

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

Steven W. LaBelle v. Edward Borla, et al.

LaBelle · No. 25-cv-09808-TLT · Decided December 9, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of California screened Steven W. LaBelle’s pro se prisoner civil rights complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A. The court found that the complaint plausibly alleged an Eighth Amendment claim based on allegedly inadequate living space in a double cell and ordered service on the named defendants. The order also establishes deadlines for service, responsive pleadings, dispositive motions, discovery, and other case-management requirements.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
DECIDED	December 9, 2025
DOCKET	25-cv-09808-TLT
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Screening of a pro se prisoner civil-rights complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, the court must screen a prisoner complaint seeking redress from a governmental entity or officer and dismiss claims that are frivolous, malicious, fail to state a claim, or seek monetary relief from an immune defendant. Pro se pleadings are liberally construed, and dismissal is appropriate only when the claims lack an arguable basis in law or fact.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished district court order; limited persuasive value.
PARTIES	Steven W. LaBelle v. Edward Borla, Jefferey Macomber, Connie Gipson

TOPICS

- prisoners rights
- section 1983
- cruel and unusual punishment
- pleadings
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the prisoner's complaint stated a cognizable claim under the Eighth Amendment based on allegedly inadequate living space.
2. Whether the complaint should be screened and served under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A.
3. What procedural requirements and deadlines should govern service, responsive pleadings, dispositive motions, and discovery.

HOLDINGS

1. Liberally construed, the allegations that LaBelle was housed in a double cell with approximately 19 square feet of unencumbered space stated an Eighth Amendment claim for inadequate living space against the named defendants.
2. The complaint survived preliminary screening under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, and service was ordered on Edward Borla, Jefferey Macomber, and Connie Gipson.
3. In the Ninth Circuit, a defendant may raise failure to exhaust under Rule 12(b)(6) when the failure to exhaust is clear on the face of the complaint; otherwise, the issue must be supported by evidence in a Rule 56 summary-judgment motion.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“A federal court must conduct a preliminary screening in any case in which a prisoner seeks redress from a governmental entity or officer or employee of a governmental entity.” (at 2)

“Liberally construed, plaintiff has stated an Eighth Amendment claim against defendants for inadequate living space.” (at 3)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

LaBelle is incarcerated at the Correctional Training Facility and alleged that he was housed in an unconstitutionally small double cell with another prisoner. He alleged that the cell contained only approximately 19 square feet of unencumbered space and that prisoners had been double-celled in certain North Yard buildings since 2011 even though those rooms were not constructed as double cells. He sought damages under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 from the CTF warden, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation secretary, and the former director of adult institutions.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

LaBelle, a prisoner at Correctional Training Facility, filed a complaint under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 against correctional officials. The district court screened the complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A and concluded that the allegations stated a cognizable Eighth Amendment claim against the named defendants. The court ordered service of the complaint and established the schedule for service, responsive pleadings, dispositive motions, and discovery.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- United States v. Qazi, 975 F.3d 989, 993 (9th Cir. 2020)
- Erickson v. Pardus, 551 U.S. 89, 93 (2007)
- Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 555, 570 (2007)
- West v. Atkins, 487 U.S. 42, 48 (1988)
- Leadsinger, Inc. v. BMG Music Pub., 512 F.3d 522, 532 (9th Cir. 2008)
- Rhodes v. Chapman, 452 U.S. 337, 346-47 (1981)
- Woods v. Carey, 684 F.3d 934, 935 (9th Cir. 2012)
- Albino v. Baca, 747 F.3d 1162, 1166, 1168 (9th Cir. 2014) (en banc)
- Wyatt v. Terhune, 315 F.3d 1108, 1119 (9th Cir. 2003)
- Rand, 154 F.3d at 962-63