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Appendix A

United States Court of Appeals

For the Seventh Circuit

Chicago, Illinois 60604

July 14, 2026

Before

MICHAEL B. BRENNAN, *Chief Judge*

FRANK H. EASTERBROOK, *Circuit Judge*

JOHN Z. LEE, *Circuit Judge*

No. 25-1051

DANA WATSON,
Plaintiff-Appellant,

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

v.

No. 24-cv-1835-SMY

METROPOLITAN ENFORCEMENT
GROUP OF SOUTHERN ILLINOIS,
et al.,

Staci M. Yandle,
Chief Judge.

Defendants-Appellees.

ORDER

On consideration of the petition for rehearing and for rehearing en banc, no judge in active service requested a vote on the petition for rehearing en banc, and the judges on the original panel voted to deny rehearing. It is therefore ordered that the petition for rehearing and for rehearing en banc is DENIED.

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE SEVENTH CIRCUIT

Everett McKinley Dirksen
United States Courthouse
Room 2722 - 219 S. Dearborn Street
Chicago, Illinois 60604



Office of the Clerk
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www.ca7.uscourts.gov

FINAL JUDGMENT

June 16, 2026

Before

MICHAEL B. BRENNAN, *Chief Judge*
FRANK H. EASTERBROOK, *Circuit Judge*
JOHN Z. LEE, *Circuit Judge*

No. 25-1051	DANA WATSON, Plaintiff - Appellant
	v. METROPOLITAN ENFORCEMENT GROUP OF SOUTHERN ILLINOIS, et al., Defendants - Appellees
Originating Case Information:	
District Court No: 3:24-cv-01835-SMY Southern District of Illinois District Judge Staci M. Yandle	

The judgment of the District Court is **AFFIRMED**, with costs, in accordance with the decision of this court entered on this date.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Christopher Conway".

Clerk of Court

NONPRECEDENTIAL DISPOSITION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 June 16, 2026*

Decided June 16, 2026

Before

MICHAEL B. BRENNAN, *Chief Judge*

FRANK H. EASTERBROOK, *Circuit Judge*

JOHN Z. LEE, *Circuit Judge*

No. 25-1051

DANA WATSON,
Plaintiff-Appellant,

v.

METROPOLITAN ENFORCEMENT
GROUP OF SOUTHERN ILLINOIS,
et al.,

Defendants-Appellees.

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

No. 24-cv-1835-SMY

Staci M. Yandle,
Chief Judge.

ORDER

Dana Watson sued a multijurisdictional law enforcement task force, the state police, and individual officers to reclaim cash and a handgun they seized from her

* 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).

home. The district court dismissed her complaint under the doctrine of claim preclusion because her previous complaint covering the same events had been dismissed as untimely. *See Watson v. Metro. Enf't Grp. of S. Ill.*, No. 23-1412, 2023 WL 5276607 (7th Cir. Aug. 16, 2023) (nonprecedential decision) (*Watson I*). Because Watson's complaint is either precluded or otherwise fails to state a federal claim, we affirm the judgment.

In 2022, Watson filed a complaint against the Metropolitan Enforcement Group of Southern Illinois under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 alleging several constitutional violations.¹ She alleged that in January 2014, task-force officers executed a no-knock warrant at her home in East St. Louis, where they seized drugs, \$1,892 in cash, and her handgun. Watson's husband was charged with drug and firearm offenses. The state also sought forfeiture of the cash. Watson challenged the forfeiture, and in 2018, the state voluntarily dismissed the proceedings, but the funds and gun remained as evidence in the criminal case. Three years later, the state trial court ordered the funds released from evidence to Watson, but she asserts that she has been unable to access them and that the gun remains in the clerk's possession as evidence.

The district court dismissed Watson's 2022 complaint as untimely under Illinois's two-year statute of limitations because her claims accrued in 2014. *See* 735 ILCS 5/13-202. We affirmed that decision in 2023. *See Watson I*, 2023 WL 5276607, at *2.

