

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF KANSAS

Johnny Lee Baldwin v. Mathew Newton, et al.

Baldwin · No. 26-3027-JWL · Decided March 18, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Kansas orders pro se plaintiff Johnny Lee Baldwin to show cause why his 42 U.S.C. § 1983 action should not be dismissed or stayed. The court discusses potential abstention under *Younger v. Harris* because Baldwin's state criminal proceedings are ongoing, and warns that damages claims may be barred by *Heck v. Humphrey* if he is convicted. The court grants in forma pauperis status, assesses the filing fee, sets an April 17, 2026 response deadline, and orders redaction of the victim's name.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Kansas
WRITING FOR THE COURT	John W. Lungstrum
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Kansas
DECIDED	March 18, 2026
DOCKET	26-3027-JWL
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Pro se prisoner civil-rights action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. The district court screened the complaint under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915A and 1915(e) (2), granted leave to proceed in forma pauperis, and ordered Plaintiff to show cause why the action should not be dismissed or stayed based on <i>Younger</i> abstention and the potential <i>Heck</i> bar.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915A(b) and 1915(e)(2)(B), the court must dismiss a prisoner or in forma pauperis complaint that is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim, or seeks monetary relief from an immune defendant. The court liberally construes a pro se complaint, accepts well-pleaded allegations as true, and applies the plausibility standard under <i>Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly</i> .
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished_nonprecedential
PARTIES	Johnny Lee Baldwin v. Mathew Newton, Andrew Couch, Saline County, Kansas, Salina Police Department

TOPICS

section 1983 habeas corpus civil procedure federalism due process

PRACTICE AREAS

prisoner civil rights federal jurisdiction and abstention habeas corpus civil procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the court should abstain under *Younger v. Harris* from hearing Baldwin's federal constitutional claims because his related Kansas criminal proceedings were ongoing, implicated important state interests, and provided an adequate forum for his federal claims.
2. Whether Baldwin's challenge to his pretrial detention or bond could proceed as a habeas claim under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 without exhaustion of available state remedies.
3. Whether Baldwin's claims for damages could be barred under *Heck v. Humphrey* if success would necessarily imply the invalidity of a future conviction or sentence.
4. Whether the complaint satisfied the pleading and statutory screening standards applicable to pro se prisoner and in forma pauperis actions.

HOLDINGS

1. The complaint appeared subject to *Younger* abstention because Baldwin's state criminal proceedings were ongoing, Kansas had an important interest in enforcing its criminal laws, and the state proceedings appeared to provide an adequate opportunity to litigate his constitutional claims. The court required Baldwin to show good cause why the action should not be dismissed or stayed on that basis.
2. To the extent Baldwin challenged excessive bond or pretrial detention through habeas corpus, he could not obtain federal relief without first exhausting available state-court remedies, and *Younger* abstention also counseled against intervention in the pending state criminal case.
3. If Baldwin is convicted, his § 1983 damages claims may be barred under *Heck v. Humphrey* to the extent a judgment in his favor would necessarily imply the invalidity of the conviction or sentence, unless the conviction or sentence has already been invalidated.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Once these three conditions are met, Younger abstention is non-discretionary and, absent extraordinary circumstances, a district court is required to abstain.” (Section III.1)

“If a judgment on Plaintiff’s claim in this case would necessarily imply the invalidity of his conviction, the claim may be barred by Heck.” (Section III.2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Baldwin, detained at the Saline County Jail, brought a pro se § 1983 action concerning his pending state criminal case involving rape-related charges. He alleged that police delayed disclosure of a negative SANE/SART test, that the prosecutor committed Brady violations, that he was recorded without consent, and that police influenced

the victim's account. He also alleged warrantless search and seizure, false charges, excessive or absent bond, and mistreatment in jail, seeking an OR bond with electronic monitoring, dismissal of the criminal charges, and \$500,000 in damages.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Baldwin filed a § 1983 complaint while detained in the Saline County Jail, challenging events related to his pending Kansas criminal prosecution and seeking injunctive relief and damages. The court granted his motion to proceed in forma pauperis, assessed the filing fee under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b), and determined that the complaint appeared subject to abstention and possible dismissal. Rather than dismissing immediately, the court gave Baldwin until April 17, 2026, to show good cause and to state whether he sought a stay.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- West v. Atkins, 487 U.S. 42, 48 (1988)
- Northington v. Jackson, 973 F.2d 1518, 1523 (10th Cir. 1992)
- Erickson v. Pardus, 551 U.S. 89, 94 (2007)
- Anderson v. Blake, 469 F.3d 910, 913 (10th Cir. 2006)
- Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 555, 558, 570 (2007)
- Hall v. Bellmon, 935 F.2d 1106, 1110 (10th Cir. 1991)
- Nasious v. Two Unknown B.I.C.E. Agents, 492 F.3d 1158, 1163 (10th Cir. 2007)
- Whitney v. New Mexico, 113 F.3d 1170, 1173-74 (10th Cir. 1997)
- Kay v. Bemis, 500 F.3d 1214, 1218 (10th Cir. 2007)
- Smith v. United States, 561 F.3d 1090, 1098 (10th Cir. 2009)
- Younger v. Harris, 401 U.S. 37, 44-45 (1971)
- Buck v. Myers, 244 F. App'x 193, 197 (10th Cir. 2007)
- Winnebago Tribe of Neb. v. Stovall, 341 F.3d 1202, 1204 (10th Cir. 2003)
- Middlesex Cnty. Ethics Comm. v. Garden State Bar Ass'n, 457 U.S. 423, 432 (1982)
- Crown Point I, LLC v. Intermountain Rural Elec. Ass'n, 319 F.3d 1211, 1215 (10th Cir. 2003)
- In re Troff, 488 F.3d 1237, 1240 (10th Cir. 2007)
- Capps v. Sullivan, 13 F.3d 350, 354 n.2 (10th Cir. 1993)
- Robb v. Connolly, 111 U.S. 624, 637 (1884)
- Steffel v. Thompson, 415 U.S. 452, 460-61 (1974)
- Hodson v. Reams, Civil Action No. 17-cv-00379-GPG, 2017 WL 6550694, at *1-*2 (D. Colo. June 20, 2017)
- Arter v. Gentry, 201 F. App'x 653, 653-54 (10th Cir. 2006)
- Tucker v. Reeve, 601 F. App'x 760, 760-61 (10th Cir. 2015)

- Albright v. Raemisch, 601 F. App'x 656, 659-60 (10th Cir. 2015)
- D.L. v. Unified Sch. Dist. No. 497, 392 F.3d 1223, 1228 (10th Cir. 2004)
- Garza v. Burnett, 672 F.3d 1217, 1220 (10th Cir. 2012)
- Wallace v. Kato, 549 U.S. 384, 393 (2007)
- Myers v. Garff, 876 F.2d 79, 81 (10th Cir. 1989)
- Heck v. Humphrey, 512 U.S. 477, 482, 486-87 (1994)

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