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S.C. SUPREME COURT

THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
In the Supreme Court

IN THE ORIGINAL JURISDICTION OF THE SUPREME COURT

James C. "Chris" McNeil and
Meaghan Poyer, ...Petitioners,

v.

Ninth Judicial Circuit Court of Common Pleas, Charleston County,
. . . . Respondent.

PETITION FOR WRIT OF MANDAMUS

I. INTRODUCTION

Petitioners James C. ("Chris") McNeil and Meaghan Poyer respectfully petition this Court, in its original jurisdiction, for a Writ of Mandamus directed to the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court of Common Pleas, Charleston County, compelling the performance of clearly established ministerial duties that the circuit court has unreasonably refused to discharge for periods ranging from 68 to 166 days - while simultaneously ruling on a defense housekeeping motion in 5 days. This case, McNeil & Poyer v. SAC 181, LLC et al., Civil Action No. 2025-CP-10-05095, involves an eight-count landlord-tenant fraud, retaliation, and veil-piercing action brought by pro se Plaintiffs-Petitioners against corporate landlord entities and their principals. Three critical motions:

1. Plaintiffs' Motion for Leave to File the Second Amended Complaint (filed October 24, 2025; 166+ days unruled),
2. Plaintiffs' ADA Accommodations Motion (filed January 30, 2026; 68+ days unruled), and
3. Relief requested in Plaintiffs' Omnibus Motion (filed February 24, 2026; 42+ days unruled)

remain in procedural limbo despite repeated filings, briefs, and direct pleas to both the presiding judge and the Chief Administrative Judge for the Ninth Circuit.

Meanwhile, a routine defense Motion to Relieve Justine Tate as Counsel, filed April 2, 2026, was granted on April 7, 2026 -five calendar days. This selective responsiveness is not an isolated incident but the visible surface of a documented pattern of administrative gatekeeping that systematically advantages represented defense parties and disadvantages a lead pro se Plaintiff suffering from documented severe PTSD (PCL-5 score: 76 out of 80).

Petitioners have exhausted all available remedies within the circuit court. They have filed motions, supplemental notices, briefs in aid of safety, and direct communications to the Chief Administrative Judge - all without meaningful judicial action. No single judge is assigned to this case; the motions rotate among the judges of the Ninth Circuit. This structural reality makes the failure institutional rather than individual: multiple judges have had occasion to act, and the court as an institution has failed to do so. The ordinary remedy of motion → hearing → ruling is functionally unavailable to these Petitioners. This Court's intervention is the only remaining avenue to compel the ministerial acts the circuit court is obligated to perform.

II. JURISDICTION

This Court possesses original jurisdiction to issue writs of mandamus pursuant to Article V, Section 5 of the South Carolina Constitution and S.C. Code Ann. § 14-3-310, which provides: "The Supreme Court shall have power to issue writs or orders of injunction, mandamus, quo warranto, prohibition, certiorari, habeas corpus and other remedial and original writs."

This Court exercises mandamus jurisdiction in cases involving significant public interest or unusual circumstances. See S.C. Bar, Guide to the Courts ("Normally, this only occurs when the case involves significant public interest or other unusual circumstances."). Both conditions are present here: the case implicates systemic access-to-justice failures for vulnerable pro se litigants and raises documented questions about selective judicial administration favoring represented parties connected to prominent local interests.

III. BACKGROUND, PURPOSE OF PRO SE STATUS AND ALIGNMENT WITH COURT

Petitioners note that their pro se status reflects an unusual combination of circumstances that this Court deserves to understand in context. Petitioner McNeil approaches this Court as a practitioner from adjacent and complementary disciplines - systems consulting, institutional analysis, and thought leadership - whose work is deeply aligned with the shared values of justice and equity that this Court serves. As a systems thinking consultant and inventor of the Strategic Thought Leadership methodology, he has expert witness experience in litigation involving high tech internet communications and the skillset of a non-witness expert litigation consultant.

When he immediately noticed the problems that led to the lawsuit were systemic, he decided to study the system of Housing Justice in Charleston, SC from the point of view of its most vulnerable member role : an unrepresented tenant who was harmed and deserves justice but

cannot afford an attorney. The most vulnerable member (MVM) stance is an accepted methodology to determine the resilience of a system.

He had recently developed an innovative application of his own Strategic Thought Leadership platform and his consulting practice was experiencing immediate traction of a product-market fit through training AI to help propagate new paradigms through “STL Schema” when the forced move and subsequent defense counsel exhaustion tactics flattened its velocity and kept it flat.

