UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF MARYLAND

Terrence Williams v. Walmart Inc.

Williams v. Walmart · No. 1:26-cv-00667-SAG · Decided March 30, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Maryland denied Terrence Williams's motion to remand his state-court action against Walmart to state court. The court held that removal was timely and that complete diversity and the amount-in-controversy requirement supported federal jurisdiction, and it also granted Walmart's unopposed motion to seal protected health information.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Maryland
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Stephanie A. Gallagher
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Maryland
DECIDED	March 30, 2026
DOCKET	1:26-cv-00667-SAG
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff moved to remand a removed state-court action to state court. The federal district court denied the motion to remand and granted an unopposed motion to seal records containing protected health information.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Removal statutes are strictly construed, doubts concerning removal jurisdiction are resolved in favor of remand, and the removing party bears the burden of establishing federal jurisdiction. Diversity jurisdiction is assessed based on the pleadings and circumstances existing at the time of removal.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished memorandum opinion; precedential status is unknown.
PARTIES	Terrence Williams v. Walmart Inc., Wal-Mart Associates, Inc.

TOPICS

subject matter jurisdiction · civil procedure · federalism · limited liability companies · service of process

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure | federal jurisdiction | removal | corporate citizenship

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the federal court had diversity subject-matter jurisdiction over the removed action based on complete diversity and an amount in controversy exceeding $75,000.
2. Whether Walmart's removal was timely under the applicable 30-day removal period.
3. Whether alleged defects in service, filing, or disclosure of affiliate information invalidated the removal.

HOLDINGS

1. The court had diversity jurisdiction because the amount in controversy exceeded $75,000 and complete diversity existed between Williams, a Maryland citizen, and the relevant Walmart entities, which were citizens of Delaware and Arkansas.
2. Removal was timely because Walmart removed the action within 30 days after Williams first sought damages exceeding $75,000 in his amended complaint.
3. The alleged faulty service, filing issues, and affiliate disclosures did not invalidate an otherwise proper removal.

KEY QUOTATIONS

> *"The burden of establishing federal jurisdiction is placed upon the party seeking removal. Because removal jurisdiction raises significant federalism concerns, we must strictly construe removal jurisdiction. If federal jurisdiction is doubtful, a remand is necessary."* (I. LEGAL STANDARD)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Williams, a Maryland resident, sued Walmart entities in state court. His amended complaint first sought damages exceeding $75,000 on February 4, 2026, and Walmart removed the action on February 18, 2026. Walmart Inc. and Wal-Mart Associates, Inc. were Delaware corporations with principal places of business in Arkansas; the court also considered the citizenship of Wal-Mart Stores East, LP, whose members were Delaware LLCs ultimately owned by Walmart Inc.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Williams filed suit in state court against Walmart entities. After Williams filed an amended complaint increasing the amount in controversy above $75,000, Walmart removed the action to federal court based on diversity jurisdiction. Williams moved to remand, Walmart opposed, and Williams replied. The court denied remand and separately granted the motion to seal.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Receivership Est. of Mann Bracken, LLP v. Cline, Civ. No. RWT-12-0292, 2012 WL 2921355, at *2 (D. Md. July 16, 2012)
- Stephens v. Kaiser Found. Health Plan of the Mid-Atl. States, Inc., 807 F. Supp. 2d 375, 378 (D. Md. 2011)
- Mulcahey v. Columbia Organic Chems. Co., 29 F.3d 148, 151 (4th Cir. 1994)
- Semtek Int'l, Inc. v. Lockheed Martin Corp., 988 F. Supp. 913, 914-15 (D. Md. 1997)
- Burrell v. Bayer Corp., 918 F.3d 372, 380-81 (4th Cir. 2019)
- Navy Fed. Credit Union v. LTD Fin. Servs., LP, 972 F.3d 344, 352 (4th Cir. 2020)
- Americold Realty Tr. v. Conagra Foods, Inc., 577 U.S. 378, 381 (2016)

OPINION

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF MARYLAND TERRENCE WILLIAMS, * * Plaintiff, * * v. * Civil Case No. 1:26-cv-00667-SAG * WALMART INC., * * Defendant. * * ************* MEMORANDUM OPINION Plaintiff Terrence Williams ("Plaintiff"), who is self-represented, filed this lawsuit in state court against Defendants Walmart Inc. and Wal-Mart Associates, Inc (collectively "Walmart").

The case proceeded in state court for some time, but after Plaintiff filed an Amended Complaint increasing the amount in controversy, Walmart removed the lawsuit to this Court, ECF 1, citing diversity jurisdiction. Plaintiff has now filed a motion to remand the case to state court. ECF 8. Walmart opposed the motion, ECF 16, and Plaintiff filed a reply, ECF 17.

No hearing is necessary. See Loc. R. 105.6 (D. Md. 2025). For the reasons that follow, Plaintiff's Motion to Remand will be denied.1 I. LEGAL STANDARD Federal district courts have "original jurisdiction of all civil actions arising under the Constitution, laws, or treaties of the United States." 28 U.S.C. § 1331. Other cases are reserved to the state courts.

