

COURT OF CRIMINAL APPEALS OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA

Sorrell v. State

2026 OK CR 16 (Court of Criminal Appeals of the State of Oklahoma 2026) · No. F-2025-17 · Decided April 30, 2026

SUMMARY

The Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals affirmed Lonnie Keith Sorrell's convictions for three counts of lewd or indecent acts with a child under twelve. The court held that testimony supporting the victim's credibility was improperly admitted as preemptive bolstering because the victim's credibility had not yet been attacked by evidence, but concluded the error did not affect Sorrell's substantial rights. The court also rejected his challenge to consecutive sentences and found no abuse of discretion.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Court of Criminal Appeals of the State of Oklahoma
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Lumpkin, Presiding Judge; Musseman, Vice Presiding Judge; Lewis, Judge; Hudson, Judge; Rowland, Judge
JURISDICTION	Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals
DECIDED	April 30, 2026
DOCKET	F-2025-17
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Sorrell appealed his jury convictions and sentences from the District Court of McClain County, challenging alleged prosecutorial bolstering and the consecutive nature of two sentences.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Prosecutorial-misconduct claims are reviewed in the context of the entire trial, considering the prosecutor's conduct, the strength of the evidence, and the arguments of defense counsel. A claim that the trial court abused its discretion in ordering sentences to run consecutively is reviewed for abuse of discretion.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published precedential opinion of the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals
PARTIES	Lonnie Keith Sorrell v. The State of Oklahoma

TOPICS

criminal procedure

prosecutorial misconduct

evidence

sentencing

appellate procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

criminal procedure

evidence

sentencing

appellate procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the prosecutor improperly bolstered the credibility of the complaining witness by eliciting opinion testimony about her truthfulness before her credibility had been attacked by evidence.
2. Whether the trial court abused its discretion by ordering the sentences on Counts 1 and 2 to run consecutively based on the jury's notation of "minimum" on the verdict forms.

HOLDINGS

1. Testimony from the school counselor and great-grandmother that supported WB's credibility constituted improper bolstering because WB's character for truthfulness had not been attacked by evidence before the testimony was introduced.
2. The improper bolstering did not affect Sorrell's substantial rights and therefore did not warrant relief.
3. The trial court did not abuse its discretion by ordering the sentences on Counts 1 and 2 to run consecutively.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"Statements by the attorneys are not evidence . . ." (§10)

"The jury received no instruction regarding the running of sentences. Thus, the jury could not have intended something it knew nothing about." (§16)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Sorrell was convicted of three counts of lewd or indecent acts with a child under twelve involving WB, his young granddaughter. Before WB testified, a school counselor and WB's great-grandmother gave testimony indicating that WB was truthful concerning the abuse allegations, and the defense argued that this testimony improperly bolstered WB's credibility. The evidence also included consistent accounts WB gave to other witnesses, testimony concerning possible motivation to fabricate, and evidence that Sorrell attempted suicide after being confronted about the abuse. The jury assessed twenty-five years' imprisonment on each count and wrote the word "minimum" on the verdict forms; the trial court ordered Counts 1 and 2 to run consecutively.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

A jury convicted Sorrell of three counts of lewd or indecent acts with a child under twelve. The McClain County District Court entered judgment and sentence, ordering the sentences on Counts 1 and 2 to run consecutively. Sorrell appealed to the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals, which denied both propositions of error and affirmed the judgment and sentence.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Simpson v. State, 2020 OK CR 9, 465 P.3d 227
- Mitchell v. State, 2010 OK CR 14, 235 P.3d 640
- Sanders v. State, 2015 OK CR 11, 358 P.3d 280
- Nickell v. State, 1994 OK CR 73, 885 P.2d 670
- Jackson v. State, 12 Okl.Cr. 406, 157 P. 945
- United States v. Sherman, 171 F.2d 619, 622 (2d Cir. 1948)
- Young v. State, 2000 OK CR 17, 12 P.3d 20
- Dodd v. State, 2004 OK CR 31, 100 P.3d 1017
- Riley v. State, 1997 OK CR 51, 947 P.2d 530
- Rodriguez v. State, 2025 OK CR 22

OPINION

PER CURIAM.

OSCN Found Document:SORRELL v. STATE SORRELL v. STATE 2026 OK CR 16 Case Number: F-2025-17 Decided: 04/30/2026 THE COURT OF CRIMINAL APPEALS OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA Cite as: 2026 OK CR 16, __ P.3d __ LONNIE KEITH SORRELL, Appellant, v. THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA, Appellee. OPINION LUMPKIN, PRESIDING JUDGE: ¶1 Appellant, Lonnie Keith Sorrell, was tried by jury and convicted in the District Court of McClain County, Case No. CF-2023-1905 of Counts 1-3, Lewd or Indecent Acts with a Child under Twelve, in violation of 21 O.S.Supp.2018, § 1123 ¶2 From this judgment and sentence, Appellant appeals and raises the following propositions of error: I. THE PROSECUTOR INVADED THE PROVINCE OF THE JURY BY USING WITNESSES TO BOLSTER THE CREDIBILITY OF THE COMPLAINING WITNESS.