In order to demonstrate the value of that platform to a jury for the purpose of assessing punitive damages, in full transparency to defense counsel, he utilized the case itself as a study for the purpose of improving the housing system for everyone. He offers the work product of the Housing Justice Audit (available at housingjusticeaudit.com/report) as a contribution to the public record that is available to tenants, good-faith landlords, and to this Court as a decision-support tool.

A. What is Meant by Systems Thinking

Systems thinking, as defined by management theorist Russell Ackoff, holds that 'a system is never the sum of its parts; it's the product of their interactions.' Rather than analyzing individual components in isolation, systems thinking examines how parts interact, what feedback loops those interactions create, and where high-leverage interventions can change systemic behavior. **(**Ackoff, R. L. (1994). *The Democratic Corporation: A Radical Prescription for Recreating Corporate America and Rediscovering Success*. Oxford University Press.)

This perspective is important both in understanding the basis for the Housing Justice Audit study, and its role as a demonstration of McNeil’s Strategic Thought Leadership Platform. The

stance Petitioners take in their diagnosis of the problems that have led to the need for this Petition for Writ of Mandamus is that the issues are clearly systemic. And McNeil's consulting experience has demonstrated that if the system itself doesn't change, the people can change yet the same problems will recur with new people in the same roles. And without changing the thinking behind the system - the core mental model - a revised or new system is likely to be just as problematic.

That is the reason the Housing Justice Audit that Petitioner McNeil produced through this case focuses on what System Thinker Donella Meadows calls the highest leverage point in intervening in a system: paradigms. McNeil's platform assists in that by providing and distributing the solution paradigm of *Conscious Co-Stewardship* as a replacement for the discovered core problem paradigm at the root of the events of this case: the assumption of "*unconscious abdication*" buried within the concept of "*passive investing*".
(Meadows, D. H. (1999). *Leverage Points: Places to Intervene in a System.* The Sustainability Institute.)

The Strategic Thought Leadership research ran parallel with this case demonstrated both the prevalence of the passive investing model and that what is usually meant by the term is actually unconsciously abdicating to agents, which creates a dark space within which bad actors can thrive. Further, it also discovered the deeper assumption within unconscious abdication that "you must hurt people in order to make more money", which runs counter to the well=accepted "better service = more profits" paradigm in most services businesses but is allowed to fester in housing due to the perceptual distortions of the human need for shelter, the high cost of switching

providers, the difficulty in getting visible feedback that would demonstrate tenant-centered service as opposed to tenant exploitation in property management, and the opacity of tenant housing ownership that is prevalent and demonstrated in this case.

The conscious co-stewardship model, by contrast, unifies investor, manager, and tenant under a shared values and belief system around reverence for the shelter life stories play out in. And a highly regarded study from the UK funded and sponsored by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), *A Systematic Approach to Service Improvement: Evaluating Systems Thinking in Housing*, which used a Systems Thinking approached called the Vanguard Method developed by an acquaintance and mentor of McNeil, John Seddon. The study demonstrated that by shifting from 'Command and Control' to systems thinking, organizations achieved a 'triple win': better experience, lower costs, and higher financial performance.

The study in the UK demonstrated that by shifting from "Command and Control" (targets and bureaucracy) to "Systems Thinking" (designing work around tenant demand), organizations achieved a "triple win": better experience, lower costs, and higher financial performance.

B. Why No Counsel at this Stage

Petitioners are actively working to onboard experienced and values-aligned counsel as they did not intend to handle this matter pro se this long in a case this complex. The delays and procedural dysfunction documented herein - compounded by the severe PTSD directly caused by defense conduct during those delays - have made that transition both more urgent and more difficult because of the institutional betrayal experienced through the documented behavior of Phelps Dunbar and Resnick & Louis defense attorneys. Petitioners are currently actively working

towards retaining appropriate counsel with a more robust due-diligence process than initially anticipated, which simply takes more time.

This background is relevant because, since the MVM Method demonstrates that a system's resilience can be measured by how it performs for its most vulnerable members, this Court's intervention will strengthen the public's confidence in the Ninth Circuit's administration of justice.

As a systems consultant who studies institutional performance for a living, Petitioner McNeil recognizes that the pattern documented herein reflects structural dynamics of a selective-action pattern visible on the court's own docket - five days for a defense housekeeping motion, 166 days for an unopposed motion to amend - is the kind of systemic signal that, left unaddressed, erodes institutional credibility. This Petition asks the Court to address it - quickly, cleanly, and in a way that strengthens the integrity and credibility of the court by reinforcing the principle that all litigants, regardless of representation status, receive equal access to the court's ministerial functions.

