

THIRD DISTRICT COURT OF APPEAL OF FLORIDA

State of Florida v. Ariel Paul

Paul · No. 3D25-0037 · Decided May 6, 2026

SUMMARY

The Third District Court of Appeal of Florida affirmed an order granting Ariel Paul’s motions to suppress in a DUI prosecution. The court held that the trial court did not abuse its discretion by denying the State’s request for a continuance after three subpoenaed officers failed to appear, because the State had not contacted the officers, confirmed their attendance, or explained their absence.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Third District Court of Appeal of Florida
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Gooden, J.; Lindsey, J.; Lobree, J.
JURISDICTION	Third District Court of Appeal of Florida
DECIDED	May 6, 2026
DOCKET	3D25-0037
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The State appealed the county court's order granting Ariel Paul's motions to suppress evidence in a driving-under-the-influence prosecution.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	A trial court's ruling on a motion for continuance is reviewed for abuse of discretion; reversal requires a palpable abuse that clearly and affirmatively appears in the record. Review is contextual and dependent on the circumstances presented.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published opinion
PARTIES	State of Florida v. Ariel Paul

TOPICS

- criminal procedure
- suppression of evidence
- appellate procedure
- standard of review

PRACTICE AREAS

- Criminal procedure
- Appellate procedure
- Evidence

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the trial court abused its discretion by denying the State's request for a continuance to secure the testimony of subpoenaed officers who failed to appear at a rescheduled suppression hearing.

HOLDINGS

1. The trial court did not abuse its discretion in denying the State's request for a continuance because the State failed to demonstrate due diligence in securing the remaining officers' appearance.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Granting a continuance is within a trial court’s discretion, and the court’s ruling will be disturbed only when that discretion has been abused.” (at 2)

“In criminal cases an application for a continuance is addressed to the sound judicial discretion of the trial court, and the denial of such a motion should not be reversed by an appellate court unless there has been a palpable abuse of this judicial discretion. This abuse of discretion must clearly and affirmatively appear in the record.” (at 2)

“Review is contextual, very much dependent on the ‘circumstances’ presented in each case.” (at 2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Following a motor vehicle accident, officers found Paul unconscious behind the steering wheel. After he was cleared of injuries, officers administered field sobriety exercises, arrested him based on his performance, advised him of his Miranda rights, and obtained no breath sample because he refused one. At the suppression hearing, one subpoenaed officer testified, while three other subpoenaed officers failed to appear at the rescheduled hearing despite being instructed to return. The State had not contacted or confirmed the officers' attendance and offered no explanation for their absence.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

After Paul was arrested for driving under the influence and refused to provide a breath sample, he moved to suppress evidence. At the suppression hearing, one subpoenaed officer testified, but three other subpoenaed State witnesses failed to appear at the rescheduled hearing. The State requested a continuance to secure their testimony, but the trial court denied the request and granted Paul's suppression motions. The Third District Court of Appeal affirmed.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Bouie v. State, 559 So. 2d 1113, 1114 (Fla. 1990)
- Magill v. State, 386 So. 2d 1188, 1188 (Fla. 1980)
- Madison v. State, 132 So. 3d 237, 240 (Fla. 1st DCA 2013)

- State v. McCarthy, 585 So. 2d 1167, 1168 (Fla. 4th DCA 1991)
- State v. Lawrence, 560 So. 2d 400, 401 (Fla. 4th DCA 1990)
- State v. Bercaw, 363 So. 3d 124, 126 (Fla. 1st DCA 2023)
- Gerald v. State, 674 So. 2d 96, 99 (Fla. 1996)

OPINION

State of Florida v. Ariel Paul

PER CURIAM.

Third District Court of Appeal State of Florida Opinion filed May 6, 2026. Not final until disposition of timely filed motion for rehearing. _____ No. 3D25-0037 Lower Tribunal No. AHCW2YE _____ State of Florida, Appellant, vs. Ariel Paul, Appellee. An Appeal from the County Court for Miami-Dade County, Betsy Alvarez-Zane, Judge. James Uthmeier, Attorney General, and Haccord J. Curry, Assistant Attorney General, for appellant. Carlos J. Martinez, Public Defender, and Maria E. Lauredo, Chief Assistant Public Defender, for appellee. Before LINDSEY, LOBREE and GOODEN, JJ. GOODEN, J. Appellant State of Florida appeals the trial court's order granting Appellee Ariel Paul's motions to suppress. We affirm. Paul was charged with driving under the influence. Following a motor vehicle accident, Officers Cooper, Baptiste, Milfort, and Dorcent were dispatched to the scene. Officers Cooper and Milfort discovered Paul unconscious behind the steering wheel. Once he was cleared of any injuries, the officers administered field sobriety exercises. Due to Paul's performance, he was arrested and advised of his Miranda rights. Paul refused to provide a breath sample. Subsequently, Paul moved to suppress evidence. The trial court set the motions for hearing. Paul subpoenaed Officers Cooper, Baptiste, Milfort, and Dorcent—who were listed as the State's witnesses. Officer Cooper appeared and testified. The remaining three officers also appeared, but did not have the opportunity to testify. The trial court asked about the remaining officers' schedules and continued the hearing to a future date. The court advised the officers that they remain under their existing subpoenas and instructed them to appear at the rescheduled hearing. Yet the remaining three officers failed to appear at that hearing. When questioned, the State confirmed that it had not contacted any of the officers 2 prior to the hearing and provided no explanation as to their failure to appear. In response, Paul requested that the motions to suppress be granted. But the State sought a continuance so they could secure the officers' testimony. After considering arguments from both parties and allowing the State an opportunity to establish a record, the trial court granted the motions to suppress. This appeal followed. "Granting a continuance is within a trial court's discretion, and the court's ruling will be disturbed only when that discretion has been abused." Bouie v. State, 559 So. 2d 1113, 1114 (Fla. 1990). See also Magill v. State, 386 So. 2d 1188, 1188 (Fla. 1980) ("In criminal cases an application for a continuance is addressed to the sound judicial discretion of the trial court, and the denial of such a motion should not be reversed by an appellate court unless there has been a palpable abuse of this

judicial discretion. This abuse of discretion must clearly and affirmatively appear in the record.”). “Review is contextual, very much dependent on the ‘circumstances’ presented in each case.” *Madison v. State*, 132 So. 3d 237, 240 (Fla. 1st DCA 2013). Under these circumstances, we find the trial court did not abuse its discretion. Contrast *State v. McCarthy*, 585 So. 2d 1167, 1168 (Fla. 4th DCA 1991), and *State v. Lawrence*, 560 So. 2d 400, 401 (Fla. 4th DCA 1990), with *State v. Bercaw*, 363 So. 3d 124, 126 (Fla. 1st DCA 2023). The State failed to show due diligence in securing the remaining officers’ appearance. *Geralds v. State*, 674 So. 2d 96, 99 (Fla. 1996). The State did not contact the officers, did not confirm their attendance, and did not explain why they failed to appear. Affirmed. 4