Summary of SC101563, *State of Missouri v. Lisa Coots*
Appeal from the Worth County circuit court, Judge Corey K. Herron
Argued and submitted September 1, 2026; opinion issued November 10, 2026

Attorneys: Coots was represented by Ellen H. Flottman of the public defender's office in Columbia, (573) 777-9977. The state was represented by Nathan J. Aquino of the attorney general's office in Jefferson City, (573) 751-3321.

This summary is not part of the Court's opinion. It is provided by communications counsel for the convenience of the reader to help understand issues in the opinion. Any quotes or citations should be to the Court's opinion, not this summary.

Overview: A woman appeals her judgment of conviction for two drug-related charges. In a unanimous decision written by Judge Paul C. Wilson, the Supreme Court of Missouri affirms the judgment. Based on the totality of the circumstances, the law enforcement officer had reasonable suspicion the vehicle contained drugs and ultimately to search the vehicle. Additionally, there was sufficient evidence to find the woman guilty of possessing drug paraphernalia.

Facts: Lisa Coots was a passenger in a vehicle a highway patrol corporal stopped for speeding. The driver appeared to be unduly nervous and admitted he had a criminal history, had used methamphetamine within the last couple of days, and said he had been coming from a location the corporal knew to be associated with drug sales and use. When asked for his passenger's name, he responded with a spelling the corporal believed was intentionally false and intended to mislead. The driver denied consent to search the vehicle. As a result of the driver's behavior and responses, the corporal suspected there may be contraband in the vehicle. While the corporal was still entering information for the speeding ticket, he asked for a K-9 unit. The police dog alerted to the presence of drugs, and the corporal searched the vehicle, finding methamphetamine in the center console and, in a backpack on the front passenger floorboard, a straw and baggies of methamphetamine and oxycodone pills. The corporal arrested both the driver and Coots. The state charged Coots as a prior offender and prior drug offender with one count each of second-degree drug trafficking and possession of drug paraphernalia. Coots moved to suppress the evidence on the ground the corporal exceeded the scope of the initial stop and unreasonably prolonged her detention without reasonable suspicion for doing so. The circuit court overruled the motion. Following trial, the jury found Coots guilty, and the circuit court sentenced her to concurrent terms of seven years in prison plus 30 days. Coots appeals.

AFFIRMED.

Court en banc holds: (1) The circuit court did not err in overruling Coots' motion to suppress. Given the totality of the circumstances, the corporal had reasonable suspicion the vehicle contained drugs, justifying the very short delay in summoning the K-9 unit. Only 18 minutes passed from the time the corporal saw driver speeding to the time the K-9 unit arrived, and the police dog alerted only minutes later. While awaiting the K-9 unit, the corporal continued the tasks required by the stop and had not yet finished ticketing the driver before the K-9 unit arrived. The driver's behavior and responses when speaking with the corporal gave the corporal reasonable suspicion to believe the vehicle contained drugs and to extend the stop.

(2) The evidence was sufficient for a reasonable juror to find Coots guilty of possessing drug paraphernalia. She challenges only whether there was sufficient evidence to support the fourth element of the crime, which lists 22 different purposes for which a person knowingly uses, or possesses with intent to use, drug paraphernalia. In a sufficiency of the evidence claim, the state need only prove the elements of the crime as laid out in the statute, so it does not matter which of the 22 purposes the evidence proves. Any reasonable juror looking at the evidence could find Coots possessed the straw for a number of the 22 purposes, including to pack, repack, store, contain, or conceal drugs. This Court, therefore, need not and does not decide whether a reasonable juror could infer Coots possessed the straw for the purpose with which she was charged and the jury was instructed – inhaling drugs.