

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT

Stoltie v. Tilton

Stoltie · No. 07-56079 · Decided August 18, 2008

SUMMARY

The United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit affirmed the district court’s decision in a habeas corpus case involving a confusing jury instruction on reasonable doubt. The court held that the state appellate court unreasonably applied clearly established Supreme Court law and adopted the district court’s opinion except for Section III.C.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Per Curiam; Stephen Reinhardt, Circuit Judge; Roger J. Miner, Senior Circuit Judge, sitting by designation; Marsha S. Berzon, Circuit Judge
JURISDICTION	Federal
DECIDED	August 18, 2008
DOCKET	07-56079
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The respondent appealed the United States District Court for the Central District of California's decision granting habeas corpus relief to the petitioner.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Federal habeas review under the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, including whether the state court unreasonably applied clearly established Supreme Court law.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published precedential opinion
PARTIES	James E. Tilton, Secretary of the Department of Corrections v. Brian Joseph Stoltie

TOPICS

- federal habeas corpus
- reasonable doubt
- due process
- criminal procedure
- post-conviction relief

PRACTICE AREAS

- federal habeas corpus
- criminal procedure
- constitutional law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the state appellate court unreasonably applied clearly established Supreme Court law governing the reasonable-doubt standard.
2. Whether the district court's grant of federal habeas relief should be affirmed.

HOLDINGS

1. The state appellate court unreasonably applied clearly established Supreme Court law regarding reasonable doubt because it misunderstood the trial judge's confused and confusing explanation of that standard.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"We AFFIRM the district court's decision, and adopt its opinion in Stoltie v. California, reported at 501 F. Supp. 2d 1252 (C.D. Cal. 2007), except for Section III.C., as to which we express no view." (11026)

"This error led it to apply in an unreasonable manner clearly established Supreme Court law regarding reasonable doubt." (11026)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

At the petitioner's criminal trial, the trial judge gave the jury a confused and confusing explanation of the reasonable-doubt standard. The state appellate court misunderstood that explanation and consequently applied an unreasonable manner of review to clearly established Supreme Court law concerning reasonable doubt.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The district court granted relief in a state prisoner's federal habeas proceeding. The Ninth Circuit affirmed and adopted the district court's opinion, *Stoltie v. California*, 501 F. Supp. 2d 1252 (C.D. Cal. 2007), except for Section III.C., as to which it expressed no view.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- *Stoltie v. California*, 501 F. Supp. 2d 1252 (C.D. Cal. 2007)
- *Sullivan v. Louisiana*, 508 U.S. 275 (1993)
- *Cage v. Louisiana*, 498 U.S. 39 (1990)
- *Estelle v. McGuire*, 502 U.S. 62 (1991)
- *In re Winship*, 397 U.S. 358 (1970)