

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF
NEW YORK

Mark W. Benjamin v. Jacob A. Wetzel and Daniel Ossa

Benjamin v. Wetzel and Ossa, No. 6:25-cv-00302 (AMN/PJE) (N.D.N.Y. Feb. 17, 2026) · No. 6:25-cv-00302 (AMN/PJE) · Decided February 17, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of New York reviewed Mark W. Benjamin’s amended pro se complaint concerning his arrest after a traffic stop. The court held that his false-arrest claims under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 and New York law survived initial review under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e), while denying as moot his amended in forma pauperis request and denying his request for appointed counsel.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of New York
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Anne M. Nardacci
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of New York
DECIDED	February 17, 2026
DOCKET	6:25-cv-00302 (AMN/PJE)
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The district court conducted initial review of a pro se amended complaint filed in forma pauperis under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e).
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B), the court must dismiss an in forma pauperis action that is frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim, or seeks monetary relief from an immune defendant. The court applies the plausibility pleading standard and construes pro se submissions liberally.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown; unpublished district court memorandum-decision and order

TOPICS

- section 1983
- police misconduct
- civil rights
- pleadings
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the amended complaint plausibly stated false-arrest claims under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 and New York law sufficient to survive initial review under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e).
2. Whether Plaintiff's amended in forma pauperis request should be denied as moot.
3. Whether Plaintiff's amended request for appointment of counsel should be granted.

HOLDINGS

1. Liberally construed, the amended complaint sufficiently stated false-arrest claims against Defendants under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 and New York law, and the claims survived initial review and required a response.
2. The amended request to proceed in forma pauperis and related correspondence were denied as moot because Plaintiff was already proceeding in forma pauperis.
3. The amended request for appointment of counsel was denied because it was too early to determine whether Plaintiff's claims were likely to be of substance, and the additional circumstances identified did not change the prior analysis.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“At this early stage, Plaintiff’s false arrest claims against Defendants under Section 1983 and New York law, liberally construed, survive initial review and are sufficient to require a response.” (Section III.A)

“In so ruling, the Court expresses no opinion as to whether these claims can withstand a properly filed dispositive motion.” (Section III.A)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff alleged that New York State Troopers Jacob A. Wetzel and Daniel Ossa conducted a traffic stop on October 12, 2024, administered field sobriety tests, and arrested him. He alleged that the arrest was improper and that all charges, including traffic violations, were dismissed in Oneonta Municipal Court on December 11, 2024. He asserted false-arrest claims under the Fourth Amendment through 42 U.S.C. § 1983 and under New York law.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff commenced the action on March 7, 2025, and was granted leave to proceed in forma pauperis. A magistrate judge recommended dismissal of the original complaint with leave to amend, but Plaintiff filed an amended complaint instead of objections. The district court reviewed the amended complaint, found the false-arrest claims sufficient to survive initial review, denied the renewed in forma pauperis request as moot, denied the request for appointed counsel, and directed service and a response.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Caldwell v. Barriere, 844 F. App'x 461, 461 (2d Cir. 2021)
- Hardaway v. Hartford Pub. Works Dep't, 879 F.3d 486, 489 (2d Cir. 2018)
- Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009)
- Murray v. New York, No. 24-cv-08015, 2024 WL 5009955, at *1 (S.D.N.Y. Dec. 6, 2024)
- Ruhrgas AG v. Marathon Oil Co., 526 U.S. 574, 583 (1999)
- Govan v. Campbell, 289 F. Supp. 2d 289, 295 (N.D.N.Y. 2003)
- Haines v. Kerner, 404 U.S. 519, 520 (1972)
- Terry v. Inc. Vill. of Patchogue, 826 F.3d 631, 633 (2d Cir. 2016)
- Cuoco v. Moritsugu, 222 F.3d 99, 112 (2d Cir. 2000)
- Traguth v. Zuck, 710 F.2d 90, 95 (2d Cir. 1983)
- Alexander v. City of Syracuse, 132 F.4th 129, 156 (2d Cir. 2025)
- Kee v. City of New York, 12 F.4th 150, 158 (2d Cir. 2021)
- Carruthers v. Colton, 153 F.4th 169, 179 (2d Cir. 2025)
- Aponte v. Perez, 75 F.4th 49, 59-60 (2d Cir. 2023)
- Triolo v. Nassau Cnty., 24 F.4th 98, 106 (2d Cir. 2022)
- Leftridge v. Conn. State Trooper Officer No. 1283, 640 F.3d 62, 68 (2d Cir. 2011)
- Hodge v. Police Officers, 802 F.2d 58, 61-62 (2d Cir. 1986)