

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Jorge Contreras v. B. Mendoza, et al.

Contreras v. Mendoza · No. 1:25-cv-01157-KES-EPG (PC) · Decided November 18, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California recommends dismissing Jorge Contreras’s pro se civil rights action without prejudice. The recommendation is based on his failure to pay the filing fee or submit an application to proceed in forma pauperis, failure to prosecute, and failure to comply with a court order. The court applies the factors governing dismissal under *Pagtalunan v. Galaza* and directs that objections may be filed within 30 days.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	November 18, 2025
DOCKET	1:25-cv-01157-KES-EPG (PC)
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Findings and recommendations by a United States magistrate judge recommending dismissal without prejudice of a pro se prisoner's § 1983 action for failure to pay the filing fee or submit an application to proceed in forma pauperis, failure to prosecute, and failure to comply with a court order.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Dismissal for failure to prosecute or failure to comply with a court order is evaluated by weighing five factors: the public's interest in expeditious resolution, the court's need to manage its docket, the risk of prejudice to defendants, the availability of less drastic alternatives, and the public policy favoring disposition on the merits.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential

TOPICS

- civil procedure
- civil rights
- pleadings
- section 1983

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the action should be dismissed without prejudice for Plaintiff's failure to pay the filing fee or submit an application to proceed in forma pauperis.
2. Whether dismissal without prejudice is appropriate under the five-factor test governing dismissal for failure to prosecute or failure to comply with a court order.

HOLDINGS

1. A court must weigh five factors when determining whether to dismiss an action for failure to prosecute or failure to comply with a court order: the public interest in expeditious resolution, docket management, prejudice to defendants, availability of less drastic alternatives, and the policy favoring disposition on the merits.
2. Dismissal without prejudice was appropriate because the first four dismissal factors favored dismissal, while the fifth factor favored resolution on the merits, and Plaintiff had failed to comply with a warned court order or prosecute the action.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"In determining whether to dismiss a[n] [action] for failure to prosecute or failure to comply with a court order, the Court must weigh the following factors: (1) the public's interest in expeditious resolution of litigation; (2) the court's need to manage its docket; (3) the risk of prejudice to defendants/respondents; (4) the availability of less drastic alternatives; and (5) the public policy favoring disposition of cases on their merits." (at 1)

"delay inherently increases the risk that witnesses' memories will fade and evidence will become stale" (at 2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Jorge Contreras, an inmate when the action was filed, brought a civil-rights action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. He neither paid the filing fee nor submitted an application to proceed in forma pauperis. After receiving an order giving him forty-five days to do one or the other and warning of dismissal for noncompliance, he failed to respond or otherwise prosecute the case.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed this § 1983 action on September 8, 2025, without paying the filing fee or submitting an application to proceed in forma pauperis. The court ordered Plaintiff on September 19, 2025, to pay the filing fee or submit a completed and signed IFP application within forty-five days and warned that noncompliance could result in dismissal. Plaintiff did neither and filed nothing further, prompting the magistrate judge to recommend dismissal without prejudice and closure of the case, subject to objections to the assigned district judge.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Pagtalunan v. Galaza, 291 F.3d 639, 642-43 (9th Cir. 2002)
- Ferdik v. Bonzelet, 963 F.2d 1258, 1260-61 (9th Cir. 1992)
- Yourish v. California Amplifier, 191 F.3d 983, 990-91 (9th Cir. 1999)
- Wilkerson v. Wheeler, 772 F.3d 834, 838-39 (9th Cir. 2014)
- Baxter v. Sullivan, 923 F.2d 1391, 1394 (9th Cir. 1991)

OPINION

Mendoza

PER CURIAM.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

9 EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

10 11 JORGE CONTRERAS, Case No. 1:25-cv-01157-KES-EPG (PC) 12 Plaintiff, FINDINGS
AND RECOMMENDATIONS,

13 RECOMMENDING THAT THIS ACTION BE

v. DISMISSED, FOR FAILURE TO PAY THE

14 FILING FEE OR SUBMIT AN APPLICATION

B. MENDOZA, et al.

TO PROCEED IN FORMA PAUPERIS,

15 Defendants. FAILURE TO PROSECUTE, AND FAILURE

TO COMPLY WITH A COURT ORDER

16

OBJECTIONS, IF ANY, DUE WITHIN THIRTY

17

(30) DAYS

18 19 20 Plaintiff Jorge Contreras, an inmate at the Madera County when this case was filed on
21 September 8, 2025, proceeds pro se in this civil rights lawsuit filed pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §
1983.

