

SUMMARY STATEMENT

State of Idaho v. Stacie Nichol Fitzpatrick

Docket No. 51136

In this case arising out of Ada County, the Court of Appeals vacated Stacie Nichol Fitzpatrick's judgment of conviction for possession of a controlled substance, possession of drug paraphernalia, and being a persistent violator. An officer initiated a traffic stop after observing a vehicle fail to make a complete stop while exiting a parking lot. The officer identified Fitzpatrick as the driver and, while issuing a citation, was joined by a canine-unit officer and a drug dog. The drug dog made physical contact with the vehicle during the drug-detection sniff and ultimately alerted to the presence of narcotics. A subsequent search of the vehicle revealed methamphetamine and drug paraphernalia. Fitzpatrick moved to suppress the evidence, arguing the drug dog's contact with the vehicle rendered the search unlawful. The district court denied Fitzpatrick's motion and the case proceeded to trial. During deliberations, the district court was informed that one juror appeared to be unwilling to cooperate. After questioning the juror, the district court found good cause to excuse the juror and replaced her with an alternate. The jury found Fitzpatrick guilty of both charges and she later pled guilty to a sentencing enhancement. Fitzpatrick moved for a new trial, asserting the district court abused its discretion by excusing the juror. The district court denied Fitzpatrick's motion.

On appeal, Fitzpatrick argued the district court erred in denying her motion to suppress, asserting the district court's finding of probable cause to search her vehicle prior to the drug dog's trespass was not supported by substantial evidence. The Court rejected these arguments, holding that the district court correctly found that the canine-unit officer's bodycam video and testimony established probable cause to search Fitzpatrick's vehicle prior to the drug dog's trespasses. Fitzpatrick also argued the district court abused its discretion in excusing the juror from deliberations. The Court agreed and held there was an insufficient basis to exclude the juror for good cause. As a result, the Court vacated Fitzpatrick's judgment of conviction and remanded the case to the district court.

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