

TENNESSEE COURT OF CRIMINAL APPEALS

State of Tennessee v. Christopher Lance Osteen

No. W2024-00986-CCA-R3-CD (Tenn. Crim. App. Apr. 8, 2026) · No. W2024-00986-CCA-R3-CD · Decided April 8, 2026

SUMMARY

The Tennessee Court of Criminal Appeals dismissed Christopher Lance Osteen's appeal from guilty pleas to two counts of aggravated kidnapping. The court held that Osteen failed to properly reserve dispositive certified questions under Tennessee Rule of Criminal Procedure 37, and therefore lacked jurisdiction to review his speedy-trial and due-process claims.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Tennessee Court of Criminal Appeals
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Camille R. McMullen; J. Ross Dyer; Matthew J. Wilson
JURISDICTION	Tennessee Court of Criminal Appeals
DECIDED	April 8, 2026
DOCKET	W2024-00986-CCA-R3-CD
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	After the trial court denied his motions to dismiss, the defendant entered a guilty plea to two counts of aggravated kidnapping and attempted to reserve three certified questions of law under Tennessee Rule of Criminal Procedure 37. He appealed under Tennessee Rule of Appellate Procedure 3, challenging the trial court's speedy-trial and due-process rulings.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Whether the court had jurisdiction to review a certified question under Tennessee Rule of Criminal Procedure 37(b) is governed by the rule's strict requirements. A certified question is dispositive only if its resolution requires the appellate court to affirm the conviction or reverse and dismiss the charges.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	published
PARTIES	Christopher Lance Osteen v. State of Tennessee

TOPICS

appellate procedure

criminal procedure

speedy trial

due process

PRACTICE AREAS

criminal appellate procedure

criminal procedure

constitutional criminal procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the defendant properly reserved certified questions of law under Tennessee Rule of Criminal Procedure 37(b)(2)(A).
2. Whether the agreed order reflected that the defendant, the State, and the trial court were all of the opinion that the certified questions were dispositive of the case.
3. Whether the certified questions were actually dispositive when answering them would require additional analysis under the Barker v. Wingo speedy-trial factors or the Marion-Dykes due-process test.
4. Whether the certified questions clearly identified the scope and limits of the legal issues, including the reasons relied on by the defendant and the reasons adopted by the trial court.

HOLDINGS

1. Strict compliance with Rule 37(b)(2)(A) is required to perfect the reservation of a certified question and confer appellate jurisdiction after a guilty plea.
2. The reservation was inadequate because the agreed order stated only that all parties considered the questions dispositive; it did not expressly state that the trial court was of that opinion.
3. The certified questions were not dispositive because a ruling in the defendant's favor would not necessarily require dismissal of the charges.
4. The certified questions were insufficiently specific because they did not identify the defendant's reasons for seeking dismissal or the trial court's reasoning for denying the motions.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“A defendant must properly reserve a certified question before this court has jurisdiction to consider the merits of the question.” (at 8)

“Strict compliance, rather than substantial compliance, with the requirements of Rule 37(b) is necessary to perfect the reservation of a certified question of law and to confer jurisdiction on an appellate court following entry of a guilty plea.” (at 9)

“Generally, a “question is dispositive when the appellate court must either affirm the judgment [of conviction] or reverse and dismiss [the charges].”” (at 11)

“Because the Defendant failed to comply with the requirements for an appeal of a certified question, we may not accept jurisdiction where it would not otherwise exist.” (at 13)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

The defendant escaped from a Tennessee correctional complex in December 2020 and was arrested in Florida while subject to Tennessee and Kentucky warrants. He was returned to Tennessee to serve the remainder of his prior sentence and was not served with the Henry County warrants until April 2023. After his motions to dismiss based on speedy-trial and due-process claims were denied, he pleaded guilty to two aggravated-kidnapping counts and sought appellate review through three certified questions.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The defendant was charged in Henry County, Tennessee, after offenses involving two victims. The general sessions court denied his motions to dismiss, and the circuit court likewise denied a motion alleging violations of the Sixth Amendment speedy-trial right and due process. The defendant then pleaded guilty to two aggravated-kidnapping counts, received an effective ten-year sentence, and reserved three certified questions. The Court of Criminal Appeals dismissed the appeal for lack of jurisdiction because the certified-question reservation did not strictly comply with Rule 37(b) and was not dispositive.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- State v. Osteen, No. 2011-02714-CCA-R3-CD, 2013 WL 298042, at *1 (Tenn. Crim. App. Jan. 25, 2013), perm. app. denied (Tenn. June 11, 2013)
- State v. Utley, 956 S.W.2d 489 (Tenn. 1997)
- State v. Irwin, 962 S.W.2d 477, 479 (Tenn. 1998)
- State v. Preston, 759 S.W.2d 647, 650 (Tenn. 1988)
- State v. Day, 263 S.W.3d 891, 899 (Tenn. 2008)
- State v. Armstrong, 126 S.W.3d 908, 912 (Tenn. 2003)
- State v. Springer, 406 S.W.3d 526, 531 (Tenn. 2013)
- State v. Pendergrass, 937 S.W.2d 834, 837-38 (Tenn. 1996)
- State v. Thompson, 131 S.W.3d 923, 923-24 (Tenn. Crim. App. 2003)
- State v. Bolka, No. W2018-00798-CCA-R3-CD, 2019 WL 1958110, at *3 (Tenn. Crim. App. Apr. 30, 2019)
- State v. Graves, No. E2021-00647-CCA-R3-CD, 2022 WL 4835190, at *8-9 (Tenn. Crim. App. Oct. 4, 2022)
- State v. McDonald, No. E2006-02568-CCA-R3-CD, 2007 WL 4460141, at *3 (Tenn. Crim. App. Dec. 20, 2007)
- State v. Wheatley, No. M2019-00071-CCA-R3-CD, 2020 WL 774161, at *3 (Tenn. Crim. App. Feb. 18, 2020)
- State v. Davis, No. W2017-02145-CCA-R3-CD, 2018 WL 3409678, at *6 (Tenn. Crim. App. July 12, 2018)
- State v. Simmons, No. M2003-03064-CCA-R3-CD, 2005 WL 468295, at *3 (Tenn. Crim. App. Feb. 23, 2005)
- State v. Dailey, 235 S.W.3d 131, 134 (Tenn. 2007)
- State v. Wilkes, 684 S.W.2d 663, 667 (Tenn. Crim. App. 1984)

- *Barker v. Wingo*, 407 U.S. 514, 530-33 (1972)
- *United States v. Marion*, 404 U.S. 307, 324-25 (1971)
- *State v. Dykes*, 803 S.W.2d 250, 256 (Tenn. Crim. App. 1990)
- *State v. Potts*, No. M2020-01489-CCA-R3-CD, 2021 WL 4714716, at *5 (Tenn. Crim. App. Oct. 11, 2021)
- *State v. Elliott*, No. M2022-00789-CCA-R3-CD, 2023 WL 2727587, at *7 (Tenn. Crim. App. Mar. 31, 2023), perm. app. denied (Tenn. June 28, 2023)
- *State v. Rickman*, No. W2019-00778-CCA-R3-CD, 2020 WL 1894693, at *2 (Tenn. Crim. App. Apr. 16, 2020)
- *State v. Treat*, No. E2010-02330-CCA-R3-CD, 2011 WL 5620804, at *5 (Tenn. Crim. App. Nov. 18, 2011)
- *State v. Pride*, No. E2010-02214-CCA-R3-CD, 2011 WL 4424354, at *3 (Tenn. Crim. App. Sept. 23, 2011)

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