

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF
PENNSYLVANIA

Trenton John Tompkins v. Kenneth Rodgers, William Sherman,
Michael Peters, and Anthony Gioan

Tompkins · No. 2:19-CV-1089 · Decided March 25, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania granted Defendants’ motion to dismiss and dismissed the pro se plaintiff’s case with prejudice under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 41(b) for failure to prosecute and comply with court orders. Applying the six Poulis factors, the Court found that the factors largely supported dismissal, while the merits factor was neutral.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania
WRITING FOR THE COURT	J. Nicholas Ranjan
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania
DECIDED	March 25, 2026
DOCKET	2:19-CV-1089
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The pro se plaintiff repeatedly failed to comply with court orders, meet deadlines, and attend scheduled conferences. The defendants' previously held-in-abeyance motion for sanctions seeking dismissal was granted under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 41(b) and the Poulis factors.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Dismissal under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 41(b) for failure to prosecute or comply with court orders is an extreme remedy evaluated under the six Poulis factors; no single factor is dispositive and not all factors must be satisfied.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Nonprecedential district-court memorandum order; the record identifies its precedential status as unknown.
PARTIES	Trenton John Tompkins v. Kenneth Rodgers, William Sherman, Michael Peters, Anthony Gioan

TOPICS

sanctions civil procedure section 1983 prisoners rights

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure civil rights prisoner civil rights sanctions remedies

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether dismissal with prejudice was warranted under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 41(b) because Tompkins repeatedly failed to prosecute the action and comply with court orders.
2. Whether the Poulis factors supported dismissal as a sanction rather than the imposition of an alternative sanction.

HOLDINGS

1. Dismissal with prejudice was warranted because the Poulis factors, considered as a whole, strongly favored dismissal.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"dismissal is a harsh remedy and should be resorted to only in extreme cases." (at 1)

"[N]o single Poulis factor is dispositive[;]" at the same time, "not all of the Poulis factors need be satisfied in order to dismiss a complaint." (at 1)

"Defendants' motion to dismiss (ECF 292) is GRANTED and the case is DISMISSED WITH PREJUDICE." (at 6)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Tompkins, proceeding pro se and in forma pauperis, repeatedly failed to comply with court-ordered deadlines and attend scheduled proceedings. He failed to provide required pretrial filings, did not appear for multiple final pretrial or status conferences, missed a deposition, and arrived more than an hour late to a settlement conference. Despite repeated warnings and additional opportunities to demonstrate his intent to proceed to trial, he failed to file the required documents or attend the March 24, 2026, status conference.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Tompkins's civil-rights action proceeded through discovery, summary judgment, and pretrial proceedings. He failed to file required pretrial materials, failed to appear for multiple conferences and a deposition, and failed to comply with successive orders giving him additional opportunities to proceed. The court granted defendants' motion to dismiss as a sanction and dismissed the case with prejudice.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Mindek v. Rigatti, 964 F.2d 1369, 1373 (3d Cir. 1992)
- Poulis v. State Farm Fire & Cas. Co., 747 F.2d 863, 868 (3d Cir. 1984)
- Briscoe v. Klaus, 538 F.3d 252, 262-63 (3d Cir. 2008)
- In re Avandia Mktg., Sales Pracs. & Prods. Liab. Litig., 687 F. App'x 210, 214 (3d Cir. 2017)
- Emerson v. Thiel Coll., 296 F.3d 184, 190 (3d Cir. 2002)
- Ware v. Rodale Press, Inc., 322 F.3d 218, 222 (3d Cir. 2003)
- Adams v. Trs. of New Jersey Brewery Employees' Pension Tr. Fund, 29 F.3d 863, 874-75 (3d Cir. 1994)
- National Hockey League v. Metropolitan Hockey Club, Inc., 427 U.S. 639, 643 (1976)
- Nieves v. Thorne, 790 F. App'x 355, 358 (3d Cir. 2019)

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