1 Also pending is a motion to seal records containing protected health information, ECF 2. That unopposed motion will be granted. When a case is removed to federal court, courts "strictly construe the removal statute and resolve all doubts in favor of remanding the case to state court." Receivership Est. of Mann Bracken, LLP v. Cline, Civ. No. RWT-12-0292, 2012 WL 2921355, at *2 (D.

Md. July 16, 2012) (internal quotation marks omitted) (quoting Stephens v. Kaiser Found. Health Plan of the Mid– Atl. States, Inc., 807 F. Supp. 2d 375, 378 (D. Md. 2011)). As the Fourth Circuit has explained, "The burden of establishing federal jurisdiction is placed upon the party seeking removal.

Because removal jurisdiction raises significant federalism concerns, we must strictly construe removal jurisdiction. If federal jurisdiction is doubtful, a remand is necessary." Mulcahey v. Columbia Organic Chems. Co., 29 F.3d 148, 151 (4th Cir. 1994) (internal citations omitted).

Nevertheless, because the decision to remand is largely unreviewable, district courts should be cautious about denying a defendant access to a federal forum.

See Semtek Int'l, Inc. v. Lockheed Martin Corp., 988 F. Supp. 913, 914–15 (D. Md. 1997). II. ANALYSIS As the party seeking removal, Walmart bears the burden of establishing federal jurisdiction. Burrell v. Bayer Corp., 918 F.3d 372, 380–81 (4th Cir. 2019).

Here, Walmart relies on diversity jurisdiction. The federal diversity jurisdiction statute allows federal courts to exercise original jurisdiction over civil actions between "citizens of different States" "where the matter in controversy exceeds... $75,000, exclusive of interest and costs." 28 U.S.C. § 1332. Diversity jurisdiction requires complete diversity, which "means that no plaintiff may share a citizenship with any defendant." Navy Fed.

Credit Union v. LTD Fin. Servs., LP, 972 F.3d 344, 352 (4th Cir. 2020). The citizenship analysis is somewhat complicated in this case by the intricate corporate structure of Walmart's entities. But there are just two named corporate defendants: Walmart Inc. and Wal-Mart Associates, Inc. (which Plaintiff misspelled as "Walmart Associates, Inc." in the Amended Complaint.).

Both are corporations, and "a corporation shall be deemed to be a citizen of every State and foreign state by which it has been incorporated and of the State or foreign state where it has its principal place of business." 28 U.S.C. § 1332(c)(1). Walmart Inc. is incorporated in the state of Delaware and has its principal place of business in Arkansas. Wal-Mart Associates, Inc. (which Plaintiff named as "Walmart Associates, Inc." in the Amended Complaint), is also incorporated in the state of Delaware and maintains a principal place of business in Arkansas.

Walmart asserts in its opposition, however, that the "correct operating entity" is not Walmart Inc. but Wal-Mart Stores East, LP. ECF 16 at 4 n.1. That entity is not a corporation, so this Court must assess the citizenship of all of its members for diversity purposes. See Americold Realty Tr. v. Conagra Foods, Inc., 577 U.S. 378, 381 (2016).

The two owners of Wal-Mart Stores East, LP are WSE Management, LLC and WSE Investment, LLC, both Delaware limited liability companies. The sole member of both WSE Management, LLC and WSE Investment, LLC is Walmart Inc. Because that entity, again, is incorporated in Delaware with a principal place of business in Arkansas, Wal-Mart Stores East, LP shares citizenship in those states for diversity jurisdiction purposes.

Because Plaintiff is a Maryland resident (and not a resident of Delaware or Arkansas), there is complete diversity between Plaintiff and Walmart Inc., Wal-Mart Associates, Inc., and Wal- Mart Stores East, LP. Plaintiff raises a number of additional arguments that are simply inapposite to the diversity analysis.

First, the affiliate entities and financial interests that must be disclosed pursuant to Local Rule 103.3 do not impact the citizenship of the relevant defendant entities. Second, because Walmart Inc. is a corporation, § 1332(c)(1) does not require consideration of the citizenship of its shareholders or its registered agents.

Third, although Plaintiff's Amended Complaint identifies "Walmart.com USA, LLC" as a trade name for Walmart Inc., Walmart explains that they are two separate entities. Thus, Walmart.com USA, LLC's membership need not be considered to assess diversity jurisdiction.

Finally, while Plaintiff suggests a possible intent to amend his complaint later to add additional individual defendants once he discovers some additional information, ECF 17 at 4, this Court must consider the present Amended Complaint to determine whether complete diversity exists at the time of removal, not speculate about potential future iterations. Plaintiff's other arguments are similarly unpersuasive.

His arguments regarding faulty service and filing issues can be or have been rectified and would not invalidate an otherwise valid removal. And his contention that Walmart's removal was untimely fails because diversity jurisdiction requires an amount in controversy exceeding $75,000. Plaintiff first sought damages in excess of that amount in his Amended Complaint on February 4, 2026, and Walmart filed its Notice of Removal within 30 days, on February 18, 2026.

Removal, then, was both timely and appropriate. III. CONCLUSION For the reasons set forth above, the Motion to Seal, ECF 2, will be GRANTED and Plaintiff's Motion to Remand, ECF 8, will be DENIED. A separate Order is filed herewith. Dated: March 30, 2026 /s/ Stephanie A. Gallagher United States District Judge

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