

SUPREME COURT OF WYOMING

Lujan v. State

99 P.3d 979 (Wyo. 2004) · Decided October 28, 2004

SUMMARY

The Wyoming court affirmed Joseph Michael Lujan’s conviction for first-degree sexual assault. Applying the sufficiency-of-the-evidence standard, the court held that the victim’s testimony, corroborating bruising, and other circumstances permitted a rational jury to find the essential elements of the offense beyond a reasonable doubt.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Supreme Court of Wyoming
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Guthrie, District Judge; Golden; Guthrie; Hill; Lehman; Voigt
JURISDICTION	Wyoming
DECIDED	October 28, 2004
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Lujan appealed his jury conviction for first-degree sexual assault and the denial of his post-verdict motions for judgment of acquittal, mistrial, or a new trial, arguing that the evidence was insufficient to support the conviction.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	For a sufficiency-of-the-evidence claim, the court determines whether any rational trier of fact could have found the essential elements of the crime beyond a reasonable doubt, viewing the evidence and reasonable inferences in the light most favorable to the State. The appellate court does not reweigh evidence or reassess witness credibility.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published opinion; precedential under Wyoming law.
PARTIES	Joseph Michael Lujan, Sr. v. State of Wyoming

TOPICS

- evidence
- reasonable doubt
- standard of review
- appellate procedure
- criminal procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

- criminal law
- criminal procedure
- appellate litigation

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether sufficient evidence supported Lujan's conviction for first-degree sexual assault beyond a reasonable doubt.

HOLDINGS

1. The evidence was sufficient for a rational jury to find beyond a reasonable doubt that Lujan committed first-degree sexual assault by causing Montoya's submission through physical force or forcible confinement.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“We must determine whether any rational trier of fact could have found present, beyond a reasonable doubt, the essential elements of the crime.” (¶ 11)

“Drawing all inferences in the light most favorable to the State, we find that beyond a reasonable doubt a rational trier of fact could have found present the essential elements” (¶ 17)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Lujan hired April Montoya to work as a waitress at his restaurant and made sexual advances toward her during her shift. In a dark, vacant barroom, Lujan allegedly forced Montoya onto a bench, restrained her hands, removed her undergarments, and penetrated her despite her repeated demands that he stop. Afterward, Lujan offered her money and told her to act as though nothing had happened. A medical examination documented fresh bruises on Montoya's arms and spine, and Lujan admitted penetration but claimed the encounter was consensual.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

A jury convicted Lujan of first-degree sexual assault, and the district court sentenced him to seven to ten years in the Wyoming State Penitentiary. The district court denied his motion for judgment of acquittal and later denied his motion for a mistrial or, alternatively, a new trial. Lujan appealed, and the Wyoming Supreme Court affirmed.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Porth v. State, 868 P.2d 236, 248 (Wyo. 1994)
- Pisano v. State, 828 P.2d 666, 669 (Wyo. 1992)
- Trujillo v. State, 880 P.2d 575, 578 (Wyo. 1994)
- Huyff v. State, 992 P.2d 1071 (Wyo. 1999)

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