

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF
FLORIDA

Jeffrey W. Holton v. Nicholas A. Sudzina, Kimberly Jenkins,
Stephanie Sullivan, John Does 1-X (General Counsel), and John Does
Y-Z (IT Department)

Holton · No. 8:25-cv-1546-WFJ-CPT · Decided January 5, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida adopted a magistrate judge’s Report and Recommendation, overruled Jeffrey Holton’s objections, denied his motion to proceed in forma pauperis, and dismissed his amended complaint without prejudice. The court held that the challenged scheduling-related conduct was protected by quasi-judicial immunity and that the alleged mishandling of a Florida public records request did not support a federal claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. Holton was granted twenty-one days to file a second amended complaint.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida
WRITING FOR THE COURT	William F. Jung
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida
DECIDED	January 5, 2026
DOCKET	8:25-cv-1546-WFJ-CPT
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The district court reviewed de novo a magistrate judge's report and recommendation after the plaintiff objected to the recommended denial of in forma pauperis status and dismissal of his amended complaint.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	De novo review of the portions of the magistrate judge's report and recommendation to which timely and specific objections were made; the complaint was assessed for failure to state a claim under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6).
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential district court order
PARTIES	Jeffrey W. Holton v. Nicholas A. Sudzina, Kimberly Jenkins, Stephanie Sullivan, John Does 1-X (General Counsel), John Does Y-Z

TOPICS

motions to dismiss

section 1983

government liability

public records

remedies

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

civil rights

constitutional law

remedies

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Jenkins and Sudzina were entitled to quasi-judicial immunity for alleged acts involving the scheduling of court hearings and communications concerning hearing dates.
2. Whether Holton stated a cognizable First Amendment retaliation claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 based on the alleged deficient handling of his request for records under Florida's Public Records Act.
3. Whether Holton's separate count seeking declaratory and injunctive relief stated an independent cause of action.
4. Whether the amended complaint should be dismissed with or without prejudice and whether Holton should receive leave to amend.

HOLDINGS

1. Officials performing functions intimately associated with the judicial process are entitled to quasi-judicial immunity, and the challenged acts of scheduling hearings and communicating with counsel about hearing dates fell within that protection.
2. The alleged violation of Florida's Public Records Act did not state a cognizable § 1983 claim because it did not implicate a right secured by federal law.
3. Declaratory judgments and injunctions are remedies rather than independent causes of action, and *Ex parte Young* likewise does not create an independent cause of action.
4. A pro se plaintiff must generally receive at least one opportunity to amend before dismissal with prejudice; Holton was granted one final opportunity to file a sufficient second amended complaint.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The Court “determine[s] whether a government employee deserves quasi-judicial immunity through an analysis of that employee’s functions, and not the status of the defendant.”” (Dkt. 30 at 8)

“Section 1983 of Title 42, United States Code, creates a private right of action to remedy violations of rights, privileges, or immunities secured by the Constitution and laws of the United States,” (Dkt. 30 at 10)

“Declaratory judgments and injunctions are not causes of action. Instead, they are remedies tied to some other cause of action.” (Dkt. 30 at 11)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Holton alleged that judicial assistant Kimberly Jenkins and Nicholas Sudzina engaged in improper conduct involving the scheduling of court hearings and communications with opposing counsel. He also alleged that Sudzina, Stephanie Sullivan, and unidentified defendants retaliated against him in connection with his request for public records under Florida's Public Records Act. The district court treated the allegations in the pro se amended complaint as true and liberally construed them, but concluded that the scheduling-related conduct was protected by quasi-judicial immunity and that the public-records allegations did not establish a federal right enforceable under 42 U.S.C. § 1983.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

A magistrate judge recommended denying Holton's motion to proceed in forma pauperis and dismissing his pro se amended complaint. Holton filed objections challenging the application of quasi-judicial immunity and the characterization of his First Amendment retaliation claim. The district court overruled the objections, adopted the report and recommendation, denied in forma pauperis status, dismissed the amended complaint without prejudice, and granted twenty-one days to file a second amended complaint.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Jeffrey S. State Bd. of Educ. of State of Ga., 896 F.2d 507, 512 (11th Cir. 1990)
- Macort v. Prem., Inc., 208 F. App'x 781, 783-84 (11th Cir. 2006)
- Heath v. Jones, 863 F.2d 815, 822 (11th Cir. 1989)
- Washington v. Rivera, 939 F.3d 1239, 1243 (11th Cir. 2019)
- Roland v. Phillips, 19 F.3d 552, 555 (11th Cir. 1994)
- In re Lickman, 304 B.R. 897, 904 (Bankr. M.D. Fla. 2004)
- Nicholson v. Colbert, No. CV424-067, 2024 WL 4800216, at *4 (S.D. Ga. Nov. 15, 2024)
- Gaston v. Lake Cnty., 2023 WL 9287506, at *7 (M.D. Fla. Jan. 4, 2023)
- Reitmire v. Fla. Atty's Gen., 2008 WL 341439, at *3 (M.D. Fla. Feb. 5, 2008)
- Hyland v. Kolhage, 267 F. App'x 836, 839-40 (11th Cir. 2008)
- Bailey v. Wheeler, 843 F.3d 473, 480 (11th Cir. 2016)
- Viera v. City of Lake Worth, Fla., 853 F. App'x 356, 360 (11th Cir. 2021)
- Canova v. Snipes, No. 20-CV-61328, 2021 WL 2652699, at *5 (S.D. Fla. May 4, 2021)
- Alabama v. U.S. Army Corps of Eng'rs, 424 F.3d 1117, 1127 (11th Cir. 2005)
- Kornegay v. Beretta USA Corp., 614 F. Supp. 3d 1029, 1037 (N.D. Ala. 2022)
- Ex parte Young, 209 U.S. 123 (1908)
- Summit Med. Assocs., P.C. v. Pryor, 180 F.3d 1326, 1336 (11th Cir. 1999)
- Woldeab v. Dekalb Cnty. Bd. of Educ., 885 F.3d 1289, 1291 (11th Cir. 2018)
- Silberman v. Miami Dade Transit, 927 F.3d 1123, 1132 (11th Cir. 2019)

