

SUPREME COURT OF KENTUCKY

St. Clair v. Castlen

381 S.W.3d 306 (Ky. 2012) · Decided October 25, 2012

SUMMARY

The Kentucky Supreme Court denied Michael Dale St. Clair’s petition for a writ of prohibition seeking to prevent retrial on charges following a mistrial. The Court held that St. Clair had an adequate remedy by appeal and therefore declined to address the merits of his double-jeopardy claim.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Supreme Court of Kentucky
WRITING FOR THE COURT	John D. Minton, Jr.
JURISDICTION	Kentucky
DECIDED	October 25, 2012
DISPOSITION	writ_denied
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	St. Clair petitioned the Supreme Court of Kentucky for a writ of prohibition to prevent the Hardin Circuit Court from retrying him after a mistrial. The court denied the petition because he had an adequate remedy by appeal.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	A writ of prohibition is discretionary and is considered conservatively; the petitioner must establish the applicable writ prerequisites, including the absence of an adequate remedy by appeal and, where the lower court acts within its jurisdiction, great injustice and irreparable injury.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	published precedential opinion
PARTIES	Michael Dale St. Clair v. Castlen

TOPICS

double jeopardy

appellate procedure

criminal procedure

appellate jurisdiction

PRACTICE AREAS

criminal procedure

appellate procedure

constitutional law

extraordinary writs

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether a writ of prohibition was available to prevent the Hardin Circuit Court from retrying St. Clair after declaring a mistrial.
2. Whether the existence of an adequate remedy by appeal required denial of the writ without reaching the merits of St. Clair's double-jeopardy claim.

HOLDINGS

1. A writ of prohibition is unavailable when the petitioner has an adequate remedy by appeal and cannot show that denial of the writ will cause great injustice and irreparable injury.
2. The court may decline to address the merits of a double-jeopardy claim in a writ proceeding when an adequate remedy by appeal exists.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“A writ of prohibition is a remarkable remedy and proper only: [U]pon a showing that (1) the lower court is proceeding or is about to proceed outside of its jurisdiction and there is no remedy through an application to an intermediate court; or (2) [] the lower court is acting or is about to act erroneously, although within its jurisdiction, and there exists no adequate remedy by appeal or otherwise and great injustice and irreparable injury will result if the petition is not granted.” (308)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

During St. Clair's second trial, the Hardin Circuit Court declared a mistrial after determining that the Commonwealth had violated a pretrial order by referring in opening statement to St. Clair's alleged prior bad acts. The trial court found manifest necessity for the mistrial but did not find prosecutorial misconduct, and St. Clair sought to prevent retrial on the same criminal charges.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

St. Clair's second trial on charges of capital kidnapping, attempted murder, arson, and receiving stolen property ended when the Hardin Circuit Court declared a mistrial based on a violation of a pretrial order. St. Clair moved to bar retrial on double-jeopardy grounds, but the trial court found manifest necessity for the mistrial and declined to find prosecutorial misconduct. He then sought a writ of prohibition, which the Kentucky Supreme Court denied without reaching the merits of the double-jeopardy claim.

DISPOSITION

writ_denied

CASES CITED

- Bender v. Eaton, 343 S.W.2d 799, 800-02 (Ky. 1961)
- Hoskins v. Maricle, 150 S.W.3d 1, 5, 10, 18 (Ky. 2004)
- St. Clair v. Roark, 10 S.W.3d 482, 485 (Ky. 1999)

