

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)

OPINION

Winters

PER CURIAM.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

EASTERN DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN

MATTHEW X. WINTERS,

Plaintiff, Case No. 25-CV-1135-JPS-JPS v.

CORPORAL JARVELA, CORPORAL ORDER

RARIE, SERGEANT GRAY,

CORRECTIONAL OFFICER

BEDFORD, CORRECTIONAL

OFFICER AYALA, CORPORAL

MACDONALD, CAPTAIN BERANIS,

CORRECTIONAL OFFICER

LOESCH, SERGEANT

REINERSMAN, and KATHLEEN

SUMMERS,

Defendants.

MATTHEW X. WINTERS,

Plaintiff, Case No. 25-CV-1136-JPS-JPS v.

ORDER

J. O'HANLON,

Defendant.

MATTHEW X. WINTERS,

Plaintiff, Case No. 25-CV-1629-JPS-JPS v.

CORPORAL WILLSTEAD and ORDER

CORPORAL DOBBS,

Defendants.

MATTHEW X. WINTERS,

Plaintiff, Case No. 25-CV-1741-JPS-JPS v.

VITA CORE MEDICAL STAFF and ORDER

NICOLE DO,

Defendants.

MATTHEW X. WINTERS,

Plaintiff, Case No. 25-CV-1755-JPS-JPS v.

CPL. MACDONALD, C.O. ORDER

LIVINGSTON, CPL. JARVELA, SGT. BERNHARDT, C.O. WILKS, C.O. GRIFFITH, C.O.

POOLE, C.O. TROTTER, SGT. PARKER, LT. MIKUTIS, C. VALLADARES, K.

CERMINARA, BRITTANY ERBY, and

C.O. HARRIS,

Defendants. Plaintiff Matthew X. Winters ("Plaintiff"), an inmate at Kenosha County Detention Center ("KCDC"), has filed five cases within several months. All of Plaintiff's cases are § 1983 civil rights cases and are generally about his care at KCDC. Specifically, Plaintiff has filed the following cases: Date Filed Case Number Disposition 08/01/2025 25-CV-1135 Screened 08/01/2025 25-CV-1136 Screened 10/23/2025 25-CV-1629 Pre-screening 11/06/2025 25-CV-1741 Pre-screening 11/07/2025 25-CV-1755 Pre-screening In Case No. 25-CV-1135, Plaintiff recently filed an amended complaint, which included ten different complaints as attachments. Case No. 25-CV-1135, ECF No. 15. Plaintiff states he wants to "amend and sever into separate lawsuits." Id. at 1. In Case No. 25-CV-1755, Plaintiff's complaint attached eleven different complaints. Case No. 25-CV-1755, ECF No. 1-1. Including these attached complaints, it appears that Plaintiff is attempting to bring over twenty different cases. The right of access to federal courts is not absolute. In re Chapman, 328 F.3d 903, 905 (7th Cir. 2003) (citing United States ex rel. Verdone v. Circuit Court for Taylor Cnty., 73 F.3d 669, 674 (7th Cir. 1995)). Individuals are "only entitled to meaningful access to the courts." Id. (citing Lewis v. Casey, 518 U.S. 343, 351 (1996)). "Every paper filed . . . no matter how repetitious or frivolous, requires some portion of the institution's

limited resources. A part of the Court's responsibility is to see that these resources are allocated in a way that promotes the interests of justice." In *re* McDonald, 489 U.S. 180, 184 (1989). A federal court's inherent powers include "the ability to fashion an appropriate sanction for conduct which abuses the judicial process." *Chambers v. NASCO, Inc.*, 501 U.S. 32, 44–45 (1991). The All Writs Act, 28 U.S.C. § 1651(a), gives district courts the "inherent power to enter pre-filing orders against vexatious litigants." *Orlando Residence Ltd. v. GP Credit Co., LLC*, 609 F. Supp. 2d 813, 816–17 (E.D. Wis. 2009) (citing *Molski v. Evergreen Dynasty Corp.*, 500 F.3d 1047, 1057 (9th Cir. 2007)). "A filing restriction must, however, be narrowly tailored to the type of abuse, and must not bar the courthouse door absolutely." *Chapman v. Exec. Comm.*, 324 Fed. App'x 500, 502 (7th Cir. 2009) (citations omitted). "Courts have consistently approved filing bars that permit litigants access if they cease their abusive filing practices," but have "rejected as overbroad filing bars in perpetuity." *Id.* (citations omitted); *Smith v. United States Cong.*, No. 19-CV-1001-PP, 2019 WL 6037487, at *9 (E.D. Wis. Nov. 14, 2019). Under the circumstances presented by Plaintiff having filed what amounts to be over twenty different complaints in a short time span, the Court finds it appropriate to impose a filing bar limiting Plaintiff to proceeding with only two cases before this branch of the Court at any one time, with the exception that the bar will not apply to habeas corpus petitions relating to his criminal convictions. Accordingly, the Court will order Plaintiff to file a letter with the Court within thirty days of this Order indicating which two of his five open cases before this Court (25-CV-1135, 25-CV-1136, 25-CV-1629, 25-CV-1741, 25-CV-1755) he would like to proceed. The remaining cases will then be administratively closed subject to a motion to reopen after such time as the number of Plaintiff's pending cases falls below two. Plaintiff may move to modify or rescind this bar no earlier than three years after the date of this Order. See *Smith*, 2019 WL 6037487, at *11. Accordingly, ORDERED that Plaintiff Matthew X. Winters is BARRED from having more than two open cases before this branch of the Court, with the exception that the bar will not apply to habeas corpus petitions relating to his criminal convictions; the Clerk of Court shall return UNFILED any new cases submitted by or on behalf of Plaintiff in violation of this Order; Plaintiff may move to modify or rescind this bar no earlier than three years after the date of this Order; and IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that, consistent with the terms of this Order, Plaintiff must file a letter with the Court on or before January 9, 2026 indicating which two of his five open cases before this Court (25-CV-1135, 25-CV-1136, 25-CV-1629, 25-CV-1741, 25-CV-1755) he would like to proceed. Dated at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, this 9th day of December, 2025. \

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J.P. Stathh ueller U.S Distfict Judge Page 50f5