

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Marlin Wells v. Wallace

Wells v. Wallace · No. 1:25-cv-01679-BAM (PC) · Decided December 19, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California directs the Clerk to randomly assign a district judge in Marlin Wells’s civil-rights action against Wallace. The magistrate judge construes Wells’s request for litigation supplies and mail access as a motion for preliminary injunctive relief and recommends denying it because the complaint has not been screened and the Court lacks personal jurisdiction over the defendant and other identified parties at this stage. The parties are given fourteen days to object to the Findings and Recommendations.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Barbara A. McAuliffe
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	December 19, 2025
DOCKET	1:25-cv-01679-BAM (PC)
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	A pro se civil detainee proceeding under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 moved for supplies and access to the mail delivery system. The magistrate judge construed the motion as a request for a preliminary injunction and issued findings and recommendations that it be denied; the complaint had not yet been screened and no defendant had been served or appeared.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Preliminary-injunction standard requiring a clear showing that the plaintiff is likely to succeed on the merits, likely to suffer irreparable harm, that the balance of equities favors relief, and that an injunction is in the public interest.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential
PARTIES	Marlin Wells v. Janine Wallace

TOPICS

injunctions

personal jurisdiction

section 1983

civil procedure

civil rights

PRACTICE AREAS

Civil rights

Federal civil procedure

Prisoner and civil-detainee litigation

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Plaintiff's motion for supplies and access to the mail delivery system should be construed as a motion for a preliminary injunction.
2. Whether the court could grant prospective injunctive relief before screening the complaint, identifying viable claims, serving a defendant, and establishing personal jurisdiction over the proposed defendant or other DSH-C personnel.
3. Whether Plaintiff satisfied the requirements for a preliminary injunction.

HOLDINGS

1. A request for a court order requiring an institution to provide litigation supplies, copying, and mailing costs during the action is properly construed as a motion for preliminary injunctive relief.
2. The court could not grant the requested injunction because the complaint had not been screened, the action did not yet proceed on any cognizable claims, no defendant had been served or appeared, and the court therefore lacked personal jurisdiction over Wallace, other DSH-C staff, or DSH-C generally.
3. Plaintiff did not establish entitlement to preliminary injunctive relief.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"A preliminary injunction is an extraordinary remedy never awarded as of right." (at 1)

"A plaintiff seeking a preliminary injunction must establish that he is likely to succeed on the merits, that he is likely to suffer irreparable harm in the absence of preliminary relief, that the balance of equities tips in his favor, and that an injunction is in the public interest." (at 1)

"Thus, this action does not yet proceed on any cognizable claims, no defendant has been ordered served, and no defendant has yet made an appearance." (at 2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Marlin Wells, a civil detainee proceeding pro se and in forma pauperis, filed a civil rights action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. He moved for an order requiring the Department of State Hospitals–Coalinga to provide supplies reasonably necessary for litigation, including copying and mailing costs. The complaint had not been screened, no claims had been found cognizable, no defendant had been served, and no defendant had appeared.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed a civil rights complaint and a motion requesting an order requiring the Department of State Hospitals–Coalinga to provide litigation supplies, copying, and mailing costs. Before screening the complaint,

the magistrate judge directed the Clerk to randomly assign a district judge and recommended denial of the motion because the action did not yet proceed on any cognizable claims and the court lacked personal jurisdiction over the proposed defendant and other DSH-C personnel.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Page v. Torrey, 201 F.3d 1136, 1140 (9th Cir. 2000)
- Winter v. Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc., 555 U.S. 7, 20, 22, 24 (2008)
- City of Los Angeles v. Lyons, 461 U.S. 95, 102 (1983)
- Valley Forge Christian College v. Americans United for Separation of Church & State, Inc., 454 U.S. 464, 471 (1982)
- Summers v. Earth Island Institute, 555 U.S. 488, 491–93 (2009)
- Mayfield v. United States, 599 F.3d 964, 969 (9th Cir. 2010)
- Wilkerson v. Wheeler, 772 F.3d 834, 838–39 (9th Cir. 2014)
- Baxter v. Sullivan, 923 F.2d 1391, 1394 (9th Cir. 1991)