

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF
WISCONSIN

Thomas Zachary Peters v. Captain Stan Hendrickson, Lieutenant
Ryan Hallman, Sergeant Todd Evers, Officer Brian Carter, Officer
April Brown, and Monroe County, Wisconsin

Peters · No. 24-cv-710-wmc · Decided May 15, 2026

SUMMARY

The Western District of Wisconsin dismissed without prejudice Thomas Peters’s second amended complaint because it asserted multiple unrelated claims against various Monroe County Jail officials and the county, contrary to Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 8 and 20. The court granted Peters a final opportunity to select one group of related claims to pursue by June 15, 2026, warning that failure to respond would result in dismissal with prejudice.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin
WRITING FOR THE COURT	William M. Conley
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin
DECIDED	May 15, 2026
DOCKET	24-cv-710-wmc
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Screening of a prisoner's second amended civil-rights complaint after the court dismissed the first amended complaint for violating Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 8 and 20 and granted leave to amend.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Pleading and joinder screening under Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 8 and 20.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished and nonprecedential district court opinion

TOPICS

- joinder
- pleadings
- civil procedure
- prisoners rights

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the second amended complaint improperly joined unrelated claims and defendants under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 20.
2. Whether the second amended complaint should be dismissed for failing to present a coherent, properly joined pleading under Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 8 and 20.
3. Whether Peters should receive another opportunity to amend and select one group of claims to pursue in this action.

HOLDINGS

1. A plaintiff may join claims against different defendants in one action only when the claims arise out of the same transaction, occurrence, or series of transactions or occurrences. Peters's second amended complaint improperly combined at least six distinct and seemingly unrelated groups of claims.
2. A complaint that combines multiple disparate lawsuits and unrelated claims does not satisfy the pleading and joinder requirements of Rules 8 and 20 and may be dismissed without prejudice.
3. Peters was granted a final opportunity to select one set of related claims to proceed under the existing case number; if he failed to respond by June 15, 2026, the case would be dismissed with prejudice.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“A litigant cannot throw all of his grievances, against dozens of different parties, into one stewpot.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Peters, a prisoner and pretrial detainee at the Monroe County Jail, alleged several groups of incidents involving jail officers and jail administration. The allegations included prolonged verbal harassment, failure to protect him from a hostile inmate, segregation-related conduct, denial of toilet paper, allegedly exacerbated medical conditions, and routine denial of grievances. The court found that these allegations involved at least six distinct issues and did not arise from the same transaction, occurrence, or series of transactions.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The court previously dismissed Peters's first amended complaint because it asserted multiple disparate lawsuits in violation of Rules 8 and 20, but allowed him leave to amend. Peters filed a second amended complaint containing the same unrelated groups of allegations. The court dismissed the second amended complaint without prejudice, directed Peters to select one set of claims to pursue in this action, and granted a final opportunity to amend.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Wheeler v. Wexford Health Sources, Inc., 689 F.3d 680, 683 (7th Cir. 2012)

OPINION

Thomas Zachary Peters v. Captain Stan Hendrickson, Lieutenant Ryan Hallman, Sergeant Todd Evers, Officer Brian Carter, Officer April Brown, and Monroe County, Wisconsin

PER CURIAM.

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN

THOMAS ZACHARY PETERS,

Plaintiff, OPINION AND ORDER v. 24-cv-710-wmc

CAPTAIN STAN HENDRICKSON,

LIEUTENANT RYAN HALLMAN,

SERGEANT TODD EVERS, OFFICER BRIAN CARTER,

OFFICER APRIL BROWN, and

MONROE COUNTY, WISCONSIN,

Defendant. Plaintiff Thomas Peters, a prisoner representing himself, raises several claims related to when he was a pretrial detainee at the Monroe County Jail.¹ (Dkt. #10.) The court screened his first amended complaint and dismissed his case because he did not comply with Fed. Rs. Civ. P. 8 and 20—the first amended complaint outlined multiple, disparate lawsuits. (Dkt. #9.) Nonetheless, the court allowed Peters leave to amend to cure the defects in his amended complaint. Because his second amended complaint contains the same disparate claims, this court will dismiss the second amended complaint and grant him a final opportunity to amend.

