

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF APPEALS OF WEST VIRGINIA

September 1993 Term

No. 21767

STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
EX REL. MOUNTAINEER PARK, INC.,
A WEST VIRGINIA CORPORATION,
Petitioner

V.

CHARLES POLAN, SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT
OF ADMINISTRATION OF THE STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA,
AND RONALD RILEY, DIRECTOR OF THE PURCHASING
DIVISION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION
OF THE STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA,
BOTH IN THEIR OFFICIAL CAPACITIES ONLY,
Respondents

No. 21768

STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA EX REL.
THE WEST VIRGINIA STATE LOTTERY COMMISSION,
Petitioner

V.

CHARLES POLAN, SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT
OF ADMINISTRATION OF THE STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA,
AND RONALD RILEY, DIRECTOR OF THE PURCHASING
DIVISION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION
OF THE STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA,

BOTH IN THEIR OFFICIAL CAPACITIES ONLY,
Respondents

PETITIONS FOR WRITS OF MANDAMUS

WRITS DENIED

Submitted: September 14, 1993

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JUSTICE McHUGH delivered the Opinion of the Court.

SYLLABUS BY THE COURT

1. Article VI, section 36 of the West Virginia Constitution provides an exception to the prohibition against lotteries to allow the operation of a lottery which is regulated, controlled, owned and operated by the State of West Virginia in the manner provided by general law. Only those lottery operations which are regulated, controlled, owned and operated in the manner provided by general laws enacted by the West Virginia Legislature may be properly conducted in accordance with the exception created under article VI, section 36 of our Constitution.

2. In order for a delegation of authority by the legislature to an administrative agency to be constitutional, the legislature must prescribe adequate statutory standards to guide the agency in the administration of the statute, and not grant the agency unbridled authority in the exercise of the power conferred upon it. A general delegation of authority by the legislature to the Lottery Commission under W. Va. Code, 29-22-9(b)(2) [1990], authorizing it to promulgate rules and regulations with regard to "electronic video lottery systems," is clearly not a sufficient statutory standard which would vest the Lottery Commission with power to include electronic gaming devices, such as electronic video lottery, as part of the operations of the state lottery. To hold otherwise would result in an unlawful delegation of legislative power to the Lottery Commission and would violate article VI, § 36 of the West Virginia Constitution.

3. "As a general rule the Legislature, in delegating discretionary power to an administrative agency, such as a board or a commission, must prescribe adequate standards expressed in the statute or inherent in its subject matter and such standards must be sufficient to guide such agency in the exercise of the power conferred upon it." Syl. pt. 3, *Quesenberry v. Estep*, 142 W. Va. 426, 95 S.E.2d 832 (1956).

4. "'Wherever an act of the Legislature can be so construed and applied as to avoid a conflict with the Constitution, and give it the force of law, such construction will be adopted by the courts.' Syllabus Point 3, *Slack v. Jacobs*, 8 W. Va. 612 (1875)." Syl. pt. 1, *Perilli v. Board of Education*, 182 W. Va. 261, 387 S.E.2d 315 (1989).

5. "'A writ of mandamus will not issue unless three elements coexist--(1) a clear legal right in the petitioner to the relief sought; (2) a legal duty on the part of respondent to do the thing which the petitioner seeks to compel; and (3) the absence of another adequate remedy.' Syllabus point 2, *State ex*

rel. Kucera v. Wheeling, 153 W. Va. 538, 170 S.E.2d 367 (1969)."
Syl. pt. 4, Delardas v. County Court of Monongalia County, 158 W.
Va. 1027, 217 S.E.2d 75 (1975).

McHugh, Justice:

In these original proceedings in mandamus, the petitioners, Mountaineer Park, Inc. (hereinafter "Mountaineer") and the West Virginia Lottery Commission (hereinafter "Lottery Commission"), each seek a writ from this Court to compel the respondents, Charles M. Polan and Ron Riley, to approve a contract entered into between the petitioners for the operation of an electronic video lottery game. For the reasons stated herein, we deny both writs.

I.

