



Iowa General Assembly

2017 Legal Updates

Legislative Services Agency – Legal Services Division

www.legis.state.ia.us
<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/publications/legalPubs/legalUpdates>

Purpose. *Legal update briefings are prepared by the nonpartisan Legal Services Division of the Legislative Services Agency. A legal update briefing is intended to inform legislators, legislative staff, and other persons interested in legislative matters of recent court decisions, Attorney General Opinions, regulatory actions, federal actions, and other occurrences of a legal nature that may be pertinent to the General Assembly's consideration of a topic. Although a briefing may identify issues for consideration by the General Assembly, a briefing should not be interpreted as advocating any particular course of action.*

CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH A LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER MUST END A TRAFFIC STOP

Filed by the Iowa Supreme Court

February 10, 2017, as amended April 19, 2017

State v. Coleman

No. 15-0752

http://www.iowacourts.gov/About_the_Courts/Supreme_Court/Supreme_Court_Opinions/Recent_Opinions/20170210/15-0752.pdf

Factual and Procedural Background. On the evening of August 18, 2014, a law enforcement officer was conducting random checks on the license plates of passing motor vehicles. One check revealed that the female-registered owner of the vehicle, Arvis Quinn, had a suspended driver's license. Because it was too dark for the officer to determine the identity of the vehicle's driver, the officer performed a traffic stop on the vehicle to investigate whether Quinn was operating the vehicle with a suspended driver's license. As the officer approached the vehicle, the officer realized the driver was male. The officer proceeded to request the driver of the vehicle, Jayel Coleman, to produce his driver's license, registration, and proof of insurance. The officer determined that Coleman was driving while barred, and Coleman was later charged accordingly. Coleman filed a pretrial motion to suppress the evidence obtained from the traffic stop, which the district court denied. After a bench trial, Coleman was convicted of the offense. He appealed. The Iowa Supreme Court (Court) transferred his appeal to the Iowa Court of Appeals, which affirmed his conviction. He sought, and was granted, further review by the Court.

Issue on Appeal. Whether a law enforcement officer, after making a legal traffic stop supported by reasonable suspicion that an offense may be occurring, must terminate the stop when the underlying reason for the stop is no longer present.

Holding. Under the search and seizure provision of Article I, Section 8 of the Iowa Constitution, the Court held that a traffic stop must end when the underlying reason for the stop is no longer present.

Analysis. As a preliminary matter, the Court analyzed whether Coleman correctly preserved his claim under Article I, Section 8 of the Iowa Constitution. Generally, if a defendant only identifies the Fourth Amendment to the United States Constitution as the basis for a search and seizure claim in the district court, the defendant's claim under the Iowa Constitution has not been preserved and cannot be considered on appeal. In this case, however, Coleman did not identify either constitution as the basis for his claim in his motion to suppress in the district court. Previously, the Court has held that where there are parallel constitutional provisions and a defendant fails to identify whether a claim is brought under the Iowa or Federal Constitution, both claims are preserved. Accordingly, the Court held that Coleman's claim under the Iowa Constitution was "minimally preserved."

The Court examined the analytic framework used by the United States Supreme Court to evaluate traffic stops under the Fourth Amendment, and discussed cases from various federal circuit courts of appeal and federal district courts. The Court also examined cases decided by supreme courts and courts of appeal of other states, including Florida, Colorado, South Dakota, Oklahoma, Maine, Texas, Wisconsin, and Illinois. Finally, the Court discussed its prior decisions relating to the adjudication of state constitutional issues independent of the approach of the United States Supreme Court, and its prior decisions involving traffic stops. In one such case, *State v. Jackson*, 315 N.W.2d 766 (Iowa 1982), the Court had upheld an officer's request of a person to produce the person's driver's license after the officer had

performed a traffic stop to investigate the validity of a license plate and had determined the plate to be valid. The Court noted that its previous decision was conclusory, was stated without citation to any authority other than the relevant Iowa Code section, and did not mention either the Iowa or Federal Constitution. The Court emphasized a well-recognized distinction in the caselaw that where there is a valid, ongoing traffic stop, officers may properly seek a driver's identification, registration, and proof of insurance. Nevertheless, any extension of any such traffic stop, however minor, is not lawful.

The Court recognized the purpose of Article I, Section 8 of the Iowa Constitution is to ensure governmental power is exercised in a carefully limited manner, and an important means of fulfilling that purpose is to limit the scope and duration of warrantless traffic stops. The Court stated that its recent traffic-stop cases have made the Court aware of the potential for arbitrary government action on Iowa's roads. The Court further recognized that officer safety is a legitimate and weighty interest in the context of traffic stops, and requiring a traffic stop to end after the resolution of the reason for the stop would prevent any further danger arising from the continued detention of the driver. As a result, the Court concluded that when the reason for a traffic stop is resolved and there is no other basis for reasonable suspicion, Article I, Section 8 of the Iowa Constitution requires the officer to end the stop. The Court determined that Coleman's motion to suppress should have been granted, and therefore the Court vacated the decision of the Court of Appeals and reversed the ruling of the district court. The Court overruled *State v. Jackson* to the extent it is inconsistent with the Court's holding.

Dissent. Justice Waterman dissented, joined by Justice Mansfield and Justice Zager. Justice Waterman stated that both Iowa and federal caselaw explicitly support allowing officers to check the driver's license, registration, and proof of insurance as a routine part of any traffic stop. The practice assists law enforcement in identifying dangerous and illegal drivers. Justice Waterman noted that Coleman was barred from driving due to four convictions for driving while barred, two convictions for driving while suspended, several narcotics convictions, and a conviction for second-offense operating-while-intoxicated committed two days prior to the officer stopping Coleman in this case. Justice Waterman further emphasized that the Court's ruling on the preservation of the Iowa constitutional claim rewards the failure of Coleman's trial counsel to identify either the Iowa or Federal Constitution in the district court.

LSA Monitor: Nicholas Schroeder, Legal Services, (515) 725-7323