

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF SOUTH
CAROLINA

Keith Goins v. Warden Stonebreaker

Goins · No. 5:25-cv-11507-JD · Decided December 3, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of South Carolina dismissed Keith Goins's 28 U.S.C. § 2254 habeas corpus action without prejudice under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 41(b) for failure to comply with an order and failure to prosecute. The court also denied a certificate of appealability and provided notice of the right to appeal.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of South Carolina
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Joseph Dawson, III
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of South Carolina
DECIDED	December 3, 2025
DOCKET	5:25-cv-11507-JD
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Petitioner filed a petition for a writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2254. After the court directed him to correct the filing and either pay the filing fee or submit an in forma pauperis application, he failed to respond, and the court sua sponte dismissed the action without prejudice for failure to prosecute and failure to comply with a court order.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown; unpublished district court opinion
PARTIES	Keith Goins v. Warden Stonebreaker

TOPICS

- federal habeas corpus
- post-conviction relief
- civil procedure
- appellate procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

- Federal habeas corpus
- Post-conviction relief
- Civil procedure
- Appellate procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the district court could sua sponte dismiss the habeas action for failure to prosecute and failure to comply with a court order.
2. Whether Petitioner was entitled to a certificate of appealability.

HOLDINGS

1. A district court may sua sponte dismiss an action for failure to prosecute and failure to comply with a court order under its inherent authority and Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 41(b). Because Petitioner failed to respond to the court's order, dismissal without prejudice was proper.
2. A certificate of appealability was denied because Petitioner failed to make a substantial showing of the denial of a constitutional right.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The authority of a court to dismiss sua sponte for lack of prosecution has generally been considered an ‘inherent power,’ governed not by rule or statute but by the control necessarily vested in courts to manage their own affairs so as to achieve the orderly and expeditious disposition of cases.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Keith Goins, an inmate at Evans Correctional Institution, filed an action seeking habeas corpus relief under 28 U.S.C. § 2254. The court determined that the petition was not in proper form and directed Goins to pay the filing fee or submit an application to proceed in forma pauperis. Goins failed to respond by the court-ordered deadline and did not otherwise prosecute the case.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The court advised Petitioner on August 28, 2025, that his habeas petition was not in proper form and ordered him to pay the five-dollar filing fee or complete an application to proceed in forma pauperis by September 18, 2025. The court warned that noncompliance could result in dismissal. Petitioner did not respond, so the court dismissed the case without prejudice under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 41(b) and denied a certificate of appealability.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Link v. Wabash R.R. Co., 370 U.S. 626, 630-31 (1962)

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