On November 6, 1984, the voters of the State of West Virginia ratified an amendment to article VI, section 36 of the West Virginia Constitution to allow the legislature to "authorize lotteries which are regulated, controlled, owned and operated by the State of West Virginia in the manner provided by general law, either separately by this State or jointly or in cooperation with one or more other states[.]" Upon receiving voter approval, the legislature enacted the State Lottery Act, W. Va. Code, 29-22-1 through 29-22-28, "to establish and implement a state-operated lottery[.]" W. Va. Code, 29-22-2 [1985].

The State Lottery Act provides that the lottery is to be operated under the supervision of the Lottery Commission and its director. Under the Act, the Lottery Commission was first authorized to initiate a "preprinted instant winner type lottery." W. Va. Code, 29-22-9(a) [1990]. The Act further provides that the "commission shall proceed with operation of such additional lottery games, including the implementation of games utilizing a variety of existing or future technological advances at the earliest feasible date." W. Va. Code, 29-22-9(c) [1990].

Within a year after the enactment of the State Lottery Act, lottery operations began; first with the sale of instant game tickets in January of 1986, and then with the implementation of an "on-line game" the following month. In 1990, the Lottery Commission expanded lottery operations by entering into a three-year contract with Mountaineer for the operation of an electronic video lottery game at Mountaineer's thoroughbred race track in Hancock County, West Virginia. The video lottery terminals, which are provided by Mountaineer under its contract with the Lottery Commission, are owned by Scientific Games, Inc.

In 1993, Senate President Keith Burdette, in response to concerns raised by certain senators regarding the continuation and expansion of electronic video lottery, requested that Attorney General Darrell V. McGraw issue an opinion as to whether private ownership of the video lottery terminals was

constitutionally permissible. Attorney General McGraw opined that article VI, section 36 of the Constitution requires that the state own all "devices" used in conjunction with the state lottery.

Thereafter, the Lottery Commission and Mountaineer submitted a contract amendment and extension agreement to the director of the Purchasing Division of the Department of Administration for approval. In a letter dated May 21, 1993, Mr. Riley, the director of the purchasing division and a respondent herein, refused to approve the contract amendment and agreement extension based upon the Attorney General's opinion that the video lottery terminals must be owned by the State of West Virginia.

The Lottery Commission and Mountaineer each now seek a writ of mandamus from this Court to compel the respondents to approve their contract amendment and extension agreement on the ground that the Constitution does not mandate that the State own the video lottery terminals.

II.

As an initial matter, we point out that the parties to these mandamus proceedings have focused their arguments on the issue of whether the West Virginia Constitution mandates that the State must own each component of electronic video lottery. In our review, however, we have found that the more crucial inquiry is whether the Constitution requires the legislature to pass laws which prescribe: (1) the manner in which electronic video lottery operations are regulated, controlled, owned and operated before any can be properly conducted; and (2) sufficient standards to guide the Lottery Commission so that the delegation of authority is constitutional and does not vest the Lottery Commission with uncontrolled discretion.

Thus, in reaching our decision today, we are guided by the basic principles governing constitutional construction and interpretation. We succinctly stated these principles in *State ex rel. Brotherton v. Blankenship*, 157 W. Va. 100, 108, 207 S.E.2d 421, 427 (1973):

The fundamental principle in constitutional construction is that effect must be given to the intent of the framers of such organic law and of the people who ratified and adopted it. . . . If the language of a constitutional provision is plain and unambiguous it is not subject to judicial interpretation, the intent of the framers and the people being readily ascertainable therefrom. When an ambiguity appears,

however, ordinary principles employed in statutory construction must be applied to ascertain such intent. It must, therefore, first be determined whether the constitutional provision in question is imbued with ambiguity.

(citations omitted). Simply put, the object of constitutional construction and interpretation is to give effect to the intent of the people in adopting it. *Diamond v. Parkersburg-Aetna Corp.*, 146 W. Va. 543, 122 S.E.2d 436 (1961); *State ex rel. Trent v. Sims*, 138 W. Va. 244, 77 S.E.2d 122 (1953). However, where the provision of the Constitution "is clear in its terms and of plain interpretation to any ordinary and reasonable mind, it should be applied and not construed." Syl. pt. 4, *State ex rel. Casey v. Pauley*, 158 W. Va. 298, 210 S.E.2d 649 (1975); syl. pt. 3, *State ex rel. Smith v. Gore*, 150 W. Va. 71, 143 S.E.2d 791 (1965).

