

CALIFORNIA COURT OF APPEAL, FIRST APPELLATE DISTRICT, DIVISION ONE

Estrada v. Superior Court

Estrada · No. A166474; A166508 · Decided March 2, 2023

SUMMARY

In consolidated writ proceedings, Miguel Angel Estrada and Andrew Kuhaiki sought dismissal of their criminal cases under Penal Code section 1382, arguing that continuances beyond the statutory speedy-trial deadlines lacked good cause. The California Court of Appeal held that the San Francisco Superior Court did not abuse its discretion in finding that COVID-19-related exceptional circumstances and resulting trial backlogs justified the continuances. The petitions for writ of mandate or prohibition were denied.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	California Court of Appeal, First Appellate District, Division One
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Banke, J.; Margulies, Acting P.J.; Swope, J.
JURISDICTION	California
DECIDED	March 2, 2023
DOCKET	A166474; A166508
DISPOSITION	writ_denied
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Consolidated petitions for writs of mandate or prohibition seeking dismissal of criminal cases for alleged violations of California Penal Code section 1382's speedy-trial deadline.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Abuse of discretion review applies to the superior court's determination whether good cause exists under Penal Code section 1382. The appellate court considers the totality of the circumstances and applies principles of common sense.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published and certified for publication; precedential California Court of Appeal opinion.
PARTIES	Miguel Angel Estrada, Andrew Kuhaiki v. The Superior Court of the City and County of San Francisco, The People of the State of California

TOPICS

speedy trial

criminal procedure

appellate procedure

standard of review

writ of certiorari

PRACTICE AREAS

criminal procedure

appellate procedure

constitutional law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the continuing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic constituted good cause under Penal Code section 1382 to continue petitioners' jury trials beyond the statutory deadlines.
2. Whether the San Francisco Superior Court abused its discretion by attributing the trial backlog and courtroom unavailability to exceptional pandemic-related circumstances rather than chronic court congestion or mismanagement.
3. Whether the superior court erred by denying petitioners' motions to dismiss without expressly discussing the prejudice they allegedly suffered from continued pretrial detention.
4. Whether writ relief should issue requiring dismissal of petitioners' criminal cases.

HOLDINGS

1. The continuing consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic constituted exceptional circumstances and supplied good cause to continue petitioners' trials beyond the statutory deadlines.
2. The superior court did not abuse its discretion in finding that the relevant delay was caused primarily by exceptional pandemic-related circumstances rather than chronic court congestion or mismanagement.
3. The superior court's failure to expressly discuss prejudice did not require dismissal because no affirmative showing of prejudice is necessary to obtain dismissal under section 1382, and the record did not establish that the court failed to consider the submitted materials.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Accordingly, the superior court did not, in the instant cases, abuse its discretion in concluding that exceptional circumstances justified continuance of petitioners’ trials past their statutory last days. Nor did it err in denying petitioners’ motions for dismissal.” (at 34-36)

“The petitions for writs of mandate or prohibition are denied, and the order to show cause is discharged. The previously imposed stays of the trial in both matters are lifted.” (at 36)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Estrada and Kuhaiki were charged with felony offenses in San Francisco and each requested a jury trial on a no-time-waiver basis. On their respective statutory last days for trial, July 26 and August 5, 2022, the superior court found that courtroom, staffing, security, and pandemic-related conditions constituted good cause to continue the trials. The superior court found that the continuing effects of COVID-19, including court backlogs, staffing shortages, quarantines, outbreaks, and disruptions involving judges, court personnel, sheriff's deputies, attorneys, defendants, witnesses, and jurors, continued to impair trial capacity despite substantial efforts to reduce the backlog.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Estrada and Kuhaiki were charged by information, arraigned, pleaded not guilty, and requested jury trials without waiving time. The San Francisco Superior Court continued each trial beyond the statutory last day after finding good cause based on the continuing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and denied each petitioner's motion to dismiss. The Court of Appeal issued orders to show cause, consolidated the writ proceedings, and denied the petitions, discharged the order to show cause, and lifted the trial stays.

DISPOSITION

writ_denied

CASES CITED

- Hernandez-Valenzuela, 75 Cal. App. 5th 1108, 1114-1136
- Burgos v. Superior Court, 206 Cal. App. 4th 817, 825 (2012)
- People v. Sutton, 48 Cal. 4th 533, 545, 555 n.10 (2010)
- People v. Martinez, 22 Cal. 4th 750, 766 (2000)
- People v. Johnson, 26 Cal. 3d 557, 569-571 (1980)
- Rhinehart v. Municipal Court, 35 Cal. 3d 772, 781, 783 (1984)
- People v. Engram, 50 Cal. 4th 1131, 1162-1163 (2010)
- People v. Hajjaj, 50 Cal. 4th 1184, 1198, 1204 (2010)
- In re Venable, 86 Cal. App. 585, 587 (1927)
- People v. Tucker, 196 Cal. App. 4th 1313, 1315, 1317-1318 (2011)
- Stanley v. Superior Court, 50 Cal. App. 5th 164, 166, 169-170 (2020)
- Lewis v. Superior Court, 122 Cal. App. 3d 494, 498-499 (1981)
- Arreola v. Municipal Court, 139 Cal. App. 3d 108, 112-115 (1983)
- Rutherford v. Owens-Illinois, Inc., 16 Cal. 4th 953, 967 (1997)
- Carlsbad Police Officers Assn. v. City of Carlsbad, 49 Cal. App. 5th 135, 150-151 (2020)
- People v. Superior Court (J.C. Penney Corp., Inc.), 34 Cal. App. 5th 376, 406 n.18 (2019)
- People v. Sparks, 262 Cal. App. 2d 597, 600 (1968)
- Elias v. Superior Court, 78 Cal. App. 5th 926, 938, 941, 943 (2022)
- Lockley v. Law Office of Cantrell, Green, Pekich, Cruz & McCort, 91 Cal. App. 4th 875, 882 (2001)

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