II. UNDER THE FACTS AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF THIS CASE, THE TRIAL COURT ABUSED ITS DISCRETION BY NOT ORDERING ALL THREE SENTENCES TO RUN [C]ONCURRENTLY. ¶3 After thorough consideration of these propositions and the entire record before us on appeal including the original record, transcripts, and briefs of the parties, we have determined that under the law and the evidence, Appellant is not entitled to relief.

I. ¶4 In his first proposition of error, Appellant maintains the prosecutor committed misconduct when he elicited testimony, which allegedly bolstered the testimony of the victim, WB, from Krystal Williams, Charlene Sorrell and Latisha Sorrell, who all testified prior to WB. all v. State, 2020 OK CR 9 465 P.3d 227 Simpson v. State, 1994 OK CR 40 876 P.2d 690 Id., 1994 OK CR 40.

¶5 This Court reviews claims of prosecutorial misconduct "within the context of the entire trial, considering not only the propriety of the prosecutor's actions, but also the strength of the evidence against the defendant and the corresponding arguments of defense counsel."

Mitchell v. State, 2010 OK CR 14 235 P.3d 640 Sanders v. State, 2015 OK CR 11 358 P.3d 280. Our published cases have not defined improper bolstering, but there is a definition found in Nickell v. State, 1994 OK CR 73 885 P.2d 670 While the term "bolstering" is not specifically defined in the Evidence Code, its concept is addressed within the provisions of 12 O.S.1991, § 2608 See Jackson v. State, 12 Okl.Cr.

406, 157 P. 945 See also 4 J. Wigmore, Evidence, § 1104, pp. 233--34 (J. Chadbourn ed. 1972); 3 L. Whinery, Oklahoma Evidence, § 47.31, pg. 377 (1994); United States v. Sherman, 171 F.2d 619, 622 (2d Cir.1948) (Judge Learned Hand reasoned: "[t]he reason for... exclusion [of an earlier consistent account] is because it has not been made on oath rather than because it has no probative value, although courts have often spoken as though it had none.") Therefore, "bolstering" constitutes nothing more than "preemptive rehabilitation" of a witness.

In other words, it is the timing of the evidence based on the anticipated attempt to impeach a witness which is at issue and, to a degree, it is addressed in Section 2608. However, our jurisprudence has vacillated on whether the predicates ultimately codified in the Evidence Code must be followed, especially as it relates to non-opinion evidence. (emphasis added and footnote omitted).

As stated above, bolstering is somewhat addressed pertinently in 12 O.S.2021, § 2608 The credibility of a witness may be attacked or supported by evidence in the form of opinion or reputation, subject to these limitations: 1.

The evidence may refer only to character for truthfulness or untruthfulness; and 2. Evidence of truthful character is admissible only after the character of the witness for truthfulness has been attacked. ¶7 Latisha Sorrell, WB's mother. Appellant argues Sorrell's testimony that WB had lied to her in the past and so had her other children, was improper bolstering of WB's testimony.

Using the above definition of bolstering as preemptive rehabilitation of a witness, nothing about this testimony served to rehabilitate WB's testimony that Appellant abused her. Nothing about Sorrell's testimony leads to an inference that since WB lies sometimes and so do other children, she was telling the truth at trial. This claim is denied. ¶8 Krystal Williams, WB's school counselor, and Charlene Sorrell, WB's great-grandmother.

Appellant contends that both these witnesses engaged in bolstering, to-wit: Williams when she testified that in prior dealings with WB, she determined that WB was truthful and that she never determined that WB was lying about the allegations in this case; and Sorrell when she testified that

WB had lied to her in the past but had never lied about someone sexually abusing her. ¶9 The inference from this testimony was that they believed WB was telling the truth about the abuse.

Under Section 2608(A), a witness's credibility may be attacked or supported by opinion or reputation evidence "only after the character of the witness for truthfulness has been attacked." The subject witnesses' testimony qualifies as opinion evidence supporting WB's credibility.

However, WB's credibility had not been attacked by any evidence prior to their testimony, i.e., they testified before WB. ¶10 The only attack upon WB's credibility prior to Williams' and Sorrell's testimony arguably occurred during defense counsel's opening statement. Counsel told the jury they would hear numerous inconsistencies between WB's prior statements and her testimony and urged jurors to pay attention to the difference between WB's straightforward testimony on direct examination and her much vaguer testimony on cross-examination.

He implied that WB had to think about how to answer defense counsel's questions but not the State's and quoted Mark Twain, "[i]f you tell the truth, it's [sic] easy to remember." While counsel's opening statement certainly set out the defense theory of the case, it was not evidence. "Statements by the attorneys are not evidence...". *Young v. State*, 2000 OK CR 17 12 P.3d 20 See also Instruction No. 10-5, OUJI-CR (2d) ("Evidence is the testimony received from the witnesses under oath, stipulations made by the attorneys, and the exhibits admitted into evidence during the trial.").

