

SUMMARY STATEMENT

State v. Goulette

Docket No. 50538-2023

The Idaho Supreme Court affirmed Peter Franklin Goulette's conviction for felony vehicular manslaughter. Goulette entered a guilty plea while maintaining his innocence, pursuant to *North Carolina v. Alford*, 400 U.S. 25 (1970). At his change of plea hearing, the district court asked Goulette if he agreed that there was a strong factual basis to support his guilty plea and Goulette responded affirmatively. The district court did not ask any further questions or state any conclusions on the record regarding the factual basis supporting Goulette's plea and accepted Goulette's plea. After Goulette made his plea, but prior to his sentencing hearing, Goulette filed a report from an accident reconstruction expert that suggested Goulette was not guilty of vehicular manslaughter.

Goulette appealed from his judgment of conviction, primarily arguing that the district court erred when it accepted his *Alford* plea because it failed to inquire into the factual basis of his guilty plea. Goulette also argued that the district court was obligated to re-inquire into the factual basis of his plea at sentencing because the expert report and his attorney's statements at sentencing raised obvious doubt as to Goulette's guilt.

The Court affirmed Goulette's conviction. The Court began by clarifying the standards applicable to accepting an *Alford* plea, holding that *Alford* requires that a guilty plea be entered knowingly, voluntarily, and intelligently but does not require that the plea must be supported by a strong factual basis. The Court then concluded that the record as a whole demonstrated that Goulette entered a knowing, voluntary, and intelligent plea despite his assertion of innocence. The Court also concluded that it was not necessary for the district court to reassess the validity of Goulette's plea at sentencing because the expert report did not raise obvious doubt as to Goulette's guilt.

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