

NONPRECEDENTIAL DISPOSITION
To be cited only in accordance with FED. R. APP. P. 32.1

United States Court of Appeals
For the Seventh Circuit
Chicago, Illinois 60604

Submitted January 27, 2026*
Decided February 3, 2026

Before

MICHAEL Y. SCUDDER, *Circuit Judge*

AMY J. ST. EVE, *Circuit Judge*

CANDACE JACKSON-AKIWUMI, *Circuit Judge*

No. 25-1762

RAKEEM HARRIS,
Plaintiff-Appellant,

Appeal from the United States District
Court for the Central District of Illinois.

v.

No. 1:24-cv-01155-JEH

CITY OF BLOOMINGTON, et al.,
Defendants-Appellees.

Jonathan E. Hawley,
Judge.

O R D E R

After being pulled over for a traffic infraction, Rakeem Harris was arrested and officers conducted a search of his car. Harris sued six police officers and the City of Bloomington, Illinois, alleging the search violated the Fourth Amendment. *See* 42 U.S.C.

* We have agreed to decide the case without oral argument because the briefs and record adequately present the facts and legal arguments, and oral argument would not significantly aid the court. FED. R. APP. P. 34(a)(2)(C).

§ 1983. The district court dismissed Harris's complaint for failure to state a claim. *See FED. R. CIV. P. 12(b)(6)*. We affirm.

We review the court's grant of a motion to dismiss de novo, accepting as true the complaint's well-pleaded allegations and drawing all reasonable inferences in the plaintiff's favor. *Approved Mortg. Corp. v. Truist Bank*, 106 F.4th 582, 588 (7th Cir. 2024). In April 2023, Harris was pulled over for not having visible tail lamps and was ultimately arrested for driving on a suspended license. Officers searched his car and several items in the car, including a backpack, a VR headset case, and a safe that officers broke open to search inside. Each item and its contents were noted in an inventory log. When the search ended, Harris's car was towed.

In April 2024, Harris filed a civil-rights lawsuit against the City and six police officers involved in the search: Nicholas Doage, Jeff Linden, Taylor Hallat, Jerrad Freeman, Spencer Busch, and Timmothy Carleton. Harris mailed summonses to each defendant. Counsel responded to the summons on behalf of all defendants except Carleton. As relevant to this appeal, Harris alleged that the officers violated and conspired to violate his Fourth Amendment rights, reasoning that because he was arrested for merely having a suspended license there was no probable cause to search his car. *See 42 U.S.C. §§ 1983, 1985.*[†]

The district court dismissed Harris's complaint, ruling that it did not plausibly allege a constitutional violation. The court also dismissed Carleton as a defendant, concluding that Harris did not effectuate service of process on him. The court granted Harris fourteen days to amend his complaint and properly state a claim.

Rather than amend his complaint, Harris timely moved to amend the judgment. *See FED. R. CIV. P. 59(e)*. He argued that (1) the search had exceeded the scope of an inventory search based on comments from newly obtained body-worn camera video, (2) he had no practical way of serving Carleton because the City had fired Carleton and he did not have Carleton's home address, and (3) the court was biased and should recuse itself. The court denied the motion, ruling that the motion rehashed old arguments instead of making new ones, failed to explain why Harris did not simply

[†] Harris brought other claims but does not address them in his opening brief. Accordingly, we do not discuss them further. *See White v. United States*, 8 F.4th 547, 552 (7th Cir. 2021).

amend his complaint, and that recusal was not warranted because the motion did not provide any supporting facts.

Harris appeals, first alleging that the police were not conducting an inventory search but instead rummaging through his belongings in hopes of finding drugs. In support of this pretext argument, he highlights that officers said “he must have just dropped off drugs,” called a K-9 unit, and broke open his safe. But these arguments were raised for the first time in Harris’s Rule 59(e) motion, and thus are waived on appeal. *Estremera v. United States*, 442 F.3d 580, 587 (7th Cir. 2006).

He next argues that his complaint should not have been dismissed because he plausibly alleged a Fourth Amendment violation. Harris alleged that the search was not authorized by a warrant, and that neither having two inoperable tail lamps nor his subsequent arrest for driving with a suspended license gave rise to probable cause. But because Harris alleged the arresting officer believed he was not in compliance with state traffic laws, Harris alleged a lawful traffic stop. *See Whren v. United States*, 517 U.S. 806, 813 (1996). That stop concluded with Harris’s arrest for driving on a suspended license, and his car was searched, inventoried, and towed in accordance with the City’s inventory policy. BLOOMINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT SOP 1.09.

When inventory searches of impounded automobiles are conducted pursuant to an official policy that is reasonable under the Fourth Amendment, the inventory search provides a valid exception to both the probable cause and warrant requirements. *United States v. Cartwright*, 630 F.3d 610, 613–15 (7th Cir. 2010). As Harris was lawfully arrested and his car searched as part of the City’s inventory procedure, the facts alleged show that the officers conducted a constitutional inventory search of the car. *Id.* Therefore, Harris had not pleaded facts in his complaint to plausibly allege a Fourth Amendment violation. And because he has not plausibly alleged a Fourth Amendment violation, he cannot have plausibly alleged a conspiracy to deprive him of those same rights either. *See Katz-Crank v. Haskett*, 843 F.3d 641, 650 (7th Cir. 2016).

Harris also appeals the court’s dismissal of the case as to Carleton, but we need not address whether Carleton was properly served. As explained above, even if he had been served, Harris has not stated a claim against Carleton on the merits.

Lastly, the motion to recuse was properly denied. Although Harris asserts that the district judge was biased against him, and that this bias is reflected in his procedural rulings, adverse “judicial rulings alone almost never constitute a valid basis” for

questioning a judge's impartiality. *Liteky v. United States*, 510 U.S. 540, 555 (1994). Harris has not provided evidence suggesting they do here.

AFFIRMED