

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF
WISCONSIN

Isaiah Joseph Brueggen v. Investigator Dan Baudek and Investigator
Brandon Stoughtenger

Brueggen v. Baudek · No. 26-cv-235-jdp · Decided May 18, 2026

SUMMARY

The court screened Isaiah Joseph Brueggen’s pro se complaint alleging that investigators falsely reported that a substance tested positive for methamphetamine, leading to criminal charges that were later dismissed. The court dismissed the federal malicious prosecution and state-law defamation claims for failure to state a claim, but granted Brueggen one opportunity to amend. The court concluded that the positive field test established probable cause and that the investigators’ statements were protected by applicable immunity.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin
WRITING FOR THE COURT	James D. Peterson
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin
DECIDED	May 18, 2026
DOCKET	26-cv-235-jdp
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Screening of a pro se incarcerated plaintiff’s complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	At screening under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, the court accepts well-pleaded allegations as true, construes a pro se complaint liberally, and dismisses claims that are frivolous, malicious, fail to state a plausible claim, or seek damages from an immune defendant.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court opinion
PARTIES	Isaiah Joseph Brueggen v. Investigator Dan Baudek, Investigator Brandon Stoughtenger

TOPICS

prisoners rights

section 1983

pleadings

civil procedure

torts

PRACTICE AREAS

Civil rights

Prisoner litigation

Federal civil procedure

Defamation

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Brueggen stated a plausible Fourth Amendment malicious-prosecution claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 based on the investigators' positive field test and the later laboratory determination that the substance was salt.
2. Whether the Eighth Amendment governed Brueggen's claim based on his custodial status while awaiting resolution of proceedings to revoke his extended supervision.
3. Whether Brueggen stated a plausible Wisconsin defamation claim based on the investigators' statements about the substance.
4. Whether Brueggen should be granted leave to amend his complaint.

HOLDINGS

1. The Eighth Amendment did not govern Brueggen's claim because, when the events occurred, he was detained while awaiting resolution of the state's efforts to revoke his extended supervision, and that supervision had not yet been revoked.
2. Brueggen failed to state a plausible malicious-prosecution claim because the positive field test supplied probable cause for the methamphetamine-possession charge, and probable cause is a complete defense to malicious prosecution.
3. Brueggen failed to state a plausible Wisconsin defamation claim, and the court dismissed the claim.
4. The court granted Brueggen one opportunity to amend his complaint despite concluding that the malicious-prosecution claim appeared futile.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“A positive field test is enough to support probable cause for a drug possession offense.” (at 3)

“Probable cause to arrest is an absolute defense to malicious prosecution.” (at 3)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

While detained at the La Crosse County Jail, Brueggen possessed a substance that Investigators Baudek and Stoughtenger tested on or about October 30, 2025. The initial field test was positive for methamphetamine, and Brueggen was charged with possession of methamphetamine, possession of drug paraphernalia, and bail jumping. A later crime-laboratory test determined that the substance was salt, and the charges were dismissed.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Brueggen filed a complaint alleging that county investigators falsely reported that a substance found in his possession tested positive for methamphetamine, leading to criminal charges that were later dismissed. The district court screened the complaint, dismissed the federal malicious-prosecution and state-law defamation claims for failure to state a plausible claim, and granted Brueggen one opportunity to amend by June 18, 2026.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Arnett v. Webster, 658 F.3d 742, 751 (7th Cir. 2011)
- Tellabs, Inc. v. Makor Issues & Rights, Ltd., 551 U.S. 308, 322 (2007)
- Bell v. Wolfish, 441 U.S. 520, 537 n.16 (1979)
- Voss v. Marathon County, No. 18-cv-540-jdp, 2021 WL 148732, at *4 (W.D. Wis. Jan. 15, 2021)
- Thompson v. Clark, 596 U.S. 36, 44, 49 (2022)
- Evans v. Matson, No. 23-2954, 2024 WL 2206638, at *2 (7th Cir. May 16, 2024)
- Mustafa v. City of Chicago, 442 F.3d 544, 547 (7th Cir. 2006)
- United States v. Hill, 818 F.3d 289, 294 (7th Cir. 2016)
- Larsen v. Carroll County, 798 F. App'x 942, 945 (7th Cir. 2020)
- Alba-Guerrero v. Sirchie Acquisition Co., LLC, No. 24-cv-602-jdp, 2025 WL 1344872, at *3 (W.D. Wis. May 8, 2025)
- Wright v. Associated Insurance Companies Inc., 29 F.3d 1244, 1251 (7th Cir. 1994)
- Converters Equipment Corp. v. Condes Corp., 80 Wis. 2d 257, 266 (1977)
- Felton v. City of Chicago, 827 F.3d 632, 636 (7th Cir. 2016)
- Bogie v. Rosenberg, 705 F.3d 603, 608 (7th Cir. 2013)
- Cannon v. Newport, 850 F.3d 303, 306 (7th Cir. 2017)