Moreover, when, as here, this Court is called upon to either interpret or construe an exception to a constitutional provision, such exception must be "strictly construed and limited to objects fairly within their terms." 16 Am. Jur. 2d Constitutional Law § 108 p. 452 (1979) (footnote omitted). See 16 C.J.S. Constitutional Law § 18 p. 67 (1984).

Another equally important principle this Court must consider is that the legislature may not vest an administrative agency with uncontrolled discretion. The legislature may not grant an administrative agency unbridled authority under an enabling statute; the delegation of authority to the agency in connection with the administration of statutes must be circumscribed by rules for the guidance of the agency. 16 C.J.S. Constitutional Law § 143 (1984). We recognized this fundamental principle of constitutional law in syllabus point 3 of *Quesenberry v. Estep*, 142 W. Va. 426, 95 S.E.2d 832 (1956):

As a general rule the Legislature, in delegating discretionary power to an administrative agency, such as a board or a commission, must prescribe adequate standards expressed in the statute or inherent in its subject matter and such standards must be sufficient to guide such agency in the exercise of the power conferred upon it.

See *State ex rel. West Virginia Housing Development Fund v. Waterhouse*, 158 W. Va. 196, 212, 212 S.E.2d 724, 733 (1974); *State ex rel. West Virginia Housing Development Fund v.*

Copenhaver, 153 W. Va. 636, 171 S.E.2d 545 (1969); Meisel v. Tri-State Airport Authority, 135 W. Va. 528, 64 S.E.2d 32 (1951).

Finally, an administrative agency can only exercise such powers as those granted by the legislature, and if such agency exceeds its statutory authority, its action may be nullified by this Court. *State Human Rights Comm'n v. Pauley*, 158 W. Va. 495, 212 S.E.2d 77 (1975), disapproved of on another point, *State ex rel. Human Rights Comm'n v. Pearlman Realty Agency*, 161 W. Va. 1, 239 S.E.2d 145 (1977).

Keeping in mind these fundamental principles, we now briefly review the history of the constitutional provision relating to lotteries. At the first constitutional convention of the State of West Virginia, the framers of our state Constitution adopted, without debate, a prohibition against lotteries. 1 *Debates and Proceedings of the First Constitutional Convention of West Virginia 1861-1863* pp. 51, 673-74. Article XI, section 1 of the original constitution provided that "[n]o lottery shall be authorized by law; and the buying, selling or transferring of tickets or chances in any lottery shall be prohibited." 3 *Debates and Proceedings of the First Constitutional Convention of West Virginia 1861-1863* p.881.

The absolute prohibition against lotteries remained part of our Constitution until 1983, when the Senate and the House approved a state-run lottery amendment to be placed on the ballot for voter ratification in the 1984 general election. The proposed amendment was summarized on the ballot as follows: "To amend the State Constitution to permit the Legislature to pass laws authorizing state operated and controlled lotteries." (emphasis added). In 1984, the voters ratified this amendment to allow the legislature to pass laws establishing a state-run lottery. Accordingly, article VI, section 36 of the West Virginia Constitution was amended to provide an exception to the prohibition against lotteries. Article VI, section 36 of the Constitution now provides, in relevant part:

The legislature shall have no power to authorize lotteries or gift enterprises for any purpose, and shall pass laws to prohibit the sale of lottery or gift enterprise tickets in this State; except that the legislature may authorize lotteries which are regulated, controlled, owned and operated by the State of West Virginia in the manner provided by general law, either separately by this State or jointly or in cooperation with one or more other States.

(emphasis added). The exception to the prohibition against lotteries created by this constitutional amendment is the center of the controversy in the case now before us.

A.

Video Lottery in Other States

Legislatures in other states, which have similar constitutional provisions, have enacted specific statutes authorizing video lottery games. A good example is South Dakota. The exception to the prohibition against lotteries under the South Dakota Constitution is substantially the same as the exception found under our Constitution.

