

Missouri Court of Appeals

Southern District

Division Two

STATE OF MISSOURI,)
Plaintiff-Respondent,))
vs.) No. SD34724
JOSEPH DOBYNS,	Filed: December 21, 2017
Defendant-Appellant.)

APPEAL FROM THE CIRCUIT COURT OF LAWRENCE COUNTY

Honorable Jack A. Goodman, Circuit Judge

AFFIRMED

Joseph Dobyns ("Appellant") claims he did not receive due process because the trial court introduced the court, the circuit clerk, the court reporter, the bailiffs and the prosecuting attorney first during voir dire. After introducing this group of people, the trial judge asked whether anyone was "acquainted with any of them or have you had any business or social relationship with any of them[?]" The trial judge then proceeded to introduce Appellant's counsel and asked the same question. Appellant claims that by introducing people "at the same time as it introduced its own staff, the trial court was

giving off the impression that it favored the prosecution over the defense." Appellant's complaint has no merit.

Counsel for Appellant filed a motion for a mistrial after the introductions. Counsel stated, "The Court introduced the State as if they were part of the judicial system meaning the Judge and the court reporter and circuit clerk and police officers, and then introduced me separate like me and my client are not associated and I believe it shows prejudice and bias." When asked by the trial court if it had said anything specifically to give the impression of prejudice and bias, Appellant's counsel stated he had not. It is hard to understand just what Appellant's complaint is. Presumably, he believes the trial court is required to ask in voir dire whether any of the jurors know the court personnel separately from the state attorneys. Appellant does not cite to a single source that found any error in an introduction such as was given in this trial. Appellant does not cite the standard of review for our review of the voir dire proceedings. We will review the conduct of the trial judge to determine "whether the trial court's conduct is such as to prejudice the minds of the jury against the defendant thereby depriving the defendant of a fair and impartial trial." *State v. Hicks*, 501 S.W.3d 914, 918 (Mo.App. S.D. 2016) (quoting State v. Jackson, 836 S.W.2d 1, 6 (Mo.App. E.D. 1992)). "There is no error as long as the trial judge does not express an opinion as to the nature, content or truthfulness of evidence." Id.

There is absolutely nothing in the trial court's questioning that causes any concern that Appellant did not receive a fair and impartial trial. The trial court had to start the introductions with someone and the progression he chose was logical. The State proceeds first throughout the trial and the State bears the burden of proof. Appellant has

not even alleged that the court had said any specific statement to give the impression of prejudice and bias. The complaint borders on frivolous. The point is denied. The judgment is affirmed.

Nancy Steffen Rahmeyer, P.J. - Opinion Author

Daniel E. Scott, J. - Concurs

William W. Francis, Jr., J. – Concurs