

SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, APPELLATE DIVISION,
SECOND JUDICIAL DEPARTMENT

Clendeninn v. Young

2026 NY Slip Op 03421 · No. 2024-06481 · Decided June 3, 2026

SUMMARY

The Appellate Division, Second Department reversed a \$32,000 judgment entered in favor of the tenant against the landlord-related defendants. The court held that the plaintiff failed to establish prima facie that the COVID-19 pandemic and related executive orders made performance of the lease impossible or frustrated its purpose, and also failed to establish that certain defendants were proper parties. The court therefore denied the plaintiff's summary judgment motion and reinstated the challenged defenses and counterclaim.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Supreme Court of the State of New York, Appellate Division, Second Judicial Department
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Betsy Barros, J.P.; Barry E. Warhit, J.; Carl J. Landicino, J.; Laurence L. Love, J.
JURISDICTION	Supreme Court of the State of New York, Appellate Division, Second Judicial Department
DECIDED	June 3, 2026
DOCKET	2024-06481
DISPOSITION	reversed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The defendants appealed from a judgment entered after the Supreme Court, Suffolk County, granted the plaintiff's motion for summary judgment on claims for unjust enrichment and related theories, dismissed certain affirmative defenses and a counterclaim, and entered judgment for \$32,000.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	On summary judgment, the movant bears the prima facie burden of demonstrating entitlement to judgment as a matter of law; if that burden is not met, the motion must be denied regardless of the sufficiency of the opposing papers.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published New York Appellate Division decision

PARTIES

Dawn H. Young, as administrator of the estate of Steven W. Young,
S.W. Young Property Management, S.W. Young Contracting v. Neil
Clendeninn

TOPICS

summary judgment frustration of purpose impossibility of performance unjust enrichment
appellate procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

contracts civil procedure real estate remedies appellate procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the Supreme Court properly deemed the defendants' failure to respond paragraph by paragraph to the plaintiff's statement of material facts an admission of those assertions.
2. Whether the plaintiff established prima facie entitlement to summary judgment by proving that the COVID-19 pandemic and related executive orders made performance of the lease impossible or frustrated its purpose.
3. Whether the plaintiff established prima facie that S.W. Young Contracting and Steven W. Young were proper parties to the action.
4. Whether the plaintiff was entitled to summary judgment dismissing the defendants' fourth and fifth affirmative defenses and counterclaim.

HOLDINGS

1. The Supreme Court improvidently exercised its discretion by deeming the assertions in the plaintiff's statement of material facts admitted under the circumstances presented; blind adherence to 22 NYCRR 202.8-g was not required.
2. The plaintiff failed to establish prima facie entitlement to summary judgment because he did not demonstrate that the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent executive orders made performance of the lease impossible or frustrated the lease's purpose.
3. The plaintiff failed to demonstrate prima facie that S.W. Young Contracting and Steven W. Young were proper parties to the action.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"[B]lind adherence to the procedure set forth in 22 NYCRR 202.8-g [wa]s not required," even though the rule—which has since been amended—included "mandatory language" at the time the court determined [the plaintiff's] motion" ([*1])

"In order to invoke the doctrine of a frustration of purpose, 'the frustrated purpose must be so completely the basis of the contract that, as both parties understood, without it, the transaction would have made little

sense"" ([*1])

"[T]he law of impossibility provides that performance of a contract will be excused if such performance is rendered impossible by intervening governmental activities, but only if those activities are unforeseeable" ([*1])

"Impossibility excuses a party's performance only when the destruction of the subject matter of the contract or the means of performance makes performance objectively impossible" ([*1])

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

In December 2019, Neil Clendeninn, as tenant, entered into a lease with S.W. Young Property Management for Fire Island premises, for a term from April 15, 2020, through October 31, 2020. Clendeninn alleged that COVID-19-related governmental restrictions prevented him from taking possession and sought recovery of advance lease payments under theories including unjust enrichment, frustration of purpose, and impossibility of performance. The defendants asserted that S.W. Young Contracting and Steven W. Young were not proper parties and counterclaimed for breach of the lease.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The plaintiff commenced the action in May 2021 after allegedly being unable to take possession of leased Fire Island premises because of COVID-19-related governmental restrictions. The Supreme Court granted the plaintiff summary judgment and dismissed the defendants' fourth and fifth affirmative defenses and counterclaim, resulting in a \$32,000 judgment. The Appellate Division reversed the judgment, denied the relevant branches of the plaintiff's motion, and modified the order accordingly.

DISPOSITION

reversed

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

The judgment was reversed with costs; the relevant branches of the plaintiff's motion for summary judgment and for dismissal of the defendants' fourth and fifth affirmative defenses and counterclaim were denied, and the June 23, 2023 order was modified accordingly.

CASES CITED

- Argueta v Hall & Wright, LLC, 230 AD3d 1200, 1201
- Leberman v Instantwhip Foods, Inc., 207 AD3d 850, 851
- On the Water Prods., LLC v Glynos, 211 AD3d 1480, 1481
- Kay v Heavenly Events & Catering Corp., 241 AD3d 1305, 1308
- Gulf LNG Energy, LLC v Eni S.p.A., 232 AD3d 183, 192
- Pleasant Hill Developers, Inc. v Foxwood Enters., LLC, 65 AD3d 1203, 1206
- Matter of A & S Transp. Co. v County of Nassau, 154 AD2d 456, 459

- Berman v TRG Waterfront Lender, LLC, 181 AD3d 783, 786
- Kel Kim Corp. v Central Mkts., 70 NY2d 900, 902
- Gap, Inc. v 44-45 Broadway Leasing Co. LLC, 206 AD3d 503, 504
- Fives 160th, LLC v Qing Zhao, 204 AD3d 439, 440
- Popal v DiLorenzo, 231 AD3d 1067, 1069
- McCarthy v Young, 57 AD3d 955, 955
- Winegrad v New York Univ. Med. Ctr., 64 NY2d 851, 853

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