

ORIGINAL

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF FLORIDA

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FREDRICK SNELL,
Petitioner,

CASE NO. SC00-518

v.

STATE OF FLORIDA,
Respondent.
_____ /

RESPONDENT'S ANSWER BRIEF ON THE MERITS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE(S)</u>
TABLE OF CONTENTS	i
TABLE OF CITATIONS	ii
PRELIMINARY STATEMENT	1
CERTIFICATE OF FONT AND TYPE SIZE	1
STATEMENT OF THE CASE AND FACTS	2
SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT	3
ARGUMENT	7
 <u>ISSUE I</u>	
DID THE LEGISLATURE IMPROPERLY DELEGATE SENTENCING DISCRETION TO THE PROSECUTOR BY ENACTING THE PRISON RELEASEE REOFFENDER STATUTE, § 775.082(8)? (Restated)	
	7
 <u>ISSUE II</u>	
DID THE TRIAL COURT ERR IN FAILING TO EXERCISE ITS "DISCRETION" TO DECLINE TO SENTENCE PETITIONER AS A PRISON RELEASEE REOFFENDER? (Restated)	
	32
 <u>ISSUE III</u>	
DID THE TRIAL COURT ERR BY SENTENCING PETITIONER AS A PRISON RELEASEE REOFFENDER FOR A CRIME THAT BEGAN BEFORE THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE STATUTE BUT CONTINUED AFTER THE EFFECTIVE DATE? (Restated)	
	33
 <u>ISSUE IV</u>	
DID THE TRIAL COURT ERR BY FAILING TO AWARD CREDIT FOR TIME SERVED AWAITING TRIAL AGAINST PETITIONER'S SENTENCE? (Restated)	
	48
CONCLUSION	49
CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE	49

TABLE OF CITATIONS

<u>CASES</u>	<u>PAGE(S)</u>
<u>Applegate v. Barnett Bank,</u> 377 So. 2d 1150 (Fla. 1979)	35
<u>Arnold v. State,</u> 24 Fla. L. Weekly D1834 (Fla 4th DCA August 4, 1999)	27,28,39
<u>Atkins v. Parker,</u> 472 U.S. 115, 105 S. Ct. 2520, 86 L. Ed. 2d 81 (1985)	30
<u>Barber v. State,</u> 564 So. 2d 1169 (Fla. 1st DCA Fla.1990)	22
<u>Bergelson v. Singletary,</u> 721 So. 2d 1194 (Fla. 1st DCA 1998)	41
<u>Bould v. Touchette,</u> 349 So. 2d 1181 (Fla.1977)	34
<u>Britt v. Chiles,</u> 704 So. 2d 1046 (Fla. 1997)	28
<u>Burkett v. State,</u> 731 So. 2d 695 (Fla. 2d DCA 1998)	40
<u>Calloway v. State,</u> 24 Fla. L. Weekly D552 (Fla. 1st DCA February 17, 1999)	39
<u>Chambers v. State,</u> Case No. 1D99-1928 (Fla. 1st DCA February 11, 2000)	15,27
<u>Chancey v. State,</u> 349 S.E.2d 717 (Ga. 1986)	43
<u>Chapman v. United States,</u> 500 U.S. 453, 111 S. Ct. 1919, 114 L. Ed. 2d 524 (1991)	38
<u>City of West Covina v. Perkins,</u> 525 U.S. 234, 119 S. Ct. 678, 142 L. Ed. 2d 636 (1999)	29
<u>Crump v. State,</u> 746 So. 2d 558 (Fla. 1st DCA 1999)	20
<u>Dell'Orfano v. State,</u> 616 So. 2d 33 (Fla. 1993)	47
<u>Florida League of Cities, Inc. v. Administration Com'n,</u> 586 So. 2d 397 (Fla. 1st DCA 1991)	8

<u>Flowers v. State,</u> 567 So. 2d 1055 (Fla. 5th DCA 1990)	37
<u>Foster v. State,</u> 596 So. 2d 1099 (Fla. 5th DCA 1992)	37
<u>Gonzales v. State,</u> 24 Fla. L. Weekly D2356 (Fla. 3d DCA October 13, 1999)	26
<u>Grant v. State,</u> 745 So. 2d 519 (Fla. 2d DCA 1999)	16,19,26
<u>Gray v. State,</u> 742 So. 2d 805 (Fla. 5th DCA 1999)	26
<u>Griffith v. State,</u> 654 So. 2d 936 (Fla. 4th DCA 1995)	45,46,47
<u>Harmelin v. Michigan,</u> 501 U.S. 957, 111 S. Ct. 2680, 115 L. Ed. 2d 836 (1991)	18,19
<u>Hudson v. State,</u> 711 So. 2d 244 (Fla. 1st DCA 1998)	13
<u>Huff v. United States,</u> 192 F.2d 911 (5th Cir. 1951)	43
<u>Jackson v. State,</u> 744 So. 2d 466 (Fla. 1st DCA 1999)	16
<u>Jenkins v. State,</u> 444 So. 2d 1108 (Fla. 1st DCA 1984)	41
<u>Jones v. State,</u> 701 So. 2d 76 (Fla.1997)	19
<u>Jones v. State,</u> 24 Fla. L. Weekly D569 (Fla. 1st DCA 1999)	37
<u>Lawrence v. Florida E. Coast Railway,</u> 346 So. 2d 1012 (Fla.1977)	34
<u>Logan v. State,</u> 666 So. 2d 260 (Fla. 4th DCA 1996)	37
<u>Lowry v. Parole and Probation Com'n,</u> 473 So. 2d 1248 (Fla. 1985)	15
<u>McKnight v. State,</u> 727 So. 2d 314 (Fla. 3d DCA)	12

<u>Ocean Trail Unit Owners Association, Inc. v. Mead,</u> 650 So. 2d 4 (Fla. 1994)	34
<u>People v. Eason,</u> 353 N.E.2d 587 (N.Y. 1976)	11
<u>People v. Grant,</u> 973 P.2d 72 (Cal. 1999)	42
<u>Plain v. State,</u> 720 So. 2d 585 (Fla. 4th DCA 1998) <i>review denied</i> , 727 So. 2d 909 (Fla. 1999)	24,28
<u>Reetz v. Michigan,</u> 188 U.S. 505, 23 S. Ct. 390, 47 L. Ed. 563 (1903)	30
<u>Rollinson v. State,</u> 743 So. 2d 585 (Fla. 4th DCA 1999)	23,31
<u>Samuels v. McCurdy,</u> 267 U.S. 188, 45 S. Ct. 264, 69 L. Ed. 568 (1925)	43
<u>Savoie v. State,</u> 422 So. 2d 308 (Fla. 1982)	34
<u>Scoggins v. State,</u> 726 So. 2d 762 (Fla. 1999)	34
<u>Smith v. United States,</u> 508 U.S. 223, 113 S. Ct. 2050, 124 L. Ed. 2d 138 (1993)	38
<u>State v. Beasley,</u> 580 So. 2d 139 (Fla. 1991)	29
<u>State v. Benitez,</u> 395 So. 2d 514 (Fla. 1981)	3,7,9,10,11
<u>State v. Chamberlain,</u> 24 Fla. L. Weekly D2514 (Fla. 2d DCA November 3, 1999)	26
<u>State v. Cotton,</u> 728 So. 2d 251 (Fla. 2d DCA 1999)	4,14,15,32
<u>State v. Griffith,</u> 675 So. 2d 911 (Fla. 1996)	45
<u>State v. Hayes,</u> 18 A.2d 895 (Conn. 1941)	43
<u>State v. Kinner,</u> 398 So. 2d 1360 (Fla. 1981)	8

<u>State v. O'Neal,</u> 724 So. 2d 1187 (Fla. 1999)	34
<u>State v. Thompson,</u> 24 Fla. L. Weekly S224, n.7 (Fla. 1999)	34
<u>State v. Whiddon,</u> 384 So. 2d 1269 (Fla.1980)	40,41,46
<u>Todd v. State,</u> 643 So. 2d 625 (Fla. 1st DCA 1994)	8
<u>Turner v. State,</u> 745 So. 2d 351 (Fla. 1st DCA 1999)	16,19,21
<u>Tyus v. Apalachicola Northern R.R.,</u> 130 So. 2d 580 (Fla. 1961)	34
<u>United States v. Barnette,</u> 800 F. 2d 1558 (11th Cir. 1986)	45
<u>United States v. Buckhalter,</u> 986 F.2d 875 (5th Cir.1993)	43
<u>United States v. Calabrese,</u> 825 F.2d 1342 (9th Cir.1987)	43,45
<u>United States v. Campanale,</u> 518 F.2d 352 (9th Cir. 1975)	43
<u>United States v. Decker,</u> 55 F.3d 1509 (10th Cir. 1995)	38
<u>United States v. Devorkin,</u> 159 F.3d 465 (9th Cir. 1998)	38
<u>United States v. Ehsan,</u> 163 F.3d 855 (4th Cir. 1998)	38
<u>United States v. Farmer,</u> 73 F.3d 836 (8th Cir. 1996)	45
<u>United States v. Gibbs,</u> 813 F.2d 596 (3d Cir.1987)	43
<u>United States v. Giry,</u> 818 F.2d 120 (1st Cir. 1987)	43
<u>United States v. Goldberger,</u> 197 F.2d 330 (3d Cir. 1952)	43