IV. STATEMENT OF FACTS

A. The Underlying Action

On or about August 2025, Petitioners commenced this action against SAC 181, LLC, Meridian Residential Group, LLC, Adam W. Bayles, Tara Bayles, and MRG Investing Company LLC, alleging violations of the South Carolina Residential Landlord and Tenant Act (S.C. Code Ann. § 27-40-410 et seq.), fraudulent misrepresentation involving falsified federal postal documentation,

invasion of privacy, retaliatory eviction, breach of habitability, corporate veil-piercing, and related claims. The Amended Complaint was filed September 15, 2025.

B. The Motion for Leave -166+ Days Without Ruling

On October 24, 2025, Petitioners filed a Motion for Leave to File the Second Amended Complaint ("Second Amended Complaint"). The proposed Second Amended Complaint adds Charles S. Altman as an individual defendant -the Registered Agent and beneficial owner-principal of defendant SAC 181, LLC - and adds counts for invasion of privacy related to the mass distribution of Petitioners' images and personal property on public websites without consent. These images were discovered by Plaintiffs on or around September 18, 2025 – after the filing of the Amended Complaint.

Charles S. Altman has been engaged with this case since its inception as Registered Agent of SAC 181, LLC. He is a prominent member of the Charleston legal and real estate community, as is his nephew Jonathan S. Altman, who serves on Mayor William Cogswell's Homeownership Initiative Commission - a fact that creates documented conflicts of interest relevant to the pattern of judicial inaction described herein.

As of the date of this Petition, 166 days have elapsed since the Motion for Leave was filed. No hearing has been set. No order has been entered. The motion sits on the docket in the same procedural posture as the day it was filed.

A comparative analysis of all motions for leave to amend filed in the Ninth Circuit Court of Common Pleas since 2023 confirms that Petitioners' experience is an extreme statistical outlier.

Of eleven granted motions in the dataset, the median time to ruling is 39 days. Forty-five percent were granted in three days or less. The longest took 128 days. Petitioners' unopposed motion has been pending 166 days - 4.3 times the median and the only unopposed motion in the dataset still unruled beyond 60 days. *[Exhibit L. Comparative Analysis of Motions for Leave to Amend, Ninth Circuit Court of Common Pleas]*

Under SCRCP Rule 15(a), leave to amend "shall be freely given when justice so requires." The standard is liberal, and denial is the exception requiring specific findings of prejudice, bad faith, or futility. None of those conditions exist here; no opposition to the Motion for Leave has been filed by any defendant. The circuit court's 166-day failure to rule on an unopposed, presumptively grantable motion is unreasonable by any measure.

C. The ADA Accommodations Motion -68+ Days Without Ruling

On January 30, 2026, Petitioner McNeil filed a Supplemental ADA Accommodations Motion documenting his diagnosed severe PTSD (PCL-5 score of 76 out of 80 -classified as "extreme" on a validated clinical instrument), requesting accommodations including virtual/remote hearing attendance and electronic filing access. The motion was supported by clinical documentation and detailed the causal chain from defense counsel's documented abusive conduct through Petitioner's nervous breakdown to the current disability.

On February 9, 2026, Chief Administrative Judge Dale E. Van Slambrook convened a status conference in this case, at which he identified the ADA Motion as a priority matter. Despite this judicial prioritization, 68 days have now passed without any ruling, order, or response from the circuit court.

During the same period, defense counsel Alicia Bolyard's informal email request for WebEx access to the April 3, 2026 hearing was accommodated within 3 days by court staff -on the same email thread in which court administrator Beth Atkins had characterized Petitioners' safety filing as "ex parte" and "not allowed," despite all parties and counsel being copied.

D. The Two Continuances Under False Pretenses

1. **The December 19, 2025 Continuanc**e. A hearing originally scheduled before Judge Rode for December 19, 2025, was continued by Judge McCoy based on defense counsel's fabricated representation of Plaintiffs' consent. This continuance directly enabled three additional months of defense obstruction -including the coordinated discovery abuse, systematic psychological manipulation documented in defense counsel communications (Exhibits F and K to the November 10, 2025 Motion to Compel), witness tampering, and intimidation tactics documented extensively in the record - that produced Petitioner McNeil's documented nervous breakdown.
2. **The April 3, 2026 Continuance**. On March 26, 2026 - six days after Petitioners filed a comprehensive Brief in Aid of Safety Risk Mitigation and Judicial Clarity detailing catastrophic exposure models, attorney exodus from the defense, and escalating safety risks -Judge McCoy issued a letter continuing the April 3, 2026 hearing indefinitely. The stated justification was the need for Chief Administrative Judge Van Slambrook to intervene on an "administrative assignment question."

