

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF
PENNSYLVANIA

Tina Lee Strohecker v. Commissioner of Social Security

Strohecker · No. 1:25-CV-261 · Decided February 27, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania dismissed Tina Lee Strohecker’s appeal of the denial of Social Security benefits with prejudice under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 41(b). The court concluded that Strohecker failed to file her opening brief and did not respond to an order to show cause, and that the applicable failure-to-prosecute factors supported dismissal.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Daryl F. Bloom
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania
DECIDED	February 27, 2026
DOCKET	1:25-CV-261
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff appealed the denial of Social Security benefits. After the case was transferred from the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, plaintiff failed to file her opening brief and failed to respond to an order to show cause.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	A dismissal for failure to prosecute under Rule 41(b) is reviewed for abuse of discretion.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown
PARTIES	Tina Lee Strohecker v. Commissioner of Social Security

TOPICS

- civil procedure
- sanctions
- administrative law

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the action should be dismissed with prejudice under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 41(b) for failure to prosecute and failure to comply with court orders.
2. Whether the six-factor analysis governing dismissal for failure to prosecute supported dismissal in light of plaintiff's repeated noncompliance and the untested merits of her Social Security claim.

HOLDINGS

1. A civil action may be dismissed under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 41(b) when a party fails to prosecute or comply with the Federal Rules or court orders, and dismissal was warranted here because plaintiff repeatedly failed to comply with court orders and failed to prosecute the action.
2. The inability to determine the merits of plaintiff's Social Security claims did not prevent dismissal where plaintiff failed to file the brief necessary to explain the alleged error and the other Rule 41(b) factors supported dismissal.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"In balancing the factors, [courts] do not [employ] a . . . 'mechanical calculation' to determine whether a District Court abused its discretion in dismissing a plaintiff's case."

"Evidence of prejudice to an adversary would bear substantial weight in support of a dismissal or default judgment."

"Thus, this action will be dismissed with prejudice for the plaintiff's failure to prosecute."

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Tina Lee Strohecker brought an action challenging the denial of her Social Security benefits. She failed to file her opening brief despite receiving an extension of time and did not respond to the court's subsequent order directing her to show cause why the case should not be dismissed. The court found that her noncompliance and lack of communication were attributable entirely to her and prevented consideration of the merits.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Strohecker initially filed the action in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, which transferred it to the Middle District of Pennsylvania. The court granted leave to proceed, directed service, and received the Commissioner's answer and administrative transcript. After Strohecker failed to file her opening brief despite an extension and did not respond to an order to show cause, the court dismissed the action with prejudice for failure to prosecute under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 41(b).

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- 296 F.3d 184, 190 (3d Cir. 2002)
- 747 F.2d 863, 868 (3d Cir. 1984)
- 322 F.3d 218, 222 (3d Cir. 2003)
- 964 F.2d 1369, 1373 (3d Cir. 1992)
- 538 F.3d 252, 259-263 (3d Cir. 2008)
- 29 F.3d 863, 873-875 (3d Cir. 1994)
- 843 F.2d 683, 693-694 (3d Cir. 1988)
- 256 F. App'x 509 (3d Cir. 2007)
- 256 F. App'x 506 (3d Cir. 2007)
- 243 F. App'x 728 (3d Cir. 2007)
- 2015 WL 4113453 (D.N.J. July 8, 2015)

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