The South Dakota Legislature enacted statutes establishing and regulating video lottery operations. Specifically, the South Dakota Legislature: (1) set forth the requirements for licensed video lottery machines, S.D. Codified Laws Ann. § 42-7A-37 (1991); (2) placed restrictions on licensed establishments, S.D. Codified Laws Ann. § 42-7A-37.1 (Supp. 1993); (3) established limits on the amount played and the awards given, S.D. Codified Laws Ann. § 42-7A-38 (1991); (4) required a background investigation of video lottery licensees, S.D. Codified Laws Ann. § 42-7A-43 (Supp. 1993); (5) stated the rules for placement of video lottery machines in establishments, S.D. Codified Laws Ann. § 42-7A-44 (Supp. 1993); (6) established criminal penalties for tampering with a video lottery machine and manipulating the outcome, payoff or operation of a video lottery machine, S.D. Codified Laws Ann. §§ 42-7A-46 and 42-7A-47 (1991); and (7) established the age limit and legal hours for the operation of video lottery machines, S.D. Codified Laws Ann. § 42-7A-48 (1991).

Similar statutory provisions authorizing video lottery games have been enacted by the Rhode Island General Assembly. The Constitution of Rhode Island provides an exception, comparable to the exceptions found under the Constitutions of South Dakota and West Virginia, to the general prohibition against lotteries. The Rhode Island General Assembly enacted Chapter 61.2 of Volume 6C of the General Laws of Rhode Island. In addition to setting forth the powers and duties of the Lottery Commission with respect to video lotteries, R.I. Gen. Laws §§ 42-61.2-2 to 42-61.2-4 (Supp. 1992), the General Assembly placed restrictions upon whom may play, R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-61.2-5 (Supp. 1992), and when video lottery may be played, R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-61.2-6 (Supp. 1992). The General Assembly also specified the allocation of the income derived from video lottery

games, R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-61.2-7 (Supp. 1992), and established penalties for tampering with or manipulating the outcome, payoff or operation of the video lottery terminal, R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-61.2-8 (Supp. 1992).

As a final example, we recognize the laws established in Oregon for the operation of video lottery. While article XV, section 4 of the Oregon Constitution prohibits the operation of any lottery, it does create certain exceptions, including the operation of a state-run lottery by the Lottery Commission. The Oregon Legislative Assembly authorized the Lottery Commission to initiate games using video lottery devices, Or. Rev. Stat. § 461.215 (1991), placed limitations on the placement of video lottery terminals, Or. Rev. Stat. § 461.217(2) (1991), and specified the use of proceeds from video lottery games, Or. Rev. Stat. §§ 461.544 to 461.548 (1991). The Oregon Legislative Assembly also enacted comprehensive laws for: (1) the operation of the lottery; (2) lottery game retailers, vendors and contractors; (3) lottery finances; and (4) prohibited conduct. Or. Rev. Stat. §§ 461.200 to 461.600 (1991).

B.

The Legislature

As in every case involving the application or interpretation of a constitutional provision, analysis must begin with the language of the constitutional provision itself. Upon analyzing the exception created under article VI, section 36 of the Constitution, we believe this constitutional provision "is clear in its terms and of plain interpretation to any ordinary and reasonable mind[.]" Syl. pt. 4, Casey, supra; syl. pt. 3, Smith, supra. By its terms, article VI, section 36 of the Constitution allows the legislature to authorize lotteries which are regulated, controlled, owned and operated by this state "in the manner provided by general law[.]" (emphasis added). The plain language of this constitutional provision authorizes the legislature not simply to establish a state-run lottery, but also to prescribe the "general law" pursuant to which the lotteries will be "regulated, controlled, owned and operated[.]"

Moreover, we believe that the application of the plain language of article VI, section 36 of the Constitution gives effect to the intent of the people in adopting it. Specifically, the voters of this state, in ratifying the amendment, authorized the legislature to "pass laws" establishing a state-run lottery. The unambiguous terms of this constitutional provision allowing lotteries to be "regulated, controlled, owned and operated . . . in the manner provided by general law" clearly gives effect to the intent of the voters of this state to allow the legislature to "pass laws" authorizing a state operated and controlled

lottery.

