

SUPREME COURT OF WYOMING

Craig v. State

2007 WY 122 (Wyo. 2007) · No. 06-30 · Decided August 2, 2007

SUMMARY

The Supreme Court of Wyoming reviewed Jason Wayne Craig's guilty plea to felony battery against a household member and his sentence based on two prior domestic-violence convictions. The court held that Craig's guilty plea was knowing and voluntary and that he knowingly waived a jury determination concerning whether the prior convictions involved household members. The court affirmed the judgment and sentence.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Supreme Court of Wyoming
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Golden, Justice; Voigt, C.J.; Golden, J.; Hill, J.; Kite, J.; Burke, J.
JURISDICTION	Wyoming
DECIDED	August 2, 2007
DOCKET	06-30
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Craig pleaded guilty pursuant to a plea agreement to one count of felony battery against a household member, reserving the right to challenge whether his prior convictions qualified for felony enhancement. After the district court found that the prior convictions involved household members and sentenced him to 30 to 36 months' imprisonment, Craig appealed, challenging the voluntariness of his guilty plea and the sentencing procedure.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Claims concerning the voluntariness of a guilty plea are reviewed de novo. The court reviewed the change-of-plea hearing as a whole to determine whether the plea was knowing, intelligent, and voluntary.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published Wyoming Supreme Court opinion; precedential
PARTIES	Jason Wayne Craig v. State of Wyoming

TOPICS

- plea bargaining
- sentencing
- sixth amendment
- criminal procedure
- appellate procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

criminal law

criminal procedure

sentencing

constitutional law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the district court violated Craig's Sixth Amendment right to a jury trial by determining that his two prior convictions were assaults against household members for purposes of felony sentence enhancement.
2. Whether Craig entered a knowing and voluntary guilty plea.

HOLDINGS

1. Craig's guilty plea was knowing, intelligent, and voluntary because the district court adequately explained the charge, potential consequences, waived rights, and procedure for determining whether the prior convictions qualified for felony enhancement.
2. The district court's sentencing procedure did not violate Craig's Sixth Amendment right to a jury trial because Craig knowingly and intelligently waived jury determination of the facts concerning his prior convictions and affirmatively agreed that the judge would decide those facts at sentencing.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"A guilty plea will stand where the totality of the circumstances demonstrates that the defendant made a voluntary and intelligent choice to plead guilty from alternative courses of action available to him and understood the consequences of his plea." (¶ 8)

"In the end, Craig affirmatively agreed to bypass the jury and let the judge be the fact-finder." (¶ 15)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

On February 15, 2005, Craig struck his wife repeatedly, hit her with a broom handle, and kicked her after she fell. She suffered a cut lip and bruising, and reported an earlier assault involving a wooden mallet. Craig had two prior battery convictions that the State alleged involved household members, and the district court later found those convictions qualified for felony enhancement.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The State charged Craig with two felony counts of battery against a household member based on separate incidents and alleged two prior qualifying convictions. Under a plea agreement, Craig pleaded guilty to Count II in exchange for dismissal of Count I, with sentencing capped at three years if the State proved the prior convictions qualified for enhancement. The district court accepted the plea, later found the prior offenses involved household members, and imposed a 30-to-36-month sentence. The Wyoming Supreme Court affirmed.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Maes v. State, 2005 WY 70, ¶ 9, 114 P.3d 708, 710 (Wyo. 2005)
- Van Haele v. State, 2004 WY 59, ¶ 12, 90 P.3d 708, 711 (Wyo. 2004)
- Reyna v. State, 2001 WY 105, ¶ 9, 33 P.3d 1129, 1132 (Wyo. 2001)
- McCarty v. State, 883 P.2d 367, 372 (Wyo. 1994)
- Apprendi v. New Jersey, 530 U.S. 466, 120 S. Ct. 2348, 147 L. Ed. 2d 435 (2000)
- Blakely v. Washington, 542 U.S. 296, 310, 124 S. Ct. 2531, 2541, 159 L. Ed. 2d 403 (2004)
- Van Riper v. State, 882 P.2d 230, 236 (Wyo. 1994)

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