

SUPREME COURT OF LOUISIANA

State ex rel. Williams v. State

224 So. 3d 358 (La. 2017) · Decided August 4, 2017

SUMMARY

The Louisiana Supreme Court denied supervisory relief in a post-conviction proceeding, holding that the relator failed to establish ineffective assistance of trial or appellate counsel under Strickland v. Washington. The court also rejected claims concerning the confrontation right and alleged hearsay, noting that the trial court excluded the challenged testimony and issued a curative instruction. The court concluded that the relator had fully litigated his state post-conviction claims and that the denial was final absent a narrow exception permitting a successive application.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Supreme Court of Louisiana
JURISDICTION	Louisiana
DECIDED	August 4, 2017
DISPOSITION	writ_denied
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Relator sought supervisory review of the denial of his application for state post-conviction relief by the Twenty-Fourth Judicial District Court for Jefferson Parish. The Louisiana Supreme Court denied the writ and adopted the district court's written reasons.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	A post-conviction applicant bears the burden of proving entitlement to relief. Ineffective-assistance claims require proof of deficient performance and resulting prejudice under Strickland v. Washington. Appellate counsel is afforded substantial deference in selecting issues for appeal.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published Louisiana Supreme Court per curiam decision; precedential.
PARTIES	State ex rel. Williams v. State

TOPICS

- state post-conviction relief
- successive petitions
- ineffective assistance
- sixth amendment
- hearsay

PRACTICE AREAS

- criminal procedure
- post-conviction relief
- constitutional law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether trial counsel provided ineffective assistance by failing to obtain additional photographs or video of the crime scene or request that the jury view the scene.
2. Whether appellate counsel was ineffective for failing to raise the alleged confrontation-related issue on direct appeal.
3. Whether the admission of the detective's brief hearsay reference violated Williams's rights under the Confrontation Clause or deprived him of a fair trial.
4. Whether Williams remained entitled to further state collateral review after fully litigating his post-conviction application.

HOLDINGS

1. Williams failed to prove that trial counsel performed deficiently or that any alleged deficiency prejudiced the reliability or fairness of the trial.
2. Williams failed to establish ineffective assistance of appellate counsel based on counsel's failure to raise the asserted confrontation issue.
3. Williams failed to establish a Confrontation Clause violation or resulting prejudice because the trial court excluded the challenged hearsay reference and instructed the jury to disregard it.
4. After fully litigating his state post-conviction application, Williams exhausted his right to state collateral review unless he could satisfy a statutory exception authorizing a successive application.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Denied. Relator fails to show that he received ineffective assistance of counsel under the standard of Strickland v. Washington, 466 U.S. 668, 104 S.Ct. 2052, 80 L.Ed.2d 674 (1984).” (at 358)

“Relator has now fully litigated his application for post-conviction relief in state court.” (at 358)

“The petitioner has not met his heavy burden on his claims.” (at 361)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Williams was convicted of a crime arising from a confrontation in the Scottsville neighborhood on April 26, 2009, in which the victim was chased and shot. At trial, witnesses testified about photographs depicting the location, Williams testified regarding his familiarity with the area, and defense counsel cross-examined the witnesses. A detective briefly referred to information underlying an arrest warrant, but the trial court sustained a hearsay objection, instructed the jury to disregard the testimony, and excluded the potential hearsay evidence.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The district court denied Williams's post-conviction claims, including ineffective assistance of trial and appellate counsel and a Confrontation Clause claim. The Louisiana Supreme Court denied supervisory relief, concluding that Williams failed to establish ineffective assistance under Strickland, failed to support his remaining claims,

and had fully litigated his state post-conviction application. The court stated that any later successive application would be barred unless a narrow statutory exception applied.

DISPOSITION

writ_denied

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

The district court was ordered to record a minute entry consistent with the per curiam decision.

CASES CITED

- Strickland v. Washington, 466 U.S. 668 (1984)
- State v. Washington, 491 So. 2d 1337 (La. 1986)
- State v. Legranet, 2002-1462 (La. 12/3/03), 864 So. 2d 89
- State v. Saylor, 93-1042 (La. App. 5 Cir. 4/26/94), 636 So. 2d 1069
- Smith v. Murray, 477 U.S. 527 (1986)
- Jones v. Barnes, 463 U.S. 745 (1983)
- United States v. Phillips, 210 F.3d 345 (5th Cir. 2000)
- Maryland v. Craig, 497 U.S. 836 (1990)