(ECF No. 1). When Plaintiff filed this case, Plaintiff neither paid the filing fee for this action nor
22 submitted an application to proceed in forma pauperis (IFP). The Court issued an order on 23
September 19, 2025, giving Plaintiff forty-five days to either (1) submit a completed and signed 24
IFP application or (2) pay the filing fee of \$405. (ECF No. 3). The Court warned Plaintiff that 25
“[f]ailure to comply with this order will result in dismissal of this action.” (Id. at 1) (emphasis 26
omitted). The forty-five-day period has expired, and Plaintiff has failed to pay the filing fee, 27

submit a completed and signed IFP application, or otherwise respond to the Court's order. 28 1 Accordingly, the Court will recommend dismissal based on Plaintiff's failure to pay the 2 filing fee or file an IFP application, failure to prosecute this case, and failure to comply with court 3 orders. 4 In determining whether to dismiss a[n] [action] for failure to prosecute or failure to comply with a court order, the Court must weigh the following factors: (1) the 5 public's interest in expeditious resolution of litigation; (2) the court's need to manage its docket; (3) the risk of prejudice to defendants/respondents; (4) the 6 availability of less drastic alternatives; and (5) the public policy favoring disposition of cases on their merits. 7 *Pagtalunan v. Galaza*, 291 F.3d 639, 642 (9th Cir. 2002) (citing *Ferdik v. Bonzelet*, 963 F.2d 8 1258, 1260-61 (9th Cir. 1992)). 9 "The public's interest in expeditious resolution of litigation always favors dismissal." 10 *Id.* (quoting *Yourish v. California Amplifier*, 191 F.3d 983, 990 (9th Cir. 1999)). Therefore, the 11 first factor weighs in favor of dismissal. 12 As to the Court's need to manage its docket, "[t]he trial judge is in the best position to 13 determine whether the delay in a particular case interferes with docket management and the 14 public interest. . . . It is incumbent upon the Court to manage its docket without being subject to 15 routine noncompliance of litigants. . . ." *Id.* (citations omitted). Here, Plaintiff has failed to 16 respond to the Court's order to pay the filing fee or file an IFP application. (ECF No. 3). 17 Moreover, Plaintiff has filed nothing since initiating this case on September 8, 2025.¹ This failure 18 to respond is delaying the case and interfering with docket management, as the case cannot 19 progress without the filing fee being paid or Plaintiff being permitted to proceed IFP. See 20 U.S.C. §§ 1914, 1915. Therefore, the second factor weighs in favor of dismissal. 21 Turning to the risk of prejudice, "pendency of a lawsuit is not sufficiently prejudicial in 22 and of itself to warrant dismissal." *Pagtalunan*, 291 F.3d at 642 (citing *Yourish*, 191 F.3d at 991). 23 1 The Court notes that one of its orders, ECF No. 2, was returned as undeliverable on September 19, 2025, 24 with the notation that Plaintiff was not in custody. However, its later order, ECF No. 3, was not returned as 25 undeliverable. Assuming that Plaintiff did not receive some are all of the Court's orders, it is ultimately Plaintiff's responsibility to keep the Court updated with a current address at all times. See Local Rule 26 183(b) ("A party appearing in propria persona shall keep the Court and opposing parties advised as to his or her current address. If mail directed to a plaintiff in propria persona by the Clerk is returned by the U.S. 27 Postal Service, and if such plaintiff fails to notify the Court and opposing parties within thirty (30) days thereafter of a current address, the Court may dismiss the action without prejudice for failure to 28 prosecute."). 1 However, "delay inherently increases the risk that witnesses' memories will fade and evidence 2 will become stale," *id.* at 643, and it is Plaintiff's failure to prosecute this case and comply with 3 court orders that is causing delay. Therefore, the third factor weighs in favor of dismissal. 4 As for the availability of lesser sanctions, given that Plaintiff has chosen not to prosecute 5 this action and has failed to comply with a court order, despite being warned of possible dismissal, there is little available to the Court besides dismissal which would constitute a 6 satisfactory lesser sanction while protecting the Court from further unnecessary

expenditure of its 7 scarce resources. Notably, given the stage of these proceedings, the preclusion of evidence or 8 witnesses is not available. Further, because the Court is recommending dismissal without 9 prejudice, it has stopped short of recommending the harsher sanction of dismissal with prejudice. 10 Therefore, the fourth factor weighs in favor of dismissal. 11 Finally, because public policy favors disposition on the merits, this final factor weighs 12 against dismissal. Id. 13 After weighing the factors, the Court finds that dismissal without prejudice is appropriate. 14 Accordingly, IT IS RECOMMENDED that: 15

1. This action be dismissed, without prejudice, based on Plaintiff's failure to pay the 16 filing fee or file an in forma pauperis application, failure to prosecute this case, and failure to 17 comply with court orders; and 18 2. The Clerk of Court be directed to close this case. 19 These findings and recommendations are submitted to the United States District Judge 20 assigned to the case, pursuant to the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1). Within thirty (30) days 21 after being served with these findings and recommendations, Plaintiff may file written objections 22 with the Court. Such a document should be captioned "Objections to Magistrate Judge's Findings 23 and Recommendations." \ 24 \ 25 \ 26 \ 27 \ 28 1 Any objections shall be limited to no more than fifteen (15) pages, including exhibits. 2 | Plaintiff is advised that failure to file objections within the specified time may result in the waiver 3 | of rights on appeal. Wilkerson v. Wheeler, 772 F.3d 834, 838-39 (9th Cir. 2014) (citing Baxter v. 4 | Sullivan, 923 F.2d 1391, 1394 (9th Cir. 1991)). 5 IT IS SO ORDERED. | Dated: _ November 18, 2025 [see ey 3 UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28