<u>United States v. Henson,</u> 848 F.2d 1374 (6th Cir. 1988)	. . . . .	43,44,46
<u>United States v. Kaluna,</u> 192 F.3d 1188 (9th Cir. 1999)	. . . . .	13
<u>United States v. Kramer,</u> 955 F.2d 479 (7th Cir.1992)	. . . . .	43
<u>United States. v. McCall,</u> 915 F.2d 811 (2nd Cir. 1990)	. . . . .	43
<u>United States v. Muench,</u> 153 F.3d 1298 (11th Cir. 1998)	. . . . .	35
<u>United States v. Newman,</u> 144 F.3d 531 (7th Cir. 1998)	. . . . .	24
<u>United States v. Pace,</u> 898 F.2d 1218 (7th Cir. 1990)	. . . . .	43
<u>United States v. Quinn,</u> 123 F.3d 1415 (11th Cir. 1997)	. . . . .	8
<u>United States v. Rasco,</u> 123 F.3d 222 (5th Cir. 1997)	. . . . .	8
<u>United States v. Saccoccia,</u> 58 F.3d 754 (1st Cir. 1995)	. . . . .	18
<u>United States v. Shabani,</u> 513 U.S. 10, 115 S. Ct. 382, 130 L. Ed. 2d 225 (1994)	. . . . .	38
<u>United States v. Stanberry,</u> 963 F.2d 1323 (10th Cir. 1992)	. . . . .	43
<u>United States v. Terzado-Madruga,</u> 897 F.2d 1099 (11th Cir. 1990)	. . . . .	44
<u>United States v. Tharp,</u> 892 F.2d 691 (8th Cir. 1989)	. . . . .	43
<u>United States v. Thomas,</u> 114 F.3d 228 (D.C.Cir. 1997)	. . . . .	44
<u>United States v. Wechsler,</u> 392 F.2d 344 (4th Cir. 1968)	. . . . .	43
<u>Wainwright v. Wainwright,</u> 610 So. 2d 94 (Fla. 1st DCA 1992)	. . . . .	36

<u>Williams v. State,</u> 630 So. 2d 534 (Fla. 1993)	18
<u>Williams v. State,</u> 743 So. 2d 1154 (Fla. 2d DCA 1999)	28
<u>Winokur v. State,</u> 605 So. 2d 100 (Fla. 4th DCA 1992)	41
<u>Woods v. State,</u> 740 So. 2d 20 (Fla. 1st DCA 1999)	20,22,36
<u>Young v. State,</u> 719 So. 2d 1010 (Fla. 4th DCA 1998), review denied, 727 So. 2d 915 (Fla.1999)	16,25,28,30

FLORIDA CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS & STATUTES

Article II, § 3	9
Article III, § 6	16
Article I, § 17	17
Ch. 99-188	14,21
§ 775.021(1)	37,38
§ 775.082(8)	9
§ 893.135	10
§ 893.135(4)	10
§ 944.705(6)	25,29

OTHER

PHILIP J. PADOVANO, FLORIDA APPELLATE PRACTICE § 9.4 (2d ed. 1997)	9
Rule 9.210(b)	1

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

Respondent, the State of Florida, will be referred to as Respondent or the State. Petitioner, FREDRICK SNELL, will be referred to as Petitioner or by proper name. Pursuant to Rule 9.210(b), Fla. R. App. P. (1997), this brief will refer to the volume number followed by the appropriate page number. "IB" will refer to Petitioner's Initial Brief. All double underlined emphasis is supplied.

CERTIFICATE OF FONT AND TYPE SIZE

Counsel certifies that this brief was typed using Courier New 12.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE AND FACTS

The State rejects the petitioner's statement of the case and facts because the facts do not related to the issues raised on appeal which is a sentencing issue. The only relevant fact to the sentencing issue raised is the date of the crime and petitioner included none of the facts that establish the date of the crime. Therefore, the State substitutes the following statement of the facts:

Defense counsel asked at trial: "as far as Fred doing anything to you, this would have occurred sometime in June of 1997; is that correct." (T. II 80). The victim, Cryssida Cater, responded: "yes". The victims' sister testified that the sexual incident she witnessed between appellant and the victim was in the Spruce Street apartment. (T. II 120). The family moved into that apartment in April 1997. (T. II 128, 141).

SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

ISSUE I

Petitioner argues the prison releasee reoffender statute violates separation of powers principles because it improperly delegates sentencing to the prosecutor rather than the judiciary. Petitioner claims that when a statute allows for sentencing discretion, that discretion must be shared. The State respectfully disagrees. This Court has already held that the trafficking statute, which is a sentencing statute that operates in the same manner as the prison releasee reoffender statute, does not violate separation of powers. Both the trafficking statute and the reoffender statute set rigorous minimum mandatory penalties. The trial court must impose these mandatory penalties under either statute. However, both statutes then allow the prosecutor and only the prosecutor to move for leniency. Under both statutes, if the prosecutor makes a motion, it is the trial court that determines the actual sentence. Quite simply, this Court's prior holding in State v. Benitez, 395 So.2d 514, 519 (Fla. 1981), controls. As this Court explained in Benitez, as long as the judiciary retains the final decision regarding sentencing, a statute does not violate separation of powers. The final determination of a defendant's sentence is the trial court's, not the prosecutor under the prison releasee reoffender statute. While the prosecutor may seek reoffender sanctions and the trial court must impose such sanctions when sought, if the prosecutor does not seek such sanctions, it is the trial court that decides what the actual sentence will be. The

prosecutor is merely a gatekeeper to the trial court's discretion. Thus, contrary to petitioner's claim, the sentencing discretion in the prison releasee reoffender statute is shared. Both the trial court and prosecutor share discretion. Petitioner's reliance on State v. Cotton, 728 So.2d 251 (Fla. 2d DCA 1999), review granted, No. 94,996 (Fla. June 11, 1998), is seriously misplaced. Cotton has been superseded by an amendment to the prison releasee reoffender statute. Hence, the prison releasee reoffender statute does not violate the separation of powers clause of the Florida Constitution.

ISSUE II

As to the *ex post facto* challenge, petitioner argues that the statute is being retroactively applied to him because he was released prior to the enactment of the statute. However, Petitioner's release date is irrelevant. The relevant dates are the effective date of the statute and the date the offense was committed. The statute was in effect on the date petitioner committed the instant offense and therefore, the statute is not being retroactively applied to Petitioner.

ISSUE III

Petitioner claims that because the information charges that the crimes occurred during a seven month period of time and part of time was prior to the effective date of the prison releasee

reoffender statute, that the statute may not be applied to him. Petitioner argues that the rule of lenity requires an appellate court interpret an information in his favor. The State respectfully disagrees. First, this issue is not preserved for appellate review. Petitioner did not raise this issue in the trial court. Such claims must be raised in the trial court because they require a factual determination that the crime continued after the effective date of the statute. Additionally, the claim is meritless. The rule of lenity is a rule of statutory construction; it does not apply to informations or verdicts. Moreover, the prohibition on *ex post facto* laws is not violated by applying a new or newly amended statute to a defendant as long as the criminal conduct continued after the effective date of the new statute. The State presented evidence that one of the crimes occurred after the effective date of the prison releasee reoffender statute. Thus, the trial court properly sentenced as a prison releasee reoffender.

ISSUE IV

Petitioner argues that the trial court committed fundamental error by failing to award Petitioner credit for time served and that the error resulted in a sentence beyond the statutory maximum. While the state agrees that the sentence exceeds the statutory maximum of thirty years if Petitioner spent time in jail pending trial, the State disagrees with the forum in which such matters should be litigated. No one disputes that Petitioner should not spend a day in prison beyond the statutory maximum. That is not

the issue, the issue is the correct forum for correcting the sentence and that is clearly the trial court, not an appellate court. Such issues should be raised in the trial court where they have access to the jail records. Petitioner can file a 3.800 motion in the trial court. Had Petitioner taken this option, two appellate attorneys, three district court judges and seven Supreme Court justices would not have to address the issue.

ARGUMENT

ISSUE I

DID THE LEGISLATURE IMPROPERLY DELEGATE SENTENCING DISCRETION TO THE PROSECUTOR BY ENACTING THE PRISON RELEASEE REOFFENDER STATUTE, § 775.082(8)?
(Restated)

Petitioner argues the prison releasee reoffender statute violates separation of powers principles because it improperly delegates sentencing to the prosecutor rather than the judiciary. Petitioner claims that when a statute allows for sentencing discretion, that discretion must be shared. The State respectfully disagrees. This Court has already held that the trafficking statute, which is a sentencing statute that operates in the same manner as the prison releasee reoffender statute, does not violate separation of powers. Both the trafficking statute and the reoffender statute set rigorous minimum mandatory penalties. The trial court must impose these mandatory penalties under either statute. However, both statutes then allow the prosecutor, and only the prosecutor, to move for leniency. Under both statutes, if the prosecutor makes a motion, it is the trial court that determines the actual sentence. Quite simply, this Court's prior holding in State v. Benitez, 395 So.2d 514, 519 (Fla. 1981), controls. As this Court explained in Benitez, as long as the judiciary retains the final decision regarding sentencing, a statute does not violate separation of powers. The final determination of a defendant's actual sentence is the trial court's, not the prosecutor's under the prison releasee reoffender

statute. While the prosecutor may seek reoffender sanctions and the trial court must impose such sanctions when sought, if the prosecutor does not seek such sanctions, it is the trial court that decides what the actual sentence will be. The prosecutor is merely a gatekeeper to the trial court's discretion. Thus, contrary to petitioner's claim, the sentencing discretion in the prison releasee reoffender statute is shared. Both the trial court and prosecutor share discretion. Hence, the prison releasee reoffender statute does not violate the separation of powers clause of the Florida Constitution.

