

**Fifth Circuit Court of Appeal  
State of Louisiana**

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No. 26-K-267

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STATE OF LOUISIANA

*versus*

BASIN WELLS

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**IN RE BASIN WELLS**

APPLYING FOR SUPERVISORY WRIT FROM THE TWENTY-FOURTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT, PARISH OF JEFFERSON, STATE OF LOUISIANA, DIRECTED TO THE HONORABLE R. CHRISTOPHER COX, III, DIVISION "B", NUMBER 23-5755

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**TRUE COPY**

July 06, 2026



MORGAN NAQUIN  
DEPUTY CLERK

Panel composed of Judges Stephen J. Windhorst,  
Michael P. Mentz, Pro Tempore, and Timothy S. Marcel

**WRIT DENIED**

In this writ application, Basin Wells requests we exercise our supervisory jurisdiction to review the trial court's April 21, 2026 denial of his motion to suppress evidence.<sup>1</sup> Relator is charged by bill of information with violation of La. R.S. 40:1041, in that he knowingly or intentionally received or acquired proceeds derived from a violation of La. R.S. 40:966 et. seq. On the showing made, we find no error in the trial court's ruling.

On May 9, 2023, task force agents with the Drug Enforcement Agency and the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office conducted drug "interdiction duties" at the New Orleans International Airport in Kenner, Louisiana. In plain clothes, with badges displayed, the task force agents were positioned at the departure gate of an outbound flight from New Orleans to Los Angeles, California. According to the suppression hearing testimony of Detective Leon James, that location

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<sup>1</sup> The motions to suppress the evidence and the statement were not attached to the writ application as required by Uniform Rules – Courts of Appeal, Rule 4-5(C)(8), which states that the writ application shall contain a copy of each pleading on which the judgment, order, or ruling was founded.

within the airport was chosen by agents because Los Angeles is a source city for drug trafficking. Agents were monitoring the boarding crowd for any type of suspicious or unusual behavior. Their attention was drawn to a Black male in the boarding line who, after noticing the agents' presence, appeared nervous – looking back and forth over his shoulder - and began acting in a suspicious manner. While the line of boarding passengers moved forward, that male, later identified as relator, stepped out of the line and started to walk away from the gate through the concourse, down to the baggage claim level, and exited the building. Detective James and another agent followed relator through the airport. As he exited the building, agents called out “sir, can we speak with you?” Relator then ran toward the long-term parking garage pursued by the agents. Inside the parking garage, relator tripped and fell, where relator was initially detained by the pursuing agents. Once detained, relator uttered to the agents “I don’t want to go back to jail.” Detective James then advised relator of his rights, which relator waived after acknowledging an understanding of those rights.

In response to questions from agents, relator reported that he was not in possession of drugs but did have stacks of money and then consented to a search of his carry-on suitcase. Detective James testified that he observed several stacks of currency wrapped in black rubber bands inside the suitcase, which he believed to be associated with drug trafficking. Afterwards, relator was transported to the investigative bureau. Relator consented to the search of his cell phone, providing agents with the passcode. According to Detective James’ testimony, his partner recognized relator from a previous enforcement encounter, and relator’s cell phone contained detailed communications with another individual regarding marijuana sales.

Relator filed motions to suppress his statements to agents as well as the \$13,000 in currency that agents recovered from his suitcase and the communications extracted from his cellphone on grounds the agents did not have a reasonable suspicion for his detention at the airport. The trial court denied relator’s motions. In his writ application before us, relator challenges the trial court’s finding that the agents’ investigatory stop, detention, and arrest did not violate relator’s constitutionally protected rights.

Individuals are protected against unreasonable searches and seizures by the Fourth Amendment of the United States Constitution and Article I, § 5 of the Louisiana Constitution. *State v. Richardson*, 18-401 (La. App. 5 Cir. 2/6/19), 265 So.3d 1006, 1010. Law enforcement officers are permitted to stop and interrogate an individual in a public place who they reasonably suspect is committing, has committed, or is about to commit an offense and demand that the person identify himself and explain his actions under the authority of La. C.Cr.P. art. 215.1, as well as by state and federal jurisprudence. *Terry v. Ohio*, 392 U.S. 1, 88 S.Ct. 1868, 20 L.Ed.2d 889 (1968); *State v. Abrego*, 21-166 (La. App. 5 Cir. 12/1/21), 334 So.3d 883, 888, *writ denied*, 21-1949 (La. 2/22/22), 333 So.3d 450. Reasonable suspicion, which is something less than probable

