

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF
TEXAS, AMARILLO DIVISION

Marvin D. Price v. Potter County Sheriff Brian Thomas, et al.

Price v. Thomas, No. 2:25-CV-145-Z-BR (N.D. Tex. Jan. 14, 2026) · No. 2:25-CV-145-Z-BR · Decided January 14, 2026

SUMMARY

A magistrate judge recommends dismissing Marvin D. Price’s pro se 42 U.S.C. § 1983 complaint against Potter County Sheriff Brian Thomas and a detention officer. The recommendation concludes that Price cannot recover compensatory damages under the Prison Litigation Reform Act because he alleged no physical injury and that amendment would be futile; dismissal with prejudice is recommended under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(i).

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas, Amarillo Division
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas, Amarillo Division
DECIDED	January 14, 2026
DOCKET	2:25-CV-145-Z-BR
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	A pro se prisoner brought a civil-rights action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 and proceeded in forma pauperis. A United States Magistrate Judge issued findings, conclusions, and a recommendation that the complaint be dismissed with prejudice during preliminary PLRA screening.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B) and 1915A(b), the court must dismiss a prisoner's in forma pauperis complaint, or a complaint against a governmental entity or employee, if it is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim, or seeks monetary relief from an immune defendant. Well-pleaded factual allegations are accepted as true, but conclusory allegations and assertions merely restating legal elements are not credited. Pro se pleadings are liberally construed, but must allege facts raising the right to relief above a speculative level.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential

PARTIES

Marvin D. Price v. Potter County Sheriff Brian Thomas, Detention Officer Cotton, et al.

TOPICS

prisoners rights

section 1983

civil rights

damages

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

prisoner civil rights

constitutional litigation

federal civil procedure

PLRA screening

damages

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the prisoner's complaint was subject to dismissal as frivolous or for failure to state a claim under the PLRA.
2. Whether 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(e) barred Price from recovering compensatory damages because he alleged no physical injury.
3. Whether Price should be granted leave to amend his complaint.

HOLDINGS

1. Because Price alleged no physical injury and sought compensatory damages for alleged constitutional violations, § 1997e(e) barred recovery of the compensatory damages he sought.
2. The complaint should be dismissed with prejudice under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(i) because Price failed to state a viable claim and his requested compensatory damages were barred by the absence of physical injury.
3. Leave to amend should be denied because Price had pleaded his best case and amendment would be futile and cause needless delay.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“A frivolous complaint lacks any arguable basis, either in fact or in law, for the wrong alleged.” (at 2)

“The application of Section 1997e(e) is based on “the relief sought, and not the underlying substantive violation.”” (at 3)

“Price has stated his best case in his complaint and detailed questionnaire responses.” (at 4)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Price alleged that on May 29, 2025, Potter County Detention Center Officer Cotton confiscated a letter he had written to his wife and issued him a disciplinary case for an unspecified reason. Price sued Cotton and Potter County Sheriff Brian Thomas in his supervisory capacity under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. He sought \$100,000 in damages for damages, pain, and suffering, and admitted in questionnaire responses that he had not suffered a physical injury.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Price filed a complaint alleging that a detention officer confiscated a letter to his wife and issued him a disciplinary case, and that the sheriff was liable as the officer's supervisor. He was granted leave to proceed in forma pauperis and provided questionnaire responses. The magistrate judge concluded that Price failed to allege physical injury and recommended dismissal with prejudice under the PLRA, while allowing the statutory objection period.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319, 325 (1989)
- Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319, 327 (1989)
- Geiger v. Jowers, 404 F.3d 371, 373 (5th Cir. 2005)
- Geiger v. Jowers, 404 F.3d 371, 375 (5th Cir. 2005)
- Wilson v. Barrientos, 926 F.2d 480, 483-84 (5th Cir. 1991)
- Berry v. Brady, 192 F.3d 504, 507 (5th Cir. 1999)
- Chhim v. Univ. of Tex. at Austin, 836 F.3d 467, 469 (5th Cir. 2016)
- Taylor v. Books A Million, Inc., 296 F.3d 376, 378 (5th Cir. 2002)
- Mayfield v. Tex. Dep't of Crim. Just., 529 F.3d 599, 603, 605 (5th Cir. 2008)
- Hill v. Fagan, No. 1:16-CV-185-BL, 2018 WL 3244617, at *3 (N.D. Tex. June 4, 2018)
- Brewster v. Dretke, 587 F.3d 764, 767-68 (5th Cir. 2009)
- Douglass v. United Servs. Auto. Ass'n, 79 F.3d 1415, 1428-29 (5th Cir. 1996) (en banc)
- ACS Recovery Servs., Inc. v. Griffin, 676 F.3d 512, 521 n.5 (5th Cir. 2012)
- Rodriguez v. Bowen, 857 F.2d 275, 276-77 (5th Cir. 1988)