

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF  
INDIANA, SOUTH BEND DIVISION

William David Heffley v. Matt Traster, et al.

No. 1:25-CV-00433-CCB-SJF (N.D. Ind. Mar. 24, 2026) · No. 1:25-CV-00433-CCB-SJF · Decided March 24, 2026

SUMMARY

The court denied William David Heffley’s motion to proceed in forma pauperis and dismissed without prejudice his civil-rights complaint against Matt Traster, Neal Blythe, and Kevin Likes. The court held that the claims against the prosecutor were barred by absolute immunity, the allegations against the other defendants were conclusory, and Younger abstention required the court to refrain from interfering with Heffley’s ongoing state criminal prosecution.

CASE DETAILS

|                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| COURT                 | United States District Court for the Northern District of Indiana, South Bend Division                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| WRITING FOR THE COURT | Cristal C. Brisco                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| JURISDICTION          | United States District Court for the Northern District of Indiana, South Bend Division                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| DECIDED               | March 24, 2026                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| DOCKET                | 1:25-CV-00433-CCB-SJF                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| DISPOSITION           | dismissed                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| PROCEDURAL POSTURE    | Pro se plaintiff filed a civil-rights complaint under 42 U.S.C. §§ 1983 and 1985 and moved for leave to proceed in forma pauperis. The district court screened the complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B), denied in forma pauperis status, dismissed the complaint without prejudice, and abstained under Younger because plaintiff’s related state criminal prosecution was ongoing. |
| STANDARD OF REVIEW    | The court screened the complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B) and applied the Rule 8(a)(2) plausibility standard, accepting well-pleaded factual allegations as true but rejecting conclusory allegations.                                                                                                                                                                             |
| PRECEDENTIAL VALUE    | nonprecedential                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| PARTIES               | William David Heffley v. Matt Traster, Neal Blythe, Kevin Likes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

## TOPICS

pleadings

civil procedure

section 1983

first amendment

due process

## PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

constitutional law

civil rights

federal courts

criminal procedure

## QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the complaint stated plausible claims under 42 U.S.C. §§ 1983 and 1985 against the defendants.
2. Whether prosecutor Neal Blythe was absolutely immune from claims arising from initiating and prosecuting the pending criminal case.
3. Whether the federal court was required to abstain under *Younger v. Harris* from hearing claims seeking to interfere with the ongoing state criminal prosecution.
4. Whether Heffley should be permitted to proceed in forma pauperis under 28 U.S.C. § 1915.

## HOLDINGS

1. The complaint failed to state plausible claims against Traster and Likes because its allegations were conclusory and did not identify what either defendant specifically did, when the conduct occurred, or how the conduct demonstrated an agreement to retaliate.
2. Blythe was entitled to absolute immunity under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 for conduct related to initiating and prosecuting the state criminal case.
3. The court was required to abstain from hearing Heffley's claims because his state criminal prosecution was ongoing and his requested injunction would interfere with that proceeding.
4. Heffley's motion for leave to proceed in forma pauperis was denied because the complaint failed to state a claim and sought monetary relief against an immune defendant.

## KEY QUOTATIONS

*“The statement must contain enough factual matter, accepted as true, to state a plausible claim, not a speculative one.”*

*“Younger “directs federal courts to abstain from exercising jurisdiction over federal claims that seek to interfere with pending state court proceedings.””*

*“Although [pro se] litigants . . . benefit from various procedural protections,” including liberal construction of pleadings, they “are not entitled to [exemption] from the rules of procedure . . . .”*

## FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Heffley alleged that he reported Matt Traster, the City of Butler's chief of police, for sexual misconduct with minors and that Traster, prosecutor Neal Blythe, and defense attorney Kevin Likes conspired to retaliate against him through a pending Indiana criminal prosecution. He alleged that Blythe initiated the prosecution for retaliatory purposes and withheld exculpatory evidence, engaged in improper communications, and acted with

bias. He alleged that Traster permitted harassment and that Likes provided ineffective assistance and acted with divided loyalties. The state criminal prosecution remained pending, with a jury trial scheduled for May 7, 2026.

## PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Heffley filed the complaint on August 18, 2025, alleging that the defendants conspired to retaliate against him through an ongoing Indiana criminal prosecution and violated his First, Sixth, and Fourteenth Amendment rights. He simultaneously moved to proceed in forma pauperis. The district court determined that the complaint failed to state plausible claims, sought monetary relief against an immune defendant, and sought federal interference with a pending state criminal proceeding. The court denied the in forma pauperis motion, dismissed the complaint without prejudice, abstained under *Younger*, and directed the clerk to close the case.

## DISPOSITION

dismissed

## CASES CITED

- *Adkins v. E.I. DuPont de Nemours & Co.*, 335 U.S. 331, 339 (1948)
- *Hoskins v. Poelstra*, 320 F.3d 761, 763 (7th Cir. 2003)
- *Jones v. Phipps*, 39 F.3d 158, 163 (7th Cir. 1994)
- *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009)
- *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555, 570 (2007)
- *Imbler v. Pachtman*, 424 U.S. 409, 430-31 (1976)
- *Younger v. Harris*, 401 U.S. 37, 43-44, 53-54 (1971)
- *J.B. v. Woodard*, 997 F.3d 714, 722 (7th Cir. 2021)
- *Kugler v. Helfant*, 421 U.S. 117, 125 (1975)

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