

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
IN THE COURT OF APPEALS

Appeal from the Circuit Court
The Honorable Frank R. Addy, Jr.

Appellate Case No. 2021-001465

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DEC 22 2022

SC Court of Appeals

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA APPELLANT

v.

Joey Reid, #1392728, ...RESPONDENT

FINAL REPLY OF APPELLANT

Matthew C. Buchanan
General Counsel

**South Carolina Department of Probation,
Parole and Pardon Services
P.O. Box 207
Columbia, South Carolina 29202
(803) 734-9220**

ATTORNEY FOR APPELLANT

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Argument in reply

A sentence not appealed by either party is the law of the case even if not authorized by statute when the sentence is not disadvantageous to the defendant.

Respondent seeks for this Court to uphold the trial judge's decision to require a new sentencing proceeding, emphasizing the "illegal" nature of the original sentence while downplaying the fact that the Respondent received a significant benefit in its illegality. Admittedly, the sentencing judge should not have suspended the sentence. However, only upon facing a revocation of probation – which would require service of some or all of that suspended sentence – does the Respondent cry foul.

A ruling not objected to becomes the law of the case. State v. Sampson, 317 S.C. 423, 545 S.E.2d 721 (1995). The sentence pronounced by the Honorable Doyet Early on January 27, 2014, was ripe for appeal and/or objection – it was clearly contrary to statute. However, it was not appealed, nor was it challenged under the post-conviction relief act. Furthermore, it was far from an unconscionable sentence. Per the negotiations agreed to by both Respondent and the Eighth Circuit Solicitor's Office, he agreed to the terms of the sentence which included abiding by the conditions of probation or face a revocation of up to twenty years – a sentence that could have been accomplished by reducing the charge to assault and battery of a high and aggravated nature (ABHAN).

Because neither the State nor the Respondent objected to the sentence, it became the law of the case. While originally not legal, by virtue of neither side appealing or challenging the sentence, either on direct appeal or via PCR, it became binding on the parties. Thus, Judge Addy was not asked to enforce an illegal sentence. The sentence before him was a negotiated sentence agreed upon by both parties and ratified by Judge Early. Ideally, the mistake should have been

caught during the time of the plea because the identical sentence could have been achieved by Respondent pleading guilty to ABHAN. Sadly this did not occur, but because neither side appealed, the finality of the negotiated sentence should be upheld and enforced in the subsequent probation violation proceeding.

Respondent argues that the State should “bear the minimal costs of the mistake in this plea bargain, not Reid.” Br. Of Respondent at 7. Appellant submits that the costs would be significant to the State. A resentencing under attempted murder cannot restore Respondent’s probationary sentence, and anything greater than a suspended sentence would certainly be challenged by Respondent as contrary to the original negotiation. Resuming or renewing plea negotiations, as the Honorable Frank R. Addy, Jr. suggests in his order, would not result in a minimal cost for the State. The original offense was committed in 2012, more than ten years ago. The State is not in the same bargaining position as it was in 2013 and 2014, when witnesses’ recollections were fresher and their whereabouts known. Allowing Respondent to withdraw his plea and forcing the State to prepare for a possible trial years after the finality of a negotiated plea disproportionately punishes the State and rewards Respondent – especially when he failed to live up to his terms of the agreement by violating probation.

Respondent also calls for the Rule of Lenity and cites State v. Quattlebaum,¹ a case of egregious prosecutorial overreach. If anything, this is a case of prosecutorial *underreach*. Agreeing to a probationary sentence is far from egregious. Notably, Respondent did not object to his own negotiated windfall until faced with the consequences of failing to abide by the conditions of probation. Thus, instead of fearing to enforce an “illegal sentence” as done in this case, the court should have embraced the version of judicial estoppel espoused by Judge Few in his dissent in

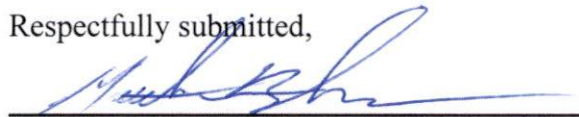
¹ 338 S.C. 441, 527 S.E.2d 105 (2000).

State v. Blakney, 410 S.C. 244, 763 S.E.2d 622 (2014). As discussed by Few, judicial estoppel would “prevent[] a litigant from asserting a position inconsistent with ... one the litigant has previously asserted in the same or related proceeding.” *Id.* At 255 (internal citations omitted). Respondent here *negotiated* for a probationary sentence. Then, years later in a related proceeding (his probation violation hearing), he objected to having received the probationary sentence in the first place. Placing the fault and significant costs upon the State as a consequence for the original sentence unduly burdens the State and unduly rewards Respondent.

Conclusion

Neither party appealed the sentence and Respondent did not challenge his sentence in PCR. As such, the sentence imposed became the law of the case. The violation court could have and should have treated the sentence before it as a fully legitimate sentence to which both Respondent and the State had agreed. Respondent’s objections to the sentence came only *after* he failed to abide by the conditions of supervision. He should not be rewarded and the State should not be forced into a far worse position as a consequence of his actions. The only fault of the State was committing the same mistake that Respondent and the sentencing court also shared. To throw the burden of that mistake years after the fact solely upon the State should not be the solution. The circuit court can and should be authorized to proceed with the violation of probation, where it can exercise its sound discretion – including revocation of the suspended sentence.

Respectfully submitted,



Matthew C. Buchanan #73740
General Counsel

South Carolina Department of Probation,
Parole and Pardon Services
P.O. Box 207
Columbia, South Carolina 29202

Columbia, South Carolina
December 20, 2022

(803) 734-9220

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CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE

The undersigned certifies that the Final Reply Brief of Appellant filed December 20, 2022, complies with Rule 211(b), SCACR, and does not include, or partially redacts, personal data identifiers, Re Revised Order Concerning Personal Identifying Information and Other Sensitive Information in Appellate Court Filings, 407 S.C. 607, 607, 757 S.E.2d 421 (2014) (requiring redaction of social security numbers, names of minor children, financial account numbers, home addresses, and date of birth).

This 20th day of December 1, 2022.



Matthew C. Buchanan
General Counsel
S.C. Bar No. 73740