



OCTOBER 2025

LOWER THE WINDOWS, NOT YOUR GUARD

*United States v.
Ronnard Williams
(Court of Appeals D.C.
Circuit 2025)*

In the case of *United States v. Williams*, (No. 23-3044 (D.C. Cir. 2025)), the D.C. Circuit Court addressed whether an order to lower a vehicle's windows during a lawful traffic stop violates the Fourth Amendment.

At approximately 11:00 p.m., Washington, D.C. Metropolitan police officers approached a car that was illegally parked with excessively tinted windows. When the officers tapped on the glass, the driver, Ronnard Williams, only partially lowered his window, obstructing the officers' view inside. The officers ordered him to lower the windows further. When he complied, the officers observed a firearm at the foot of a passenger in the backseat. The officers then opened the door, seized the gun, and arrested Williams. A subsequent search revealed another firearm, marijuana, and cash.

Williams was indicted for unlawful possession of a firearm by a felon. He moved to suppress the evidence, arguing that the order to lower his windows was an unconstitutional search under the Fourth Amendment. The district court denied the motion, and Williams was convicted and sentenced to three years and five months in prison.

Appellate Court Decision:

The D.C. Circuit upheld the conviction, finding no Fourth Amendment violation when the officers ordered Williams to lower his illegally tinted windows.

The court relied on the precedent set by *Pennsylvania v. Mimms*, 434 U.S. 106 (1977) which allows police officers to order a driver to exit his vehicle during a lawful traffic stop to protect officer safety without violating the Fourth Amendment. Extending that reasoning, the court concluded that ordering a driver to lower tinted windows serves the same legitimate safety purpose and imposes only minimal intrusion on the driver's privacy.

Take away:

Requiring a driver to lower a vehicle's windows during a lawful stop- especially when visibility is obstructed – constitutes a reasonable and lawful police order. Officer safety is a paramount concern and minimal intrusions to ensure visibility are justified.

Stay Safe and Stay Informed!