

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF
FLORIDA, FORT MYERS DIVISION

Johnnie L. Williams v. Stephanie V. Daniels, Director, Miami Dade
Police Department, in her Official Capacity; Department of Financial
Services; Francianne Dorvilus, in her Official Capacity; and Officer
D. Forbes, Badge #0055, in his Individual Capacity

Williams v. Daniels · No. 2:25-cv-00874-JES-NPM · Decided January 15, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida granted in part three motions to dismiss in an action brought by Johnnie L. Williams. The court dismissed the Department of Financial Services without prejudice on Eleventh Amendment immunity grounds and transferred the remaining case to the Southern District of Florida based on venue. The transferee court was left to consider the defendants’ arguments that the complaint failed to state a claim.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida, Fort Myers Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	John E. Steele
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida
DECIDED	January 15, 2026
DOCKET	2:25-cv-00874-JES-NPM
DISPOSITION	remanded
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The court reviewed three motions to dismiss filed by the Department of Financial Services, Francianne Dorvilus, and Donald Forbes. The court granted the motions in part, dismissed the claims against the Department of Financial Services without prejudice on Eleventh Amendment grounds, transferred the case to the Southern District of Florida for improper venue, and deferred consideration of the remaining failure-to-state-a-claim arguments.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court reviewed the motions to dismiss and assessed Eleventh Amendment immunity and venue under the applicable statutory and

	constitutional standards. It did not reach the defendants' arguments that the complaint failed to state a claim.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished district court opinion; limited persuasive value
PARTIES	Johnnie L. Williams v. Stephanie V. Daniels, Director, Miami Dade Police Department, in her Official Capacity, Department of Financial Services, Francianne Dorvilus, in her Official Capacity, Officer D. Forbes, Badge #0055, in his Individual Capacity

TOPICS

venue

motions to dismiss

eleventh amendment immunity

sovereign immunity

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

civil rights

constitutional law

federal jurisdiction

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the Department of Financial Services was immune from Williams's monetary-damages claims under the Eleventh Amendment.
2. Whether venue was proper in the Middle District of Florida or whether the action should be transferred to the Southern District of Florida.
3. Whether the remaining defendants' arguments that the complaint failed to state a claim should be decided by the transferor court.

HOLDINGS

1. The Department of Financial Services was protected by Eleventh Amendment immunity because Florida had not consented to the suit and Congress had not validly abrogated the immunity; the claims against DFS were therefore dismissed without prejudice.
2. Venue was not proper in the Middle District of Florida because the remaining defendants resided in Miami-Dade County and the relevant events occurred there; the case was transferred to the Southern District of Florida.
3. The court deferred the remaining failure-to-state-a-claim arguments for consideration by the transferee court.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The Eleventh Amendment of the United States Constitution protects states from being sued in federal court without the state’s consent.”

“As such, Williams’s Complaint must be dismissed as to DFS pursuant to the Eleventh Amendment.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Williams sought monetary damages from state and local public officials and entities arising from events that occurred in Miami-Dade County. The Department of Financial Services was sued despite Florida's lack of consent to the suit and the absence of congressional abrogation of immunity. The remaining defendants resided in Miami-Dade County, and defendant Daniels was located in the Southern District of Florida.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Williams filed a civil action in the Middle District of Florida seeking monetary damages. The Department of Financial Services, Dorvilus, and Forbes moved to dismiss. The court determined that Florida had not consented to the suit and that Congress had not abrogated the state's immunity, dismissed DFS without prejudice, concluded that venue was proper in the Southern District of Florida because the defendants and events were located in Miami-Dade County, and transferred the case to the Miami Division of that district under 28 U.S.C. § 1404(a).

DISPOSITION

remanded

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

The Clerk was directed to transfer the case to the Miami Division of the Southern District of Florida for all further proceedings, terminate all deadlines, and close the Fort Myers files. The transferee court was to consider the deferred failure-to-state-a-claim arguments.

CASES CITED

- Manders v. Lee, 338 F.3d 1304, 1308 (11th Cir. 2003)
- DeKalb Cnty. Sch. Dist. v. Schrenko, 109 F.3d 680, 688 (11th Cir. 1997)
- Pennhurst State Sch. & Hosp. v. Halderman, 465 U.S. 89, 99 (1984)