

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF
ILLINOIS, SPRINGFIELD DIVISION

David Robert Bentz v. Steven Hall, et al.

Bentz v. Hall · No. 24-3191 · Decided December 9, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Central District of Illinois screened David Robert Bentz’s Third Amended Complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A. The court allowed claims to proceed against certain defendants for First Amendment retaliation, Fourteenth Amendment procedural due process violations, and Eighth Amendment conditions of confinement, while dismissing other defendants and claims without prejudice. The order also addressed service, identification of Doe defendants, discovery, and scheduling matters.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Central District of Illinois, Springfield Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Colleen R. Lawless
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Central District of Illinois, Springfield Division
DECIDED	December 9, 2025
DOCKET	24-3191
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Screening of a pro se incarcerated plaintiff’s Third Amended Complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, the court accepted factual allegations as true and construed them liberally in the plaintiff’s favor, but required sufficient nonconclusory facts to state a facially plausible claim. Claims were dismissed if frivolous, malicious, failed to state a claim, or sought relief from an immune defendant.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished district court screening order; persuasive but not precedential outside the case.
PARTIES	David Robert Bentz v. Steven Hall, Berry, Gooslage, Brittany Greene, Manton, S. Hasten, D. Hasten, Eric Wohlfeil, John/Jane Does #1-18

TOPICS

section 1983 prisoners rights first amendment due process civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil rights litigation prisoner civil rights constitutional litigation federal civil procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Bentz stated a First Amendment retaliation claim against Hall and the adjustment-committee chairperson.
2. Whether Bentz stated a Fourteenth Amendment procedural due process claim based on the disciplinary charge, hearing, and resulting segregation.
3. Whether Bentz stated an Eighth Amendment conditions-of-confinement claim against officials allegedly informed of the conditions and who failed to act.
4. Whether claims against officials based solely on supervisory status or receipt or mishandling of grievances were legally sufficient under § 1983.
5. Whether conclusory allegations against certain defendants were sufficient to survive screening under § 1915A and Rule 12(b)(6).

HOLDINGS

1. Bentz stated a First Amendment retaliation claim against Hall because filing lawsuits and grievances is protected activity and the alleged pat-down, threats, harassment, property search, destruction or confiscation of property, and disciplinary ticket plausibly supported retaliatory action.
2. Bentz stated a First Amendment retaliation claim against John Doe #18 based on the allegation that the chairperson threatened to impose and did impose discipline because Bentz said he intended to file a grievance.
3. A prison official cannot be held liable under § 1983 solely because of supervisory status or because the official received correspondence or grievances concerning a subordinate's conduct.
4. Bentz stated a procedural due process claim against Hall and John Doe #18 because the alleged combination of one month of C-Grade, harsh confinement conditions, inadequate notice, and inability to present a defense or call witnesses plausibly implicated a protected liberty interest and denial of required process.
5. Bentz stated an Eighth Amendment conditions-of-confinement claim against Greene, Manton, John Does #2, #6, #7, #9, #10, and #11, and John/Jane Doe #12.
6. Bentz failed to state a First Amendment or § 1983 claim against K. Hasten, D. Hasten, and Wohlfeil based solely on allegedly fabricated grievance records or refusal to process grievances.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“A prisoner may not be disciplined for filing a grievance, as “[a]n act taken in retaliation for the exercise of a constitutionally protected right violates the Constitution.””

“Conditions that deny an inmate “the minimal civilized measures of life’s necessities” violate the Eighth Amendment.”

“ “[T]he Constitution does not obligate prisons to provide a grievance process, nor does the existence of a grievance process itself create a protected interest.””

“ “[T]he mishandling of an inmate grievance alone cannot be a basis for liability under § 1983.””

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Bentz, incarcerated at Western Illinois Correctional Center, alleged that Officer Steven Hall retaliated against him for identifying Hall as a defendant in another lawsuit and for filing grievances. He alleged that Hall and an adjustment-committee chairperson issued and upheld a disciplinary charge involving an altered state jacket, resulting in one month of C-Grade and one month of yard restriction, although the ticket was later expunged. Bentz further alleged that the C-Grade unit exposed him to severe conditions, including flooding from a defective toilet, mold, cold, toxic smoke, inadequate food, and denial of medical, recreational, and other services, and that certain officials knew of but failed to address those conditions.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Bentz filed a Third Amended Complaint under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 against correctional officers, prison administrators, counselors, a grievance officer, and unidentified defendants. Following the required screening review, the court allowed specified First Amendment retaliation, Fourteenth Amendment procedural due process, and Eighth Amendment conditions-of-confinement claims to proceed, while dismissing other defendants and claims without prejudice for failure to state a claim.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Turley v. Rednour, 729 F.3d 645, 649 (7th Cir. 2013)
- Alexander v. United States, 721 F.3d 418, 422 (7th Cir. 2013)
- Douglas v. Reeves, 964 F.3d 643, 646 (7th Cir. 2020)
- Dobbey v. Illinois Department of Corrections, 574 F.3d 443, 446 (7th Cir. 2009)
- DeWalt v. Carter, 224 F.3d 607, 618 (7th Cir. 2000)
- John Doe v. Purdue University, Doe v. Purdue University, 928 F.3d 652, 664 (7th Cir. 2019)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 667 (2009)
- Norington v. Daniels, 2011 WL 5101943, at *2-3 (N.D. Ind. Oct. 25, 2011)
- Diaz v. McBride, 1994 WL 750707, at *4 (N.D. Ind. Nov. 30, 1994)
- Hamlin v. Vaudenberg, 95 F.3d 580, 584 (7th Cir. 1996)

- *Brokaw v. Mercer County*, 235 F.3d 1000, 1020 (7th Cir. 2000)
- *McCoy v. Atherton*, 818 F. App'x 538, 541 (7th Cir. 2020)
- *Sandin v. Conner*, 515 U.S. 472, 484 (1995)
- *Dixon v. Godinez*, 114 F.3d 640, 644 (7th Cir. 1997)
- *Marion v. Columbia Correctional Institution*, 559 F.3d 693, 698 (7th Cir. 2009)
- *Ealy v. Watson*, 109 F.4th 958, 964, 966 (7th Cir. 2024)
- *Adams v. Reagle*, 91 F.4th 880, 885 (7th Cir. 2024)
- *Kervin v. Barnes*, 787 F.3d 833, 836 (7th Cir. 2015)
- *Farmer v. Brennan*, 511 U.S. 825, 834 (1994)
- *Haywood v. Hathaway*, 842 F.3d 1026 (7th Cir. 2016)
- *McNeil v. Lane*, 16 F.3d 123, 124 (7th Cir. 1994)
- *Donald v. Cook County Sheriff's Department*, 95 F.3d 548, 556 (7th Cir. 1996)
- *Montanez v. Feinerman*, 439 F. App'x 545, 547-48 (7th Cir. 2011)
- *Owens v. Hinsley*, 635 F.3d 950, 953-54 (7th Cir. 2011)