Presumption of Constitutionality

There is a strong presumption of constitutionality afforded to legislative acts under which courts resolve every reasonable doubt in favor of the constitutionality of the statute. See State v. Kinner, 398 So.2d 1360, 1363 (Fla. 1981); Florida League of Cities, Inc. v. Administration Com'n, 586 So.2d 397, 412 (Fla. 1st DCA 1991). An act should not be declared unconstitutional unless it is determined to be invalid beyond a reasonable doubt. Todd v. State, 643 So.2d 625, 627 (Fla. 1st DCA 1994).

Standard of Review

The constitutionality of a sentencing statute is reviewed *de novo*. United States v. Rasco, 123 F.3d 222, 226 (5th Cir. 1997) (reviewing the constitutionality of the federal three strikes statute by *de novo* review); United States v. Quinn, 123 F.3d 1415,

1425 (11th Cir. 1997); PHILIP J. PADOVANO, FLORIDA APPELLATE PRACTICE § 9.4 (2d ed. 1997).

Merits

The separation of powers provision of the Florida Constitution, Article II, § 3, provides:

Branches of Government.--The powers of the state government shall be divided into legislative, executive and judicial branches. No person belonging to one branch shall exercise any powers appertaining to either of the other branches unless expressly provided herein.

The legislature, not the judiciary, prescribes maximum and minimum penalties for violations of the law. State v. Benitez, 395 So.2d 514, 518 (Fla. 1981). The power to set penalties is the legislature's and it may remove all discretion from the trial courts. The Florida legislature passed the Prison Releasee Reoffender Act in 1997. CH 97-239, LAWS OF FLORIDA. The Act, codified as §775.082(8), Florida Statutes (1997), provides that a defendant who commits one of the enumerated felonies within three years of being released from state prison shall be sentenced to the statutory maximum. By enacting the prison releasee reoffender statute, the legislature has limited the trial court's authority to sentence individually. However, individualized sentencing is a relatively new phenomenon. Historically, most sentencing was mandatory and determinate.

This Court has previously addressed a similar statute and rejected a separation of powers challenge in that context. The most analogous statute to the reoffender statute is the trafficking

statute.¹ Florida already has a minimum mandatory sentencing statute that allows the prosecutor sole discretion to determine whether the minimum mandatory will be imposed. Florida's trafficking statute operates in a similar manner to the prison releasee reoffender statute. The trafficking statute allows the prosecutor to petition the sentencing court to not impose the minimum mandatory normally required under the trafficking statute for substantial assistance. Absent a request from the prosecutor, the trial court must impose the minimum mandatory sentence.

In State v. Benitez, 395 So. 2d 514 (Fla. 1981), this Court held that the trafficking statute did not violate the separation of powers provision. The Court first explained the operation of Florida's trafficking statute, § 893.135. The trafficking statute contains three main components: subsection (1) establishes "severe" mandatory minimum sentences for trafficking; subsection (2)

¹The trafficking statute, § 893.135(4), Florida Statutes (1999), provides:

The state attorney may move the sentencing court to reduce or suspend the sentence of any person who is convicted of a violation of this section and who provides substantial assistance in the identification, arrest, or conviction of any of that person's accomplices, accessories, coconspirators, or principals or of any other person engaged in trafficking in controlled substances. The arresting agency shall be given an opportunity to be heard in aggravation or mitigation in reference to any such motion. Upon good cause shown, the motion may be filed and heard in camera. The judge hearing the motion may reduce or suspend the sentence if the judge finds that the defendant rendered such substantial assistance.

prevents the trial court from suspending or reducing the mandatory sentence and eliminates the defendant's eligibility for parole and subsection (3) permits the trial court to reduce or suspend the "severe" mandatory sentence for a defendant who cooperates with law enforcement in the detection or apprehension of others involved in drug trafficking based on the initiative of the prosecutor. This Court characterized this subsection as an "escape valve" from the statute's rigors and explained that the "harsh mandatory penalties" of the statute could be ameliorated by the prospect of leniency. Benitez raised a separation of powers challenge arguing that the subsection allowing the prosecutor to make a motion for leniency usurps the sentencing function from the judiciary and assigns it to the executive branch because the leniency is triggered solely at the initiative of the prosecutor. This Court rejected the improper delegation claim reasoning that the ultimate decision on sentencing resides with the judge who must rule on the motion for reduction or suspension of sentence. This Court, quoting People v. Eason, 353 N.E.2d 587, 589 (N.Y. 1976), stated: "[s]o long as a statute does not wrest from courts the final discretion to impose sentence, it does not infringe upon the constitutional division of responsibilities." The Benitez court stated that because the trial court retained the final discretion in sentencing the trafficking statute did not violate separation of powers.

Once the prosecutor moves for leniency, the trial court's traditional sentencing discretion is fully restored under the trafficking statute. Similarly, once the prosecutor moves for

leniency pursuant to the prison releasee reoffender statute, the trial court's traditional sentencing discretion is restored. Under both statutes, it is the trial court that determines the actual sentence, not the prosecutor. The sole difference between sentencing pursuant to the trafficking statute and sentencing pursuant to the prison releasee reoffender statute is that the trial court may completely reject the prosecutor's request for leniency in the trafficking context but the trial court may not impose reoffender sanctions if the prosecutor does not want such a sanction. However, this is a difference without constitutional significance.

Surely, petitioner cannot be arguing that the prison releasee reoffender statute is a violation of separation of powers because the trial court is required to show leniency under the prison releasee reoffender statute. If the defendant convinces the prosecutor not to seek reoffender sanctions, then the trial court cannot impose such a sanctions. Requiring only the prosecutor to be convinced, as the prison releasee reoffender statute does, rather than both the prosecutor and the trial court as the trafficking statute does, inures to the defendant's benefit, not harm. The defendant needs to only convince one person to be lenient, not two.

Subsequently to the Judge Sorondo's opinion in McKnight v. State, 727 So.2d 314 (Fla. 3d DCA), rev. granted, No. 95,154 (Fla. Aug. 19, 1999), which canvassed the federal caselaw dealing with the federal three strike law, one more federal circuit court has

held that the three strikes law does not violate the federal separation of powers doctrine. In United States v. Kaluna, 192 F.3d 1188 (9th Cir. 1999), the Ninth Circuit joined the Fifth, Eighth and Seventh Circuits in rejecting a separation of powers challenge to the federal three strike law. Kaluna contended that the three-strikes statute violated separation of powers because it impermissibly increases the discretionary power of prosecutors while stripping the judiciary of all discretion to craft sentences. Kaluna also argued that the law should be construed to allow judges' discretion in order to avoid the constitutional issue. The Kaluna Court noted that the Supreme Court has stated unequivocally that "Congress has the power to define criminal punishments without giving the courts any sentencing discretion." Furthermore, the legislative history of the statute leaves no doubt that Congress intended it to require mandatory sentences. The statute itself uses the words "mandatory" and "shall". The Ninth Circuit also rejected the invitation to narrowly construe a law to avoid constitutional infirmity because "no constitutional question exists". Kaluna, 192 F.3d at 1199.

This Court should likewise reject petitioner's invitation to construe "must" as "may" to cure the alleged separation of powers problem. Where a statute is susceptible of two constructions, one of which gives rise to grave and doubtful constitutional questions and the other construction is one where such questions are avoided, a court's duty is to adopt the latter. Hudson v. State, 711 So.2d 244, 246 (Fla. 1st DCA 1998), citing, United States ex rel.

Attorney General v. Delaware & Hudson Co., 213 U.S. 366, 408, 29 S.Ct. 527, 536, 53 L.Ed. 836 (1909). However, rewriting clear legislation is an improper use of this rule of statutory construction. Only where a statute is susceptible of two possible constructions does this rule apply. Here, only one construction is possible. This Court may uphold this statute or it may strike it down but it may not rewrite it, as petitioner suggests.

Petitioner's reliance on State v. Cotton, 728 So.2d 251 (Fla. 2d DCA 1998), review granted, No. 94,996 (Fla. June 11, 1999), is seriously misplaced. Cotton has been superceded by an amendment to the prison releasee reoffender statute. The legislature has now specifically addressed the general issue of who may exercise discretion and removed any doubt. The clarifying amendment to the prison releasee reoffender statute contains the phrase unless "the state attorney determines that extenuating circumstances exist" which replaced the prior four exceptions. Ch. 99-188, Law of Fla.; CS/HB 121. The final analysis of HB 121 from the Crime & Punishment Committee on this amendment, dated June 22, 1999, cited both Cotton and Wise with disapproval. The analysis stated: "[t]his changes clarifies the original intent that the prison releasee reoffender minimum mandatory can only be waived by the prosecutor." The statute now clearly states that it is the executive branch prosecutor, not the trial court, who has the discretion to determine if extenuating circumstances exist that justify not imposing prison releasee reoffender sanctions. When, as here, a statute is amended soon after a controversy arises on

its meaning, "a court may consider that amendment as a legislative interpretation of the original law and not as a substantive change". Lowry v. Parole and Probation Com'n, 473 So.2d 1248, 1250 (Fla. 1985). In sum, the legislature has done exactly what Cotton wanted it to do. The Cotton court stated that if the legislature had wished to transfer this exercise of judgment to the office of the state attorney, it would have done so in unequivocal terms. The legislature has now, in unequivocal terms, stated that the state attorney has the discretion, not the trial court. The clear intent of the legislature is that the prosecutor, not the trial court, determine whether one of the exceptions to the statute applies. Hence, Cotton has been suppreceded by statute and the legislature has made is perfectly clear that the prosecutor, not the trial court, has the discretion. Accordingly, the prison releasee reoffender statute does not violate Florida's separation of powers principles.

SINGLE SUBJECT

Petitioner argues that the Prison Releasee Reoffender Act violate the single subject provision of the Florida Constitution. The State respectfully disagrees. Every District Court that has considered a single subject challenge to the prison releasee reoffender Act has rejected such a challenge. The First District reasoned that the Prison Releasee Reoffender Act does not violate the single subject provision because all sections of the Act deal with reoffenders. Chambers v. State, case No. 1D99-1928 (Fla. 1st

DCA February 11, 2000), *citing and quoting, Jackson v. State*, 744 So. 2d 466 (Fla. 1st DCA 1999), *review granted*, No. 96,308; *Turner v. State*, 745 So. 2d 351 (Fla. 1st DCA 1999) (finding without merit the argument that the Act violates the single subject requirement of the Florida Constitution and observing that that the references in the preamble to "violent felony offenders" do not reflect an intent to "reach only those defendants with a prior record of violent offenses."). The Second and Fourth Districts have also rejected this constitutional challenge. In *Grant v. State*, 745 So. 2d 519 (Fla. 2d DCA 1999), the Second District held that the prison releasee reoffender Act did not violate the single subject requirement of Article III, Section 6, of the Florida Constitution. Grant argued that that some sections of the Act concern the length of sentence and the forfeiture of gain time while other sections allow law enforcement officers to arrest probationers and community controllees without a warrant and therefore, the Act violates the single subject, because they are not reasonably related to the specific mandatory punishment provision in subsection eight. Noting that all the District court that have addressed the issue have rejected such a challenge, the Second District quotes and adopts the Fourth District reasoning in *Young v. State*, 719 So.2d 1010 (Fla. 4th DCA 1998), *review denied*, 727 So.2d 915 (Fla.1999) (noting that the preamble to the legislation states that its purpose was to impose stricter punishment on reoffenders to protect society and concluding that because each section dealt in some fashion with reoffenders, that the Act does not violate the

single subject requirement). Petitioner does not discuss these cases or attempt to argue that they are incorrectly decided.

CRUEL AND UNUSUAL PUNISHMENT

Petitioner argues that the prison releasee reoffender statute violates the cruel and unusual provision of Florida's Constitution because it does not impose strict proportionality in sentencing. The State respectfully disagrees. The Eighth Amendment does not require strict proportionality in sentencing. Only "extreme" sentences that are "grossly" disproportionate to the crime are subject to cruel and unusual punishment challenges. Because the prison releasee reoffender statute involves certain limited enumerated felonies which are serious crimes no successful cruel and unusual punishment challenge is possible.

FLORIDA'S CONSTITUTION

The prior version of the cruel or unusual punishment provision of Florida's Constitution, Article I, section 17, provided:

Excessive fines, cruel or unusual punishment, attainder, forfeiture of estate, indefinite imprisonment, and unreasonable detention of witnesses are forbidden.

Article I, section 17, Florida Constitution, now provides:

Excessive fines, cruel and unusual punishment, attainder, forfeiture of estate, indefinite imprisonment, and unreasonable detention of witnesses are forbidden. The death penalty is an authorized punishment for capital crimes designated by the Legislature. The prohibition against cruel or unusual punishment, and the prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment, shall be construed in conformity with decisions of the United States Supreme Court which interpret the prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment provided in the Eighth Amendment to the United States Constitution.

Any method of execution shall be allowed, unless prohibited by the United States Constitution. Methods of execution may be designated by the legislature, and a change in any method of execution may be applied retroactively. A sentence of death shall not be reduced on the basis that a method of execution is invalid. In any case in which an execution method is declared invalid, the death sentence shall remain in force until the sentence can be lawfully executed by any valid method. This section shall apply retroactively.

This amendment to section 17 of the Florida Constitution was approved by voters on November 3, 1998. This amendment superseded the Florida Supreme Court's holding in Williams v. State, 630 So.2d 534 (Fla. 1993), allowing proportionality review of non-capital sentences under the State Constitution. There is no strict judicial scrutiny of statutorily mandated penalties in noncapital cases. United States v. Saccoccia, 58 F.3d 754, 788 (1st Cir. 1995), *citing*, Gore v. United States, 357 U.S. 386, 393, 78 S.Ct. 1280, 1284-85, 2 L.Ed.2d 1405 (1958). The Eighth Amendment does not require strict proportionality between crime and sentence. Harmelin v. Michigan, 501 U.S. 957, 111 S.Ct. 2680, 115 L.Ed.2d 836 (1991). Now, at most, only "extreme" sentences that are "grossly" disproportionate to the crime are subject cruel and unusual punishment challenges. Harmelin v. Michigan, 501 U.S. 957, 111 S.Ct. 2680, 115 L.Ed.2d 836 (1991). Moreover, contrary to petitioner's claim, punishment must be cruel AND unusual, not merely cruel OR unusual. The United States Supreme Court requires punishment to be cruel AND unusual to violate the Eighth Amendment. Thus, contrary to petitioner's claim, the state constitution is not more expansive than the federal constitutional protection against cruel and unusual punishment any longer.

In Harmelin, 501 U.S. 957, 966-75, 111 S.Ct. 2680, 115 L.Ed.2d 836 (1991), Justice Scalia, writing for himself and Justice Rehnquist, argued that the proper question for a cruel and unusual analysis is whether the sentence is illegal, not whether is it proportionate. Any sentence that is within the statutory maximum set by the legislature is *per se* not a violation of the Eighth Amendment. The Eighth Amendment provided protection with respect to modes and methods of punishment, not the length of incarceration. Id. at 966-67, 111 S.Ct. at 2686-87. Justice Kennedy, writing for himself Justice O'Connor and Justice Souter, argued that proper cruel and unusual analysis requires the courts give broad deference to the sentencing policies determined by the state legislature without undue comparison to the policy decisions of other states. Harmelin, 501 U.S. at 998-99, 111 S.Ct. 2680. The Eighth Amendment does not require strict proportionality between crime and sentence. However, the plurality in Harmelin, agreed that a mandatory life sentence without parole for possession of cocaine was not cruel and unusual punishment.

The First District, relying on this Court's decision in Jones v. State, 701 So.2d 76, 79 (Fla.1997), rejected a cruel and unusual punishment challenge reasoning that imposition of a statutory maximum is not cruel or unusual punishment because there is no possibility that the Act inflicts torture or a lingering death or the infliction of unnecessary and wanton pain. Turner v. State, 745 So.2d 351 (Fla. 1st DCA 1999). See also Grant v. State, 745 So.2d 519 (Fla. 2nd DCA 1999) (relying on Turner, supra and rejecting a

claim that the Act violates the prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment because it allows for sentences that are disproportionate to the crime committed).

VOID FOR VAGUENESS

Petitioner also claims that the Act is void for vagueness under the United States and Florida Constitutions. The First District has rejected a vagueness challenge to the statute as have other district courts. In Woods v. State, 740 So.2d 20 (Fla. 1st DCA 1999), the First District held that the statute was not vague. Woods argued that the statute was vague because it encouraged "arbitrary and erratic enforcement" and the accused had to "speculate about its meaning" Judge Webster rejected this challenge, noting that "one to whose conduct a statute clearly applies may not challenge it for vagueness", because there was no question but that the Act was intended to apply to Wood's conduct. Moreover, the fact that the Act vests in the prosecutor the discretion to decide whether an eligible defendant should be sentenced pursuant to the Act does not render the Act unconstitutionally vague.

In Crump v. State, 746 So.2d 558 (Fla. 1st DCA 1999), the First District held that Prison Releasee Reoffender Punishment Act is not unconstitutionally vague under the due process clause despite the legislature's failure to define the terms "sufficient evidence," "material witness," the degree of materiality required, "extenuating circumstances," and "just prosecution". The Crump

Court reasoned that words in a statute should be given their plain and ordinary meaning and Crump has failed to identify how the plain language of the statute renders it impossible for a person of ordinary intelligence to read the statute and understand how the legislature intended these terms to apply to any particular defendant.

DUE PROCESS

Petitioner argues that the statute denies due process of law by giving the victim a "veto power" over imposing such sanctions. The State respectfully disagrees. The statute does not give the victim the power to decide whether prison releasee reoffender sanction will be sought. That power is the prosecutor's, not the victim's.

In Turner v. State, 745 So.2d 351 (Fla. 1st DCA 1999), the First District held that the Act does not deny due process of law because it gives the victim "veto" power which allows the Act to be applied in an arbitrary manner. The Turner Court reasoned that this provision does not, in fact, give the victim "veto" power because a prosecutor may still seek prison releasee reoffender sanction even if the victim requests that such sanction not be imposed. The provision merely expresses the legislative intent that the prosecution give consideration to the preference of victims.

The legislature recently amended the exceptions provision of the statute. Ch. 99-188, Law of Fla.; CS/HB 121. The four exception have been removed and the exception provision now provides:

It is the intent of the Legislature that offenders previously released from prison who meet the criteria in paragraph (a) be punished to the fullest extent of the law and as provided in this subsection, unless the state attorney determines that

extenuating circumstances exist which preclude the just prosecution of the offender, including whether the victim recommends that the offender not be sentenced as provided in this subsection.

Thus, the legislature has made it clear that the victims be merely "recommends" but it is the prosecutor that makes the actual decision. Contrary to petitioner's argument, the legislature history of this amendment refers to this change as a clarifying amendment and therefore, this was the correct interpretation of the original statute and at all times.

EQUAL PROTECTION

In Woods v. State, 740 So.2d 20 (Fla. 1st DCA 1999), the First District held that the statute did not violate either the federal or state equal protection clauses. Woods claimed that the statute violated equal protection because it vested "complete discretion in the state attorney" to seek such sanctions and thereby presenting a risk that similarly situated defendants, i.e. those with the exact same criminal record, will be treated differently - one may be classified as a reoffender while the other is not. The First District cited and quoted Barber v. State, 564 So.2d 1169 (Fla. 1st DCA Fla.1990), which dealt with an identical challenge to the habitual felony offender statute. The Woods Court explained that the guarantee of equal protection is not violated when prosecutors are given the discretion by law to seek enhanced sentencing for only some of those criminals who are eligible. Mere selective, discretionary application of a statute is permissible; only where persons are being selected according to some unjustified standard,

such as race, religion, or other arbitrary classification, would raise a potentially viable challenge. See also Rollinson v. State, 743 So. 2d 585 (Fla. 4th DCA 1999) (concluding that classification and increased punishment for prison releasee reoffenders is rationally related to the legitimate state interests of punishing recidivists more severely than first time offenders and protecting the public from repeat criminal offenders and that limiting the Act's application to releasees who commit one of the enumerated felonies within three years of prison release is not irrational).

EX POST FACTO

Petitioner asserts that the prison releasee reoffender statute is being retroactively applied to him because he was released from prison prior to the statute's effective date. However, the statute is NOT being applied retroactively because the "fact" that is critical for *ex post facto* analysis is not the date he was released from prison but the date he committed the offense. Being released from prison did NOT subject Petitioner to prison releasee reoffender sanctions; rather, committing another crime, after being released, is what subjected Petitioner to the criminal penalty. Thus, the relevant date for *ex post facto* analysis is the date that Petitioner committed the crime, not the date he was released from prison. The prison releasee reoffender statute applies only to those who commit one of the enumerated offenses after its effective date. Thus, there are no *ex post facto* concerns present.

This argument has been rejected by the Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth Districts. This Court should join its district courts and hold that the prison releasee reoffender is not an *ex post facto* law when applied to those who commit their offense after the effective date of the statute regardless of the date they were released from prison.

Furthermore, the statute clearly applies to those released from prison prior to the statute's effective date. In Plain v. State, 720 So. 2d 585 (Fla. 4th DCA 1998), *rev. denied*, 727 So. 2d 909 (Fla. 1999), the Fourth District held that the prison releasee reoffender statute does not violate the *ex post facto* clause as applied to those released from prison prior to its enactment. Plain was released from prison prior to the enactment of the statute but committed the burglary after the statute's enactment. The Court noted that the statute increased the penalty for a crime committed after its enactment based on release from prison resulting from a conviction which occurred prior to its enactment. The Plain Court analogized the prison releasee reoffender statute to the habitual offender statute and noted that recidivist statutes have been held not to constitute *ex post facto* laws.²

² This analogy is not particularly sound. The prior conduct in the various cases cited in Plain are prior convictions, which is prior criminal behavior which are subject to *ex post facto* challenges. By contrast, the conduct here is the wholly innocent conduct of being released from prison which is not subject to *ex post facto* challenges. The better approach is to acknowledge that if the last act that gives rise to criminal liability occurs after the effective date of the statute, then the statute is simply not being applied retroactively. United States v. Newman, 144 F.3d 531, 538 (7th Cir. 1998) (defining retroactive application as

In Young v. State, 719 So. 2d 1010 (Fla. 4th DCA 1998), rev. denied, 727 So. 2d 915 (Fla. 1999), the Fourth District held that the prison releasee reoffender statute applied to all defendants regardless of the date of their release from prison. Young was released from prison in 1996. The prison releasee reoffender statute became effective on May 30, 1997. Young committed one of the enumerated offenses, namely robbery, in June 1997. Thus, Young was released from prison prior to the effective date of the statute but committed his crime after the effective date. The Young Court classified the vagueness claim as "meritless". The Young Court explained that the prison releasee reoffender statute "is clear and unambiguous", "is not susceptible of differing constructions" and required "no statutory interpretation". The Court held that the prison releasee reoffender statute clearly applies to prisoners released prior to its effective date.

The Fourth District also discussed the notice provision contained in § 944.705(6), Fla. Stat. (1997), which requires individuals released from prison to receive actual, personal notice that they were subject to prison releasee reoffender sanctions but also provides that a prisoner who did not receive the written notice is still subject to prison releasee reoffender sanctions. The Young Court noted that this notice statute results in the "inescapable conclusions" that the prison releasee reoffender statute was intended to apply to both those prisoners released

"applies to criminal conduct occurring before its enactment").

prior to its enactment and to those prisoners released after its enactment.

In Gonzales v. State, 24 FLA. L. WEEKLY D2356 (Fla. 3d DCA October 13, 1999), the Third District held that the relevant date for *ex post facto* analysis is the date of the offense not the date the defendant was released from prison. Gonzales contended that the prison releasee reoffender was an *ex post facto* law because he had been released from prison prior to effective date of the statute. The Third District characterized this claim as "misplaced" and explained that the relevant date is the date of the crime. Because Gonzales committed his crime after the effective date of the statute, the statute applies to him and there is *no ex post facto* violation.

In State v. Chamberlain, 24 FLA. L. WEEKLY D2514 (Fla. 2d DCA November 3, 1999), the Second District held that the relevant date for *ex post facto* analysis is the date of the offense not the date the defendant was released from prison. Chamberlain argued the prison releasee reoffender statute did not apply to him because he was released from prison prior to the effective date of the statute. The Second District reasoned that the date of release from prison is not the determinative date. The Court concluded that Chamberlain committed his new offenses after the May 30, 1997 effective date of the Act, and therefore, the Act may be applied to him. See Gray v. State, 742 So.2d 805 (Fla. 5th DCA 1999) (agreeing with the Fourth District's analysis); Grant v. State, 745 So. 2d

519 (Fla. 2d DCA 1999) (holding that the prison releasee reoffender statute does not violate the *ex post facto* clause).

In Chambers v. State, No. 1D99-1928, (Fla. 1st DCA February 11, 2000), the First District held that application of the statute to crimes occurring after its effective date do not violate *ex post facto* principles. The Chambers Court explained that application of the act would violate *ex post facto* principles if the "qualifying events" occurred before the act became effective; however, the "qualifying events" for purposes of the prison releasee reoffender statute is the commission of a new offense, not the date the defendant was released from prison.

This argument has been rejected by the First, Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth Districts. This Court should join the district courts and hold that the prison releasee reoffender is not an *ex post facto* law when applied to those who commit their offense after the effective date of the statute regardless of the date they were released from prison.

The Fourth District has found that the application of the prison releasee reoffender statute to those defendants who committed the crime prior to the statute's effective date violates the *ex post facto* clause. In Arnold v. State, 24 Fla. L. Weekly D1834 (Fla 4th DCA August 4, 1999), the Fourth District held that an prison releasee reoffender sentence was an improper *ex post facto* application when applied to offenses committed prior to the statute's effective date. Arnold committed the crimes on April 1, 1997, prior to the statute's effective date of May 30, 1997.

Quoting Britt v. Chiles, 704 So. 2d 1046, 1047 (Fla. 1997), the Fourth District noted: "To fall within the *ex post facto* prohibition, a law must be retrospective -- that is 'it must apply to events occurring before its enactment' -- and it 'must disadvantage the offender affected by it' by altering the definition of criminal conduct or increasing the punishment for the crime." The Arnold Court noted their prior holdings in Plain v. State, 720 So.2d 585 (Fla. 4th DCA 1998), *review denied*, 727 So. 2d 909 (Fla. 1999) and Young v. State, 719 So. 2d 1010 (Fla. 4th DCA 1998), *review denied*, 727 So. 2d 915 (Fla. 1999) that the statute did not amount to an unconstitutional *ex post facto* law as applied to a defendant who had been released from prison prior to the Act, but who committed a crime *after* its effective date. (emphasis in original). But the Court noted that unlike Plain and Young, the statute was being applied retrospectively to Arnold. Arnold was convicted for crimes committed on April 1, 1997, prior to the Act's May 30, 1997 effective date. Thus, the statute violated the *ex post facto* clause as applied to him. The court remanded for imposition of a guidelines sentence. See also Williams v. State, 743 So.2d 1154 (Fla. 2d DCA 1999) (concluding that application of the prison releasee reoffender statute to Williams was a violation of the *ex post facto* clause because the "qualifying events" for purposes of the statute is the date he committed his new offenses which occurred before the Act became effective but affirming prison releasee reoffender sentence in a third case because Williams

committed the offenses in that case after the effective date of the Act).

Petitioner next argues that he did not receive actual, personal notice of the enactment of the prison releasee reoffender statute. The State respectfully disagrees. Petitioner is not entitled to individualized notice, statutory notice is sufficient.

The release orientation program statute, § 944.705(6), Florida Statutes (1999), provides:

(a) The department shall notify every inmate, in no less than 18-point type in the inmate's release documents, that the inmate may be sentenced pursuant to s. 775.082(9) if the inmate commits any felony offense described in s. 775.082(9) within 3 years after the inmate's release. This notice must be prefaced by the word "WARNING" in boldfaced type.

(b) Nothing in this section precludes the sentencing of a person pursuant to s. 775.082(9), nor shall evidence that the department failed to provide this notice prohibit a person from being sentenced pursuant to s. 775.082(9). The state shall not be required to demonstrate that a person received any notice from the department in order for the court to impose a sentence pursuant to s. 775.082(9).

While petitioner may have lacked actual, personal notice, Petitioner had statutory notice of the prison releasee reoffender statute before he committed his last offense. State v. Beasley, 580 So.2d 139, 142 (Fla. 1991) (noting that "publication in the Laws of Florida or the Florida Statutes gives all citizens constructive notice of the consequences of their actions.").

In City of West Covina v. Perkins, 525 U.S. 234, 119 S.Ct. 678, 681, 142 L.Ed.2d 636 (1999), the United States Supreme Court held that due process did not require individual notice; rather, statutory notice was sufficient. The police searched Perkin's home and seized certain property. Perkins home was searched during a

criminal investigation of a former boarder suspected of murder. Perkins claimed that the city's notice of the procedure for retrieving their property seized during the search was inadequate. The police left a form specifying the fact of the search, its date, the searching agency, the warrant's date, the issuing judge, the name of a person who could be contacted for information and an itemized list of the property seized. The Supreme Court reasoned that due process does not require notice of state law remedies which are established by published, generally available state statutes. The Court stated that once the owner is informed that his property has been seized, he can turn to these public sources to learn about the remedial procedures. The City is not required to provide any additional notice. *Id.*, citing Reetz v. Michigan, 188 U.S. 505, 509, 23 S.Ct. 390, 47 L.Ed. 563 (1903) (holding that no special notice is required; rather, the statute is itself sufficient notice); Atkins v. Parker, 472 U.S. 115, 131, 105 S.Ct. 2520, 86 L.Ed.2d 81 (1985) (noting that the "entire structure of our democratic government rests on the premise that the individual citizen is capable of informing himself about the particular policies that affect his destiny").

In Young v. State, 719 So.2d 1010 (Fla. 4th DCA 1998), the Fourth District observed that although this statute requires the Department of Corrections to give notice to every inmate of the provisions of the prison releasee reoffender statute, the statute also provides that the trial court can impose an enhanced sentence under the Act regardless of whether a defendant has received such

notice. Id. at 1011. Thus, neither the statute nor due process require that Petitioner be given actual notice of the prison releasee reoffender statute.

In Rollinson v. State, 743 So. 2d 585 (Fla. 4th DCA 1999), the Fourth District held that constructive notice was all that was required. Because Rollinson committed the crimes after the effective date of the statute, he had constructive notice of the statute's enhanced sentencing provisions. One is charged with knowledge of all the Florida Statutes. Every defendant is presumed to know the law and has actual knowledge of his own criminal history, there is no possible claim of lack of notice.

ISSUE II

DID THE TRIAL COURT ERR IN FAILING TO EXERCISE ITS
"DISCRETION" TO DECLINE TO SENTENCE PETITIONER AS
A PRISON RELEASEE REOFFENDER? (Restated)

Petitioner argues that the trial court failed to exercise its discretion to decline to sentence petitioner as a prison releasee reoffender. The State respectfully disagrees. The trial court has no discretion. Petitioner's reliance on State v. Cotton, 728 So.2d 251 (Fla. 2d DCA 1998), *review granted*, No. 94,996 (Fla. June 11, 1999), is seriously misplaced. Cotton has been superceded by a clarifying amendment to the statute as discussed above.

ISSUE III

DID THE TRIAL COURT ERR BY SENTENCING PETITIONER AS A PRISON RELEASEE REOFFENDER FOR A CRIME THAT BEGAN BEFORE THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE STATUTE BUT CONTINUED AFTER THE EFFECTIVE DATE? (Restated)

Petitioner claims that because the information charges that the crimes occurred during a seven month period of time and part of time was prior to the effective date of the prison releasee reoffender statute, that the statute may not be applied to him. Petitioner argues that the rule of lenity requires an appellate court interpret an information in his favor. The State respectfully disagrees. First, this issue is not preserved for appellate review. Petitioner did not raise this issue in the trial court. Such claims must be raised in the trial court because they require a factual determination that the crime continued after the effective date of the statute. Additionally, the claim is meritless. The rule of lenity is a rule of statutory construction; it does not apply to informations or verdicts. Moreover, the prohibition on *ex post facto* laws is not violated by applying a new or newly amended statute to a defendant as long as the criminal conduct continued after the effective date of the new statute. The State presented evidence that one of the crimes occurred after the effective date of the prison releasee reoffender statute. Thus, the trial court properly sentenced as a prison releasee reoffender.

Jurisdiction

This Court should hold that it has no jurisdiction to consider this "extra" issue. The First District did not certify this issue

to this Court nor is the decision on this issue in direct or express conflict with any other district court's decision. The State is aware of numerous case that hold that once the Florida Supreme Court accepts jurisdiction to answer the certified question, the Florida Supreme Court may review the entire record for error. Ocean Trail Unit Owners Ass'n, Inc. v. Mead, 650 So.2d 4, 6 (Fla. 1994) (explaining that having accepted jurisdiction to answer the certified question, the Florida Supreme Court may review the entire record for error); Savoie v. State, 422 So.2d 308, 312 (Fla. 1982); Tyus v. Apalachicola Northern R.R., 130 So.2d 580 (Fla. 1961); Lawrence v. Florida E. Coast Ry., 346 So.2d 1012, 1014 n.2 (Fla.1977); Bould v. Touchette, 349 So.2d 1181, 1183 (Fla.1977) (stating that "[i]f conflict appears, and this Court acquires jurisdiction, we then proceed to consider the entire cause on the merits"). The State is also aware that this Court routinely declines to address issues which are not central to the resolution of the issue on which jurisdiction is based. State v. Thompson, 24 Fla. L. Weekly S224, n.7 (Fla. 1999) (stating "[w]e decline to address the other issue raised by Thompson since it was not the basis for our review"); Scoggins v. State, 726 So.2d 762, n.7 (Fla. 1999) (stating: "[w]e decline to address Scoggins' second issue as it is beyond the scope of the conflict issue); State v. O'Neal, 724 So.2d 1187, n.1 (Fla. 1999) (stating: "[w]e decline to address the other issue raised by O'Neal since it was not the basis for our review."). Despite this restraint, this Court continues to be burdened with reviewing and the State continues to be burdened with

briefing issues which have been definitely resolved in the district court. Accordingly, the State urges this Court to clarify its case law and limit this doctrine to threshold or preliminary questions directly related to the certified question, not "extra" issues which are not central to the correct resolution of the certified question.

The standard of review

Ex post facto challenges to the application of a statute are reviewed *de novo*. United States v. Muench, 153 F.3d 1298 (11th Cir. 1998) (noting that court of appeal reviews *ex post facto* challenges *de novo*).

Presumption of correctness and burden of persuasion

Petitioner seeks to have this court presume that the trial court's sentence is erroneous and places the burden of persuasion on the State to prove no error occurred. This is contrary to well-established principles of appellate review. A trial court's ruling is presumed correct. Applegate v. Barnett Bank, 377 So.2d 1150 (Fla. 1979) (holding that, in appellate proceedings, trial court's decision is presumed correct and Petitioner has burden to bring forward record adequate to demonstrate reversible error).

Preservation

This issue is not preserved for appellate review. *Ex post facto* challenges are not challenges to the facial validity of a statute;

rather, such challenges are as applied challenges. Because the argument is that the statute is being applied "after the fact", the date of the crime is critical. Petitioner needed to raise this challenge in the trial court to develop the record as to exactly when the crimes occurred. Wainwright v. Wainwright, 610 So.2d 94 (Fla. 1st DCA 1992). Petitioner needed to raise this claim at sentencing so the trial court could take testimony to establish that at least one act occurred after the effective date of the prison releasee reoffender statute.³ Thus, because Petitioner failed to lay the proper factual predicate in the trial court, he has waived any claim that the record did not establish the date of the crimes. Additionally, Petitioner failed to file a motion for a bill of particulars to narrow the time frame.

Merits

First, Petitioner is factually mistaken. The evidence at trial did establish that at least one of the offenses occurred after the effective date of the prison releasee reoffender statute. The prison releasee reoffender statute became effective on May 30, 1997. Woods v. State, 740 So. 2d 20 (Fla. 1st DCA 1999). The testimony established that the crime occurred in June of 1997 which is after the effective date of the statute. Defense counsel asked

³ However, in the instant case, by sheer luck, the record establishes that at least one of the crimes occurred after the effective date of the statute. But this will not always be the case. Appellate courts should not assume error or facts from a silent record.

at trial: "as far as Fred doing anything to you, this would have occurred sometime in June of 1997; is that correct." (T. II 80). The victim, Cryssida Cater, responded: "yes". The victims' sister testified that the sexual incident she witnessed between Petitioner and the victim was in the Spruce Street apartment. (T. II 120). The family moved into that apartment in April 1997. (T. II 128, 141).

