

Decision on case involving WSU police jurisdiction is upheld

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By **Brandon Macz of the Tribune**

The Washington State Court of Appeals upheld a Whitman County Superior Court decision Thursday that determined a Washington State University police officer's jurisdiction extended beyond the university campus.

Justin J. Hardgrove appealed the court's decision that WSU Officer Matthew Kuhrt was allowed to conduct an off-campus traffic stop in May of 2008. The stop resulted in Hardgrove being arrested for having a suspended license and consequently being found in possession of methamphetamine and later convicted.

Hardgrove argued the evidence seized during his arrest should be suppressed because Kuhrt had no jurisdiction outside the boundaries of the WSU campus.

According to the published opinion written by Appeals Judge Kevin M. Korsmo, the WSU Police Department is a general authority law enforcement agency and holds a mutual aid agreement with the city of Pullman and Whitman County.

"Kuhrt therefore had authority to make traffic stops in Pullman and Whitman County," the opinion states, citing the Washington Mutual Aid Peace Officers Powers Act. "Since 1985, law enforcement agencies are empowered to contract with each other to provide mutual assistance without regard to normal territorial limitations."

Prior to the Act, the opinion states, "this court concluded that a WSU police officer lacked authority to enforce laws outside of the WSU campus."

The opinion further states universities in the state have the authority to form police departments and have the same powers as police officers and sheriff's deputies in the state when appointed.

Macz may be contacted at bmacz@lntribune.com or (208) 848-2275.