With respect to electronic video lottery, however, the legislature has not enacted the appropriate laws establishing electronic video lottery games. In fact, the only specific reference to electronic video lottery under our State Lottery Act is found under W. Va. Code, 29-22-9(b)(2) [1990], which provides that "[e]lectronic video lottery systems must include a central site system of monitoring the lottery terminals utilizing an on-line or dial-up inquiry."

Electronic video lottery, by its very nature, is significantly different from common state-run lottery games. Although this Court has not been given a specific description of the devices to be used in video lottery, we have found descriptions of such devices from other sources. For example, a commentator has noted that the "video lottery terminals" used at Mountaineer Park are "converted slot machines that can dispense paper-tickets." Cory Aronovitz, *To Start, Press the Flashing Button: The Legalization of Video Gambling Devices* 5 Software L.J. 771 n.1 (1992) (emphasis added). Furthermore, one state defines "video lottery machines" as "any electronic video game machine that, upon insertion of cash, is available to play or simulate the play of a video game, including but not limited to video poker, keno and blackjack[.]" S.D. Codified Laws Ann. § 42-7A-1(18) (Supp. 1993). Another state defines "video lottery terminals" as "any electronic computerized video game machine that, upon the insertion of cash, is available to play a video game . . . which uses a video display and microprocessors in which, by chance, the player may receive free games or credits that can be redeemed for cash." R.I. Gen. Laws § 41-61-2.1(a) (Supp. 1992). See also S. C. Code Ann. § 12-21-2772(5) (1993). Our legislature, however, has yet to even define electronic video lottery, much less explicitly authorize it. Such definition and authorization is essential where, as in this state, there has been a long-standing general prohibition against gambling of any kind.

The fact that electronic video lottery is different from the common state-run lottery games, and has been defined as "video poker, keno and blackjack," also raises a question as to whether electronic video lottery is actually a lottery as contemplated by W. Va. Const. art. VI, § 36. West Virginia law prohibits gambling, W. Va. Code, 61-10-1 to 61-10-31. For example, W. Va. Code, 61-10-1 [1970] prohibits any person from keeping or exhibiting a "gaming table, . . . or faro bank, or keno table, or any slot machine, multiple coin console machine, multiple coin console slot machine or device in the nature of a slot machine, or any other gaming table or device of like

kind[.]” It is not clear from the record before us whether video lottery is the type of gambling prohibited under our anti-gambling statutes. We are not convinced that W. Va. Const. art. VI, § 36 contemplated a form of lottery which in some states has included gambling activities such as slot machines and keno. Moreover, we cannot find that the State Lottery Act, which neither defines nor explicitly authorizes "electronic video lottery," constitutes a considered judgment by the legislature to implement such a far-reaching scheme to raise revenue. We are simply unwilling to approve, on this record, the Lottery Commission's attempt to bring "electronic video lottery" within the definition of lottery, as that term is used both under the State Lottery Act and W. Va. Const. art. VI, § 36.

C.

The Lottery Commission

This Court is also troubled by the Lottery Commission's

expansion of lottery operations to include electronic video lottery at Mountaineer Park. The Lottery Commission cannot act without constitutional and statutory authority. There is no language in article VI, § 36 of our Constitution which would give

the Lottery Commission the authority to establish video lottery.

As we pointed out earlier in this opinion, the legislature must prescribe adequate standards to guide administrative agencies in the exercise of their power under enabling statutes in order for the delegation of authority to be constitutional. *Waterhouse, supra*; *Copenhaver, supra*; *Quesenberry, supra*; *Meisel, supra*. This simply means, in the case now before us, that the legislature cannot vest the Lottery Commission with unbridled or uncontrolled authority in connection with the administration of the State Lottery Act. While W. Va. Code, 29-22-9(b)(2) [1990] authorizes the Lottery Commission to promulgate rules and regulations with regard to "electronic video lottery systems," this provision is clearly not an adequate standard, with respect to electronic video lottery, for guidance of the Lottery Commission in the exercise of its delegated authority under the State Lottery Act.