This stated justification is demonstrably false. Chief Administrative Judge Van Slambrook's own April 2, 2026 Order (Judgment Form 4) establishes that:

a) The February 9, 2026 status conference already resolved the assignment question;

b) Complex case designation was denied; and

c) All motions "shall be placed on Court rosters pursuant to normal scheduling procedures." The Chief Administrative Judge's April 2 Order confirms that the predicate for McCoy's indefinite continuance -an unresolved administrative assignment question -was already resolved two months earlier at the February 9 conference that Van Slambrook himself presided over. The continuance rests on no valid procedural foundation.

E. The Selective-Action Pattern – (See Exhibit L)

The following table, derived from the official court docket, demonstrates the selective responsiveness that renders ordinary remedies unavailable to Petitioners:

Motion	Filed By	Begin Date	Completed	Days
Motion to Relieve Justine Tate	Defense (SAC 181)	04/02/2026	04/07/2026	5 days
ADA Accommodations (Supp.)	McNeil	01/30/2026	- unruled -	68+ days
Motion for Leave to File Second Amended Complaint	McNeil	10/24/2025	- unruled -	166+ days
Case Age Total	System-wide			211 days

A housekeeping motion for a departing defense attorney receives a ruling in 5 days - the same week the ADA Motion crosses its 68th day without response and the Motion for Leave reaches 166 days. This selective-action pattern is consistent with the administrative gatekeeping

documented in the Atkins/court staff email thread, now codified on the official court docket itself.

At the time of writing this Petition, there are no Motions by Plaintiffs that have been ruled on. The Motion/Expedited Hearing on Motion/Disqualify Counsel and Motion to Disqualify Counsel show “Completion Dates” reflecting the Notice of Moot motions plaintiffs filed on December 3, 2025 to assist the court with docket management. They were rendered moot when original defense attorney Eric Pettis left the case. The court as a system processes defense motions with dispatch while Petitioners' motions languish across multiple judges' desks. *[Exhibit L, Comparative Analysis of Motions for Leave to File Amended Complaint, Ninth Circuit Court of Common Pleas]*

F. Documented Harm to Petitioners

The circuit court's inaction has produced concrete, escalating harm:

1. Petitioner McNeil suffered a **documented nervous breakdown** directly caused by the defense abuse enabled by the first McCoy continuance, resulting in a PCL-5 PTSD score of 76/80 ("extreme/severe"), documented in the January 28 and January 30, 2026 filings.
2. Petitioner Poyer has filed a **sworn Affidavit** (Exhibit E to the January 30, 2026 filing) detailing the **high personal cost of defense lawfare on the family**.
3. The **continued delay** in granting leave for the Second Amended Complaint **permits the proposed individual defendant Charles S. Altman to continue repositioning assets -**as evidenced by his January 12, 2026 payoff of a mortgage less than 10 years old on his personal residence, occurring after the Second Amended Complaint naming him individually was filed but before it was granted - increasing the risk that any eventual judgment will be uncollectible.

4. The **ADA violations force a traumatized pro se litigant to navigate a hostile procedural environment** without the accommodations that federal and state law mandate, compounding the documented psychological injury.

G. The Public Interest Dimension

This case carries significant public interest implications that independently warrant this Court's exercise of original jurisdiction:

1. **Housing Justice Systemic Implications**. The underlying action exposes systemic patterns in Charleston's housing ecosystem documented in the Housing Justice Audit (published at housingjusticeaudit.com/report), including what the Audit identifies as the "Ask-Harm Loop" - a systems dynamic in which vulnerable tenants' requests for legally mandated protections trigger retaliatory harm rather than compliance.
2. **Conflicts of Interest Affecting Public Programs.** Jonathan S. Altman, nephew of proposed defendant Charles S. Altman and financial beneficiary of defendant SAC 181, LLC , has served as a long-standing member of the Homeownership Initiative Commission since 2007. While his service predates the current administration, he remains a key figure on the commission currently advising Mayor William Cogswell, who is focused on the '**Project 3500**' affordable housing initiative. This deeply entrenched role within the city's housing policy framework creates significant public interest in a case alleging tenant exploitation and asset repositioning by the Altman family.
3. **Access to Justice for the Vulnerable**. The documented pattern of selective judicial administration - instant accommodation for represented defense parties, indefinite silence accompanied by obstruction for pro se plaintiffs with documented disabilities - raises

systemic concerns about equal access to justice in the Ninth Circuit that extend beyond this individual case. This supports the integrity and credibility of the court because, as the Housing Justice Audit notes, a measure of resilience is how well a system performs for its most vulnerable member.\

