NONPRECEDENTIAL DISPOSITION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 February 17, 2026*
Decided February 18, 2026

Before

MICHAEL B. BRENNAN, *Chief Judge*

CANDACE JACKSON-AKIWUMI, *Circuit Judge*

NANCY L. MALDONADO, *Circuit Judge*

No. 25-2508

WESLEY C. TAYLOR,
Plaintiff-Appellant,

v.

DIANE COWGER, et al.,
Defendants-Appellees.

Appeal from the United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana, Indianapolis Division.

No. 1:24-cv-01916-JRS-MJD

James R. Sweeney II,
Chief Judge.

O R D E R

Wesley Taylor appeals the judgment dismissing with prejudice his civil-rights lawsuit against individuals and organizations involved in his family law case in state court. *See* 42 U.S.C. § 1983. On de novo review, *see Hess v. Garcia*, 72 F.4th 753, 756–57

* The appellees were not served with process and are not participating in this appeal. We have agreed to decide the case without oral argument because the brief 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).

(7th Cir. 2023), we affirm but modify the judgment to clarify that certain claims were dismissed without prejudice.

We recite the facts as alleged in Taylor's second amended complaint, drawing all reasonable inferences in his favor. *See id.* Taylor was involved in child support and custody proceedings adjudicated in Indiana state court by Judge Diane Cowger. The proceedings resulted in a final order that required Taylor to pay child support and split custody of the children with their mother. Taylor alleges that this order was tainted by Judge Cowger's intentional misapplication of state law as well as evidence both falsified and suppressed by Indiana Legal Services attorney Tamara Wilson and county prosecutor Nisha Harland. Taylor further alleges that Harland enforced this fraudulently obtained order by instituting wage garnishment against him.

Believing that his constitutional rights had been violated, Taylor sued Judge Cowger, Wilson, Harland, Indiana Legal Services, and the Marion County Prosecutor's Office. *See* 42 U.S.C. § 1983. The district court screened Taylor's initial complaint and an amended complaint, *see* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2), dismissed each without prejudice, and permitted Taylor to file a second amended complaint. Taylor did so, requesting monetary damages and a permanent injunction against enforcing the state order.

The district court dismissed Taylor's second amended complaint with prejudice. The court first addressed Taylor's request for an injunction, explaining that both the *Rooker-Feldman* doctrine and the domestic-relations exception deprived it of jurisdiction to alter any state-court orders. Turning to monetary relief, the court ruled that Judge Cowger, Harland, and the Marion County Prosecutor's Office were entitled to immunity; that Wilson did not act under color of state law; and that Taylor's allegations against Indiana Legal Services were too vague and conclusory to state a claim.

Taylor appeals, first challenging the district court's conclusion that it lacked jurisdiction to grant an injunction under the *Rooker-Feldman* doctrine and the domestic-relations exception. He argues that the district court overlooked his disclaimer in his first amended complaint that he wanted not to vacate or modify the state order but enjoin its enforcement. But Taylor's disclaimer proposes a distinction without a difference. Both the *Rooker-Feldman* doctrine and the domestic-relations exception prohibit such interference with a state-court order. *See Gilbank v. Wood Cnty. Dep't of Hum. Servs.*, 111 F.4th 754, 780–81 (7th Cir. 2024) (en banc) (*Rooker-Feldman*); *Kowalski v. Boliker*, 893 F.3d 987, 996 (7th Cir. 2018) (citing *Jones v. Brennan*, 465 F.3d 304 (7th Cir. 2006)) (domestic relations). To the extent there is any difference between vacating the order and enjoining it, federal courts would still lack jurisdiction to grant such a request

out of federalism concerns. *See J.B. v. Woodard*, 997 F.3d 714, 722–24 (7th Cir. 2021) (requesting injunctive relief "threaten[s] interference with and disruption of local family law proceedings—a robust area of law traditionally reserved for state and local government—to such a degree as to all but compel the federal judiciary to stand down").

