

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Michael Alan Dean Hill v. Eslick, et al.

Hill v. Eslick · No. 2:25-cv-0748-DAD-JDP (P) · Decided December 10, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California addresses a detainee's motions for a temporary restraining order, discovery, and appointment of a private investigator in a 42 U.S.C. § 1983 excessive-force action. The court denies the discovery and investigator motions and recommends denying the temporary restraining order because the requested relief is not specific and the plaintiff has not shown satisfaction of the Winter factors. The document also sets a fourteen-day period for objections to the findings and recommendations.

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	December 10, 2025
DOCKET	2:25-cv-0748-DAD-JDP (P)
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff, a detainee proceeding under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, moved for a temporary restraining order, discovery, and appointment of a private investigator. The magistrate judge denied the discovery and investigator motions and recommended denial of the temporary restraining order.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	A party seeking preliminary injunctive relief must satisfy the four-factor test stated in Winter v. Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc. The court also required specific, narrowly tailored relief and found that public funds may be expended for a pro se litigant only when authorized by Congress.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential
PARTIES	Michael Alan Dean Hill v. Eslick, et al.

TOPICS

injunctions

discovery dispute

section 1983

prisoners rights

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil rights litigation

prisoner and detainee litigation

federal civil procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Hill's motion for a temporary restraining order stated specific, narrowly tailored relief.
2. Whether Hill demonstrated entitlement to preliminary injunctive relief under the four-factor test in *Winter v. Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc.*
3. Whether Hill's motion for additional discovery should be granted when a scheduling order already governed discovery and he offered no evidence of threatened destruction or tampering with evidence.
4. Whether the court could appoint and publicly fund a private investigator for a pro se litigant absent congressional authorization.

HOLDINGS

1. A request for a temporary restraining order must identify specific, narrowly tailored relief that the court can direct and enforce; a generalized request that defendants cease any conduct interfering with litigation is overbroad and inadequate.
2. A party seeking preliminary injunctive relief must show a likelihood of success on the merits, a likelihood of irreparable harm absent relief, that the balance of equities favors relief, and that an injunction is in the public interest.
3. A motion seeking additional discovery may be denied when the movant provides no evidence that relevant evidence will be destroyed or tampered with and an existing scheduling order already establishes the discovery schedule.
4. Public funds may be expended on behalf of a pro se litigant only when authorized by Congress; absent a showing of congressional authorization, the court may not appoint a publicly funded private investigator.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“A carte blanche order that defendants cannot take any action that interferes with plaintiff’s litigation would be overbroad and inappropriate.” (at 1)

“To obtain preliminary injunctive relief, plaintiff must show (1) that he is likely to succeed on the merits, (2) that he is likely to suffer irreparable harm in the absence of preliminary relief, (3) that the balance of equities tips in his favor, and (4) that an injunction is in the public interest.” (at 1)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Hill was a detainee in the El Dorado County Jail pursuing a § 1983 excessive-force action against the defendants. He alleged that jail personnel interfered with communications from his brother, restricted access to legal mail, and denied him unspecified documents needed to litigate the case. He offered no evidence that

defendants would destroy or tamper with evidence and sought public funding for a private investigator to locate witnesses and gather evidence.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Hill filed a § 1983 action alleging that defendants subjected him to excessive force in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment. While the action was pending, he filed motions concerning preliminary injunctive relief, discovery, and appointment of an investigator. The magistrate judge denied two motions and issued findings and recommendations that the district judge deny the motion for a temporary restraining order.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Maramag v. Wash. Mut. Bank, F.A., No. C 12-2156 PJH, 2012 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 131073, at *4 (N.D. Cal. Sept. 13, 2012)
- Winter v. Nat. Res. Def. Council, Inc., 555 U.S. 7, 20 (2008)
- United States v. MacCollom, 426 U.S. 317, 321 (1976)
- Tedder v. Odel, 890 F.2d 210, 211 (9th Cir. 1989)
- Turner v. Duncan, 158 F.3d 449, 455 (9th Cir. 1998)
- Martinez v. Yist, 951 F.2d 1153 (9th Cir. 1991)

OPINION

Eslick
PER CURIAM.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
9 FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

10 11 MICHAEL ALAN DEAN HILL, Case No. 2:25-cv-0748-DAD-JDP (P) 12 Plaintiff,
13 v. ORDER; FINDINGS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS

14 ESLICK, et al., 15 Defendants. 16 17 18 Plaintiff, a detainee in the El Dorado County Jail, filed this section 1983 action alleging 19 that defendants violated his Fourteenth Amendment rights when they subjected him to excessive 20 force. Pending are his motions for a temporary restraining order, ECF No. 31, for discovery, ECF 21 No. 32, and motion for the appointment of a private investigator, ECF No. 35. I will deny the 22 latter two motions and recommend that the first be denied. 23 Motion for Temporary Restraining Order 24 Plaintiff’s request for a temporary restraining order should be denied for two reasons. 25 First, it fails to request specific, narrowly tailored relief. In his motion, plaintiff alleges

that 26 defendants have interfered with preparation he has undertaken to litigate this case. First, he 27 alleges that they have blocked electronic communications from his brother, who has tried to send 28 1 him witness addresses. ECF No. 31 at 1. He also claims that defendants have interfered with or 2 limited his access to legal mail in some unspecified way. Id. at 1-2. Finally, he alleges that 3 defendants have denied him copies of unspecified documents necessary to show that he has been 4 harassed and retaliated against. Id. at 3. Nowhere in his motion, however, does plaintiff 5 explicitly state what relief he seeks. He requests only that the court “notify defendants that 6 attempts to interfere with [his] preparation is unlawful” Id. at 1. Elsewhere, he characterizes 7 this relief as a “cease and desist.” Id. at 2. This request should be denied because it does not 8 request any specific relief that the court might direct and enforce. There are innumerable acts that 9 defendants or their agents might undertake that would frustrate plaintiff’s efforts to litigate his 10 case. Some of these, like curtailing his access to electronic messages from the outside world, 11 might be reasonably related to goals of institutional security. Others, like interfering with 12 plaintiff’s legal mail, amount—if true—to violations of his rights. A carte blanche order that 13 defendants cannot take any action that interferes with plaintiff’s litigation would be overbroad 14 and inappropriate. See *Maramag v. Wash. Mut. Bank, F.A.*, No. C 12-2156 PJH, 2012 U.S. Dist. 15 LEXIS 131073, at * 4 (N.D. Cal. Sept. 13, 2012) (stating that motion for temporary restraining 16 order was inadequate where “the court [could] not determine the nature of the specific relief 17 sought by plaintiffs”). 18 Second, plaintiff has not shown that the factors set forth in *Winter v. Nat. Res. Def. 19 Council, Inc.*, 555 U.S. 7, 20 (2008), have been satisfied. To obtain preliminary injunctive relief, 20 plaintiff must show (1) that he is likely to succeed on the merits, (2) that he is likely to suffer 21 irreparable harm in the absence of preliminary relief, (3) that the balance of equities tips in his 22 favor, and (4) that an injunction is in the public interest. Id. He has not addressed these factors, 23 and no preliminary injunctive relief may issue until he does. 24 The motion should be denied. 25 Motion for Discovery 26 Plaintiff’s motion for discovery asks that the parties “move to discovery” because he 27 believes that defendants will destroy evidence necessary to prove his claims. ECF No. 32 at 1-2. 28 He offers no evidence, however, that defendants will destroy or tamper with evidence. 1 | Additionally, there is a scheduling order that has already set a schedule for discovery, ECF No. 2 | 29, thus there is no need for further discovery scheduling at this time. The motion is denied. 3 Motion for an Appointed Investigator 4 Plaintiff’s motion asks that the court to appoint investigator Tim Kimball to assist plaintiff 5 | with gathering witness statements, locating witnesses, collecting affidavits and evidence, and 6 | more. ECF No. 35. The expenditure of public funds on behalf of a pro se litigant is proper only 7 | when authorized by Congress. See *United States v. MacCollom*, 426 U.S. 317, 321 (1976); 8 | *Tedder v. Odel*, 890 F.2d 210, 211 (9th Cir. 1989). Plaintiff has not shown any Congressional 9 | authority for the court to pay for an investigator for him. 10 Conclusion 11 Accordingly, it is ORDERED that plaintiff’s motion for discovery, ECF No. 32, and 12 | motion for the appointment of an investigator, ECF No. 35, are DENIED. 13 Further, it is RECOMMENDED that plaintiff’s motion

for temporary restraining order, 14 | ECF No. 31, be DENIED. 15 These findings and recommendations are submitted to the United States District Judge 16 | assigned to the case, pursuant to the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(). Within fourteen days of 17 | service of these findings and recommendations, any party may file written objections with the 18 | court and serve a copy on all parties. Any such document should be captioned “Objections to 19 | Magistrate Judge’s Findings and Recommendations,” and any response shall be served and filed 20 | within fourteen days of service of the objections. The parties are advised that failure to file 21 | objections within the specified time may waive the right to appeal the District Court’s order. See 22 | Turner v. Duncan, 158 F.3d 449, 455 (9th Cir. 1998); Martinez v. Yist, 951 F.2d 1153 (9th Cir. 23 | 1991).

24 95 IT IS SO ORDERED. 26 | q Sty — Dated: _ December 10, 2025 q————

27 JEREMY D., PETERSON

UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE