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SC Court of Appeals

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
IN THE COURT OF APPEALS

Appeal from Lancaster County
The Honorable Brian M. Gibbons, Circuit Court Judge
Case No. 2013-002510

THE STATE, RESPONDENT

v.

JOSEPH WRIGHT, JR., APPELLANT

FINAL BRIEF OF RESPONDENT

Matthew C. Buchanan
General Counsel

**South Carolina Department of Probation,
Parole and Pardon Services
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ATTORNEY FOR THE RESPONDENT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of authorities 3

Statement of issue on appeal 4

Statement of the case 5

Arguments

 1) The Trial Court did not err because the period of probation had not expired 6

 2) Whether the Trial Court erred in entering the November 20, 2013 Order
 after the Defendant withdrew his consent. 8

 3) Whether the Trial Court erred in entering an Order providing for a remedy of
 Civil Contempt 8

Conclusion 9

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

CASES

State v. Dawkins, 352 S.C. 162, 573 S.E. 2d 783 (2002).....7

State v. Hackett, 363 S.C. 177, 609 S.E.2d 553.....7

State v. Miller, 404 S.C. 29, 744 S.E.2d 532 (2013)..... 6

United States v. Green, 429 F.Supp. 1038 (W.D.Tex.1977).7

STATUTES

§24-21-440.....6

§24-21-300.....7

STATEMENT OF ISSUE ON APPEAL

- 1) **The Trial Court did not err because the period of probation had not expired.**
- 2) **Did the Trial Court err in entering the November 20, 2013 Order after the Defendant withdrew his consent?**
- 3) **Did the Trial Court err in entering an Order providing for a remedy of civil contempt?**

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On January 10, 2005, the Appellant pled guilty to financial identity fraud, forgery, and obtaining signatures and property under false pretenses. The court sentenced the Appellant to concurrent 10-year sentences suspended on the service of 60 days incarceration and five years of probation with the special conditions of paying \$45,000 to "bank" and \$5,000 to "Mr. Price." (R.p.1-p.3).

On July 18, 2007, the trial court entered a new Order which set the date of Appellant's probation to begin on July 1, 2007.¹ The Court waived the 60 day incarceration period and ordered the Appellant pay \$100,000 in restitution to Homeowners Mortgage Enterprise. (R.p.4-p.9). The Order also required Appellant to pay \$25,000 by June 10, 2007, and to pay the remaining \$75,000 plus the collection fee during the five years of probation.

On July 14, 2008, probation agents filed a warrant for violation of probation. In the warrant, agents alleged that Appellant never reported to the Richland County Probation Office, failed to provide a verifiable address, absconded supervision, and did not pay supervision fees or restitution. The warrant was served on Appellant on March 27, 2009.

On May 15, 2009, Appellant appeared before the Honorable Judge Dickson on a probation revocation hearing. During that hearing, Judge Dickson signed the Form 9 which revoked 20 days to be served on weekends and ordered the following changes to Appellant's probation:

Maintain monthly payments of \$1875 on restitution throughout supervision. Pay \$5,000.00 on restitution today. Pay \$1875.00 in June 2009. Pay \$1875 in July 2009. Payments to be made directly to attorney Bob Wood. SCDPPPS is released from obligation of collecting restitution. Rest. Acct. to be removed from

¹ It appears that the Appellant was serving another active sentence and began his probation after release from an unrelated offense. (Jan. 14, 2005 Probation Schedule Note).

SCDPPPS. Recommend waive sup. Fees and exempt SF arrearage. Convert fine to civil judgement (sic). Probation begin date is 7/9/08 extend 5 years from that date. Case to be brought back for review in August 2009.

(R.p.10-p.15).

On May 21, 2013, probation agents issued and served a citation on Appellant for financial matters, having a balance left of \$43,468.66 remaining. (R.p.82-p.83). The citation was heard on September 6, 2013, with the attorney for Homeowners in attendance. The trial court terminated probation pursuant to a civil contempt order agreed upon by the parties that day.

The trial court later signed the Order, which was clocked in on November 20, 2013.

(R.p.16-p.18).

The Appellant now brings this appeal before this Court.

ARGUMENTS

1) The Trial Court did not err because the Appellant's probation had not expired.

"The period of probation or suspension of sentence shall not exceed a period of five years and shall be determined by the judge of the court and may be continued or extended within the above limit." §24-21-440.

"South Carolina's appellate courts have expressly recognized the general authority of the circuit court to toll probation." State v. Miller, 404 S.C. 29, 744 S.E.2d 532 (2013).

While the statute outlines the maximum length of time a court can require a person to serve on probation, the court can delay the start of probation until the defendant is released from incarceration. This happens whenever a sentencing court imposes a "split sentence," one which suspends a portion of the sentence to probation but requires a period of incarceration. See State v. Dawkins, 352 S.C. 162, 573 S.E. 2d 783 (2002).

