

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Douglas Sharron Piggee v. U.S. Marshal for the Eastern District of
California, et al.

No. 2:25-cv-3182 SCR P, United States District Court for the Eastern District of California (December 3, 2025)

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California addresses venue, an incomplete application to proceed in forma pauperis, statutory screening of a prisoner civil-rights complaint, and a motion to amend. The court grants leave to amend, directs plaintiff to submit a completed in forma pauperis application and certified trust-account statement, and warns that failure to comply may result in a recommendation of dismissal.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Sean C. Riordan
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	December 3, 2025
DOCKET	2:25-cv-3182 SCR P
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	A federal pretrial detainee proceeding pro se filed a civil-rights complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1331 and Bivens, together with an application to proceed in forma pauperis and a motion to amend before service.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court applied the screening standard under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, requiring dismissal of frivolous claims, claims failing to state a claim, and claims seeking monetary relief from immune defendants. In assessing pleading sufficiency, the court applied the facial-plausibility standard under Twombly and Iqbal and construed allegations accepted as true in the light most favorable to plaintiff.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court order
PARTIES	Douglas Sharron Piggee v. U.S. Marshal for the Eastern District of California, et al.

TOPICS

motion to amend

pleadings

prisoners rights

civil rights

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

prisoner civil rights

federal courts

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the action should be transferred to the Fresno Division because the alleged violations occurred there.
2. Whether consideration of plaintiff's incomplete application to proceed in forma pauperis should be deferred pending submission of the required certification and inmate trust-account statement.
3. Whether plaintiff could amend his complaint as a matter of course before service of the original complaint.
4. What screening and completeness requirements would govern any amended prisoner civil-rights complaint.

HOLDINGS

1. Transfer to the Fresno Division was unnecessary because the named defendants resided in Sacramento County, notwithstanding that the alleged violations occurred in Fresno County.
2. Consideration of the in forma pauperis application was properly deferred because the application lacked the institutional certificate and a certified inmate trust-account statement for the preceding six months.
3. Plaintiff could amend his complaint once as a matter of course because the original complaint had not yet been served.
4. The complaint was subject to screening under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, which requires dismissal of frivolous or malicious claims, claims failing to state a claim, and claims seeking monetary relief from immune defendants.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Local Rule 220 requires that an amended complaint be complete in itself without reference to any prior pleading.” (at 3)

“Since the original complaint has not yet been served, the court will grant plaintiff's motion to amend.” (at 3)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff, a federal pretrial detainee, alleged civil-rights violations by defendants employed by the United States Marshal Service in Sacramento. Although the alleged violations occurred in Fresno County, the named defendants resided in Sacramento County. Plaintiff filed an incomplete in forma pauperis application and sought to amend his complaint to add defendants before the original complaint had been served.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed a civil-rights complaint alleging violations by employees of the United States Marshal Service, an incomplete application to proceed in forma pauperis, and a motion to amend the complaint. The court declined to transfer the action to the Fresno Division, deferred consideration of the in forma pauperis application pending completion of the required materials, granted leave to amend as a matter of course, and directed plaintiff to file a complete amended complaint within thirty days.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Bivens v. Six Unknown Agents of Federal Bureau of Narcotics, 403 U.S. 388 (1971)
- Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319 (1989)
- Jackson v. Arizona, 885 F.2d 639 (9th Cir. 1989)
- Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544 (2007)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662 (2009)
- Erickson v. Pardus, 551 U.S. 89 (2007)
- Scheuer v. Rhodes, 416 U.S. 232 (1974)
- Monell v. Department of Social Services, 436 U.S. 658 (1978)
- Rizzo v. Goode, 423 U.S. 362 (1976)
- Starr v. Baca, 652 F.3d 1202 (9th Cir. 2011)

OPINION

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT 8 FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA 9 10 DOUGLAS SHARRON PIGGEE, No. 2:25-cv-3182 SCR P 11 Plaintiff, 12 v.
13 U.S. MARSHAL FOR THE EASTERN ORDER DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA, et al., 14
Defendants. 15 16 17 Plaintiff is a federal pretrial detainee representing himself in this civil rights
action filed 18 pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331 and Bivens v. Six Unknown Agents of Federal Bureau
of Narcotics, 19 403 U.S. 388 (1971).

In his complaint, plaintiff alleges violations of his civil rights by defendants 20 who are employed
by the United States Marshal Service in Sacramento. Although the alleged 21 violations took place
in Fresno County, the named defendants reside in Sacramento County. 22 Therefore, the court
finds that this action need not be transferred to the Fresno Division of the 23 United States District
Court for the Eastern District of California.

See Local Rule 120(f). 24 At the time of filing the complaint, plaintiff also filed a motion to
proceed in forma 25 pauperis. ECF No. 2. The court will defer consideration of plaintiff's motion
to proceed in forma 26 pauperis because it is incomplete.

