

THIRD DISTRICT COURT OF APPEAL OF FLORIDA

James Louis Padgett v. State of Florida

No. 3D25-0349 · No. No. 3D25-0349 · Decided April 23, 2025

SUMMARY

The Third District Court of Appeal of Florida affirmed the denial of James Louis Padgett’s post-conviction appeal. The court held that a life sentence is not impermissibly indefinite under article I, section 17 of the Florida Constitution.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Third District Court of Appeal of Florida
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Per Curiam; Emas; Lobree; Gooden
JURISDICTION	Florida Third District Court of Appeal
DECIDED	April 23, 2025
DOCKET	No. 3D25-0349
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Appeal under Florida Rule of Appellate Procedure 9.141(b)(2) from the Circuit Court for Miami-Dade County challenging the constitutionality of a life sentence as impermissibly indefinite.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published opinion; precedential value under Florida law, subject to timely rehearing proceedings.
PARTIES	James Louis Padgett v. State of Florida

TOPICS

- post-conviction relief
- appellate procedure
- constitutional law

PRACTICE AREAS

- criminal law
- constitutional law
- post-conviction relief
- appellate procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

- Whether a life sentence constitutes impermissible indefinite imprisonment under article I, section 17 of the Florida Constitution.

HOLDINGS

1. A life sentence is not impermissible indefinite imprisonment under article I, section 17 of the Florida Constitution.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“A life sentence is not impermissible “indefinite imprisonment” under the Florida Constitution.” (Opinion at 1)

“It is abundantly clear that the Legislature, by prescribing a sentence of life imprisonment, intends that the defendant remain in prison for the rest of his life. The term ‘life’ is sufficiently definite so that it can be understood and applied.” (Opinion at 1)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Padgett was serving a life sentence and argued that the sentence constituted impermissible indefinite imprisonment under article I, section 17 of the Florida Constitution. The appellate court relied on Florida Supreme Court and Third District precedent holding that a life sentence is sufficiently definite because it requires imprisonment for the remainder of the defendant's life.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Padgett appealed from the Circuit Court for Miami-Dade County, where Richard Hersch was the presiding judge. The Third District Court of Appeal rejected the constitutional challenge to the life sentence and affirmed.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Ratliff v. State, 914 So. 2d 938, 940 (Fla. 2005)
- Alvarez v. State, 358 So. 2d 10, 12 (Fla. 1978)
- Johnson v. Crosby, 897 So. 2d 546, 547 (Fla. 3d DCA 2005)
- Lopez v. State, 895 So. 2d 1282, 1282 (Fla. 3d DCA 2005)
- Enriquez v. State, 885 So. 2d 892, 892 (Fla. 3d DCA 2004)

OPINION

James Louis Padgett v. State of Florida

PER CURIAM.

Third District Court of Appeal State of Florida Opinion filed April 23, 2025. Not final until disposition of timely filed motion for rehearing. _____ No. 3D25-0349 Lower Tribunal No. F87-21570 _____ James Louis Padgett, Appellant, vs. State of Florida, Appellee. An Appeal under Florida Rule of Appellate Procedure 9.141(b)(2) from the Circuit

Court for Miami-Dade County, Richard Hersch, Judge. James Louis Padgett, in proper person. James Uthmeier, Attorney General, and Camilo Montoya, Assistant Attorney General, for appellee. Before EMAS, LOBREE and GOODEN, JJ. PER CURIAM. A life sentence is not impermissible “indefinite imprisonment” under the Florida Constitution. Art. I, § 17, Fla. Const. See also *Ratliff v. State*, 914 So. 2d 938, 940 (Fla. 2005) (“[A]ny sentence, even one of a short duration, can potentially exceed a defendant’s life span. The fact that the judicial system has no way of knowing how long the defendant will live and therefore cannot know how long the defendant will be incarcerated does not render a life sentence unconstitutionally indefinite. It is abundantly clear that the Legislature, by prescribing a sentence of life imprisonment, intends that the defendant remain in prison for the rest of his life. The term ‘life’ is sufficiently definite so that it can be understood and applied.”) (internal citations omitted); *Alvarez v. State*, 358 So. 2d 10, 12 (Fla. 1978) (“We reject the notion that an individual’s life expectancy should be used, or was intended by the Legislature to be used, to mark the longest term which a particular defendant should serve. Any sentence, no matter how short, may eventually extend beyond the life of a prisoner.”); *Johnson v. Crosby*, 897 So. 2d 546, 547 (Fla. 3d DCA 2005); *Lopez v. State*, 895 So. 2d 1282, 1282 (Fla. 3d DCA 2005); *Enriquez v. State*, 885 So. 2d 892, 892 (Fla. 3d DCA 2004). Affirmed. 2