

COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE SEVENTH DISTRICT OF TEXAS AT
AMARILLO

Taylor Ryan Smith v. the State of Texas

Taylor Ryan Smith v. State, No. 07-25-00020-CR (Tex. App.—Amarillo Mar. 16, 2026) (mem. op.) · No. 07-25-00020-CR · Decided March 16, 2026

SUMMARY

The Seventh Court of Appeals of Texas affirmed Taylor Ryan Smith’s fifty-year sentence for engaging in organized criminal activity, a first-degree felony. The court held that Smith failed to preserve his gross-disproportionality challenge and alternatively concluded that the record was insufficient to establish that the within-range sentence was grossly disproportionate.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Court of Appeals for the Seventh District of Texas at Amarillo
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Lawrence M. Doss; Parker, C.J.; Doss, J.; Yarbrough, J.
JURISDICTION	Court of Appeals for the Seventh District of Texas at Amarillo
DECIDED	March 16, 2026
DOCKET	07-25-00020-CR
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Appeal from an order adjudicating appellant guilty of engaging in organized criminal activity and sentencing him to fifty years of confinement. Appellant challenged the sentence as grossly disproportionate under the Eighth Amendment.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Sentencing determinations are reviewed for abuse of discretion. A complaint that a sentence is grossly disproportionate must also be preserved by a timely request, objection, or motion stating the specific grounds for the desired ruling.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential
PARTIES	Taylor Ryan Smith v. The State of Texas

TOPICS

- sentencing
- cruel and unusual punishment
- preservation of error
- standard of review
- appellate procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

criminal law

criminal procedure

sentencing

appellate practice

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Smith preserved for appellate review his claim that the fifty-year sentence was grossly disproportionate in violation of the Eighth Amendment.
2. Whether, assuming preservation, the trial court abused its discretion by imposing a grossly disproportionate sentence within the statutory range.

HOLDINGS

1. A defendant must timely present a specific objection, request, or motion to the trial court to preserve a claim that a sentence is grossly disproportionate; merely filing a motion for new trial is insufficient unless the motion is brought to the trial court's attention. Because Smith did not object when sentenced and did not show that he presented his motion for new trial, his claim was unpreserved.
2. Even if preserved, Smith's challenge would fail because the record was insufficient to establish gross disproportionality, and the trial court did not abuse its discretion by imposing a sentence within the statutory range.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“the sentencer’s discretion to impose any punishment within the prescribed range [is] essentially ‘unfettered’” (4)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Smith was approximately seventeen when charged with engaging in organized criminal activity based on allegations that he acted with two others in striking a sixteen-year-old complainant with a hand and a piece of two-by-four lumber. After pleading guilty and receiving deferred adjudication, Smith repeatedly violated the rules of a rehabilitative community-corrections facility and was ultimately discharged for noncompliance. He pleaded true to the alleged violations, and the trial court adjudicated him guilty and imposed fifty years' confinement, within the five-to-ninety-nine-years-or-life range for a first-degree felony.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Smith pleaded guilty to engaging in organized criminal activity and was placed on deferred adjudication community supervision. After repeated violations of the rules of a rehabilitative facility and an unsatisfactory discharge, he pleaded true to the State's allegations, and the trial court adjudicated him guilty and imposed a fifty-year sentence. Smith raised his disproportionate-sentence claim in a motion for new trial, but the appellate court found no indication that he presented the motion to the trial court and noted that he did not object when sentenced.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Smith v. State, 721 S.W.2d 844, 855 (Tex. Crim. App. 1986)
- Noland v. State, 264 S.W.3d 144, 151 (Tex. App.—Houston [1st Dist.] 2007, pet. ref'd)
- Clark v. State, 365 S.W.3d 333, 339 (Tex. Crim. App. 2012)
- Pena v. State, 285 S.W.3d 459, 464 (Tex. Crim. App. 2009)
- Carranza v. State, 960 S.W.2d 76, 79–80 (Tex. Crim. App. 1998)
- Jackson v. State, 680 S.W.2d 809, 814 (Tex. Crim. App. 1984)
- Ex parte Chavez, 213 S.W.3d 320, 323–24 (Tex. Crim. App. 2006)
- Foster v. State, 525 S.W.3d 898, 912 (Tex. App.—Dallas 2017, pet. ref'd)
- State v. Simpson, 488 S.W.3d 318, 322–24 (Tex. Crim. App. 2016)
- Lockyer v. Andrade, 538 U.S. 63, 73 (2003)
- London v. State, 490 S.W.3d 503 (Tex. Crim. App. 2016)

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