

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF
TENNESSEE, EASTERN DIVISION

Anthony L. Gooch v. Harlon Terry Jones, Joyce Jones, Ted Sample,
Chris Huglas, Eddie Watkins, Jane Watkins, Rutherford Police
Department, Rutherford City Hall, and Sandy Simpson

Gooch · No. 1:25-cv-1239-STA-jay · Decided January 7, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Western District of Tennessee adopted the magistrate judge’s report and recommendation and dismissed Anthony L. Gooch’s 42 U.S.C. § 1983 complaint for failure to state a claim. The court found federal-question jurisdiction but concluded that the complaint alleged no facts establishing a constitutional violation or the defendants’ responsibility for one. The court also certified that any appeal would not be taken in good faith and denied in forma pauperis status for an appeal.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Western District of Tennessee, Eastern Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	S. Thomas Anderson
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Western District of Tennessee, Eastern Division
DECIDED	January 7, 2026
DOCKET	1:25-cv-1239-STA-jay
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Pro se plaintiff brought a civil-rights action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. After a magistrate judge recommended sua sponte dismissal for lack of subject-matter jurisdiction or failure to state a claim, the district court reviewed the recommendation, found that plaintiff had filed no specific objections, adopted the recommendation in part, dismissed the case for failure to state a claim, and certified that any appeal would not be taken in good faith.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	De novo review applies to portions of a magistrate judge's disposition to which a specific objection is made; issues not specifically objected to need not be reviewed de novo. The court nevertheless conducted its

	own de novo review of the complaint, report and recommendation, and record.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court order
PARTIES	Anthony L. Gooch v. Harlon Terry Jones, Joyce Jones, Ted Sample, Chris Huglas, Eddie Watkins, Jane Watkins, Rutherford Police Department, Rutherford City Hall, Sandy Simpson

TOPICS

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QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the plaintiff preserved any specific objection to the magistrate judge's report and recommendation.
2. Whether the complaint established federal-question jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1331.
3. Whether the complaint stated a claim for relief under 42 U.S.C. § 1983.
4. Whether the plaintiff should be permitted to proceed in forma pauperis on appeal.

HOLDINGS

1. The plaintiff's one-page, one-sentence filing did not state any specific objection to the magistrate judge's report and recommendation, so no specific objection was preserved.
2. The complaint invoked federal-question jurisdiction because it asserted claims under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, even though the claims ultimately failed on the merits.
3. The complaint failed to state a claim under § 1983 because it alleged no facts showing a constitutional violation or facts establishing that any defendant, including the municipality, was responsible for such a violation.
4. The court certified under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(3) that any appeal would not be taken in good faith and that the plaintiff could not proceed in forma pauperis on appeal.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The Court holds that Gooch has not preserved any specific objection to the report and recommendation.”

“The problem is Gooch’s pleading fails to provide any facts to show an entitlement to relief under § 1983.”

“Therefore, the Court holds that Pro Se Complaint fails to state a claim for relief.”

“It is therefore CERTIFIED, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(3), that any appeal in this matter by Plaintiff

would not be taken in good faith and Plaintiff may not proceed on appeal in forma pauperis.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Gooch alleged that Harlon Terry Jones violated a no-contact order and harassed or bullied Gooch and his family. Although the complaint named several individuals, the Rutherford Police Department, and Rutherford City Hall, it alleged no facts describing the involvement of those defendants other than identifying Joyce Jones as Harlon Terry Jones's wife and a City Hall employee. The complaint invoked a civil-rights form and § 1983 but did not identify a constitutional violation or facts supporting municipal liability.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Gooch filed a pro se complaint on October 16, 2025, alleging that Harlon Terry Jones had violated a no-contact order and harassed Gooch and his family. On October 29, 2025, the magistrate judge recommended dismissal for lack of subject-matter jurisdiction or, alternatively, failure to state a claim. Gooch filed a one-sentence submission that did not identify specific objections. The district court conducted its own review, concluded that federal-question jurisdiction existed but that the complaint failed to state a claim, adopted the report and recommendation, dismissed the action, and denied in forma pauperis status for any appeal.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- United States v. Curtis, 237 F.3d 598, 602 (6th Cir. 2001)
- Gomez v. United States, 490 U.S. 858, 869-70 (1989)
- Baker v. Peterson, 67 F. App'x 308, 310 (6th Cir. 2003)
- Thomas v. Arn, 474 U.S. 140, 150-51 (1985)
- Sexton v. Cernuto, 18 F.4th 177, 183 (6th Cir. 2021)
- Collins v. City of Harker Heights, Tex., 503 U.S. 115, 120 (1992)
- Cruz v. Hauck, 404 U.S. 59, 62 (1971) (Douglas, J., concurring)
- Coppedge v. United States, 369 U.S. 438, 445 (1962)
- McGore v. Wrigglesworth, 114 F.3d 601, 610, 612-13 (6th Cir. 1997)
- Floyd v. United States Postal Serv., 105 F.3d 274, 276 (6th Cir. 1997)

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