In 2024, Watson filed this new lawsuit under § 1983 against the task force, the state police, and nine individual officers (including eight that were mentioned in her 2022 complaint) alleging violations of her due process rights. She included the same facts about the 2014 incident and further alleged that the defendants have since convinced the state court to reduce the amount she is owed by \$20. She attached to her complaint a March 2024 order from the state court amending the prior release order to reflect \$1,872 in cash as the accurate amount held in evidence.

The defendants moved to dismiss Watson's complaint under the doctrine of claim preclusion, arguing that the claims against the task force were identical to Watson's 2022 complaint and that the new defendants (the state police and individual officers) were in privity with the task force. They argued in the alternative that

¹ As we explained in *Watson I*, this task force of federal, state, and local law enforcement is organized by the Illinois State Police. 2023 WL 5276607, at *1 n.1. It is still not clear that the task force is subject to liability under § 1983 or if it is even a suable entity at all, *see id.*, but we need not decide those non-jurisdictional questions to resolve this appeal.

Watson's new complaint was also time-barred. The district court agreed that claim preclusion applied and noted that Watson's additional allegations about her subsequent attempts to retrieve her property failed to plausibly state a constitutional claim. The court dismissed her complaint with prejudice.

On appeal, Watson argues that the district court erred in concluding her claims were precluded when they rest, in part, on developments that occurred after *Watson I*. We review a dismissal based on claim preclusion de novo. *Bell v. Taylor*, 827 F.3d 699, 706 (7th Cir. 2016). That doctrine bars claims that were already litigated (or could have been litigated) when there is "(1) an identity of the causes of action; (2) an identity of the parties or their privies; and (3) a final judgment on the merits." *Id.* (quoting *Roboserve, Inc. v. Kato Kagaku Co., Ltd.*, 121 F.3d 1027, 1034 (7th Cir. 1997)). Watson disputes only the first element, arguing that this cause of action is distinct because she alleges the defendants have continued to withhold her property and have failed to follow the state court's amended release order that issued after her prior suit.

Watson's claim that the defendants have continued to withhold her property is barred. There is an identity of the causes of action when "the claims comprise the same core of operative facts that give rise to a remedy." *Adams v. City of Indianapolis*, 742 F.3d 720, 736 (7th Cir. 2014) (quoting *Matrix IV, Inc. v. Am. Nat. Bank & Tr. Co. of Chi.*, 649 F.3d 539, 547 (7th Cir. 2011)). And here Watson's claim concerning the seizure and withholding of her property is based on the exact same set of facts as *Watson I*. That Watson still does not possess her property since the first lawsuit does not create a distinct cause of action. The defendants seized the property "only one time" and any refusal to return it is not a new wrong separate from that seizure. *Rexing Quality Eggs v. Rembrandt Enters., Inc.*, 953 F.3d 998, 1004 (7th Cir. 2020) (applying Indiana law).

Watson appears to argue that she is really trying to enforce the state court's March 2024 order directing the clerk to return the money to her. She suggests that by not giving her these funds, the defendants deprived her of due process. But merely "intoning 'due process'" does not state a constitutional claim. *Portillo-Rendon v. Holder*, 662 F.3d 815, 817 (7th Cir. 2011). Watson received process in state court regarding her property and ultimately obtained an order releasing the funds to her. She does not explain how any difficulty collecting her money from the clerk resulted from these defendants' actions beyond the original seizure. Indeed, the defendants do not have the funds anymore. Watson cannot seek to enforce the state court order in this case because the order merely directs the clerk of that court to release the funds to her; it is not a money judgment against these defendants, let alone one that may be enforced in federal

court. *See GE Betz, Inc. v. Zee Co., Inc.*, 718 F.3d 615, 624–25 (7th Cir. 2013) (recognizing limited circumstances in which federal courts may enforce a state court’s judgment). Watson must direct her collection efforts to the state court system. They are not a basis for further litigation against these defendants.

