

SUPREME COURT OF OHIO

State ex rel. Mackey v. Ohio Department of Education; Industrial Commission of Ohio

Mackey, 130 Ohio St. 3d 108 (Ohio 2011) · No. 2010-1405 · Decided September 29, 2011

SUMMARY

The Supreme Court of Ohio affirmed the denial of Cerena N. Mackey's application for permanent total disability compensation. The court held that the Industrial Commission properly invoked continuing jurisdiction under R.C. 4123.52 to correct a clear mistake of law concerning whether Mackey's retirement was voluntary, and properly found that her retirement was voluntary and unrelated to her industrial injury.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Supreme Court of Ohio
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Maureen O'Connor, C.J.; Pfeifer, J.; Lundberg Stratton, J.; O'Donnell, J.; Lanzinger, J.; Cupp, J.; McGee Brown, J.
JURISDICTION	Ohio
DECIDED	September 29, 2011
DOCKET	2010-1405
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Mackey appealed as of right from the Franklin County Court of Appeals' denial of her complaint for a writ of mandamus challenging the Industrial Commission's denial of permanent-total-disability compensation.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Whether the Industrial Commission abused its discretion in exercising continuing jurisdiction and in determining that Mackey's retirement was voluntary.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published, precedential opinion of the Supreme Court of Ohio.
PARTIES	Cerena N. Mackey v. Ohio Department of Education, Industrial Commission of Ohio

TOPICS

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PRACTICE AREAS

Ohio workers' compensation

administrative law

mandamus

permanent-total-disability compensation

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the Industrial Commission could invoke continuing jurisdiction under R.C. 4123.52 to reconsider Mackey's PTD eligibility because the initial staff hearing officer's order failed to determine whether her retirement was voluntary or involuntary.
2. Whether the Industrial Commission abused its discretion by finding that Mackey's retirement was voluntary and therefore barred an award of PTD compensation.

HOLDINGS

1. The Industrial Commission properly invoked continuing jurisdiction under R.C. 4123.52 because the staff hearing officer's failure to determine whether Mackey's retirement was voluntary or involuntary was a clear mistake of law material to PTD eligibility.
2. A claimant who voluntarily retires from the workforce before becoming permanently and totally disabled cannot receive PTD compensation.
3. The Industrial Commission did not abuse its discretion in finding that Mackey's retirement was voluntary.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“As we held in Baker Material Handling, a claimant who voluntarily retires from the workforce prior to becoming permanently and totally disabled cannot receive PTD compensation.” (§ 5)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Mackey applied for permanent-total-disability compensation after retiring in 2005 at age 65 with 36 years of state service. The commission found that her retirement was unrelated to her industrial injury and was therefore voluntary. The commission also relied on the absence of medical-treatment evidence from 2001 through 2005 in evaluating her claim that pain and irritability from her allowed conditions caused her retirement.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

A commission staff hearing officer initially found Mackey permanently and totally disabled but did not determine whether her retirement was voluntary or involuntary. On reconsideration, the Industrial Commission found that her retirement was voluntary and unrelated to her industrial injury, vacated the award, and denied PTD compensation. The Franklin County Court of Appeals denied Mackey's mandamus action, and the Supreme Court of Ohio affirmed.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- State ex rel. Baker Material Handling Corp. v. Indus. Comm., 69 Ohio St. 3d 202, 631 N.E.2d 138 (1994)
- State ex rel. Nicholls v. Indus. Comm., 81 Ohio St. 3d 454, 692 N.E.2d 188 (1998)
- State ex rel. Lackey v. Indus. Comm., 129 Ohio St. 3d 119, 950 N.E.2d 542, 2011-Ohio-3089

OPINION

PER CURIAM.

