

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
WISCONSIN

**Matthew X. Winters v. Corporal Jarvela, et al.; Matthew X. Winters
v. J. O’Hanlon; Matthew X. Winters v. Corporal Willstead and
Corporal Dobbs; Matthew X. Winters v. Vita Core Medical Staff and
Nicole Do; Matthew X. Winters v. CPL. MacDonald, et al.**

Winters · No. 25-CV-1135-JPS-JPS; 25-CV-1136-JPS-JPS; 25-CV-1629-JPS-JPS; 25-CV-1741-JPS-JPS; 25-CV-
1755-JPS-JPS · Decided December 9, 2025

SUMMARY

The Eastern District of Wisconsin imposes a filing restriction on inmate Matthew X. Winters after determining that he had filed or attempted to file more than twenty civil rights claims across multiple cases within a short period. The order limits Winters to two open cases before the court at a time, excludes habeas corpus petitions concerning his criminal convictions, and requires him to identify which two of five pending cases he wishes to pursue. The remaining cases are to be administratively closed subject to possible reopening, and Winters may seek modification or rescission of the restriction after three years.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of Wisconsin
WRITING FOR THE COURT	J.P. Stadtmueller
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of Wisconsin
DECIDED	December 9, 2025
DOCKET	25-CV-1135-JPS-JPS; 25-CV-1136-JPS-JPS; 25-CV-1629-JPS-JPS; 25-CV-1741-JPS-JPS; 25-CV-1755-JPS-JPS
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Sua sponte order addressing five pending prisoner civil-rights actions and imposing a prefiling restriction based on the plaintiff’s filing of more than twenty complaints or proposed complaints in a short period.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The order reflects the district court’s exercise of its inherent authority and All Writs Act authority to control abusive litigation; no separate appellate standard of review was applied.

TOPICS

sanctions

civil procedure

section 1983

prisoners rights

remedies

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

civil rights

remedies

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the district court may impose a prefiling restriction on a litigant who has filed an excessive number of repetitive or abusive complaints.
2. Whether the appropriate restriction must be narrowly tailored and preserve meaningful access to the federal courts.
3. Whether Winters should be limited to proceeding with no more than two open cases before the court, subject to an exception for habeas petitions relating to his criminal convictions.

HOLDINGS

1. A federal district court may use its inherent authority and the All Writs Act to impose a prefiling restriction against a vexatious litigant whose conduct abuses the judicial process.
2. A filing restriction must be narrowly tailored to the type of abuse and may not absolutely bar access to the courthouse; on these facts, limiting Winters to two open cases before the court, while exempting qualifying habeas petitions, was appropriate.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“A federal court’s inherent powers include “the ability to fashion an appropriate sanction for conduct which abuses the judicial process.”” (at 3)

“A filing restriction must, however, be narrowly tailored to the type of abuse, and must not bar the courthouse door absolutely.” (at 4)

“Courts have consistently approved filing bars that permit litigants access if they cease their abusive filing practices,” (at 4)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Winters, an inmate at the Kenosha County Detention Center, filed five § 1983 civil-rights cases within several months, generally concerning his care at the detention center. His filings included an amended complaint with ten attached complaints and another complaint with eleven attached complaints. The court concluded that he was attempting to bring more than twenty different cases in a short time span.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Matthew X. Winters filed five § 1983 cases in the Eastern District of Wisconsin concerning his care at the Kenosha County Detention Center. One case included an amended complaint attaching ten additional complaints, and another included eleven attached complaints. The court ordered Winters to proceed with only two of the five open cases, administratively closed the remaining cases subject to reopening, and imposed a filing bar limiting him to two open cases before the court, with an exception for habeas petitions concerning his criminal convictions.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- In re Chapman, 328 F.3d 903, 905 (7th Cir. 2003)
- United States ex rel. Verdone v. Circuit Court for Taylor County, 73 F.3d 669, 674 (7th Cir. 1995)
- Lewis v. Casey, 518 U.S. 343, 351 (1996)
- In re McDonald, 489 U.S. 180, 184 (1989)
- Chambers v. NASCO, Inc., 501 U.S. 32, 44–45 (1991)
- Orlando Residence Ltd. v. GP Credit Co., LLC, 609 F. Supp. 2d 813, 816–17 (E.D. Wis. 2009)
- Molski v. Evergreen Dynasty Corp., 500 F.3d 1047, 1057 (9th Cir. 2007)
- Chapman v. Exec. Comm., 324 F. App'x 500, 502 (7th Cir. 2009)
- Smith v. United States Cong., No. 19-CV-1001-PP, 2019 WL 6037487, at *9, *11 (E.D. Wis. Nov. 14, 2019)

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