AFFIRMED

Appendix C

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS

DANA WATSON,

Plaintiff,

vs.

Case No. 24-cv-1835-SMY

METROPOLITAN ENFORCEMENT
GROUP OF SOUTHERN ILLINOIS,
ILLINOIS STATE POLICE,
BOB PATTERSON, JOE BELIVEAU,
JOSH HUNT, KEVIN CROLLY,
SCOTT PRITCHETT,
KAREN GORDON, TONY LUTHER,
MATT WERNER, and MATT EVERS

Defendants.

JUDGMENT IN A CIVIL ACTION

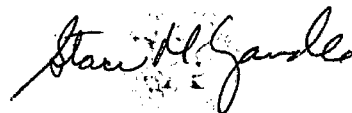
IT IS HEREBY ORDERED AND ADJUDGED that by Order dated January 6, 2025 (Doc. 32), Plaintiff Dana Watson's claims against Defendants Metropolitan Enforcement Group of Southern Illinois, Illinois State Police, Bob Patterson, Joe Beliveau, Josh Hunt, Kevin Croll, Scott Pritchett, Karen Gordon, Tony Luther, Matt Werner, and Matt Evers are **DISMISSED with prejudice**. Accordingly, the Clerk of Court is **DIRECTED** to close this case.

DATED: January 6, 2025

MONICA STUMP, Clerk of Court

By: s/ Stacie Hurst, Deputy Clerk

Approved:



STACI M. YANDLE
United States District Judge

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS**

DANA WATSON,

Plaintiff,

vs.

Case No. 24-cv-1835-SMY

**METROPOLITAN ENFORCEMENT
GROUP OF SOUTHERN ILLINOIS,
ILLINOIS STATE POLICE,
BOB PATTERSON, JOE BELIVEAU,
JOSH HUNT, KEVIN CROLLY,
SCOTT PRITCHETT,
KAREN GORDON, TONY LUTHER,
MATT WERNER, and MATT EVERS**

Defendants.

MEMORANDUM AND ORDER

YANDLE, District Judge:

Dana Watson brings this action against Defendants Metropolitan Enforcement Group of Southern Illinois (“MEGSI”), Illinois State Police (“ISP”), and ISP individual defendants Bob Patterson, Joe Beliveau, Josh Hunt, Kevin Crollly, Scott Pritchett, Karen Gordon, Tony Luther, Matt Werner, and Matt Evers. Watson alleges violations of her constitutional and civil rights stemming from the failure to have seized property returned to her. Now pending before the Court are Defendants’ motions to dismiss (Docs. 15, 21), which Watson opposes (Docs. 18, 22). For the following reasons, the motions are **GRANTED**.

Background

In January 2014, MEGSI officers executed a no-knock warrant at Watson’s home. The officers searched her home for drugs and seized Watson’s legally owned handgun and cash that she had been saving.

In 2022, Watson sued MEGSI in state court, alleging the officers had violated her constitutional rights by among other things, failing to return her property. MEGSI removed the case under 28 U.S.C. § 1441 and moved to dismiss. *See Watson v. Metro. Enft Grp. of S. Illinois*, Case No. 22-cv-2555. The Court granted the motion with prejudice, finding the statute of limitations barred the claims because more than eight years had passed between the allegedly unlawful conduct and the filing of the Complaint. Watson appealed and the Seventh Circuit affirmed in August 2023. *Watson v. Metro. Enft Grp. of S. Illinois*, No. 23-1412, 2023 WL 5276607, at *1 (7th Cir. Aug. 16, 2023).

Watson filed the instant lawsuit in August 2024, making the identical allegations she previously raised in the 2022 lawsuit against Defendant MEGSI. Although she adds defendants in her new lawsuit, the allegations are the same. Specifically, Watson claims that Defendants violated her Fourth, Fifth, and Fourteenth Amendment rights by unlawfully searching her home in 2014, seizing her property, and failing to return money in the amount of \$1892.00 and handgun which should have been released to her. She also alleges violations of the Civil Rights Act of 1871, 1964, Title VII, and 42 U.S.C. § 1983.