[Cite as State ex rel. Mackey v. Ohio Dept. of Edn., 130 Ohio St.3d 108, 2011-Ohio-4910.] THE STATE EX REL. MACKEY, APPELLANT, v. OHIO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION; INDUSTRIAL COMMISSION OF OHIO, APPELLEE. [Cite as State ex rel. Mackey v. Ohio Dept. of Edn., 130 Ohio St.3d 108, 2011-Ohio-4910.] Workers' compensation—Permanent total disability—Voluntary retirement— Continuing jurisdiction—R.C.

4123.52. (No. 2010-1405—Submitted September 21, 2011—Decided September 29, 2011.) APPEAL from the Court of Appeals for Franklin County, No. 09AP-966, 2010-Ohio-3522. _____ Per Curiam. {¶ 1} Appellant, Cerena N. Mackey, challenges appellee's, Industrial Commission of Ohio's, denial of her application for permanent total disability ("PTD") compensation.

Her application was heard in March 2009 by a commission staff hearing officer. The parties agree that during the hearing, Mackey's 2005 retirement was discussed extensively. The order that followed, however, did not address the issue and did not indicate whether Mackey's retirement was voluntary or involuntary. It simply discussed the medical evidence presented and concluded that Mackey was permanently and totally disabled. {¶ 2} Mackey's employer, the Ohio Department of Education, moved for reconsideration, alleging that the hearing officer had made a clear mistake of law in failing to determine whether Mackey's retirement was voluntary or involuntary.

The commission agreed, granted the reconsideration motion, and set the matter for a hearing on the merits. {¶ 3} Addressing the retirement issue at the hearing that followed, the commission found that Mackey's retirement from the workforce was unrelated to SUPREME COURT OF OHIO her industrial injury and was hence voluntary. It noted that Mackey had retired at age 65 with 36 years of state service.

It also emphasized the lack of evidence of medical treatment from 2001 through 2005, which the commission felt undermined the credibility of Mackey's assertion that she retired because of the pain and irritability generated by her allowed conditions. Relying on State ex rel. Baker Material Handling Corp. v. Indus. Comm.

(1994), 69 Ohio St.3d 202, 631 N.E.2d 138, the commission found that Mackey's voluntary retirement foreclosed PTD compensation, and it vacated the award. {¶ 4} Mackey filed a complaint in mandamus in the Court of Appeals for Franklin County, alleging that the commission had abused its discretion both in reopening the issue of PTD eligibility and in ultimately denying her application.

The court of appeals disagreed and denied the writ, prompting Mackey's appeal to this court as of right. {¶ 5} The commission can invoke continuing jurisdiction under R.C. 4123.52 to correct a clear mistake of law. *State ex rel. Nicholls v. Indus. Comm.*

(1998), 81 Ohio St.3d 454, 692 N.E.2d 188. The staff hearing officer's failure to determine whether Mackey's retirement was voluntary or involuntary is a clear mistake of law because it is critical to Mackey's eligibility for a PTD award.

As we held in *Baker Material Handling*, a claimant who voluntarily retires from the workforce prior to becoming permanently and totally disabled cannot receive PTD compensation. *Id.* at paragraph two of the syllabus. The commission did not, therefore, abuse its discretion in reopening the issue of Mackey's PTD eligibility in order to consider the effect of her retirement upon it. {¶ 6} The commission also did not abuse its discretion in finding that Mackey's retirement was voluntary.

Recently, in *State ex rel. Lackey v. Indus. Comm.*, 129 Ohio St.3d 119, 2011-Ohio-3089, 950 N.E.2d 542, we upheld a determination that a retirement was voluntary based in part on an absence of 2 January Term, 2011 medical evidence indicating that when the claimant applied for retirement, his ability to perform his regular duties was impaired by his industrial injury. {¶ 7} Accordingly, the judgment of the court of appeals is affirmed.

Judgment affirmed. O'CONNOR, C.J., and PFEIFER, LUNDBERG STRATTON, O'DONNELL, LANZINGER, CUPP, and MCGEE BROWN, JJ., concur. _____ Michael J. Muldoon, for appellant. Michael DeWine, Attorney General, and Charissa D. Payer, Assistant Attorney General, for appellee. _____ 3