

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF
FLORIDA

Aaron C. Timberlake v. Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office et al.

Timberlake · No. 26-CV-60221-STRAUSS · Decided February 26, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida denied without prejudice Aaron C. Timberlake’s motion for an exemption from PACER fees. The court held that proceeding in forma pauperis and the plaintiff’s stated need to monitor this and related cases did not establish that a PACER-fee exemption was necessary to avoid an unreasonable burden and promote public access to information.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida
DECIDED	February 26, 2026
DOCKET	26-CV-60221-STRAUSS
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff moved for an exemption from PACER fees after receiving leave to proceed in forma pauperis.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court applied the standard governing discretionary PACER fee exemptions under the Judicial Conference fee schedule: the applicant must show that the exemption is necessary to avoid unreasonable burdens and promote public access to information.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished district-court order; generally nonprecedential.
PARTIES	Aaron C. Timberlake v. Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office et al.

TOPICS

- civil procedure
- public records
- open government

PRACTICE AREAS

- civil procedure
- civil rights

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Plaintiff established that a discretionary exemption from PACER fees was necessary to avoid an unreasonable burden and promote public access to information.

HOLDINGS

1. In forma pauperis status alone does not entitle a litigant to an exemption from PACER fees, and Plaintiff failed to show that the exemptions already available to him were inadequate or that a discretionary exemption was necessary to avoid an unreasonable burden and promote public access to information.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“For an exemption from PACER fees, Plaintiff must show ‘an exemption is necessary in order to avoid unreasonable burdens and to promote public access to information.’”

“An exemption is the exception rather than the rule.”

“in forma pauperis status alone does not support a request to waive PACER fees.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff was proceeding in forma pauperis and sought exemption from PACER fees so he could monitor this case and review related federal cases. He asserted that he lacked access to subscription-based legal research services. The court noted that Plaintiff had access to existing PACER exemptions, including one free copy of documents filed in the case, judicial opinions, and courthouse public-access terminals.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed a motion seeking exemption from PACER fees to access documents in this and related federal cases. The court denied the motion without prejudice, allowing Plaintiff to refile upon showing that an exemption is necessary to avoid an unreasonable burden and promote public access to information.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- McWhorter v. Transunion LLC, No. 121CV01753SDGLTW, 2021 WL 12137720, at *1 (N.D. Ga. Dec. 9, 2021)
- Hatcher v. G-P Wood & Fiber Supply, LLC, Case No. 3:07-CV-080-JTC, 2008 WL 11343393, at *1 (N.D. Ga. Feb. 6, 2008)
- Rigby v. Cap. One Fin. Corp., No. 24-CV-98, 2025 WL 556426, at *1 (M.D. Fla. Feb. 19, 2025)
- Schultz v. Lewis, No. 23-CV-04132, 2024 WL 1560149, at *4 (N.D. Ga. Feb. 13, 2024), report and recommendation adopted, 2024 WL 1589512 (N.D. Ga. Mar. 4, 2024)

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