

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN

DENNIS STRONG,

Plaintiff,

v.

STATE OF WISCONSIN, *et al.*

Defendants.

ORDER

07-C-086-C

At a telephonic hearing with defendant Kelly Vitense and one of her attorneys, Amy Tutwiler, I granted the motion of the Bell Gierhart law firm to withdraw from representing Vitense in this lawsuit because the state has determined that it has no duty to defend or indemnify Vitense and has stopped paying for Vitense's lawyers. At this point, Vitense cannot afford to hire an attorney, so she has no choice but to defend herself pro se. Because of this, I prepared this order for her benefit, which is a variation of the preliminary pretrial conference order this court uses in cases involving pro se civil litigants. I have included the schedule moving forward but have not included deadlines that already have passed.

Read this whole order NOW

This federal civil lawsuit is a serious matter. As a party to a federal civil lawsuit, it is your duty to understand what you are supposed to do and when you are supposed to do it. To help you, this order explains what your duties are and what your deadlines are. This court has a number of rules that you must follow. It will not be easy to do everything that you are supposed

to do, and you will not have a lot of time. Therefore, it is important for you to read this order now so that you can do things the right way.

Review the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure

The Federal Rules of Civil Procedure are the rules that control much of what happens in this lawsuit. Not all of those rules will be important in your case, but some of them will be very important, particularly the rule about summary judgment and the rules about discovery. It is your duty to know the rules of procedure that apply to you in this case. This court cannot provide you with a copy of the rules of procedure. You will have to find your own copy of the rules to review.

The Federal Rules of Evidence could be important later in this lawsuit. The rules of evidence affect the parties' submissions for summary judgment motions. Also, if this case goes all the way to trial, the rules of evidence will affect how the evidence is presented at trial. It is your duty know the rules of evidence that apply to you in this case. This court cannot provide you with a copy of the rules of evidence. You will have to find your own copy of the rules to review.

Service of documents on your opponent is REQUIRED:

Every letter, motion, brief, exhibit, or other document that you file with the court in this lawsuit must be served on the attorneys for all of the other parties at the same time. This means that whenever you mail a document to the court, you also must mail a copy of that document

to the attorneys for the plaintiff and for the other defendants at the same time. To prove that you did this, you must **certify service** by including with each submission to the court a sentence at the end of your document, or on a separate piece of paper, in which you swear or certify that you sent a copy through the mail with proper postage to these lawyers.

There is no acceptable excuse for not serving your documents on the other parties. If you do not serve your documents and if you do not certify service, then this court will not look at your documents. There are no exceptions to this policy.

SCHEDULING

Disclosure of Expert Witnesses: Plaintiff: August 31, 2007

Defendants: September 28, 2007

Rebuttal: October 19, 2007

Because expert witnesses are different from other witnesses, there is a special rule telling how plaintiffs and defendants must name their experts and explain what those experts are going to say at trial. That rule is Rule 26(a)(2) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. If a party does not follow the requirements of Rule 26(a)(2) by his or her deadline to disclose expert witnesses, then this court will not allow that expert witness to present evidence in this case.

Physicians, nurses and other similar care givers who will be offering evidence only about what they did, and who will not be offering new expert opinions, must be named as experts by the deadlines set forth above, but these types of witnesses do not have to prepare written reports for this lawsuit.

This court does not have any money to help a party hire an expert witness. This court does not have any lists or other information that would help a party locate or contact an expert witness. The parties are on their own and they should keep this in mind if they think they might want expert witnesses in this case. There is no extra time in the schedule to allow for extensions, so the parties should begin looking for expert witnesses right away if this type of witness might be important for summary judgment or for trial.

Deadline for Filing Dispositive Motions: October 12, 2007

There are two kinds of dispositive motions: (1) motions to dismiss, and (2) motions for summary judgment. No one may file a dispositive motion after the deadline unless the court grants permission. The court usually does not grant permission to file a late motion, so you must work hard on this case to meet the deadlines.

A) Motions To Dismiss

Motions to dismiss usually do not require the parties to present evidence or to take discovery. If a defendant files a motion to dismiss, he or she must submit a supporting brief at the same time.

Plaintiff must file and serve his response to a motion to dismiss within 21 calendar days of service of the motion. The court starts counting these 21 days on the day the motion to dismiss is filed with the court. Any reply brief by a defendant must be filed and served within 10 calendar days of service of the response.

B) Motions for Summary Judgment

Summary judgment is a way for plaintiff or defendants to win this lawsuit (or parts of it) before the trial. Rule 56 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure explains how the parties must present their evidence and their legal arguments when they file or respond to a summary judgment motion. Rule 56 is important, so you should read it carefully, even before a summary judgment is filed, so that you can be ready for a summary judgment motion and then to do things correctly.

This court has a written set of rules that explains how to file a summary judgment motion and how to respond to your opponent's summary judgment motion. This "Procedure Governing Summary Judgment" is attached to this order and you should read it **now**. This will help you to understand how much work will be involved, and understand the parts that give pro se litigants trouble, like writing good responses to their opponents' proposed findings of fact.

Because it is very hard for a pro se litigant to prepare everything needed to respond to a summary judgment motion, if the plaintiff files a summary judgment motion against you (that is, defendant Kelly Vitense), then the court will give you 30 calendar days to file every part of your response and to serve it on the plaintiff's attorney. The court will start counting your 30 day response deadline on the day that it receives plaintiff's motion for summary judgment. Any reply must be filed and served not later than 10 calendar days after service of the response.

BE AWARE: you are not going to get an extension of this 30 day deadline. The only way to get more time would be if you can convince the court that something totally unfair happened that actually prevented you from meeting your deadline, and this was completely

somebody else's fault. Some things that might seem unfair to you are **not** reasons to get more time. For example, you will not get more time just because you claim that you did not have enough time or money to make copies. You will not get more time if you waited too long to get all the information you think you need to respond to the motion.