The certificate portion of the request which must be completed 27 by plaintiff's institution of incarceration has not been filled out. Also, plaintiff has not filed a 28 certified copy of his inmate trust account statement for the six month period immediately 1 preceding the filing of the complaint. See 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(2). Plaintiff shall be provided the 2 opportunity to submit a completed in forma pauperis application and a certified copy in support of 3 the application within 30 days from the date of this order.

4 I. Statutory Screening of Prisoner Complaints 5 The court is required to screen complaints brought by prisoners seeking relief against "a 6 governmental entity or officer or employee of a governmental entity." 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(a).

In 7 performing this screening function, the court must dismiss any claim that "(1) is frivolous, 8 malicious, or fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted; or (2) seeks monetary relief 9 from a defendant who is immune from such relief." *Id.* § 1915A(b). A claim is legally frivolous 10 when it lacks an arguable basis either in law or in fact. *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 325 11 (1989).

The court may dismiss a claim as frivolous if it is based on an indisputably meritless 12 legal theory or factual contentions that are baseless. *Neitzke*, 490 U.S. at 327. The critical 13 inquiry is whether a constitutional claim, however inartfully pleaded, has an arguable legal and 14 factual basis. See *Jackson v. Arizona*, 885 F.2d 639, 640 (9th Cir. 1989).

15 In order to avoid dismissal for failure to state a claim a complaint must contain more than 16 "naked assertions," "labels and conclusions" or "a formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause 17 of action." *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555-557 (2007).

In other words, 18 "[t]hreadbare recitals of the elements of a cause of action, supported by mere conclusory 19 statements do not suffice." *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009). A claim upon which the 20 court can grant relief has facial plausibility. *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 570. "A claim has facial 21 plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable 22 inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged." *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 678.

When 23 considering whether a complaint states a claim, the court must accept the allegations as true, 24 *Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89, 93-94 (2007), and construe the complaint in the light most 25 favorable to the plaintiff, *Scheuer v. Rhodes*, 416 U.S. 232, 236 (1974). 26 Moreover, there must be an actual connection or link between the actions of the 27 defendants and the deprivation alleged to have been suffered by plaintiff.

See *Monell v. 28 Department of Social Services*, 436 U.S. 658, 694 (1978); *Rizzo v. Goode*, 423 U.S. 362, 370-71 1 (1976). Plaintiff may demonstrate that connection by alleging facts showing: (1) a defendant's 2 "personal involvement in the constitutional deprivation," or (2) that a defendant

set “in motion a 3 series of acts by others” or “knowingly refus[ed] to terminate a series of acts by others, which 4 [the defendant] knew or reasonably should have known would cause others to inflict a 5 constitutional injury.” *Starr v. Baca*, 652 F.3d 1202, 1207-08 (9th Cir.

2011) (quotation marks 6 and citation omitted). 7 II. Motion to Amend 8 Before the court could screen the complaint, plaintiff filed a motion to amend his 9 complaint to add additional defendants. ECF No. 4. However, the court will not refer to a prior 10 pleading in order to make his amended complaint complete. Local Rule 220 requires that an 11 amended complaint be complete in itself without reference to any prior pleading.

Pursuant to 12 Rule 15(a)(1) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, “[a] party may amend its pleading once as 13 a matter of course... within 21 days after serving it...” Since the original complaint has not yet 14 been served, the court will grant plaintiff's motion to amend. Plaintiff may file a first amended 15 complaint that includes all claims and defendants within 30 days from the date of this order.

Any 16 claims and defendants not included in the amended complaint will not be considered by the court. 17 Accordingly, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that: 18 1. Plaintiff shall submit, within thirty days from the date of this order, a completed 19 affidavit in support of his request to proceed in forma pauperis on the form provided by the Clerk 20 of Court, and a certified copy of the inmate trust account statement for the six month period 21 immediately preceding the filing of the complaint.

22 2. The Clerk of the Court is directed to send plaintiff a new Application to Proceed In 23 Forma Pauperis By a Prisoner. 24 3. Plaintiff’s motion to amend the complaint (ECF No. 4) is granted. 25 4. Within thirty days from the date of this order, plaintiff may file an amended complaint 26 that complies with the requirements of the Civil Rights Act, the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, 27 and the Local Rules of Practice.

The amended complaint must bear the docket number assigned 28 this case and must be labeled “First Amended Complaint.” 1 5. Failure to comply with the terms of this order will result in a recommendation that this 2 || action be dismissed pursuant to Rule 41(b) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. 3 | DATED: December 2, 2025 4 6 SEAN C. RIORDAN UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE 7 8 9 10 1] 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28