

SUPREME COURT OF OHIO

State v. Watkins

99 Ohio St. 3d 12 (Ohio 2003) · Decided May 16, 2003

SUMMARY

The Ohio Supreme Court held that when a defendant charged with a petty misdemeanor traffic offense enters a guilty or no-contest plea, Traf.R. 10(D) requires the court to inform the defendant of the effect of the plea as described in Traf.R. 10(B). The court rejected the argument that the trial court must conduct the more extensive constitutional-rights colloquy required for felony pleas under Crim.R. 11(C) and affirmed the judgment.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Supreme Court of Ohio
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Pfeifer, J.; Moyer, C.J.; Whitmore, J.; F.E. Sweeney, J.; Boggins, J.; Lundberg Stratton, J.; O'Connor, J.; Resnick, J.; Cook, J.
JURISDICTION	Ohio
DECIDED	May 16, 2003
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Watkins appealed his conviction for operating a vehicle under the influence of alcohol after the trial court accepted his no-contest plea without conducting the felony-style colloquy required by Crim.R. 11(C). The Supreme Court of Ohio accepted a certified conflict concerning the requirements for accepting a guilty or no-contest plea to a petty traffic offense.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court reviewed the legal interpretation of Traf.R. 10(D) and Crim.R. 11(E) de novo.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published Ohio Supreme Court opinion; precedential.
PARTIES	Scott V. Watkins v. State of Ohio

TOPICS

- criminal procedure
- statutory interpretation
- plain meaning rule

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether a trial court accepting a guilty or no-contest plea to a petty misdemeanor traffic offense must conduct a colloquy substantially equivalent to the felony colloquy required by Crim.R. 11(C).
2. Whether informing the defendant of the information concerning the effect of the plea contained in Traf.R. 10(B) satisfies Traf.R. 10(D).

HOLDINGS

1. When a defendant charged with a petty misdemeanor traffic offense pleads guilty or no contest, the trial court complies with Traf.R. 10(D) by informing the defendant of the information contained in Traf.R. 10(B); the court is not required to conduct the expanded rights colloquy required by Crim.R. 11(C) in felony cases.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Accordingly, we find that where a defendant charged with a petty misdemeanor traffic offense pleads guilty or no contest, the trial court complies with Traf.R. 10(D) by informing the defendant of the information contained in Traf.R. 10(B).” (at 17)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Scott V. Watkins was arrested for operating a vehicle under the influence of alcohol and was prosecuted as a second offender based on a 1994 DUI conviction. At a Fairborn Municipal Court hearing, his counsel entered a no-contest plea on his behalf, and the judge explained that the plea was not an admission of guilt but did not contest the facts alleged in the complaint. The court accepted the plea, found Watkins guilty, and sentenced him to 60 days' incarceration, with 50 days suspended.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Watkins was arrested and charged under R.C. 4511.19(A)(1), entered a no-contest plea in Fairborn Municipal Court, and was convicted and sentenced as a second offender. The appellate court affirmed, holding that Traf.R. 10(D), rather than Crim.R. 11(C), governed and that the trial court complied with the applicable rule. The appellate court certified a conflict, and the Supreme Court of Ohio agreed that a conflict existed before affirming.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Toledo v. Chiaverini, 11 Ohio App. 3d 43, 11 OBR 76, 463 N.E.2d 56 (1983)
- State v. Ballard, 66 Ohio St. 2d 473, 478, 20 O.O.3d 397, 423 N.E.2d 115 (1981)