Secondly, contrary to Petitioner's argument, the rule of lenity does not apply to informations. Jones v. State, 24 Fla. L. Weekly D569 (Fla. 1st DCA 1999) (refusing to apply the rule of lenity to a provision of the evidence code because "by its terms, section 775.021(1) applies only to statutes which define criminal offenses" and the statute at issue was part of the evidence code, not the criminal code). The rule of lenity is a rule of statutory construction. It applies only to statutes, not to charging documents.

Petitioner may be referring to the constitutional, due process based concept of lenity rather than the statutory rule of lenity. However, most Florida Courts consider the statutory rule of lenity coextensive with the constitutional rule of lenity. Foster v. State, 596 So.2d 1099, 1111 (Fla. 5th DCA 1992) (stating that the rule of lenity is a codification of case law relating to basic constitutional due process rights); Flowers v. State, 567 So.2d 1055, 1058 (Fla. 5th DCA 1990) (stating that the rule of lenity, is merely codified into section 775.021(1), Florida Statutes, and cannot be abolished merely by statutory amendment or repeal); Logan

v. State, 666 So.2d 260 (Fla. 4th DCA 1996) (noting that lenity, although codified by the legislature in section 775.021(1), is founded on the due process clause). But the constitutional version of the rule of lenity is also a rule of statutory construction.⁴ Petitioner fails to explain how the information is ambiguous. It charges that the crime occurred "on or between the 1st day of January, 1997 and the 15th day of July, 1997". (R. 6). This is

⁴ Additionally, the United States Supreme Court has recently explained in several cases that the rule of lenity has a narrow application. The rule of lenity can be invoked only when a statute remains ambiguous after consulting traditional canons of statutory construction. United States v. Shabani, 513 U.S. 10, 17, 115 S.Ct. 382, 130 L.Ed.2d 225 (1994). Only after a court has seized every thing from which aid can be derived and it is still left with an ambiguous statute, does the rule apply. Chapman v. United States, 500 U.S. 453, 463, 111 S.Ct. 1919, 114 L.Ed.2d 524 (1991). The rule comes into operation at the end of the process of construing what Congress has expressed, "not at the beginning as an overriding consideration of being lenient to wrongdoers." Chapman v. United States, 500 U.S. 453, 463, 111 S.Ct. 1919, 1926, 114 L.Ed.2d 524 (1991). The rule of lenity is a last resort, not a primary tool of construction. United States v. Ehsan, 163 F.3d 855, 858 (4th Cir. 1998) (holding dismissal of charges based on rule of lenity was unwarranted). Moreover, a criminal statute is not ambiguous merely because it is possible to articulate a different or more narrow construction; rather, there must be grievous ambiguity or uncertainty in language and structure of statute for the rule of lenity to apply. Smith v. United States, 508 U.S. 223, 239, 113 S.Ct. 2050, 124 L.Ed.2d 138 (1993) (noting the mere possibility of articulating a narrower construction ... does not by itself make the rule of lenity applicable); Chapman v. United States, 500 U.S. 453, 463, 111 S.Ct. 1919, 114 L.Ed.2d 524 (1991) (stating that the ambiguity or uncertainty must be grievous). This is also true of sentencing statutes and the rule of lenity. United States v. Devorkin, 159 F.3d 465 (9th Cir. 1998) (holding the penalty statute for solicitation of murder-for-hire statute was not so ambiguous as to require invocation of rule of lenity even where defendant's interpretation of the statute was plausible); United States v. Decker, 55 F.3d 1509, 1513 (10th Cir. 1995) (finding no ambiguity in the guidelines as applied and rejecting defendant's argument to apply the rule of lenity).

clear and clearly includes dates after the effective date of the prison releasee reoffender. Thus, the rule of lenity has no application in this context.

Petitioner seems to be arguing that the *ex post facto* prohibition is violated when a statute becomes effective during the period when the crimes occurred. The state agrees that, under current caselaw which includes sentencing statutes in *ex post facto* analysis, the prison releasee reoffender statute may not be applied to crimes committed prior to its effective date. Arnold v. State, 24 Fla. L. Weekly D1834 (Fla 4th DCA August 4, 1999) (holding that an prison releasee reoffender sentence was an improper *ex post facto* application when applied to offenses committed prior to the statute's effective date); Calloway v. State, 24 Fla. L. Weekly D552 (Fla. 1st DCA February 17, 1999) (holding that it was a violation of the *ex post facto* clause to apply an amended version of the habitual offender statute for an offense committed before the effective date of the amendment). However, part of petitioner's offenses occurred after the effective date of the prison releasee reoffender statute.

Several courts have addressed the issue of the prohibition on *ex post facto* laws and continuous offenses. Both the Florida Supreme Court and two district courts have addressed the issue of a change in the law occurring during the time period in which the crimes occurred. Florida Courts hold that there is no *ex post facto* violation when the offense is of a continuing nature and some of the unlawful conduct occurred after the new law became effective.

In State v. Whiddon, 384 So.2d 1269, 1271 (Fla.1980), this Court held that a RICO conviction does not violate the *ex post facto* clause as long as one act occurred after the effective date of the Act. The trial court dismissed the RICO charge because there was no allegation of an act of racketeering after the effective date of the RICO statute. Whiddon and others were charged for various acts in a period between June 1976 and June 1977. The RICO Act became effective October 1, 1977. Thus, all acts occurred prior to the Act's effective date. Under the RICO statute, two offenses must be proven but only one of the acts is required to have occurred after the effective date. However, the RICO statute cannot be retroactively applied when none of the acts occurred after the statute's effective date. Because both acts occurred prior to the statute's effective date, the trial court properly dismissed the charges.

In Burkett v. State, 731 So. 2d 695 (Fla. 2d DCA 1998), the Second District held that the defendant could be declared a sexual predator because the offenses continued after the effective date of the statute. The crimes occurred over a 15 month period with eight months of the period before the effective date of the statute but seven months of the period were after the effective date of the statute. The Second District explained that the sexual predator designation was created by the Florida Sexual Predators Act. The 1993 Act effective date was October 1, 1993 and the Act provided that the offense must have been committed on or after October 1, 1993. The information alleged that the crimes were committed

between February 2, 1993, and April 30, 1994. Thus, of the almost fifteen-month time period during which the offenses allegedly occurred, seven months, from October 1, 1993, through April 30, 1994, were within the applicable time period of the 1993 Act and that was sufficient to declare the defendant a sexual predator under the Act. Id. citing, Winokur v. State, 605 So.2d 100 (Fla. 4th DCA 1992) (finding that 9-month period outside statute where information alleged 4 1/2-year period not prejudicial).

In Jenkins v. State, 444 So.2d 1108 (Fla. 1st DCA 1984), the First District held that where the conspiracy continued after the effective date of the amendment to the statute it was not a retroactive application of the law. The amendment increased the penalty for introduction of contraband into a state penal institution from a third degree felony to a second degree felony. This amendment had the effect of rendering a conspiracy to commit that crime a felony rather than a misdemeanor. This Court, analogizing to the reasoning of Whiddon, held that because the acts in the conspiracy clearly occurred after the effective date of the statutory amendment, the mere fact that the conspiracy started before the effective date of the amendment does not render the application of the amended statute a violation of the *ex post facto* clause. *But cf. Bergelson v. Singletary*, 721 So.2d 1194 (Fla. 1st DCA 1998).

The Supreme Court of several other states have also held that as long as the crime continued to occur after the enactment of the statute, there is no *ex post facto* violation. The California

Supreme Court, in People v. Grant, 973 P.2d 72 (Cal. 1999), held that where an offense continues after the enactment of a statute, that statute may be applied without violating the *ex post facto* prohibition. California enacted a new substantive offense of "continuous sexual abuse" which required at least three sexual acts. The sexual abuse in Grant began before this statute was enacted but continued after its' effective date. The trial court instructed the jury that they were required to find that at least one of the acts occurred after the effective date of the new substantive offense.⁵ The Grant Court explained that the critical question for determining retroactivity is whether the last act or event necessary to trigger application of the statute occurred before or after the statute's effective date. A law is not retroactive merely because some of the facts or conditions upon which its application depends came into existence prior to its enactment. Because the last act necessary to trigger application of the statute was an act of molestation committed after the statute's effective date, the conviction was not a retroactive application of the statute and therefore not a violation of the *ex post facto* clause.

Other State Supreme Courts agree that the *ex post facto* prohibition does not prohibit the prosecution of "straddle"

⁵ This part of Grant has no relevance to this issue because it is the judge, not the jury, that is the fact-finder for purposes of sentencing. At issue in Grant was a substantive offense; however, at issue here is a sentencing statute. Moreover, Petitioner waived any claim of error in the jury not making such a factual finding by failing to request such a jury instruction.

offenses. State v. Hayes, 18 A.2d 895 (Conn. 1941) (rejected the defendants' contention that their sentences violated the *ex post facto* prohibition where conspiracy continued after the enactment of the new penalty statute); Chancey v. State, 349 S.E.2d 717 (Ga. 1986) (holding that a conviction based on predicate crimes one of which occurred after the RICO act's effective date did not violate the constitutional prohibition against *ex post facto* laws).