Also, if you do not follow the court's procedure for how to respond to summary judgment, then you will not get more time to do it over unless the court decides on its own that you should get a second chance.

The only way to make sure that the court will consider your documents is to start early, do them right the first time, and file them and serve them on time. If you do not do things the way it says in Rule 56 and in the court's written summary judgment procedure, then the court will not consider your documents.

A party may not file more than one motion for summary judgment in this case without first getting permission from the court.

Settlement Letters: December 21, 2007

Defendant Kelly Vitense is excused from filing a settlement letter in this lawsuit so long as she is defending herself pro se.

Discovery Cutoff: December 21, 2007

"Discovery" is the word used in federal courts to describe how plaintiffs and defendants can learn information and get documents that are useful to deciding this lawsuit. Rules 26 through 37 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure explain how you may get information and

documents from the defendants and how the defendants may get information and documents from you. You should read Rules 26 through 37 **now** so that you understand how this works, and so that you can begin taking discovery in this case.

The court expects both sides to follow Rules 26 through 37. You have no right to get information or documents to use in this case except in the way these rules say. For example Rule 26(b) says that you may discover evidence that is relevant to the claims or defenses in this lawsuit. You may not discover evidence that is not relevant. Rule 26(c) protects all parties from discovery requests that are annoying, oppressive, or too expensive or too much time to be worth it in this case. Lawyers often object that discovery demands violate Rules 26(b) or 26(c), so it is important to make careful discovery requests that are aimed at getting the information and documents you really need for this lawsuit, and not aimed at getting other information and documents that you don't really need.

Another reason that it is important to make careful discovery requests is because Rule 33(a) says that a party only may serve 25 interrogatories on her opponent. An interrogatory is a written question that you want the defendants to answer under oath. Because of the rule, this court usually does not give either side permission to ask more than 25 interrogatories. That means you must use your 25 interrogatories to ask the most important questions.

Sometimes a party does not object to a few extra interrogatories, and this court expects that plaintiff's attorneys will be reasonable. But a defendant should not count on obtaining answers to more than 25 interrogatories during this lawsuit.

Rule 34 allows you to ask plaintiff's attorneys to show you documents that are relevant to this lawsuit, but it does not require them to make free copies of these documents for you.

If the parties disagree about discovery requests, then this court would like them to try to work it out if they can do so quickly, but the court does not require this if it would be a waste of time. If either side thinks that the other side is not doing what it is supposed to do for discovery and they cannot work it out, then either the plaintiff or the defendant quickly should file a motion with the court. If the parties do not bring discovery problems to the court's attention quickly, then they cannot complain that they ran out of time to get information that they needed for summary judgment or for trial.

If a party files a motion to compel discovery, or to protect from discovery, or for some other discovery problem, that party also must submit at the same time his or her other documents that show why the court should grant the motion. If your opponent files a discovery motion, you only have five calendar days to file and to serve your written response. You must have your response in the mail stream at the prison within five calendar days. The court will not allow a reply brief on a discovery motion unless the court asks for one.

The court does not want the parties to file their discovery material with the court, except to support some other matter in this lawsuit, such as a summary judgment motion. Once a document or a copy of a document is in the court's file, no one has to file another copy, as long as the parties make it clear to the court where the court can find the document in the file.

The one kind of discovery material that the parties must file with the court are deposition transcripts, which are due promptly after they are prepared. Deposition transcripts must be in compressed format.

Final Pretrial Conference: January 31, 2008 at 4:00 p.m.

Not later than seven calendar days before the final pretrial conference both sides shall submit to the court and serve all of these documents:

- a) Exhibit lists
- b) Motions *in limine* (and any necessary briefs or documents in support)
- c) Proposed voir dire questions
- d) Proposed jury instructions
- e) Proposed verdict forms
- f) Any objections to an opponent's designations under Rule 26(a)(3).

The way to prepare and to submit proposed voir dire questions, jury instructions and verdict forms is set forth in the written Order Governing Final Pretrial Conference, which is attached.

As noted earlier in this order, the parties must file deposition transcripts promptly with the Clerk of Court. Any deposition that has not been filed with the Clerk of Court seven calendar days before trial shall not be used by any party for any purpose at trial.

Trial: February 11, 2008 at 9:00 a.m.

The parties estimate that this case will take ten days to try.

Trial shall be to a jury of seven and shall be bifurcated. This means that the parties will offer evidence and arguments only on the issue of liability, that is, whether plaintiff has proved his claims. If the jury find that the plaintiff has met his burden, then the parties will offer evidence and arguments on the issue of damages.

This case will be tried in an electronically equipped courtroom and the parties may present their evidence using this equipment. It is up to the parties and lawyers to check whether their personal electronic equipment works with the court's electronic equipment.

The parties must have all witnesses and other evidence ready and available to present at trial in order to prevent delay. If you are not ready with your witnesses or other evidence ready when it is your turn, then the court could end your presentation of evidence.

E-Filing.

Parties in this lawsuit may file documents with the court electronically. If you choose to file electronically, then you must follow the court's procedures in order to ensure that the court properly receives and docket each submission. The court's procedures, FAQ page, and related information may be found at www.wiwd.uscourts.gov.

Electronic Notification

Parties in this lawsuit may receive court notices, briefing schedules and orders electronically. If they choose to participate in this program, they must follow the court's procedures. The court's procedures and related information may be found at www.wiwd.uscourts.gov.

Entered this 13th day of July, 2007.

BY THE COURT:

/s/

STEPHEN L. CROCKER
Magistrate Judge