Watson also added factual allegations regarding her recent attempts to collect her property. She alleges that she contacted various individuals at the Illinois State Police Department in Spring 2024 to track down her property and was told that it was not in the vault, and that she was told she would have to go through the courts to get a court order for the release of her property. She attached numerous documents to her Complaint, including those attached to her 2022 Complaint and a state court order from March 2024, releasing the money to her. Watson asserts that the state court clerk has not released the funds, so she filed the instant lawsuit.

Discussion

To survive a motion to dismiss under Rule 12(b)(6) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, a Complaint must “state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.” *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009) (citing *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007)). “A claim has facial plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged.” *Ashcroft*, 556 U.S. at 678. Defendants move to dismiss Watson’s Complaint asserting her latest lawsuit is barred by the doctrine of res judicata.

Watson’s Complaint raises the same allegations against the defendants that she made against Defendant MEGSI in her 2022 Complaint. “Under res judicata, a final judgment on the merits of an action precludes the parties or their privies from relitigating issues that were or could have been raised in that action.” *Allen v. McCurry*, 449 U.S. 90, 94 (1980). The aim of the doctrine is to “relieve parties of the cost and vexation of multiple lawsuits, conserve judicial resources, and, by preventing inconsistent decisions, encourage reliance on adjudication.” *Id.* “Res judicata promotes predictability in the judicial process, preserves the limited resources of the judiciary, and protects litigants from the expense and disruption of being haled into court repeatedly.” *Palka v. City of Chicago*, 662 F.3d 428, 437 (7th Cir. 2011).

There are three requirements for res judicata: “(1) a final judgment on the merits ... entered in the first lawsuit by a court of competent jurisdiction; (2) an identity of causes of action exists; (3) the parties or their privies are identical in both lawsuits.” *Doherty v. Fed. Deposit Ins. Corp.*, 932 F.3d 978, 983 (7th Cir. 2019). Where it applies, res judicata prevents the relitigation of claims already litigated as well as those that could have been litigated but were not. *Russian Media Grp., LLC v. Cable Am., Inc.*, 598 F.3d 302, 310 (7th Cir. 2010).

Here, the elements of res judicata are satisfied. Watson's allegations are identical to those she raised against MEGSI in her 2022 lawsuit – that Defendants' seizure of her property and failure to return her property were unlawful. The 2022 lawsuit was dismissed with prejudice and affirmed by the Seventh Circuit. And although Watson did not name ISP and the individual ISP defendants in her 2022 lawsuit, those defendants are in privity with MEGSI; privity exists between parties or entities who adequately represent the same legal interests. *Chicago Title Land Tr. Co. v. Potash Corp. of Saskatchewan Sales*, 664 F.3d 1075, 1080 (7th Cir. 2011). As noted by the Seventh Circuit, MEGSI is a task force composed of federal, state, and local law enforcement officers under the umbrella of the ISP. *Watson*, 2023 WL 5276607, at *1. As such, Watson could have brought her 2022 lawsuit against ISP and the individual ISP defendants. In fact, she mentions the individual defendants in her original state court complaint. Accordingly, the doctrine of res judicata bars her instant lawsuit.¹

Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, Defendants' motions to dismiss (Docs. 15, 21) are **GRANTED**. Plaintiff's Complaint is **DISMISSED with prejudice** and all pending motions are **TERMINATED as MOOT**. The Clerk of Court is **DIRECTED** to enter judgment accordingly and to close this case.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

DATED: January 6, 2025

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Staci M. Yandle", is written over a circular official seal of the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois.

STACI M. YANDLE
United States District Judge

¹ Even if Watson's claims were not barred by res judicata, Watson's additional allegations regarding her attempts to retrieve her property in state court fail to plausibly state a claim that any of the defendants violated her constitutional rights under the Fourth, Fifth, or Fourteenth Amendments, or her civil rights under any of the statutes invoked.