

SUPREME COURT OF WASHINGTON

State v. Beaver

148 Wash. 2d 338 (2002) · Decided December 19, 2002

SUMMARY

The Washington Supreme Court held that “minimum term” and “release date” are distinct concepts under the Juvenile Justice Act. It concluded that the juvenile court, rather than the Department of Social and Health Services, has authority to set the minimum term for a manifest injustice disposition, and affirmed Beaver’s confinement until age 21.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Supreme Court of Washington
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Bridge, J.; Alexander, C.J.; Smith, J.; Johnson, J.; Madsen, J.; Sanders, J.; Ireland, J.; Chambers, J.; Owens, J.
JURISDICTION	Washington
DECIDED	December 19, 2002
DISPOSITION	reversed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The State sought discretionary review of a published Court of Appeals decision that vacated Beaver’s manifest injustice disposition and remanded for the Department of Social and Health Services to set his minimum term.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Statutory interpretation is reviewed de novo. The court examines the statute as a whole and applies plain language when the statute is clear on its face.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published Washington Supreme Court opinion; precedential.
PARTIES	State of Washington v. Jermaine T. Beaver

TOPICS

- sentencing
- statutory interpretation
- criminal procedure
- appellate procedure
- standard of review

PRACTICE AREAS

- Juvenile criminal law
- Criminal sentencing
- Statutory interpretation
- Appellate procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the terms "minimum term" and "release date" are distinct under the Juvenile Justice Act of 1977.
2. Whether the Department of Social and Health Services has exclusive authority to set the minimum term for a juvenile receiving a manifest injustice disposition.
3. Whether a juvenile court may set the minimum term equal to the maximum term for a manifest injustice disposition.

HOLDINGS

1. The statutory terms "minimum term" and "release date" have distinct meanings. DSHS sets the juvenile's release or discharge date, while a minimum term must already exist before that date is set.
2. For a manifest injustice disposition, the juvenile court, not DSHS, has authority to set the minimum term, subject to the limitations in RCW 13.40.030(2). DSHS retains authority to set the release date.
3. RCW 13.40.030(2) does not prohibit the juvenile court from setting the minimum term at 100 percent of the maximum term for a manifest injustice disposition.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"The "release date" and "minimum term" are two distinct terms. It is the function of DSHS to set the release date for all juveniles confined to its facilities. However, it is the function of the juvenile court to set the minimum term for a manifest injustice disposition." (at 350)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Beaver was three months short of his sixteenth birthday when he participated with a group of youths in an assault and robbery of Erik Toews, who later died from his injuries. Charged with first degree murder and first degree robbery, Beaver pleaded guilty under a plea agreement to conspiracy to commit second degree murder. The juvenile court imposed a manifest injustice disposition requiring confinement until age twenty-one, after the probation officer recommended a longer disposition based on the seriousness of the offense and Beaver's continued minimization of his conduct.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Beaver pleaded guilty in Pierce County Juvenile Court to conspiracy to commit second degree murder. The juvenile court imposed a manifest injustice disposition requiring confinement in the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration until Beaver's twenty-first birthday, without early release. The Court of Appeals held that DSHS had exclusive authority to set the minimum term, vacated the disposition, and remanded. The Washington Supreme Court reversed and affirmed the juvenile court's disposition.

DISPOSITION

reversed

CASES CITED

- State v. Lundquist, 60 Wn.2d 397, 403, 374 P.2d 246 (1962)
- Haley v. Highland, 142 Wn.2d 135, 147, 12 P.3d 119 (2000)
- In re Pers. Restraint of Tapley, 72 Wn. App. 440, 448, 865 P.2d 12 (1994)
- State v. Beaver, 110 Wn. App. 519, 522-23, 41 P.3d 1222 (2002)
- State v. Watson, 146 Wn.2d 947, 954-55, 51 P.3d 66 (2002)
- State v. Riles, 135 Wn.2d 326, 341-42, 957 P.2d 655 (1998)
- State v. B.E.W., 65 Wn. App. 370, 375, 828 P.2d 87 (1992)
- State v. Taula, 54 Wn. App. 81, 86, 771 P.2d 1188, review denied, 113 Wn.2d 1007 (1989)
- State v. Bourgeois, 72 Wn. App. 650, 660-61, 866 P.2d 43 (1994)
- State v. S.H., 75 Wn. App. 1, 15, 877 P.2d 205 (1994)
- State v. Sledge, 133 Wn.2d 828, 833-37, 844-46, 947 P.2d 1199 (1997)