Furthermore, tolling a defendant's probation is appropriate when a defendant absconds from supervision. See State v. Hackett, 363 S.C. 177, 609 S.E.2d 553 (Ct.App.2005) (relying on United States v. Green, 429 F.Supp. 1038 (W.D.Tex.1977)).

In the instant case, the trial court may have imposed the sentence on January 10, 2005, but because of the Appellant's incarceration, probation would not have begun until his release. This is further evidenced by the judge's instruction on the sentence sheet for Indictment No. 2003-GS-40-5503, which has the written instruction "Probation to begin upon release from 60 days." (R.p.1-p.3).

Subsequently, the Restitution Order established a new start time for Appellant's probation of July 1, 2007. Even though the Order also set forth the end date for his probation, Appellant's subsequent actions required that to be revised.

After absconding and failing to report to begin his probation resulting in a warrant being issued, the trial court again revised the Appellant's start of probation. Judge Dickson in his Order May 15, 2009 set the start date at July 9, 2008 and extended the probation again to five years, which resulted in a completion date of July 9, 2013.

By the issuance of the Citation dated May 21, 2013, the agents were able to assert the court's jurisdiction over the Appellant's probation for the subsequent hearing on September 6, 2013. §24-21-300 ("The issuance of a citation or warrant during the period of supervision gives jurisdiction to the court and the board at any hearing on the violation.").

Therefore, through the proper adjustment of Appellant's start date of probation and the proper tolling of the probation due to Appellant's own actions, the trial court did not err in holding jurisdiction over the Appellant on September 6, 2013. During that hearing, the court terminated the Appellant's probation.

When the trial court terminated Appellant's probation, the involvement of the South Carolina Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon Services in this case was also terminated. Further negotiations regarding the Consent Order and the civil contempt did not include agents of the Department. Indeed, it even appears that the Department's involvement regarding Appellant's restitution requirement had been ended with the May 15, 2009 Order.

2) Whether the Trial Court erred in entering the November 20, 2013 Order after the Defendant withdrew his consent.

After the September 6, 2013 Order terminated the Appellant's probation, the Department's involvement in this case was ended. The Department respectfully feels it does not have standing to put forth an argument before this Court.

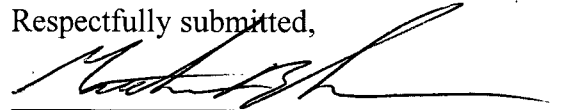
3) Whether the Trial Court erred in entering an Order providing for a remedy of Civil Contempt.

After the September 6, 2013 Order terminated the Appellant's probation, the Department's involvement in this case was ended. The Department respectfully feels it does not have standing to put forth an argument before this Court.

CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing reasons the Respondent respectfully submits that the Trial Court did have jurisdiction over the Probation Citation on September 6, 2013. However, the Respondent respectfully submits it does not have standing to respond to the second and third arguments put forth by Appellant.

Respectfully submitted,



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June 18, 2014

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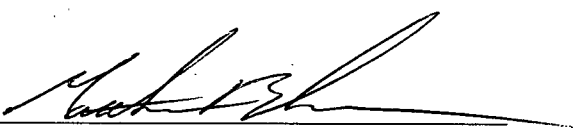
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JOSEPH WRIGHT, JR., APPELLANT

CERTIFICATE OF COUNSEL

The undersigned certifies that this Final Brief complies with Rule 211(b), SCACR and with the South Carolina Supreme Court's order dated August 13, 2007.


Matthew C. Buchanan
General Counsel

June 18, 2014

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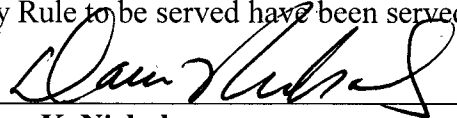
JOSEPH WRIGHT, JR., APPELLANT

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Dawn K. Nichols, Executive Administrative Assistant, hereby certify that I have served the within *Final Brief of Respondent* dated June 18, 2014, on Appellant this 18th day of June, 2014, by depositing a copy of the same in the United States mail, postage prepaid, addressed to his attorney of record:

Hemphill Pride, II, Esquire
PO Box 4529
Columbia, South Carolina 29240

I further certify that all parties required by Rule to be served have been served.

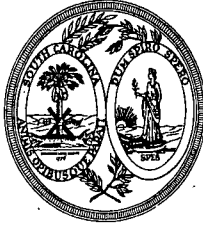


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The Honorable Jenny Kitchings
Clerk of the South Carolina Court of Appeals
1015 Sumter Street- 5th Floor
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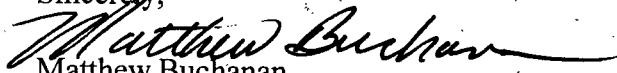
RE: State v. Joseph Wright, Jr.

Dear Ms. Kitchings:

Enclosed please find the original and fourteen (14) copies of the *Final Brief of Respondent*, along with proof of service in the above-referenced case.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,


Matthew Buchanan
General Counsel

MCB:dn

Enclosures

cc: Hemphill Pride, II, Esquire