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SUMMARY STATEMENT
State v. Ochoa, Docket No. 48723

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Alejandra Ochoa failed to stop her vehicle at the curb while exiting a convenience store parking lot. She crossed the path of a motorcycle, which collided with her vehicle, killing the operator of the motorcycle. Ochoa was convicted of misdemeanor vehicular manslaughter in Canyon County magistrate court. She appealed her conviction to the district court, which vacated the judgment of conviction and remanded the case for a new trial. The district court held that the magistrate court erred in: (1) excluding certain toxicological evidence showing the presence of methamphetamine in the victim's blood, (2) refusing to grant defendant's request to continue the trial, and (3) allowing the State's pathologist to testify concerning the cause of death based on medical records generated by the treating physicians. The State appealed and the Court of Appeals reversed the district court. This Court granted Ochoa's petition for review.

The Idaho Supreme Court reversed the district court's decisions regarding the exclusion of the toxicology report, the denial of Ochoa's motion for a continuance, and the admission of Dr. Groben's testimony. The Supreme Court determined that the magistrate court did not abuse its discretion when it determined: (1) the toxicology report was inadmissible under Idaho Rules of Evidence 401 because there was no evidence the motorcycle operator was impaired and such speculative evidence would be unfairly prejudicial under Rule 403; (2) Ochoa failed to show prejudice when she was denied a continuance; and (3) the pathologist's testimony, based in part on the reports of the treating physicians, did not serve as a conduit for the introduction of otherwise inadmissible evidence. Accordingly, the Supreme Court remanded this matter to the district court with instructions to reverse its earlier decision and reinstate Ochoa's judgment of conviction.

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

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