cause to arrest, requires that police officers have sufficient knowledge of facts and circumstances to justify an infringement of the individual's right to be free from government interference. *State v. Sam*, 05-88 (La. App. 5 Cir. 5/31/05), 905 So.2d 379, 383- 84, *writ denied*, 05-2100 (La. 3/10/06), 925 So.2d 510. Police do not have to observe what they know to be criminal behavior before investigating. *State v. McKnight*, 22-499 (La. App. 5 Cir. 5/24/23), 366 So.3d 798, 804. The determination of reasonable grounds for an investigatory stop does not rest on the officer's subjective beliefs or attitudes but is dependent on an objective evaluation of all the circumstances known to the officer at the time of his challenged action. *Id.*

Evidence derived from an unreasonable search or seizure is subject to exclusion from trial. *State v. Boss*, 04-457 (La. App. 5 Cir. 10/26/04), 887 So.2d 581, 585. In a hearing on a motion to suppress evidence obtained without a warrant, the State bears the burden of proof in establishing its admissibility. La. C.Cr.P. art. 703(D); *State v. Morales*, 12-454 (La. App. 5 Cir. 12/18/12), 125 So.3d 1141, 1145.

On appellate review, the trial court's ruling on a motion to suppress is afforded great discretion and is subject to the abuse of discretion standard of review. *Abrego*, 334 So.3d at 889. A reviewing court is to analyze the evidence in light of the totality of the circumstances, giving deference to the inferences and deductions of a trained police officer that might elude an untrained person. *McKnight*, 366 So.3d at 804. This Court has previously determined that conduct substantially similar to that exhibited by relator in this case provided reasonable suspicion for justifying the initial stop of a defendant. *See State v. Sider*, 96-508 (La. App. 5 Cir. 12/11/96), 686 So.2d 929, 933, *writ denied*, 97-94 (La. 5/16/97), 693 So.2d 797; *State v. Jones*, 624 So.2d 1249, 1256-57 (La. App. 5 Cir. 1993), *writ denied*, 634 So.2d 371 (La. 1994); *State v. Garriga*, 592 So.2d 453 (La. App. 5 Cir. 1991), *writ denied*, 596 So.2d 553 (La. 1992).

Based on the record before us, we find the trial court did not abuse its discretion in finding the agents had reasonable suspicion to justify an investigatory stop of relator. Accordingly, relator's writ application is denied.

Gretna, Louisiana, this 6th day of July, 2026.

TSM  
SJW  
MPM

SUSAN M. CHEHARDY  
CHIEF JUDGE

FREDERICKA H. WICKER  
JUDE G. GRAVOIS  
MARC E. JOHNSON  
STEPHEN J. WINDHORST  
JOHN J. MOLAISSON, JR.  
SCOTT U. SCHLEGEL  
TIMOTHY S. MARCEL

JUDGES



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CURTIS B. PURSELL  
CLERK OF COURT

SUSAN S. BUCHHOLZ  
CHIEF DEPUTY CLERK

LINDA M. TRAN  
FIRST DEPUTY CLERK

MELISSA C. LEDET  
DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL STAFF

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**NOTICE OF DISPOSITION CERTIFICATE OF DELIVERY**

I CERTIFY THAT A COPY OF THE DISPOSITION IN THE FOREGOING MATTER HAS BEEN TRANSMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH **UNIFORM RULES - COURT OF APPEAL, RULE 4-6** THIS DAY **07/06/2026** TO THE TRIAL JUDGE, THE TRIAL COURT CLERK OF COURT, AND AT LEAST ONE OF THE COUNSEL OF RECORD FOR EACH PARTY, AND TO EACH PARTY NOT REPRESENTED BY COUNSEL, AS LISTED BELOW:

**CURTIS B. PURSELL**  
CLERK OF COURT

**26-K-267**

**E-NOTIFIED**

24th Judicial District Court (Clerk)  
R. Christopher Cox, III (DISTRICT JUDGE)  
Honorable Paul D. Connick, Jr. (Respondent)

Devin C. Jones (Relator)  
Thomas J. Butler (Respondent)

**MAILED**

Sarah Helmstetter (Respondent)  
Assistant District Attorney  
Twenty-Fourth Judicial District  
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