

**Instructions for Filing a Pro Se Civil Complaint for  
Civil Rights Violations or Other Civil Claims  
in the United States District Court  
for the Central District of Illinois  
(For Use by Non-Prisoners Only)**

1. The attached civil complaint form may be used by non-prisoners to file a civil rights complaint. Submit the original complaint to the clerk's office for filing. If you want a file-stamped copy returned to you, submit an extra copy. You are strongly encouraged to keep a copy of all documents you submit to the court for filing. **Any document submitted for filing must be on 8 ½" x 11" paper.**
2. Your complaint may be typed or handwritten. If handwritten, it must be readable. All questions must be answered clearly and completely to the best of your ability. It is not necessary to have your complaint notarized, but it must include a declaration under penalty of perjury that the information you provide is true and correct. A deliberate false statement of fact may serve as the basis of summary dismissal of your case or other sanctions. **Your complaint must be signed and dated.**
3. Confine your answers to the space provided on the **front** of the page. You may use additional pages (on 8 ½" x 11" paper) where noted. State only when, where, how, and by whom you feel your constitutional rights were violated. Do not include legal arguments or citations. If you wish to present legal arguments or citations, file a separate memorandum of law.
4. Complete the attached civil cover sheet and attach it to your complaint.
5. You must pay a filing fee of \$400.00 at the time you file your complaint. If you are unable to prepay the entire filing fee and service costs for your lawsuit, you may seek permission to proceed without prepaying fees or costs by filing a motion to proceed *in forma pauperis*. A form motion is available from the clerk's office. Follow the directions on that form.
6. If you pay the filing fee, **you** are responsible for serving the summons and complaint on each defendant (or obtaining a waiver of service). See Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 4(c)-(d).
7. If you are allowed to proceed without prepaying fees and costs (i.e., if the court grants your motion to proceed *in forma pauperis*), the United States Marshal will serve the summons and complaint for you. However, you will be responsible for preparing a summons form and a Form USM-285 (available from the clerk's office) for each defendant named in your complaint, unless otherwise ordered by the court.

8. After the complaint is filed, the original of any motion, pleading, or other paper submitted for consideration by the court should be filed with the clerk's office. You must also mail a copy of that document to all other parties, or if they have counsel, to their attorneys. When you file your paper with the clerk's office, you must include a **Certificate of Service**, using the format shown below. Any pleading or other document received by the court that fails to include a certificate of service may be disregarded.

<b><u>CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE</u></b>	
I certify that a copy of this _____ was mailed/delivered (Name of Document)	
to _____	on _____
(Name and Address of Party/Attorney)	(Date)
	_____ Signature
	_____ Printed Name

9. Do not write letters to judges or magistrate judges regarding your case. Such contact is improper. If you wish to provide information or ask the court to do something, you must file a motion with the clerk's office.
10. You are responsible for learning and following the procedures that govern the court process. The district judges, magistrate judges, clerk of court, and their staff are forbidden as a matter of law from providing legal advice. Legal advice should be sought from an attorney or legal clinic.
11. You are under a continuing obligation to keep the clerk's office and each opposing party informed of any change in your address. This shall be done in writing and not later than 7 days after a change in address occurs. **Failure to do so may result in dismissal of your case.**

12. Self-representation carries certain responsibilities and risks that a *pro se* litigant should know before proceeding. The court encourages all individuals who are thinking about self-representation to carefully review the risks associated with self-representation and to be aware of the potential consequences. Rule 11 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure prohibits the filing of lawsuits that are clearly frivolous or filed merely to harass someone. If, after reviewing your complaint, a judge determines that you have filed a lawsuit for an improper or clearly unnecessary purpose, it may impose sanctions against you, including ordering you to pay a fine to the court or to pay the legal fees of the person or persons against whom you filed the lawsuit. The court has a form motion with which you may request appointment of counsel. If you wish to file such a motion, you may request the appropriate form from the clerk's office. Ordinarily, the court will not consider your motion until **after** you have filed your complaint and permission to proceed without prepaying fees or costs has been granted. Bear in mind that there is no right to counsel in a civil case, and motions to appoint counsel are not automatically granted.
13. When your complaint is complete, mail the original (and an extra copy if you want a file-stamped copy returned to you), along with the **\$400.00** filing fee or a motion to proceed *in forma pauperis*, to either:

**Clerk of the Court  
United States District Court  
Central District of Illinois  
100 N.E. Monroe Street  
Peoria, IL 61602**

**Clerk of the Court  
United States District Court  
Central District of Illinois  
201 S. Vine Street  
Urbana, IL 61802**

**Clerk of the Court  
United States District Court  
Central District of Illinois  
600 E. Monroe Street  
Springfield, IL 62701**

**Clerk of the Court  
United States District Court  
Central District of Illinois  
211 19<sup>th</sup> Street  
Rock Island, IL 61201**