Moreover, while the State Lottery Act gives the Lottery Commission the authority to "[s]elect the type and number of public gaming systems or games," W. Va. Code, 29-22-5(a)(3) [1985], and to implement "games utilizing electronic computers and electronic computer terminal devices and systems," W. Va. Code, 29-22-9(c) [1990], we do not believe that the term "games" as used in these subsections can mean the video gambling devices which are contemplated at Mountaineer Park. This is particularly

true in light of the language in both W. Va. Code, 29-22-9(b)(4) [1990], which states that "[n]o lottery utilizing a machine may use machines which dispense coins or currency[,]" and W. Va. Code, 29-22-9(b)(5) [1990], which states that "[s]election of a winner must be predicted totally on chance." In view of these restrictions and the lack of any clear statement in W. Va. Code, 29-22-1, et seq. authorizing video gambling devices, we find that the legislature has not delegated such authority to the Lottery Commission. The legislature in subsequent legislation could, of course, amend this statute to clearly state that video gambling devices are part of the lottery system.

To interpret W. Va. Code, 29-22-5(a)(3) [1985] and W. Va. Code, 29-22-9(c) [1990], as giving the Lottery Commission unbridled authority to select and implement any game, including those not contemplated by the Constitution and the legislature, would raise serious constitutional questions regarding the enabling statute. As we recognized in syllabus point 1 of *Perilli v. Board of Education*, 182 W. Va. 261, 387 S.E.2d 315 (1989): "'Wherever an act of the Legislature can be so construed and applied as to avoid a conflict with the Constitution, and give it the force of law, such construction will be adopted by the courts.' Syllabus Point 3, *Slack v. Jacobs*, 8 W. Va. 612 (1875)."

Thus, this Court must construe both W. Va. Code, 29-22-5(a)(3) [1985] and W. Va. Code, 29-22-9(c) [1990], as allowing the Lottery Commission to select those common state-run lottery games which were included in a lawful delegation of authority by the legislature, and which can be operated in accordance with the exception created under W. Va. Const. art. VI, § 36. Thus, because the legislature has not enacted general laws for the regulation, control, ownership and operation of electronic video lottery, and because the legislature failed to prescribe adequate standards in the State Lottery Act to guide the Lottery Commission in the exercise of the power conferred upon it with respect to electronic video lottery, the Lottery Commission was without authority under the Constitution to establish electronic video lottery.

In summary, we conclude that article VI, section 36 of the West Virginia Constitution provides an exception to the prohibition against lotteries to allow the operation of a lottery which is regulated, controlled, owned and operated by the State of West Virginia in the manner provided by general law. Only those lottery operations which are regulated, controlled, owned and operated in the manner provided by general laws enacted by the West Virginia legislature can be properly conducted in accordance with the exception created under article VI, section

36 of our Constitution.

We further hold that in order for a delegation of authority by the legislature to an administrative agency to be constitutional, the legislature must prescribe adequate statutory standards to guide the agency in the administration of the statute, and not grant the agency unbridled authority in the exercise of the power conferred upon it. A general delegation of authority by the legislature to the Lottery Commission under W. Va. Code, 29-22-9(b)(2) [1990], authorizing it to promulgate rules with regard to "electronic video lottery systems," is clearly not a sufficient statutory standard which would vest the Lottery Commission with power to include electronic gaming devices, such as electronic video lottery, as part of the operations of the state lottery. To hold otherwise would result in an unlawful delegation of legislative power to the Lottery Commission and would violate article VI, § 36 of the West Virginia Constitution.

III.

The traditional rule governing the issuance of a writ of mandamus has been consistently stated by this Court:

'A writ of mandamus will not issue unless three elements coexist--(1) a clear legal right in the petitioner to the relief sought; (2) a legal duty on the part of respondent to do the thing which the petitioner seeks to compel; and (3) the absence of another adequate remedy.'

Syllabus point 2, *State ex rel. Kucera v. Wheeling*, 153 W. Va. 538, 170 S.E.2d 367 (1969).

Syl. pt. 4, *Delardas v. County Court of Monongalia County*, 158 W. Va. 1027, 217 S.E.2d 75 (1975).

Based upon our holding in this case, we find that the petitioners are not clearly entitled to the relief sought. Accordingly, the petitions for writs of mandamus are denied.

Writs denied.

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