

**UNPUBLISHED**

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE FOURTH CIRCUIT

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**No. 17-6945**

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THOMAS L. HICKS,

Petitioner - Appellant,

v.

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS, Director,

Respondent - Appellee.

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Appeal from the United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia, at  
Roanoke. Glen E. Conrad, District Judge. (7:16-cv-00384-GEC-RSB)

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Submitted: November 16, 2017

Decided: November 21, 2017

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Before GREGORY, Chief Judge, and TRAXLER and KEENAN, Circuit Judges.

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Dismissed by unpublished per curiam opinion.

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Thomas L. Hicks, Appellant Pro Se. Victoria Lee Johnson, OFFICE OF THE  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF VIRGINIA, Richmond, Virginia, for Appellee.

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Unpublished opinions are not binding precedent in this circuit.

PER CURIAM:

Thomas L. Hicks seeks to appeal the district court's order denying relief on his 28 U.S.C. § 2254 (2012) petition. The order is not appealable unless a circuit justice or judge issues a certificate of appealability. 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c)(1)(A) (2012). A certificate of appealability will not issue absent "a substantial showing of the denial of a constitutional right." 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c)(2) (2012). When the district court denies relief on the merits, a prisoner satisfies this standard by demonstrating that reasonable jurists would find that the district court's assessment of the constitutional claims is debatable or wrong. *Slack v. McDaniel*, 529 U.S. 473, 484 (2000); see *Miller-El v. Cockrell*, 537 U.S. 322, 336-38 (2003). When the district court denies relief on procedural grounds, the prisoner must demonstrate both that the dispositive procedural ruling is debatable, and that the petition states a debatable claim of the denial of a constitutional right. *Slack*, 529 U.S. at 484-85.

We have independently reviewed the record and conclude that Hicks has not made the requisite showing. Accordingly, we deny a certificate of appealability, deny leave to proceed in forma pauperis, and dismiss the appeal. We dispense with oral argument because the facts and legal contentions are adequately presented in the materials before this court and argument would not aid the decisional process.

*DISMISSED*