

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF
OHIO, EASTERN DIVISION

Michelle Burrell v. Pison Stream Solutions, et al.

Burrell · No. 1:24CV855 · Decided February 11, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio granted in part Michelle Burrell’s motion for partial summary judgment against Pison Stream Solutions, Inc. and Joseph A. James on liability. The court held that the defendants were liable under the FLSA, Ohio wage laws, the Ohio Constitution’s minimum-wage provision, and the Ohio Prompt Pay Act, and also found liability on Burrell’s equitable claims against James, while noting that claims against Pison were time-barred. Damages, mediation, and the potential for double recovery remained for later proceedings.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio, Eastern Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Christopher A. Boyko
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio, Eastern Division
DECIDED	February 11, 2026
DOCKET	1:24CV855
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff moved for partial summary judgment on liability under the FLSA, Ohio wage statutes and constitutional wage provision, and several equitable claims. The court granted the motion in part on liability only.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Summary judgment is proper when the movant shows that no genuine dispute of material fact exists and the movant is entitled to judgment as a matter of law. The court views facts and reasonable inferences in favor of the nonmoving party; the nonmoving party may not rest on the pleadings and must identify specific evidence creating a genuine dispute.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown; federal district court opinion and order with no reported citation.

PARTIES

Michelle Burrell v. Pison Stream Solutions, Inc., Joseph A. James

TOPICS

flsa

wage and hour

summary judgment

employment law

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

employment law

wage and hour

civil procedure

remedies

contracts

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Burrell was entitled to partial summary judgment on liability under the Fair Labor Standards Act when defendants failed to assert or support an exemption defense.
2. Whether the same analysis required summary judgment on liability under the Ohio Minimum Fair Wage Standards Act and Article II, Section 34a of the Ohio Constitution.
3. Whether defendants were liable under Ohio's Prompt Pay Act for unpaid wages that remained unpaid beyond the statutory payment period.
4. Whether Burrell was entitled to summary judgment on her unjust-enrichment, promissory-estoppel, and quantum-meruit claims against James, notwithstanding the prior ruling that those claims against Pison were time-barred.

HOLDINGS

1. Burrell was entitled to summary judgment on liability under the FLSA because defendants did not specifically assert or present clear and affirmative evidence establishing every element of an applicable executive, administrative, or professional exemption.
2. Burrell was entitled to recover against defendants under the OMFWSA because the statute incorporates the FLSA's exemptions and defendants could not establish an applicable exemption.
3. Burrell was entitled to summary judgment on liability under Article II, Section 34a of the Ohio Constitution because defendants offered no argument against recovery and the provision adopts the FLSA definitions of employer and employee.
4. Defendants were liable under Ohio's Prompt Pay Act because Burrell's undisputed wages remained unpaid beyond the statutory payment period; she was entitled to the statutory amount equal to six percent of the unpaid amount or \$200, whichever was greater.
5. Burrell was entitled to summary judgment on liability against James on unjust enrichment, quantum meruit, and promissory estoppel because the evidence showed uncompensated work, a benefit knowingly received, and promises concerning continued employment and payment, and James offered no contrary evidence or argument.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Exemptions, “ ‘are to be narrowly construed against the employers seeking to assert them.’ ”” (5)

“Because Defendants utterly fail to make the necessary showing on an element upon which they have the burden of proof, Plaintiff is entitled to summary judgment on liability under the FLSA.” (6)

“Although Defendants have not provided any evidence nor arguments to the contrary on these equitable claims, and while it is proper to plead claims in the alternative, the Court cautions that Plaintiff is not entitled to double recovery.” (8)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Burrell worked for Pison as Vice President of Client Strategies from November 2, 2020, until her resignation on August 11, 2023, at an agreed annual salary of \$180,000. She allegedly received no compensation from June 12, 2022, through her resignation, despite repeated inquiries and assurances that she would be paid. Defendants admitted that she worked during that period, that approximately \$210,884.37 remained unpaid, and that the nonpayment resulted from cash-flow difficulties rather than performance issues.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Burrell filed suit on May 13, 2024, asserting statutory wage, equitable, and corporate-veil claims. Defendants moved for summary judgment, and Burrell filed her own partial-summary-judgment motion. In a January 29, 2026 order, the court entered judgment for Pison on several equitable claims as barred by a contractual six-month limitations period, determined that James was an employer under the FLSA and Ohio statutes, and left the statutory wage claims against Pison pending. The court then granted Burrell partial summary judgment on liability and ordered the parties to propose dates for a damages and mediation hearing.

DISPOSITION

other

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

The parties must submit a joint written notice within ten days proposing agreed dates for a damages/mediation hearing with Magistrate Judge James E. Grimes, Jr.

CASES CITED

- Celotex Corp. v. Catrett, 477 U.S. 317, 323-324 (1986)
- Lansing Dairy, Inc. v. Espy, 39 F.3d 1339, 1347 (6th Cir.)
- Matsushita Elec. Indus. Co. v. Zenith Radio Corp., 475 U.S. 574, 587 (1986)
- Betkerur v. Aultman Hospital Ass'n, 78 F.3d 1079, 1087 (6th Cir.)
- Guarino v. Brookfield Township Trustees, 980 F.2d 399, 404-406 (6th Cir.)
- Anderson v. Liberty Lobby, Inc., 477 U.S. 242, 249-252 (1986)
- Amway Distributors Benefits Ass'n v. Northfield Ins. Co., 323 F.3d 386, 390 (6th Cir.)
- Orton v. Johnny's Lunch Franchise, LLC, 668 F.3d 843, 846-847 (6th Cir.)
- Thomas v. Speedway SuperAmerica, LLC, 506 F.3d 496, 501 (6th Cir.)

- Arnold v. Ben Kanowsky, Inc., 361 U.S. 388, 392
- Martin v. Indiana Michigan Power Co., 381 F.3d 574, 578 (6th Cir.)
- Douglas v. Argo-Tech Corp., 113 F.3d 67, 70 (6th Cir.)
- Hurt v. Commerce Energy, Inc., 973 F.3d 509, 517 (6th Cir.)
- Birch v. Cuyahoga Cty. Probate Court, 173 Ohio App. 3d 696
- Craig v. Bridges Bros. Trucking LLC, 823 F.3d 382, 385 n.1 (6th Cir.)
- Waters v. Pizza to You, LLC, No. 3:19-cv-372, 2021 WL 229040, at *6 (S.D. Ohio Jan. 22, 2021)
- Hambleton v. R.G. Barry Corp., 12 Ohio St. 3d 179, 183
- Fox & Associates Co., L.P.A. v. Purdon, 44 Ohio St. 3d 69, 541 N.E.2d 448 (1989)
- Aultman Hosp. Assn. v. Community Mut. Ins. Co., 46 Ohio St. 3d 51, 544 N.E.2d 920 (1989)
- Talley v. Teamsters, Chauffeurs, Warehousemen, and Helpers, Local No. 377, 48 Ohio St. 2d 142, 146
- EEOC v. Waffle House, Inc., 534 U.S. 279, 297
- Son v. Coal Equity, Inc., 122 F. App'x 797, 802 (6th Cir.)