The record shows WB's credibility was not attacked by evidence prior to the subject witnesses' challenged testimony. Therefore, the testimony constituted improper bolstering. ¶11 In this case the error in the admission of the testimony did not result in a violation of Appellant's substantial rights. This is due to the consistency of WB's testimony with what she told other witnesses.

She told Williams that Appellant tried to put his penis inside her, he made her give him oral sex, and he tried to get her to drink beer. Consistent with what she told forensic interviewer Kasey White, WB testified: that Appellant put her on a bed at her Aunt Neesha's house and touched her vagina; that at Charlene Sorrell's house in the back room, Appellant put her on the bed covered in zebra sheets and pressed her head down as she performed oral sex on him in exchange for five dollars; that after the bonfire, Appellant was drinking Bud Light from a cooler, put her on his lap, put his mouth on her breasts, touched her vagina with his fingers and tried to digitally penetrate her; that Appellant also tried to put his penis into her vagina as she sat on his lap and how it hurt her. ¶12 The jury also heard testimony regarding motivation.

Both Latisha and Charlene Sorrell testified that WB frequently had her phone taken away as punishment. Any notion that WB fabricated her abuse allegations in retaliation for losing her phone access is belied by the record.

Finally, Latisha Sorrell testified she understood that after she tried to confront Appellant about his abuse of WB, he was trying to kill himself and his guns were taken away from him. Such actions

on Appellant's part can be seen as evidence of consciousness of guilt. See *Dodd v. State*, 2004 OK CR 31 100 P.3d 1017 ¶13 Having found the error in the admission of the complained of testimony did not affect Appellant's substantial rights, we similarly find he has failed to show any misconduct on the part of the prosecutor.

Accordingly, Proposition I is denied. II. ¶14 In his final proposition of error, Appellant argues the trial court abused its discretion by ordering his sentences in Counts 1 and 2 to run consecutively to one another. He contends that the fact that jurors wrote the word "minimum" after their assessment of twenty-five years imprisonment on each count, means they intended for all of his sentences to run concurrently to one another.

Review of this claim is for abuse of discretion as Appellant requested concurrent sentences at his sentencing hearing. *Riley v. State*, 1997 OK CR 51 947 P.2d 530 *Rodriguez v. State*, 2025 OK CR 22 ¶15 That the trial court ordered Appellant's sentences in Counts 1 and 2 to run consecutively is indicative of nothing more than the trial court's adherence to the statutory directive of 22 O.S.2021, § 976 ¶16 Appellant's argument that jurors intended his sentences to run concurrently because they wrote the word "minimum" on the verdict form is completely specious.

The jury received no instruction regarding the running of sentences. Thus, the jury could not have intended something it knew nothing about. ¶17 The record reflects Appellant received a generous discretionary sentencing ruling given the jury found him guilty of three counts of sexual abuse of his young granddaughter. There was no abuse of the trial court's discretion.

Proposition II is denied. DECISION ¶18 The Judgment and Sentence of the district court is AFFIRMED. Pursuant to Rule 3.15, Rules of the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals, Title 22, Ch. 18, App. (2026), the MANDATE is ORDERED issued upon delivery and filing of this decision. AN APPEAL FROM THE DISTRICT COURT OF MCCLAIN COUNTY, THE HONORABLE CHARLES N. GRAY, ASSOCIATE DISTRICT JUDGE APPEARANCES AT TRIAL DUSTIN S. PHILLIPS J. SANTANA SPANGLER-DAY 1900 NW EXPRESSWAY, 601 OKLAHOMA CITY, OK 73118 COUNSEL FOR DEFENDANT APPEARANCES ON APPEAL MARK P. HOOVER OIDS 1111 N. PETERS, 100 NORMAN, OK 73069 COUNSEL FOR APPELLANT LESLEY SMITH MARCH JONATHAN FRIED ASS'T DISTRICT ATTORNEYS 121 N. SECOND STREET PURCELL, OK 73080 COUNSEL FOR STATE GENTNER F. DRUMMOND ATTORNEY GENERAL RANDALL YOUNG ASST.

ATTORNEY GENERAL 313 NE 21 ST STREET OKLAHOMA CITY, OK 73105 COUNSEL FOR APPELLEE OPINION BY: LUMPKIN, P.J.: MUSSEMAN, V.P.J.: Concur LEWIS, J.: Concur HUDSON, J.: Concur ROWLAND, J.: Concur FOOTNOTES 21 O.S.Supp.2015, § 13 See Rule 3.5(A)(5), Rules of the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals, Title 22, Ch. 18, App.

(2026) (providing, inter alia, that each proposition of error must be set out "separately in the brief"). Relief is denied for this issue, and we review only his primary claim regarding bolstering.

Retrieved from lawtools.ai · <https://lawtools.ai/cases/state/oklahoma-court-of-criminal-appeals-court-of-criminal-appeals-of-the-state-of-oklahoma/2026/sorrell-v-state-5feniorp>