

COURT OF APPEALS OF TEXAS, FIFTH DISTRICT AT DALLAS

In re Christi Stembridge

In re Stembridge · No. 05-15-00672-CV · Decided May 28, 2015

SUMMARY

The Fifth District Court of Appeals of Texas denied Christi Stembridge’s petition for writ of mandamus and request for a stay. The court held that her nearly one-year delay in challenging the trial court’s order granting a new trial, without justification, barred mandamus relief.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Court of Appeals of Texas, Fifth District at Dallas
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Elizabeth Lang-Miers; Lang-Miers; Fillmore; Evans
JURISDICTION	Texas
DECIDED	May 28, 2015
DOCKET	05-15-00672-CV
DISPOSITION	writ_denied
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Christi Stembridge petitioned for a writ of mandamus and requested a stay of a scheduled new trial, challenging the trial court's order setting aside a jury verdict and granting a new trial.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Mandamus issues only to correct a clear abuse of discretion when the relator has no adequate remedy by appeal.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published memorandum opinion
PARTIES	Christi Stembridge, Relator

TOPICS

- appellate procedure
- waiver
- remedies
- standard of review

PRACTICE AREAS

- Civil procedure
- Appellate procedure
- Mandamus

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the court of appeals should issue a writ of mandamus directing the trial court to explain with reasonable specificity why it set aside the jury verdict and granted a new trial.

2. Whether Stembridge's nearly one-year delay in seeking mandamus relief barred that extraordinary remedy.

HOLDINGS

1. A relator's unjustified delay in seeking mandamus relief may waive the right to that relief; Stembridge's nearly one-year delay, coupled with her failure to explain the delay and her filing shortly before the scheduled new trial, barred mandamus relief.
2. A writ of mandamus issues only to correct a clear abuse of discretion when no adequate remedy by appeal exists, and issuance is discretionary rather than a matter of right.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“A writ of mandamus issues to correct a clear abuse of discretion when no adequate remedy by appeal exists.” (opinion text at 1)

“Thus, delaying the filing of a petition for mandamus relief may waive the right to mandamus unless the relator can justify the delay.” (opinion text at 1)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

The trial court set aside a jury verdict and granted the real party in interest's motion for a new trial on June 6, 2014. Stembridge did not seek mandamus relief until May 27, 2015, less than two weeks before the new trial was scheduled to begin, and offered no explanation for the delay.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The 162nd Judicial District Court of Dallas County granted the real party in interest's motion for new trial by order dated June 6, 2014, and set a new trial for June 8, 2015. Stembridge waited almost one year to seek mandamus relief and filed her petition less than two weeks before the scheduled new trial. The court of appeals denied the petition.

DISPOSITION

writ_denied

CASES CITED

- Walker v. Packer, 827 S.W.2d 833, 839–40 (Tex. 1992) (orig. proceeding)
- In re Pendragon Transp., LLC, 423 S.W.3d 537, 540 (Tex. App.—Dallas 2014, orig. proceeding)
- Rivercenter Assocs. v. Rivera, 858 S.W.2d 366, 367 (Tex. 1993) (orig. proceeding)
- In re Int'l Profit Assocs., Inc., 274 S.W.3d 672, 676 (Tex. 2009) (orig. proceeding)
- Int'l Awards, Inc. v. Medina, 900 S.W.2d 934, 936 (Tex. App.—Amarillo 1995, orig. proceeding)
- Bailey v. Baker, 696 S.W.2d 255, 256 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1985, orig. proceeding)

OPINION

PER CURIAM.

Deny and Opinion Filed May 28, 2015 S In The Court of Appeals Fifth District of Texas at Dallas No. 05-15-00672-CV IN RE CHRISTI STEMBRIDGE, Relator On Appeal from the 162nd Judicial District Court Dallas County, Texas Trial Court Cause No. DC-11-15373 MEMORANDUM OPINION Before Justices Lang-Miers, Fillmore, and Evans Opinion by Justice Lang-Miers Relator Christi Stemberge filed this May 27, 2015 petition for writ of mandamus and request for stay asking this Court to stay further proceedings in the trial court pending action on the merits of her petition and to conditionally grant a writ of mandamus directing the trial court to “explain with reasonable specificity why it has set aside [the] jury verdict and granted a new trial.” A writ of mandamus issues to correct a clear abuse of discretion when no adequate remedy by appeal exists.

Walker v. Packer, 827 S.W.2d 833, 839–40 (Tex. 1992) (orig. proceeding). Mandamus is an extraordinary remedy, not issued as a matter of right, but at the discretion of the court. In re Pendragon Transp., LLC, 423 S.W.3d 537, 540 (Tex. App—Dallas, 2014, orig. proceeding) (citing Rivercenter Assocs. v. Rivera, 858 S.W.2d 366, 367 (Tex. 1993) (orig. proceeding)).

Although mandamus is not an equitable remedy, its issuance is largely controlled by equitable principles. In re Pendragon, 423 S.W.3d at 540. One such principle is that “equity aids the diligent and not those who slumber on their rights.” Id. Thus, delaying the filing of a petition for mandamus relief may waive the right to mandamus unless the relator can justify the delay.

Id. (citing In re Int’l Profit Assocs., Inc., 274 S.W.3d 672, 676 (Tex. 2009) (orig. proceeding)). Here, relator complains about the trial court’s June 6, 2014 order granting real party in interest’s motion for new trial. And, relator asks this Court to stay the new trial set for June 8, 2015 while considering the merits of relator’s petition. Relator does not offer any reason for the almost one year delay in seeking mandamus relief.

Nor does relator provide any explanation for waiting to file her petition until less than two weeks before the new trial is set. Under these circumstances, we conclude relator’s delay bars her right to mandamus relief. See Rivercenter, 858 S.W.2d at 367 (mandamus relief denied where relator waited over four months to seek mandamus without justification); In re Pendragon., 423 S.W.3d at 540 (mandamus relief denied with respect to appointment of special master because of six-month delay with no explanation in seeking mandamus relief); Int’l Awards, Inc. v. Medina, 900 S.W.2d 934, 936 (Tex.

App.—Amarillo 1995, orig. proceeding) (delay of four months and until eve of trial was ample grounds for denying mandamus relief); Bailey v. Baker, 696 S.W.2d 255, 256 (Tex. App—Houston [14th Dist.] 1985, orig. proceeding) (denying leave to file petition for writ of mandamus where

there was almost four-month delay, no explanation for delay, and relator waited until two weeks prior to trial).

We deny relator's petition for writ of mandamus. 150672F.P05 /Elizabeth Lang-Miers/
ELIZABETH LANG-MIERS JUSTICE -2-