

COURT OF APPEALS OF OHIO, EIGHTH APPELLATE DISTRICT,
CUYAHOGA COUNTY

State v. Williams

2023-Ohio-456 (Ohio Ct. App. 2023) · No. No. 111622 · Decided February 16, 2023

SUMMARY

The Ohio Eighth District Court of Appeals affirmed Jonathan Williams's conviction for obstructing official business under R.C. 2921.31(A). The court held that evidence that Williams fled from pursuing police officers, despite activated lights and siren, was sufficient to establish an affirmative act intended to impede official duties. The court remanded for a nunc pro tunc sentencing entry correcting inapplicable community-control language.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Court of Appeals of Ohio, Eighth Appellate District, Cuyahoga County
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Kathleen Ann Keough; Frank Daniel Celebrezze, III; Mary Eileen Kilbane
JURISDICTION	Ohio
DECIDED	February 16, 2023
DOCKET	No. 111622
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Williams appealed his misdemeanor conviction for obstructing official business, arguing that the State presented insufficient evidence. The appellate court also considered whether the appeal was moot because Williams had completed his sentence.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	For sufficiency of the evidence, the court asks whether, viewing the evidence in the light most favorable to the prosecution, any rational trier of fact could have found the essential elements proven beyond a reasonable doubt.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published Ohio Court of Appeals opinion
PARTIES	Jonathan Williams v. State of Ohio

TOPICS

- criminal procedure
- appellate procedure
- mootness
- standard of review

PRACTICE AREAS

criminal law

criminal procedure

appellate practice

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Williams's appeal was moot because he had completed the sentence imposed for his misdemeanor conviction.
2. Whether the evidence was sufficient to prove obstructing official business under R.C. 2921.31(A).
3. Whether the sentencing entry accurately reflected the sentence imposed in open court and required correction.

HOLDINGS

1. The appeal was not moot because Williams did not voluntarily serve his sentence. He contested the charges at trial, received 90 days of jail-time credit against a 90-day sentence, and therefore had no sentence upon which to seek a stay.
2. The evidence was sufficient to establish that Williams knowingly fled from the police with the intent to impede Officer Mitri's performance of official duties, thereby satisfying R.C. 2921.31(A).
3. The sentencing entry was inaccurate because it included inapplicable community-control and probation language, so the case was remanded for a nunc pro tunc entry as of and for June 1, 2022.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"The only possible inference from this evidence is that Williams knew he was being pursued by the police and was trying to interfere with Officer Mitri's ability to effectuate a lawful stop."

"Considering the state's evidence in a light most favorable to the prosecution, as we are required to do, we find the evidence sufficient to establish that Williams acted knowingly with an intent to impede Officer Mitri's performance of his official duties and that a reasonable factfinder could have found all the elements of obstructing official business proven beyond a reasonable doubt."

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Police responded to a report of gunshots at a restaurant parking lot and saw Williams run away as an officer approached in a police cruiser. The officer activated the cruiser's lights and siren and pursued Williams through an alley and across a driveway; Williams continued fleeing, attempted to jump a six-foot wall, and later tried to scale a steel fence before being apprehended. The jury acquitted Williams of the other charged offenses but convicted him of obstructing official business.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

A Cuyahoga County grand jury indicted Williams on multiple felony and misdemeanor counts. After a jury trial, he was convicted only of obstructing official business and acquitted of the remaining charges. The trial court imposed a 90-day jail sentence with 90 days of credit, waived costs and fines, and ordered forfeiture of a seized

weapon. Williams appealed, and the appellate court affirmed the conviction but remanded for correction of the sentencing entry through a nunc pro tunc entry.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

The trial court must enter a nunc pro tunc entry as of and for June 1, 2022, removing the inapplicable language stating that Williams was sentenced to one day of community control or probation on each count and that community-control supervision was terminated as of June 1, 2022.

CASES CITED

- State v. Golston, 71 Ohio St.3d 224, 226, 643 N.E.2d 109 (1994)
- State v. Wilson, 41 Ohio St.2d 236, 325 N.E.2d 236 (1975)
- State v. Berndt, 29 Ohio St.3d 3, 504 N.E.2d 712 (1987)
- Cleveland Hts. v. Lewis, 129 Ohio St.3d 389, 2011-Ohio-2673, 953 N.E.2d 278
- State v. Jenks, 61 Ohio St.3d 259, 574 N.E.2d 492 (1991), paragraph two of the syllabus
- Middleburg Hts. v. Szewczyk, 8th Dist. Cuyahoga No. 89930, 2008-Ohio-2043, ¶ 23
- State v. Morris, 8th Dist. Cuyahoga No. 103561, 2016-Ohio-8325
- State v. Vargas, 8th Dist. Cuyahoga No. 97377, 2012-Ohio-2768
- State v. Wilson, 8th Dist. Cuyahoga No. 96627, 2011-Ohio-6886
- State v. Williams, 8th Dist. Cuyahoga No. 89574, 2004-Ohio-4476