

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
TENNESSEE

Timothy Flynn v. Coty Holland

Case No. 1:25-cv-192 (E.D. Tenn. Apr. 20, 2026) · No. Case No. 1:25-cv-192 · Decided April 20, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Tennessee granted Defendant Coty Holland’s motion for summary judgment in Timothy Flynn’s 42 U.S.C. § 1983 retaliation action. The court held that Flynn failed to exhaust available Tennessee Department of Correction administrative remedies under the Prison Litigation Reform Act and dismissed the action without prejudice.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of Tennessee
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Charles E. Atchley, Jr.
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of Tennessee
DECIDED	April 20, 2026
DOCKET	Case No. 1:25-cv-192
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Defendant moved for summary judgment in a 42 U.S.C. § 1983 prisoner-retaliation action based on Plaintiff’s failure to exhaust available administrative remedies. Plaintiff did not respond, and the court granted the motion and dismissed the action without prejudice.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Summary judgment is proper when the pleadings and evidence, viewed in the light most favorable to the nonmoving party, show that no genuine dispute of material fact exists and the movant is entitled to judgment as a matter of law. When non-exhaustion is asserted as an affirmative defense, the defendant bears the burden of proving non-exhaustion and must establish the absence of a genuine dispute regarding that issue.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential
PARTIES	Timothy Flynn v. Coty Holland

TOPICS

section 1983

prisoners rights

summary judgment

civil rights

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil rights

prisoner litigation

civil procedure

summary judgment

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Defendant was entitled to summary judgment because Plaintiff failed to properly exhaust the available TDOC grievance procedure before filing the § 1983 retaliation action.
2. Whether the undisputed evidence established that the TDOC administrative remedies were available and that Plaintiff did not pursue them.

HOLDINGS

1. The Prison Litigation Reform Act required Plaintiff to properly exhaust the available TDOC grievance procedures before bringing his § 1983 action, regardless of the type of relief sought or whether the requested relief could be granted through the administrative process.
2. Plaintiff failed to exhaust the available TDOC administrative remedies because he did not file a grievance concerning Defendant's alleged retaliation, and Defendant was therefore entitled to summary judgment.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The requirements of exhaustion are not set out in the PLRA itself. Rather, to satisfy the exhaustion requirement, an inmate must properly complete the grievance procedures put forward by his correctional institution, including any procedural rules and deadlines.” (Section III)

“For the reasons set forth above, Defendant’s summary judgment motion [Doc. 25] is GRANTED, and this action will be DISMISSED without prejudice.” (Section IV)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

On June 24, 2024, Timothy Flynn and other inmates participated in a sit-down protest at the Bledsoe County Correctional Complex. As Flynn left the dining hall, he stated that he was going to call his attorney, after which Defendant Coty Holland allegedly pulled him from line and threatened him. Flynn was then charged with participating in a riot, allegedly in retaliation for his statement. TDOC records showed that Flynn had not filed a grievance concerning the alleged retaliation and had filed only one grievance during his TDOC custody, more than five years before the incident.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff was permitted to proceed under § 1983 on a claim that Defendant retaliated against him for stating that he intended to call an attorney. Defendant moved for summary judgment, supported by a statement of undisputed facts and grievance records showing that Plaintiff had not filed a grievance concerning the alleged retaliation. Plaintiff failed to oppose the motion. The court granted summary judgment and dismissed the action without prejudice.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Celotex Corp. v. Catrett, 477 U.S. 317, 322-23 (1986)
- Surles v. Andison, 678 F.3d 452, 455-58 (6th Cir. 2012)
- Cockrel v. Shelby Cnty. Sch. Dist., 270 F.3d 1036, 1056 (6th Cir. 2001)
- Risher v. Lappin, 649 F.3d 236, 240 (6th Cir. 2011)
- El Bey v. Roop, 530 F.3d 407, 414 (6th Cir. 2008)
- Woodford v. Ngo, 548 U.S. 81, 93 (2006)
- Jones v. Bock, 549 U.S. 199, 218 (2007)
- Ross v. Blake, 578 U.S. 632, 641 (2016)
- Napier v. Laurel Cnty., 636 F.3d 218, 222, 225-26 (6th Cir. 2011)
- Albino v. Baca, 747 F.3d 1162, 1172 (9th Cir. 2014)
- Tuckel v. Grover, 660 F.3d 1249, 1254 (10th Cir. 2011)