4. **Documented Systemic Bias Against Unrepresented Litigants**. The pattern of selective judicial administration documented in this case is systemic. Peer-reviewed research establishes that pro se status itself generates measurable bias in judicial and legal decision-making. *[Exhibit L, Comparative Analysis of Motions for Leave to Amend, Ninth Circuit Court of Common Pleas]*

H. System Behavior Findings

Petitioner McNeil's unusual dual position - a professional systems analyst operating within the system as a pro se litigant - creates a natural experiment that isolates the variable of pro se status from the variable of litigation skill. In most cases, it is impossible to determine whether adverse outcomes for unrepresented parties result from inferior filings or from status-based bias. This case removes that ambiguity.

An inference can be drawn from SAC 181, LLC's counsel's November 10, 2025 Motion for Case Management Order Regarding the Use of AI that Petitioner's filings were too sophisticated to have been produced by a pro se litigant without artificial intelligence assistance. This interpretation of that motion - whatever its tactical purpose - constitutes an admission that the quality of Petitioner's work product is at or above the standard of represented counsel. Defense counsel's own filing holds litigation quality constant.

The chronological impossibility of defense counsel's theory merits emphasis. On September 30, 2021- thirteen months before the public launch of ChatGPT (November 30, 2022) and eighteen

months before Claude (March 2023) - Petitioner McNeil filed a substantive Opposition to Motion for Protective Order in Case No. 2021-CP-10-02237, Charleston County Court of Common Pleas. That case was brought against, among other corporate defendants, SAC 181, LLC - the same entity now represented by the counsel who filed the AI motion. The 2021 filing demonstrates the analytical approach, values-based reframing, and systemic argumentation visible in Petitioner's current filings. It remains a public record on the same court's docket. Defense counsel's failure to conduct even a basic docket search of their own client's litigation history before filing a speculative AI motion - a search that would have immediately disproven the premise of the motion - underscores both the frivolous nature of the motion and its utility as an inadvertent control variable in the natural experiment described above.

This is relevant because, with quality held constant, the selective-action pattern documented in Section IV.E isolates the remaining variable. If Petitioner's filings meet or exceed the standard of represented parties - as defense counsel's own motion concedes - then the 33:1 processing disparity (5 days for a defense motion, 166 days for Petitioner's unopposed motion to amend) cannot be explained by filing quality. It can only be explained by the signaling effect of pro se status itself - the precise bias mechanism identified in peer-reviewed research. See Quintanilla & Cain, 42 Law & Soc. Inquiry 1554 (2017).

This Petition functions, in part, as an information flow intervention: it makes visible, through the court's own docket data, a pattern that may otherwise remain invisible to the institution experiencing it. When the Ninth Circuit's docket shows a 5-day turnaround for defense counsel and a 166-day non-response for pro se plaintiffs, the system is producing a signal about its own health that merits this Court's supervisory attention.

The pro se litigant - the unrepresented tenant asserting statutory rights against represented corporate interests - is the most vulnerable member of the judicial system. That member has experienced, in this case, what research confirms is a systemic pattern: the harder the pro se litigant pushes for the system to perform its basic functions (rule on motions, grant mandated accommodations, schedule hearings), the more the system resists. This dynamic - which this case and the Housing Justice Audit have documented as the "Ask→Harm Loop" - is precisely the kind of institutional brittleness that mandamus exists to correct.

A resilient judicial system performs its ministerial functions regardless of litigant status. A brittle system requires Supreme Court intervention to compel that performance. The circuit court's docket demonstrates which type of system Petitioners are navigating. This Court's intervention converts the brittle response into a resilient one.

This finding is relevant not only to this case but to this Court's supervisory interest in the administration of justice across the Ninth Circuit. If a pro se litigant producing represented-quality work product still experiences a 33:1 processing disparity, the systemic implications for less-skilled unrepresented litigants - the single mothers, the elderly tenants, the disabled individuals who cannot produce sophisticated filings - are profound. The disparity this Petition documents is the floor, not the ceiling, of the access-to-justice problem in the circuit court.

I. Institutional Courage Within the System

Petitioners note that Chief Administrative Judge Van Slambrook's February 9, 2026 status conference and April 2, 2026 Order represent meaningful exercises of supervisory authority. Judge Van Slambrook identified the ADA Motion as a priority matter and directed that all motions be placed on court rosters pursuant to normal scheduling procedures. These actions reflect institutional responsiveness and are acknowledged with respect. The concern that

necessitates this Petition is that the circuit court as an institution has not yet followed through on these directives - the ADA Motion remains unruled 68 days after the Chief Administrative Judge identified it as a priority, and no motions have been scheduled despite the April 2 Order. This Court's intervention is sought to give effect to directives the Chief Administrative Judge has already issued but which the institution has not yet executed.