OPINION

A plaintiff may bring claims against different defendants in the same lawsuit “only if [those] claims arise ‘out of the same transaction, occurrence, or series of transactions or 1 This complaint is one of a series of complaints that Peters has filed about his confinement at the Monroe County Jail. Case Nos. 23-cv-232-wmc, 24-cv-710-wmc, 24-cv-722-wmc, 24-cv-757-wmc. occurrences.’” Wheeler v. Wexford Health Sources, Inc., 689 F.3d 680, 683 (7th Cir. 2012) (quoting Fed. R. Civ. P. 20(a)(1)(A)). As the Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit has explained, “[a] litigant cannot throw all of his grievances, against dozens of different parties, into one stewpot.” Id. Here, Peters’ second amended complaint again alleges at least two distinct claims. First, he alleges that Officer Brian Carter verbally harassed him and that Captain Stan Hendrickson and Lieutenant Ryan Hallman enabled Carter’s harassment over a period of over two years. Specifically, he alleges that Carter used derogatory and offensive terms and did so because plaintiff had filed grievances about another officer. Peters complained to Hallman and Hendrickson about Carter’s behavior, but they did nothing. After he complained, Carter’s behavior intensified, and he began calling Peters a variety of slurs, a “snitch,” and derogatory names that referenced his pending charges. The

harassment culminated in an incident in which Carter allegedly challenged Peters to a physical altercation while continuing to call him slurs. Hendrickson and Hallman still did not do anything when the behavior was reported to them, and they denied Peters grievance forms to complain about the harassment, as did Carter. Second, Peters alleges that, in April 2023, he was relocated to a higher security unit, where he discovered that a “hostile inmate,” who had told staff that he intended to hurt Peters, was housed on the unit. The inmate then threatened Peters with a weapon, and Peters’ friend apparently contacted jail staff to alert them to the problem. Upon hearing that Peters reported a threat, Carter “denied any altercation” occurred and “stated that [] plaintiff was fabricating” the threat from the other inmate. Peters’ second amended complaint contains more, seemingly unrelated allegations. In total, the complaint contains the following six alleged issues: (1) Carter’s repeated harassment and Hallman and Hendrickson’s failure to intervene in the harassment (described first above); (2) Carter’s failure to protect Peters from the “hostile” inmate’s threat (described second above); (3) Carter putting Peters in segregation because he refused to enter another new pod with another “hostile” inmate; (4) Carter refusing to give Peters toilet paper while in segregation; (5) Carter exacerbating Peters’ medical conditions by making him carry his own tote; and (6) jail administration routinely denying all of Peters’ filed grievances. Only one of the six issues identified above may proceed under this case number. Peters must decide which one group of claims will proceed. If Peters chooses a set of claims by the deadline set below, the court will treat that portion of his current complaint as the operative pleading and screen those claims. If he wishes to pursue claims arising from the other, separate incidents, he may do so in separate lawsuits if time remains within the applicable statute of limitations. Peters may also object to the court’s decision to separate these claims, but he still must choose one set of the six sets of claims on which to proceed by the deadline. If Peters decides to pursue separate lawsuits based on allegations unrelated to those he decides to pursue under this case number, he will be required to pay a separate filing fee for each additional lawsuit on which he chooses to proceed.

ORDER

IT IS ORDERED that: 1) Plaintiff Thomas Peters’ second amended complaint (dkt. #10) is DISMISSED without prejudice. 2) Plaintiff may have until June 15, 2026, to inform the court on which set of the distinct claims identified above he wishes to pursue in this lawsuit. If plaintiff fails to respond by the deadline, the court will dismiss this case with prejudice. Entered this 15th day of May, 2026. BY THE COURT: /s/ _____

WILLIAM M. CONLEY

District Judge