

SUMMARY STATEMENT

State v. Wharton

Docket No. 48631

This appeal arose out of a traffic stop where a single officer, without independent reasonable suspicion, checked a passenger, Christina Wharton, for outstanding warrants. The officer received a “hit” for a warrant and arrested Wharton. Afterwards, the officer discovered methamphetamine in Wharton’s purse, the rear of the patrol vehicle where Wharton sat, and on Wharton’s person. However, the district court granted Wharton’s motion to suppress the methamphetamine evidence. The district court concluded that the officer unlawfully extended the traffic stop by running a warrant check against Wharton absent independent reasonable suspicion or a safety justification particular to that stop. The State appealed.

On appeal, the Idaho Supreme Court reversed the district court’s decision granting Wharton’s motion to suppress and remanded for further proceedings. The Court explained that under *Rodriguez v. United States*, 575 U.S. 348, 354 (2015), a traffic “mission” includes (1) ordinary inquiries incident to a traffic stop; and (2) negligibly burdensome precautions for officer safety during the stop. The State argued that officers may, as a matter of course, run warrant checks against the driver *and passengers* during a lawful traffic stop because this practice is a negligibly burdensome precaution for officer safety. After employing the Fourth Amendment balancing test, the Court agreed. Accordingly, the Court held the traffic stop was not unlawfully extended when the officer ran a warrant check against Wharton because that practice falls within the traffic stop’s “mission” under *Rodriguez*.

*****This summary constitutes no part of the opinion of the Court but has been prepared by court staff for the convenience of the public.*****