V. THE FOUR MANDAMUS ELEMENTS ARE SATISFIED

Under South Carolina law, a writ of mandamus requires: "(1) a duty to perform the act; (2) the ministerial nature of the act; (3) the petitioner's specific legal right for which discharge of the duty is necessary; and (4) a lack of any other legal remedy." HHHunt Corp. v. Town of Lexington, 389 S.C. 623, 640, 699 S.E.2d 699, 707 (2010), citing Sanford v. S.C. State Ethics Comm'n, 385 S.C. 483, 494, 685 S.E.2d 600, 606 (2009). See also Redmond v. Lexington Cty. Sch. Dist. No. Four, 314 S.C. 431, 445 S.E.2d 441 (1994).

A. Element One: Duty to Perform

1. **Duty to Rule on Pending Motions.** Circuit court judges have a clear legal duty to rule on properly filed motions within a reasonable time. A motion filed, served, and pending before a court imposes a corresponding judicial duty to act. The Motion for Leave has been pending 166 days; the ADA Motion 68 days. No scheduling order, no hearing date, no order of any kind has issued on either. The duty to act is clear and has been persistently ignored.
2. **Duty to Grant Leave Freely.** Under SCRCP Rule 15(a), leave to amend "shall be freely given when justice so requires." Where no opposition has been filed, no prejudice demonstrated, and no basis for denial articulated, the circuit court's duty

to grant leave approaches the ministerial. The 166-day silence on an unopposed motion to amend is an unreasonable refusal to discharge this duty.

3. **Duty to Provide ADA Accommodations**. Under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. § 12132, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, state courts must provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities. The duty is non-discretionary once a qualifying disability and reasonable accommodation request are established -both of which are documented in the record. The 68-day failure to act on a supported ADA request, while granting defense counsel's identical informal request within hours, violates both the statutory mandate and Equal Protection principles.
4. **Duty to Schedule Motions for Hearing.** Chief Administrative Judge Van Slambrook's April 2, 2026 Order directs that all motions in this case "shall be placed on Court rosters pursuant to normal scheduling procedures." This is a direct administrative directive from the supervising judge that the circuit court has a duty to follow. The indefinite continuance issued six days earlier, premised on the very assignment question Van Slambrook's Order resolved, contravenes this directive.

B. Element Two: Ministerial Nature of the Acts

Each requested act is ministerial - requiring no exercise of judicial discretion or weighing of competing interests:

1. **Granting an unopposed motion for leave to amend**, where SCRCP 15(a) mandates liberal grant and no party has identified prejudice, futility, or bad faith, is ministerial in character. The rule prescribes the result; the judge merely executes.

2. **Ruling on an ADA accommodations request** supported by clinical documentation is ministerial. The ADA imposes a non-discretionary duty; the court's only function is to determine whether the accommodation is reasonable -a determination that does not require 68 days of silence, particularly when the identical accommodation has already been informally granted to opposing counsel.
3. **Scheduling motions for hearing pursuant to the Chief Administrative Judge's express directive** is ministerial. Van Slambrook's April 2, 2026 Order removes any discretionary predicate; the scheduling is commanded.

C. Element Three: Petitioners' Specific Legal Rights

1. **Right to Amend.** SCRCP Rule 15(a) grants litigants a specific legal right to seek leave to amend, with a strong presumption of grant. Petitioners have a particularized right to add Charles S. Altman, whose role as beneficial owner and Registered Agent of SAC 181, LLC is central to the veil-piercing and fraud claims, and to add image-distribution counts addressing the invasion of privacy that is a core wrong in this case.
2. **Right to ADA Accommodation.** Petitioners have a specific legal right under 42 U.S.C. § 12132 and 28 C.F.R. § 35.130 to reasonable accommodation in state court proceedings. The failure to act on the ADA request directly impairs Petitioner McNeil's ability to participate in the litigation of his own case.
3. **Right to Access the Court.** The Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and Article I, Section 3 of the South Carolina Constitution guarantee litigants meaningful access to the courts. The circuit court's indefinite refusal to rule on motions, coupled with continuances based on demonstrably false

predicates, effectively denies Petitioners the access to which they are constitutionally entitled.

4. **Right to Timely Adjudication.** Petitioners' documented severe PTSD, the ongoing risk of asset dissipation by proposed defendant Charles S. Altman, and the escalating safety concerns documented in the March 20, 2026 Safety Brief all create a particularized right to timely adjudication that the circuit court's inaction directly impairs.

D. Element Four: Lack of Any Other Legal Remedy

This element is dispositive. The selective-action pattern documented in Section IV.E demonstrates that the ordinary remedy - filing a motion and awaiting a ruling - is functionally unavailable to these Petitioners:

1. Petitioners have filed motions. They sit unruled for 68 to 166 days.
2. Petitioners have filed supplemental briefs, notices, and safety analyses. They are received and ignored.
3. Petitioners have directly petitioned the Chief Administrative Judge. His April 2, 2026 Order confirms the administrative predicate is resolved, yet no scheduling follows.
4. Petitioners have documented the selective-action pattern in court filings. The pattern continues.
5. There is no interlocutory appeal available for a court's failure to act - one cannot appeal a non-ruling.
6. The circuit court's own docket proves that the ordinary motion-to-ruling pipeline works for defense parties (5 days) but not for Petitioners (68-166+ days and counting).

7. Because no single judge is assigned to this case, Petitioners cannot seek recusal or reassignment as a remedy - the dysfunction is systemic across the rotating bench. The only authority with supervisory power over the Ninth Circuit Court of Common Pleas as an institution is this Court.

Petitioners have done everything the system permits a litigant to do. The system has not responded. The only remaining remedy is this Court's supervisory mandamus authority.

VI. SPECIFIC RELIEF REQUESTED

Petitioners respectfully request that this Court issue a Writ of Mandamus directed to the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court of Common Pleas, Charleston County, and any judge thereof to whom the below matters are or may be assigned:

A. **Order Rule on the Motion for Leave to File the Second Amended Complaint; or, in the alternative**, in the exercise of this Court's supervisory power and in light of the 166+ day unopposed delay, **deem the Second Amended Complaint granted** to prevent further erosion of the Plaintiffs' right to a remedy.

Ordering a ruling on or granting Petitioners' Motion for Leave to File the Second Amended Complaint, filed October 24, 2025, adds Charles S. Altman as an individual defendant and adds image-distribution invasion-of-privacy counts. The Motion is unopposed. SCRCP Rule 15(a) mandates liberal grant. The 166-day delay is unreasonable and prejudicial. The Second Amended Complaint shall supersede the Amended Complaint filed September 15, 2025, upon entry of this Order.

B. Order Shortening the Answer Period for the Second Amended Complaint to Fifteen (15) Days

Direct that Charles S. Altman and all defendants shall have fifteen (15) days from the date of service of the Second Amended Complaint (or the day before any next-scheduled hearing, whichever is earlier) to answer or otherwise respond to the Second Amended Complaint. This shortened period is warranted because:

1. **Charles S. Altman has been engaged with this litigation since its inception** as Registered Agent of SAC 181, LLC and is fully aware of the claims, having received all filings through counsel;
2. The proposed **Second Amended Complaint has been publicly available on the docket since October 24, 2025** -over five months -providing ample constructive notice;
3. Every additional day of delay extends Petitioners' **exposure to documented high-risk conditions**, including severe PTSD already at 76/80 on the PCL-5; and
4. **Evidence of asset repositioning** by Charles S. Altman (January 12, 2026 payoff of a mortgage less than 10 years old) creates urgency to bring all parties before the court.

C. Order Granting the ADA Accommodations Requested in the January 30, 2026 Filing

Direct the circuit court to immediately rule on and grant the ADA accommodations requested in the January 30, 2026 Supplemental ADA Accommodations Motion, including virtual/remote hearing access and electronic filing privileges. The accommodations are clinically supported, legally mandated, and have already been informally granted to defense counsel -making continued denial to Petitioners both discriminatory and indefensible.

D. Direct the Circuit Court to Schedule All Pending Motions Pursuant to Normal Scheduling Procedures

Direct the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court of Common Pleas to comply with Chief Administrative Judge Van Slambrook's April 2, 2026 Order by placing all pending motions on court rosters pursuant to normal scheduling procedures within fourteen (14) days of this Court's Order, and to conduct the hearing within thirty (30) days thereafter - regardless of which judge of the circuit the motions appear before.

The Chief Administrative Judge's April 2 Order establishing that all motions "shall be placed on Court rosters pursuant to normal scheduling procedures" -combined with an indefinite continuance granted six days earlier citing an "administrative assignment question" already resolved at the February 9 conference - demonstrates that the continuance rests on no valid procedural predicate, and that the circuit court's inaction on pending motions constitutes an unreasonable refusal to perform a clearly established ministerial duty.

