malicious, fail to state a claim, or seek monetary relief from an immune defendant. A complaint must satisfy Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8(a)(2) and allege sufficient facts to state a plausible claim for relief.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential

TOPICS

- motions to dismiss
- pleadings
- civil rights
- government liability
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

- civil procedure
- civil rights
- constitutional law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the first amended complaint stated a plausible claim for relief under the screening and pleading standards applicable to an in forma pauperis action.
2. Whether the defendant judges and mediator were immune from liability for damages based on their judicial or quasi-judicial acts.
3. Whether plaintiff should be granted further leave to amend.

HOLDINGS

1. The first amended complaint failed to state a claim because its limited allegations did not give defendants adequate notice of the claims or their factual basis.
2. The defendant judges were absolutely immune from civil damages liability for judicial acts, and the mediator was entitled to quasi-judicial immunity for acts within the scope of the mediator's authority.
3. Further leave to amend should be denied because amendment would be futile in light of the repeated deficiency in the amended complaint and the apparent immunity of the defendants.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“*[J]udges are absolutely immune from civil liability for damages for their judicial acts,*”” (Analysis, lines 27-32)

“Plaintiff’s amended complaint, ECF No. 8, be DISMISSED without leave to amend.” (Recommendations, lines 14-16)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff challenged orders issued in a state-court proceeding, alleging that defendants continued making judgments despite allegedly lacking jurisdiction and denied his request to move the case to another county. The defendants were three state-court judges—Christine Carringer, Christine Donovan, and Stephaine Grogan-Jones—and mediator Darlene Woodcock. The court found that the amended complaint did not identify a specific claim or provide sufficient factual detail and appeared to seek damages for judicial or quasi-judicial conduct.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed an action against three state-court judges and a mediator, followed by an amended complaint. The magistrate judge concluded that the amended complaint failed to state a claim, repeated the deficiencies of the original complaint, and recommended dismissal without leave to amend and closure of the case. The findings and recommendations were submitted to the assigned district judge under 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1), subject to objections within fourteen days.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 678-79 (2009)
- Kobold v. Good Samaritan Reg'l Med. Ctr., 832 F.3d 1024, 1038 (9th Cir. 2016)
- Nagrampa v. MailCoups, Inc., 469 F.3d 1257, 1264 n.2 (9th Cir. 2006) (en banc)
- Haines v. Kerner, 404 U.S. 519, 520 (1972) (per curiam)
- Hayes v. Idaho Corr. Ctr., 849 F.3d 1204, 1208 (9th Cir. 2017)
- Bruns v. Nat'l Credit Union Admin., 122 F.3d 1251, 1257 (9th Cir. 1997)
- Ivey v. Bd. of Regents, 673 F.2d 266, 268 (9th Cir. 1982)
- Jones v. Cnty. Redev. Agency, 733 F.2d 646, 649 (9th Cir. 1984)
- Mullis v. U.S. Bankr. Ct. for Dist. of Nev., 828 F.2d 1385, 1388 (9th Cir. 1987)
- Sacks v. Dietrich, 663 F.3d 1065 (9th Cir. 2011)
- Schucker v. Rockwood, 846 F.2d 1202, 1203-04 (9th Cir. 1988) (per curiam)
- California Architectural Bldg. Prod. v. Franciscan Ceramics, 818 F.2d 1466, 1472 (9th Cir. 1987)
- Turner v. Duncan, 158 F.3d 449, 455 (9th Cir. 1998)
- Martinez v. Ylst, 951 F.2d 1153 (9th Cir. 1991)

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