

Bond Case Briefs

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PUBLIC HOUSING - MINNESOTA

Fletcher Properties, Inc. v. City of Minneapolis

Supreme Court of Minnesota - July 29, 2020 - N.W.2d - 2020 WL 4342651

Landlords brought constitutional challenge to ordinance prohibiting landlords from refusing to rent property to prospective tenants when that refusal was motivated by desire to avoid Section 8 requirements.

The District Court granted summary judgment to landlords. City appealed. The Court of Appeals reversed and remanded. Landlords sought review, which was granted.

The Supreme Court held that:

- Ordinance was reasonable means to achieve city's purposes of increasing housing opportunities for voucher holders, addressing discriminatory effects of housing denials, and prohibiting prejudice-based discrimination, supporting finding that ordinance satisfied rational basis standard as to due process claim;
- Unless a law that treats groups of people differently impacts fundamental rights or creates a suspect class, it does not violate the equal protection principle of the state constitution when it is a rational means of achieving a legislative body's legitimate policy goal; however, this rule is subject to an important exception, which is that under the equal protection guarantee of the state constitution, court holds lawmakers to a higher standard of evidence when a statutory classification demonstrably and adversely affects one race differently than other races, even if the lawmakers' purpose in enacting the law was not to affect any race differently; and
- Distinction created by ordinance between certain landlords was rational method to achieve exemption's legislative purpose of administrative efficiency, and therefore ordinance did not violate equal protection guarantee.