E. Preserve Asset Discovery and Equitable Relief

To the extent this Court deems it appropriate and within the scope of mandamus relief, Petitioners request that this Court note for the record the documented evidence of asset repositioning by the Altman principals -including the January 12, 2026 payoff by Charles S. Altman of a mortgage less than ten years old, the documented $350,000 probate valuation discrepancy concerning the SAC 181, LLC property (detailed in the December 3, 2025 Memorandum and December 11, 2025 Supplemental Memorandum filed in the underlying action), and the veil-piercing, unclean hands, and estoppel doctrines raised therein -and direct the circuit court, upon resumption of normal proceedings, to give priority consideration to

Petitioners' requests for asset preservation and discovery into Altman-affiliated entities to prevent dissipation of assets that may be necessary to satisfy any judgment.

VII. CONCLUSION

This Petition presents a textbook case for mandamus relief. Motions involving clearly established ministerial duties have sat unruled for periods that are unreasonable by any standard. The circuit court's institutional selective responsiveness is documented on its own docket: 5 days for a defense housekeeping motion; 166 days and counting for Petitioners' presumptively grantable motion to amend.

But this Petition is offered in the spirit of service to the institution, not criticism of it. Petitioners share this Court's commitment to equal justice and believe that the pattern documented herein - however it arose - represents an institutional signal that warrants correction. The correction is straightforward: compel the ministerial acts the circuit court is obligated to perform, and confirm by doing so that the courthouse door opens equally for all litigants - represented and unrepresented alike.

As peer-reviewed research confirms, the unrepresented litigant faces measurable, documented bias at every stage of civil litigation - not because of case quality, but because of status signaling inherent in the pro se label itself. See Quintanilla & Cain, 42 Law & Soc. Inquiry 1554 (2017). When that documented bias intersects with a representation disparity that produces a 33% error rate in housing courts nationwide - and when this Court's own docket reflects a 33:1 ratio in processing speed between defense and pro se motions - the case for supervisory intervention is compelling.

While Petitioners are actively transitioning to represented status, in the interim they ask this Court to ensure that the circuit court's ministerial functions operate with the same dispatch for all

parties. The relief requested is modest, ministerial, and directly within this Court's well-established supervisory authority.

Justice delayed is justice denied. For Petitioners - one of whom carries a clinically documented severe PTSD score inflicted by the very litigation conditions this court's inaction perpetuates — each additional day of delay compounds concrete harm. The circuit court's persistent and unreasonable refusal to perform its ministerial duties warrants this Court's intervention. Petitioners respectfully request that this Court grant the Writ of Mandamus and order the relief described herein.

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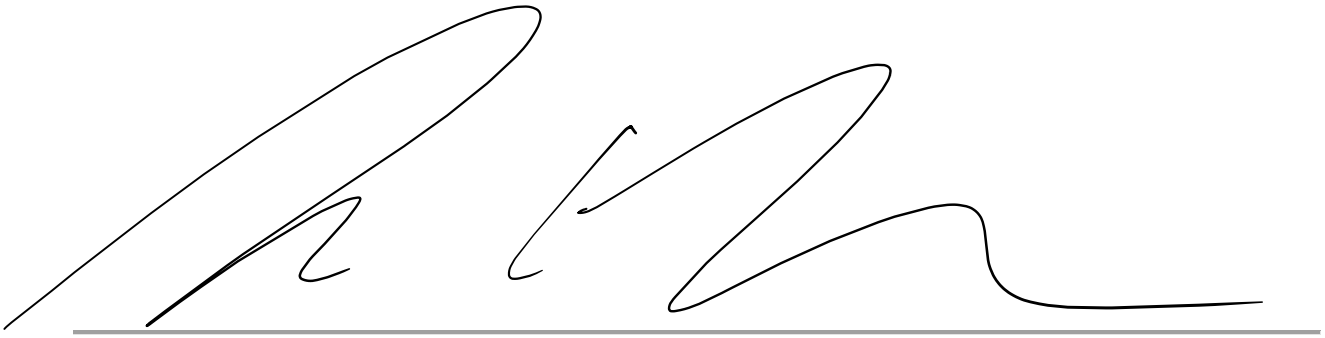
VERIFICATION

We, James C. ("Chris") McNeil, and Meaghan Poyer, verify under penalty of perjury that the facts stated in this Petition are true and correct to the best of our knowledge, information, and belief.

Respectfully submitted this 8th day of April, 2026,



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