

FEBRUARY 7, 2025, AT 11:10 A.M.

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF IDAHO

BONITA SUE STEPHENS,)
fka BONITA SUE BUELL,)
)
Petitioner-Appellant,)
)
v.)
)
DOUGLAS VIRGIL BUELL,)
)
Respondent.)

Docket No. 52418

Appeal from the Magistrate Court of the Fifth Judicial District of the State of Idaho,
Jerome County. Stacey DePew, Magistrate Judge.

Lawson Laski Clark, PLLC, Ketchum, for Appellant

Migliuri & Rodriguez, PLLC, Twin Falls, for Respondent

This is a child custody case. Bonita Buell (also known as Bonita Stephens) and Douglas Buell were married and had two sons. Bonita petitioned for divorce in 2015, and the parties divorced in the fall of 2017. Subsequently, in May of 2018, the magistrate court held a multi-day trial on the issue of child custody. Thereafter, the magistrate court entered an order (“2018 Order”) providing Bonita with primary residential custody of the children, subject to Douglas’ visitation every other weekend during the school year and alternating weeks during the summer. The parties were granted joint legal custody of the children. Additionally, the magistrate court ordered that the parties work with a parenting coordinator.

On November 2, 2021, Douglas sought a modification of the 2018 Order. He alleged that there had been a substantial and material change in circumstances since the entry of such order due to Bonita’s behavior, and requested sole legal and physical custody of the children. After a lengthy litigation process and eight days of trial, the magistrate court entered an order (“2024 Order”) granting Douglas with sole legal and physical custody of the children. Bonita requested permission to appeal the 2024 Order directly to the Idaho Supreme Court pursuant to Idaho Appellate Rule 12.2, which the magistrate court granted.

On appeal, Bonita raises eight arguments: (1) that the magistrate court erred by granting Douglas sole legal and physical custody of the children; (2) that the magistrate court erred in limiting her authority to seek medical care and select medical providers for the children; (3) that the magistrate court erred in denying her motion asking the court to interview the children before trial; (4) that the magistrate court erred in granting Douglas' motion to strike her response to Douglas' closing argument; (5) that the magistrate court erred in admitting her personnel file from a previous employer; (6) that the magistrate court erred in ordering her to obtain counseling; (7) that the magistrate court erred in denying her request to remove the parenting coordinator; and (8) that there lacked substantial and competent evidence to support the magistrate court's factual findings regarding her dishonesty.