

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Casterlow v. Chmielewski

No. 2:25-cv-1316-JDP (P), United States District Court for the Eastern District of California (May 20, 2025)

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California screened a pro se detainee's 42 U.S.C. § 1983 complaint alleging theft of mail and property, eviction from a halfway house, and towing of an RV. The court held that the complaint failed to allege that defendants acted under color of state law, granted leave to proceed in forma pauperis, and dismissed the complaint with leave to amend. Plaintiff was ordered to file an amended complaint or notice of voluntary dismissal within thirty days.

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	May 20, 2025
DOCKET	2:25-cv-1316-JDP (P)
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Screening order on a pro se pretrial detainee's in forma pauperis civil-rights complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e).
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The complaint was screened under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e), and the court applied the Rule 8(a)(2) plausibility standard, liberally construing the pro se pleading while requiring allegations sufficient to state an enforceable claim for relief.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Nonprecedential district court screening order

TOPICS

- section 1983
- prisoners rights
- pleadings
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

- civil rights
- federal civil procedure
- prisoner litigation

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the complaint stated a cognizable claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983.
2. Whether the complaint should be dismissed under the in forma pauperis screening requirements for failure to state a claim.
3. Whether plaintiff should be granted leave to amend.

HOLDINGS

1. The complaint failed to state a cognizable § 1983 claim because it did not allege that defendants acted under color of state law.
2. The complaint was dismissed for failure to state a claim under the court's mandatory in forma pauperis screening authority.
3. Plaintiff was granted leave to file an amended complaint within thirty days or alternatively file a notice of voluntary dismissal without prejudice.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The traditional definition of acting under color of state law requires that the defendant in a § 1983 action have exercised power ‘possessed by virtue of state law and made possible only because the wrongdoer is clothed with the authority of state law.’” (at 1)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff was a pretrial detainee living at a halfway house. He alleged that defendants stole his mail and property, evicted him, and towed his recreational vehicle. The court found the allegations insufficient because plaintiff did not allege that defendants acted under color of state law.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed a § 1983 complaint alleging that defendants evicted him from a halfway house, stole his mail and property, and towed his RV. The court granted leave to proceed in forma pauperis, screened the complaint, dismissed it for failure to state a claim, and granted thirty days to amend or voluntarily dismiss before recommending dismissal of the action.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

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)
- Soo Park v. Thompson, 851 F.3d 910, 921 (9th Cir. 2017)
- West v. Atkins, 487 U.S. 42, 49 (1988)
- United States v. Classic, 313 U.S. 299, 326 (1941)
- Lacey v. Maricopa Cnty., 693 F.3d 896, 907 n.1 (9th Cir. 2012) (en banc)

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