

SUPREME COURT OF IOWA

State of Iowa v. Douglas Arnold Grant

State v. Grant · No. No. 76 / 05-0020 · Decided October 13, 2006

SUMMARY

The Iowa Supreme Court affirmed the defendant’s conviction for possession of methamphetamine with intent to deliver. The court held that the quantity and individual packaging of the methamphetamine, together with experienced law-enforcement testimony, provided sufficient circumstantial evidence of intent to deliver. The court also held that the district court did not abuse its discretion in denying a motion for a new trial based on the weight of the evidence.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Supreme Court of Iowa
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Carter, Justice
JURISDICTION	Iowa
DECIDED	October 13, 2006
DOCKET	No. 76 / 05-0020
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Grant was convicted after a bench trial of possession with intent to deliver methamphetamine. The Iowa Court of Appeals affirmed, and the Supreme Court of Iowa granted review. Grant challenged the sufficiency of the evidence to prove intent to deliver and argued alternatively that the conviction was against the weight of the evidence.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The sufficiency-of-the-evidence claim was reviewed on appeal based on the trial record and the inferences supporting the fact finder's determination. A district court's ruling on a weight-of-the-evidence motion for new trial is reviewed for abuse of discretion.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published Iowa Supreme Court opinion; binding precedent within Iowa unless later limited, overruled, or abrogated.
PARTIES	Douglas Arnold Grant v. State of Iowa

TOPICS

criminal procedure

evidence

appellate procedure

standard of review

PRACTICE AREAS

criminal law

criminal procedure

evidence

appellate procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether substantial circumstantial evidence, including the quantity and individual packaging of the methamphetamine and experienced police officers' testimony, was sufficient to prove intent to deliver.
2. Whether the district court abused its discretion by denying Grant's motion for a new trial on the ground that the conviction was against the weight of the evidence.

HOLDINGS

1. The quantity of methamphetamine, its individual packaging, and the expert testimony of experienced police officers constituted sufficient evidence for the fact finder to infer that Grant intended to deliver at least some of the methamphetamine.
2. The district court did not abuse its discretion in denying Grant's motion for a new trial based on the weight of the evidence.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“This fact coupled with the packaging of the drugs and the expert testimony of experienced police officers was sufficient evidence to support the trial court’s finding that defendant intended to deliver at least some of the methamphetamine that was found in his possession.” (at 6)

“The granting of a new trial based on the conclusion that a verdict is against the weight of the evidence is reserved for those situations in which there is reason to believe that critical evidence has been ignored in the fact-finding process.” (at 7)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Police officers searching Grant's residence found 5.38 grams of methamphetamine in eight individually wrapped packages concealed in two tins above a basement air duct. An officer testified that the package sizes were dosage units commonly prepared for sale and that individual packaging was inconsistent with ordinary personal use. The search also revealed an address book containing the names of two known methamphetamine manufacturers or distributors and a ballpoint-pen shell used as a methamphetamine inhalation device, but no scales, packaging materials, pay/owe sheets, or large amounts of cash.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The Iowa District Court for Woodbury County convicted Grant of possessing less than five grams of methamphetamine with intent to deliver, a class C felony, and denied his motion for a new trial based on the weight of the evidence. The Iowa Court of Appeals affirmed. The Supreme Court of Iowa affirmed both the court of appeals decision and the district court judgment.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- State v. Adams, 554 N.W.2d 686, 692 (Iowa 1996)
- State v. Olsen, 315 N.W.2d 1, 6-7 (Iowa 1982)
- State v. Birkestrand, 239 N.W.2d 353, 362 (Iowa 1976)
- State v. Dandridge, 213 N.W.2d 903, 904 (Iowa 1974)
- State v. Dinkins, 553 N.W.2d 339, 342 (Iowa Ct. App. 1996)
- State v. Ellis, 578 N.W.2d 655, 659 (Iowa 1998)
- State v. Reeves, 670 N.W.2d 199, 202 (Iowa 2003)
- Hall v. Wright, 261 Iowa 758, 771-72, 156 N.W.2d 661, 669 (1968)