

WASHINGTON COURT OF APPEALS, DIVISION THREE

In re the Marriage of Mona Kelley & Donald Kelley

In re Kelley · No. 40124-3-III · Decided January 8, 2026

SUMMARY

The Washington Court of Appeals, Division Three, affirmed the denial of Mona Hines’s motion to hold her former spouse, Donald Kelley, in contempt for failing to pay a debt assigned to him in their dissolution decree. The court held that contempt remedies do not apply to the decree’s truck-loan payment provision because the obligation was not shown to bear a reasonable relationship to spousal support, in light of Washington Constitution article I, section 17’s prohibition on imprisonment for debt.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Washington Court of Appeals, Division Three
WRITING FOR THE COURT	George Fearing, Judge Pro Tempore; Lawrence-Berrey, C.J.; Murphy, J.
JURISDICTION	Washington Court of Appeals, Division Three
DECIDED	January 8, 2026
DOCKET	40124-3-III
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Mona Hines appealed the Yakima County Superior Court's denial of her motion to hold her former husband, Donald Kelley, in contempt for failing to pay a debt assigned to him in the dissolution decree.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The opinion does not state a separately labeled standard of review. The appellate court reviewed the dissolution court's denial of contempt relief and applied the governing legal principles to the undisputed or established facts.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	published precedential opinion
PARTIES	Mona Kelley, formerly Mona Hines v. Donald Kelley

TOPICS

- family law procedure
- dissolution of marriage
- spousal support
- remedies
- appellate procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

family law

constitutional law

remedies

appellate procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether contempt remedies may be used to enforce a dissolution-decree obligation to pay a third-party debt that has no reasonable relationship to spousal maintenance or child support.
2. Whether RCW 7.21.030 authorizes nonimprisonment contempt sanctions for failure to pay a nonsupport debt imposed by a dissolution decree.
3. Whether Hines could obtain a judgment for the truck debt or return of the truck through contempt or other dissolution-decree enforcement proceedings.

HOLDINGS

1. A dissolution court may not impose contempt sanctions for failure to pay a debt assigned in a dissolution decree when the obligation has no reasonable relationship to the support of the former spouse or children. The GMC truck debt was unrelated to Hines's support, so contempt relief was unavailable.
2. RCW 7.21.030 does not authorize contempt sanctions, including fines, forfeitures, indemnification, or other remedial sanctions, to enforce a dissolution-decree obligation unrelated to spousal maintenance or child support.
3. Hines could not obtain a judgment against Kelley for the truck debt or compel return of the truck through her contempt motion or other dissolution-decree enforcement proceedings described in the opinion.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“We hold that contempt proceedings are a proper remedy to enforce the court’s order with respect to property settlements—whether or not the settlement was previously agreed to by the parties, so long as it is embodied or incorporated by reference in the divorce decree.” (17)

“We rule in favor of Donald Kelley because the facts establish the obligation to pay his mother-in-law for the GMC pickup truck debt was unrelated to support for Mona Hines.” (27)

“For this reason, we hold that the astute dissolution court correctly rejected any contempt sanctions.” (32)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Mona Hines and Donald Kelley divorced in 2021. Their dissolution decree awarded Kelley a GMC pickup and ordered him to pay the personal loan from Hines's mother used to purchase it; the decree expressly ordered no spousal support. Kelley later stopped making payments, and Hines sought contempt relief, including a judgment, fines, imprisonment, and return of the truck. The court concluded that the truck debt was unrelated to Hines's support and that contempt remedies were unavailable.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The Yakima County Superior Court entered a dissolution decree ordering Donald Kelley to pay the debt owed to Mona Hines's mother for a GMC pickup truck, along with other assigned debts. After Kelley stopped making payments, Hines moved in the dissolution proceeding for contempt, seeking monetary and coercive relief. The superior court denied the motion, concluding that the decree provisions were unrelated to spousal support, and the Court of Appeals affirmed.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Stablein v. Stablein, 59 Wn.2d 465, 368 P.2d 174 (1962)
- Decker v. Decker, 52 Wn.2d 456, 326 P.2d 332 (1958)
- Berry v. Berry, 50 Wn.2d 158, 310 P.2d 223 (1957)
- In re Marriage of Peacock, 54 Wn. App. 12, 771 P.2d 767 (1989)
- Robinson v. Robinson, 37 Wn.2d 511, 225 P.2d 411 (1950)
- State ex rel. Lang v. Superior Court, 176 Wash. 472, 30 P.2d 237 (1934)
- State ex rel. Ridenour v. Superior Court, 174 Wash. 152, 24 P.2d 418 (1933)
- State ex rel. Adams v. Superior Court for Pierce County, 36 Wn.2d 868, 220 P.2d 1081 (1950)
- State v. Ditmar, 19 Wash. 324, 53 P. 350 (1898)
- State ex rel. Foster v. Superior Court, Yakima County, 193 Wash. 99, 74 P.2d 479 (1937)
- Davis v. Davis, 15 Wn.2d 297, 130 P.2d 355 (1942)
- Brantley v. Brantley, 54 Wn.2d 717, 344 P.2d 731 (1959)
- Kinne v. Kinne, 82 Wn.2d 360, 510 P.2d 814 (1973)
- In re Marriage of Young, 26 Wn. App. 843, 615 P.2d 508 (1980)
- In re Marriage of Mathews, 70 Wn. App. 116, 853 P.2d 462 (1993)
- In re Marriage of Wilcox, 3 Wn.3d 507, 553 P.3d 614 (2024)
- In re Marriage of Curtis, 106 Wn. App. 191, 23 P.3d 13 (2001)
- Cox v. Cox, 20 Wn. App. 2d 594, 598-99, 501 P.3d 155 (2021)
- McFerran v. McFerran, 55 Wn.2d 471, 348 P.2d 222 (1960)
- State ex rel. Erhardt v. MacGillivray, 52 Wn.2d 485, 326 P.2d 738 (1958)