



In the Missouri Court of Appeals Eastern District

DIVISION TWO

STATE OF MISSOURI,	)	No. ED113024
	)	
Respondent,	)	Appeal from the Circuit Court
	)	of Washington County
vs.	)	Cause No. 23WA-CR00376
	)	
MARY J. BARTON,	)	Honorable Patrick L. King
	)	
Appellant.	)	FILED: October 28, 2025

Introduction

Mary Barton (Barton) appeals her conviction for false impersonation. In her sole point on appeal, Barton argues the trial court erred in finding her guilty because there was insufficient evidence demonstrating Victim’s reliance upon Barton’s pretended official authority. We affirm.

Factual and Procedural Background

Viewed in the light most favorable to the verdict, the evidence presented at trial established the following relevant facts. On October 18, 2021, Victim received a phone call from an unknown number. When Victim answered, the caller introduced herself as “Blanca Terrasat,” an “investigator for Washington County Police Department.” The caller told Victim the police had a “missing police report” on her sister, who was badly hurt, and they needed to find her. The caller told Victim she needed to cooperate and asked for information to help locate Victim’s sister,

including names and phone numbers of various family members. Victim complied with this request.

Victim was scared because she was unaware her sister was hurt or missing, so she called the Washington County Sheriff's Office (WCSO)¹ to follow up. She provided Deputy G.G. with the caller's phone number and later learned that her sister was not missing or hurt. Deputy G.G. called the number and a woman answered and identified herself as "Blanca Transite, something like that." The woman further claimed she was an investigator for WCSO. Deputy G.G. was unaware of anyone named Blanca Terrasat or Blanca Transite who was employed at WCSO. Deputy G.G. attempted to get the woman's name and date of birth, but she hung up.

Deputy G.G. contacted WCSO Detective J.K. and requested a number trace. Rather than immediately trace the number, Detective J.K. and Deputy G.G. called the number a second time. The call went to voicemail and the message stated it was Mary Barton. Deputy G.G. recognized Barton's voice from previous interactions. Deputy G.G. testified at trial Barton's recorded voice was "very, very similar" to the woman's voice from the earlier phone call and that Barton had provided the same phone number for previous incident reports.

The State charged Barton with the class A misdemeanor of false impersonation in violation of section 575.120.² The case proceeded to bench trial on May 15, 2024. During the State's direct examination of Victim, the following occurred:

Q: [I]f you had gotten a similar call from an unknown individual that didn't identify themselves as law enforcement, would you have given them the kind of information that you gave to this person?

A: I'm going to say no unless they told me their name and who they was. No.

¹ At trial, the court and prosecuting attorney referred to the Washington County Sheriff's Department, while the law enforcement witnesses referred to it as the Washington County Sheriff's Office. For simplicity, we will refer to it as WCSO.

² All section references are to RSMo (2016).

And during Victim's cross-examination:

Q: And so if you got a phone call and someone said, "Hi, my name is Blank, and I'm looking for information on [your sister]," would you answer questions?

A: I'm going to say yes *if they told me who they was*. Yes.

(Emphasis added). The trial court found Barton guilty. On October 2, 2024, the court sentenced Barton to 180 days in the Washington County Jail. This appeal follows.

Standard of Review

Our review of the sufficiency of the evidence "is limited to whether the State has introduced sufficient evidence for any reasonable juror to have been convinced of the defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt." *State v. Nash*, 339 S.W.3d 500, 508-09 (Mo. banc 2011). We do not assess whether we believe the evidence at trial established guilt beyond a reasonable doubt, rather we determine "whether, in light of the evidence most favorable to the State, any rational fact-finder could have found the essential elements of the crime beyond a reasonable doubt." *Id.* at 509 (internal quotation omitted). We accept as true all favorable evidence to the State, "including all favorable inferences drawn from the evidence," and we disregard all evidence and inferences to the contrary. *Id.*

Discussion

Barton claims there was insufficient evidence Victim answered Barton's questions in reliance on her pretended official authority as a law enforcement investigator. We disagree because Victim's responses to Barton's questions and her subsequent follow-up with WCSO indicate Victim relied on Barton's law enforcement officer representation.

Section 575.120.1 provides in relevant part:

A person commits the offense of false impersonation if such person:

(1) Falsely represents himself or herself to be a public servant with the purpose to induce another to submit to his or her pretended official authority or to rely upon his or her pretended official acts; and

....

(b) Causes another to act in reliance upon his or her pretended official authority[.]

False impersonation is generally a class B misdemeanor but becomes a class A misdemeanor if the person represents himself or herself as a law enforcement officer. Section 575.120.5.

Actions taken in response to representation that an individual is a law enforcement officer, whether during or after the representation, are indicative of a reliance on that representation. *See State v. O'Toole*, 83 S.W.3d 622, 629 (Mo. App. E.D. 2002). In *O'Toole*, a patrolman conducted a traffic stop of the defendant, who identified himself as a police officer. *Id.* at 625. The patrolman as a practice asks off-duty police officers about any weapons in their vehicle, and he asked the defendant the same. *Id.* The defendant replied he had a gun in his glove box, but the patrolman did not seize it due to the defendant's claim he was a police officer. *Id.* The highway patrolman became suspicious of the defendant's documents and asked for the name of his supervisor. *Id.* at 626. The defendant named several people, including another retired highway patrolman, whom this patrolman knew. *Id.* The highway patrolman was unable to verify the defendant was a police officer, and placed the defendant under arrest for false impersonation. *Id.* After his arrest, the defendant admitted he was not a police officer and claimed instead he was a St. Louis Circuit Attorney's office investigator. *Id.* The patrolman contacted multiple law enforcement agencies, but found no evidence the defendant was law enforcement. *Id.*

After the defendant was convicted for false impersonation, he argued on appeal there was insufficient evidence supporting his conviction because the State's evidence showed the patrolman did not act in reliance on the defendant's pretended official authority. *Id.* at 628. The court affirmed, holding the patrolman's actions, continuing after the defendant's arrest, showed he

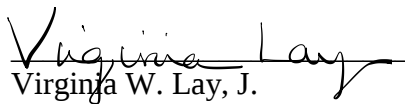
“attached at least some credibility” to the defendant’s representation. *Id.* at 629. The court cited the time spent both during the traffic stop and after the defendant’s arrest attempting to determine whether the defendant was a police officer, and that the patrolman did not seize the defendant’s gun because he was trying to determine the truth of the defendant’s claims. *Id.*

Here, sufficient evidence existed from which a reasonable trier of fact could find Victim acted in reliance on Barton’s pretended official authority. As in *O’Toole*, Victim relied on Barton’s representation both at the time of and subsequent to that representation. Barton, identifying herself as an investigator, told Victim she was looking for Victim’s sister, who was missing and badly injured, and that Victim needed to cooperate with her. To aid in the search, Barton requested Victim provide contact information for family members, which Victim provided. Furthermore, Victim became scared and immediately contacted WCSO to obtain information about her sister, demonstrating she “attached at least some credibility” to Barton’s representation that she was an investigator with a law enforcement agency. *See id.* Point denied.

Conclusion

For the reasons set forth above, we affirm the trial court’s judgment.

Michael S. Wright, P.J., concurs.
Philip M. Hess, J., concurs.


Virginia W. Lay, J.