The United States Supreme Court has held likewise. Samuels v. McCurdy, 267 U.S. 188, 45 S.Ct. 264, 69 L.Ed. 568 (1925) (holding that the Georgia prohibition statute making it illegal to possess liquor could properly be applied to a defendant who had lawfully acquired the liquor before the effective date of the statute but continued to possess the liquor for several years after the change in the law). Every federal court of appeals has held that application of an amended or newly enacted law to an offense that begins before but continues after the law's effective date does not violate the federal Constitution's prohibition against *ex post facto* laws.⁶ So long as there is evidence that the conspiracy

⁶ United States v. Giry, 818 F.2d 120, 135 (1st Cir. 1987); United States v. McCall, 915 F.2d 811 (2nd Cir. 1990); United States v. Gibbs, 813 F.2d 596 (3d Cir. 1987); United States v. Goldberger, 197 F.2d 330, 331 (3d Cir. 1952); United States v. Wechsler, 392 F.2d 344, 346-347 (4th Cir. 1968); Huff v. United States, 192 F.2d 911, 915 (5th Cir. 1951); United States v. Buckhalter, 986 F.2d 875 (5th Cir. 1993); United States v. Henson, 848 F.2d 1374, 1385 (6th Cir. 1988); United States v. Pace, 898 F.2d 1218, 1238 (7th Cir. 1990); United States v. Kramer, 955 F.2d 479, 484 (7th Cir. 1992); United States v. Tharp, 892 F.2d 691, 693 (8th Cir. 1989); United States v. Calabrese, 825 F.2d 1342, 1346 (9th Cir. 1987); United States v. Campanale, 518 F.2d 352, 355 (9th Cir. 1975); United States v. Stanberry, 963 F.2d 1323, 1326-27

continued after the effective date of the guidelines, the *ex post facto* clause is not violated.

In United States v. Henson, 848 F.2d 1374, 1385 (6th Cir.1988), the Sixth Circuit held that a jury verdict is necessarily a finding by the jury that the crime occurred as alleged in the indictment. The indictment alleged a conspiracy committed "between January 1, 1983 up to and including January 1, 1985". The defendants argued that because the last overt acts alleged in the indictment occurred prior to the change in the fines statute their fines were being improperly enhanced in violation of the *ex post facto* clause. The Sixth Circuit held that a defendant may be punished under statute effective on the last day of the time period alleged in the indictment which was January 1, 1985. The Court reasoned that a jury's verdict represents a finding that a crime was committed as alleged in the indictment, including the time frame alleged. Thus, when the jury convicted Clenton Henson, it found that the crimes took place up to and including January 1, 1985. Alan Henson's plea of guilty likewise represents a finding that he was involved in the conspiracy up to and including January 1, 1985. The Sixth Circuit, while acknowledging that the last overt act occurred prior to the change in the fine statute, still found no retroactive application because there was evidence of other acts that were performed in furtherance of the conspiracy after the effective date of the

(10th Cir. 1992); United States v. Terzado-Madruga 897 F.2d 1099, 1124 (11th Cir. 1990); United States v. Thomas, 114 F.3d 228, 271 (D.C.Cir. 1997).

statute. Two witnesses' testimony and the government agents' physical evidence established the conspiracy continued after the effective date of the new fine statute. See United States v. Barnette, 800 F.2d 1558 (11th Cir. 1986) (same); United States v. Calabrese, 825 F.2d 1342, 1346 (9th Cir. 1987) (rejecting *ex post facto* argument where substantial evidence supported jury's finding that the conspiracy continued after the effective date of the statute).

The federal courts have rejected a similar to application of the federal three-strike law and continuous offenses. In United States v. Farmer, 73 F.3d 836 (8th Cir. 1996), the Eighth Circuit held that a defendant may constitutionally be subject to the provision of the new three-strikes statute for a conspiracy that began before the effective date of the statute but continued after the effective date. One of the robbery offenses in the conspiracy count occurred two days prior to the enactment of the three-strike law. The Farmer Court referred to the claim as "a variation" of an Ex Post Facto claim. Id. at 841. The Court noted that conspiracy is a continuing offense.

Petitioner's reliance on Griffith v. State, 654 So.2d 936 (Fla. 4th DCA 1995), *quashed in part, affirmed in part*, State v. Griffith, 675 So.2d 911 (Fla. 1996), is misplaced. The Griffith Court held that the trial court court erred by sentencing the defendant as an adult because he was "a juvenile when he committed the crimes". Griffith was born in August 1967. In 1989, he was charged by information with several felonies which occurred between

August 1983 and August 1985. Griffith was under the age of 16 for less than one month of this two year period. The verdict did not specify the dates of the crime; rather, the verdict contained the phrase "as charged in the Information". Griffith, in dicta, stated that the rule of lenity requires an appellate court assume that all of the convictions occurred while the defendant was under the age of 16.

Griffith is incorrectly decided and contrary to this Court's precedent in State v. Whiddon, *supra*. Quite simply, Griffith was not a juvenile when he committed these crimes; he was an adult. Griffith was an adult for over 23 months of the 24 month period during which the crimes occurred. The Griffith Court erroneously applies the rule of lenity, a rule of statutory construction, to verdicts and informations. Neither the statutory rule of lenity nor the constitutional version of lenity apply to verdicts or informations. When a jury returns a verdict "as charged in the Information", it means exactly that as charged in the information. Henson, *supra*. The information charged that the crimes occurred up to August 1985. Moreover, appellate courts do not assume facts. Assuming error is an inversion of the principles that the burden of persuasion is on the appellant and that judgments are presumed correct. Additionally, the assumption that the crimes occurred only in August 1983 when the information charged a two year time frame is contrary to established practice and caselaw. It is standard practice for defense counsel to file a motion for a bill of particulars to narrow the time frame if it can be narrowed.

Additionally, prosecutors are required to exhaust all reasonable means to narrow the time frame. Dell'Orfano v. State, 616 So.2d 33 (Fla. 1993). The prosecutor must have had some information that the crimes occurred during the two year period. Judge Farmer is improperly assuming bad faith in the part of the prosecutor by assuming that the crime occurred in a one month time frame when the information had a two year time frame and ineffectiveness on the part of defense counsel. This Court should not follow this one sentence dicta in Griffith.

ISSUE IV

DID THE TRIAL COURT ERR BY FAILING TO AWARD CREDIT FOR TIME SERVED AWAITING TRIAL AGAINST PETITIONER'S SENTENCE? (Restated)

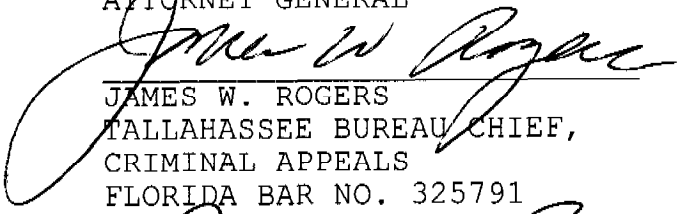
Petitioner argues that the trial court committed fundamental error by failing to award petitioner credit for time served and that the error resulted in a sentence beyond the statutory maximum. While the state agrees that the sentence exceeds the statutory maximum of thirty years if petitioner spent time in jail pending trial, the State disagrees with the forum in which such claims should be litigated. No one disputes that petitioner should not spend a day in prison beyond the statutory maximum. That is not the issue, the issue is the correct forum for correcting the sentence and that is clearly the trial court, not an appellate court. Such issues should be raised in the trial court where they have access to the jail records. Petitioner can file a 3.800 motion in the trial court. This simple remedy obviates the review by two appellate attorneys, three judges and seven justices.

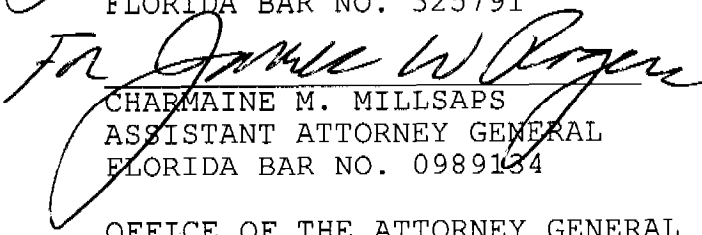
CONCLUSION

The State respectfully submits the certified question should be answered in the negative and the decision of the District Court of Appeal in be affirmed.

Respectfully submitted,

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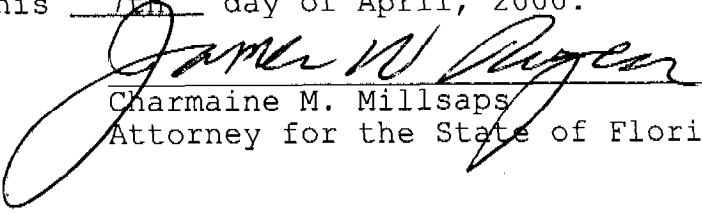

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that a true and correct copy of the foregoing RESPONDENT'S ANSWER BRIEF ON THE MERITS has been furnished by U.S. Mail to Fred Parker Bingham, II, Esq., Assistant Public Defender, Leon County Courthouse, Suite 401, 301 South Monroe Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32301, this 7th day of April, 2000.


Charmaine M. Millsaps
Attorney for the State of Florida

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