Even though the state court's order cannot be vacated, a plaintiff may still receive monetary damages for violations of his constitutional rights that occurred during the process of obtaining that order. *See Gilbank*, 111 F.4th at 791. Taylor insists that he was entitled to this relief against each defendant. He argues, for instance, that Judge Cowger acted fraudulently, thus stripping the court of jurisdiction, and so she should not have been afforded judicial immunity. But "judicial immunity is not overcome by allegations of bad faith or malice" and the state courts, not federal courts, are responsible for resolving such misconduct. *Myrick v. Greenwood*, 856 F.3d 487, 488–89 (7th Cir. 2017) (quoting *Mireles v. Waco*, 502 U.S. 9, 11 (1991)); *see also Eades v. Sterlinske*, 810 F.2d 723, 725–26 (7th Cir. 1987) (judge afforded absolute immunity despite allegations that he fraudulently modified records).

Taylor relatedly challenges the district court's decision to afford Harland prosecutorial immunity. But the district court's decision was based not on prosecutorial immunity but rather quasi-judicial immunity, which fully "immunize[s] those 'acting pursuant to an official court order.'" *See Dunn v. City of Elgin*, 347 F.3d 641, 647 (7th Cir. 2003) (quoting *Henry v. Farmer City State Bank*, 808 F.2d 1228, 1238 (7th Cir. 1986)). Taylor does not dispute that Harland has quasi-judicial immunity and so has waived any disagreement with that ruling. *See Maher v. City of Chicago*, 547 F.3d 817, 821 (7th Cir. 2008) ("[B]y not challenging one of the two independent grounds for the magistrate judge's holding … Maher's assertion of error on [his] claim is waived.").

Taylor further argues that the district court wrongly concluded that Wilson, the legal-services attorney, did not act under color of state law. But his complaint's lack of specificity regarding her involvement makes her authority hard to assess. Even if we assume (as did the district court) that Wilson was appointed by the state court to represent the children's mother or to be a guardian ad litem for the children, the court's appointment did not render her a state actor. *See Polk Cnty. v. Dodson*, 454 U.S. 312, 325 (1981) (public defenders do not act under color of law during litigation). Wilson thus would be liable under § 1983 only if she conspired with state actors, *see Spiegel v. McClintic*, 916 F.3d 611, 616 (7th Cir. 2019), and we again agree with the district court

that Taylor's allegations—that the defendants "coordinated" to present false testimony and hide documents—are too barebones and conclusory to state a claim.

Taylor also generally challenges the district court's ruling that the Marion County Prosecutor's Office was immune under the Eleventh Amendment. But he fails to contend with our precedent holding that an Indiana county prosecutor's office is immune from suit for money damages, *see Kinder v. Marion Cnty. Prosecutor's Off.*, 132 F.4th 1005, 1009–11 (7th Cir. 2025), so we have no reason to disturb the district court's ruling here.

Taylor lastly challenges the district court's ruling that he failed to state a claim against Indiana Legal Services. If we assume that Indiana Legal Services is a suable person under § 1983, it would be treated as a municipality, *see Dean v. Wexford Health Sources, Inc.*, 18 F.4th 214, 235 (7th Cir. 2021), in effect requiring Taylor to plead a pattern or practice of unconstitutional behavior, *see Monell v. Dep't of Soc. Servs.*, 436 U.S. 658, 694 (1978). But his bare allegation of "joint participation" is insufficient to state a *Monell* claim. *See, e.g.*, *Gill v. City of Milwaukee*, 850 F.3d 335, 344 (7th Cir. 2017).

We recognize that Taylor has made several other arguments detailing the underlying merits of his claims. But because we have concluded that he cannot pass essential thresholds for his claims, we do not address his arguments further.

Finally, we modify the disposition of the district court to reflect a dismissal without prejudice of Taylor's claims resolved on jurisdictional grounds under the *Rooker-Feldman* doctrine, the domestic-relations exception, and the Eleventh Amendment. *See, e.g.*, *Frederiksen v. City of Lockport*, 384 F.3d 437, 438 (7th Cir. 2004); *McHugh v. Ill. Dep't of Transp.*, 55 F.4th 529, 534 & n.2 (7th Cir. 2022).

AFFIRMED AS MODIFIED