

Bond Case Briefs

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Jefferson County Board of Education v. City of Irondale

Supreme Court of Alabama - October 23, 2020 - So.3d - 2020 WL 6235733

County board of education and several public-school employees, who worked either as public-school teachers or support staff, sought to avoid application of an occupational tax imposed by city.

The Circuit Court entered summary judgment for city. County board of education and public-school employees appealed.

The Supreme Court held that:

- Nature of services performed by employees of county board of education was not an adequate basis for excluding them from having to pay city's occupational tax;
- State-agent immunity was not a basis to find that employees of county board of education were exempt from city's occupational tax; and
- City's occupational tax neither violated statutorily mandated salary schedule for employees of local boards of education nor failed to ensure equitable pay for such employees.

Nature of services performed by public-school employees, who worked either as teachers or support workers, was not an adequate basis for excluding them from having to pay city's occupational tax; ordinance applied to all employees working in the city limits, regardless of the person's employer or place of residence, and occupational tax did not create a new or additional requirement for gaining or maintaining employment by the county board of education.

State-agent immunity was not a basis to find that employees of county board of education were exempt from occupational tax imposed by city; ordinance did not affect any government function of the county board of education, payment of the occupational tax was not related to a board employee's government responsibilities, and if the county board of education was unwilling to withhold the occupational tax for its employees, the ordinance provided a procedure for employees to independently comply with the requirements of the ordinance.

Occupational tax imposed by city ordinance neither violated statutorily mandated salary schedule for employees of local boards of education nor failed to ensure equitable pay for such employees so as to preclude occupational tax from being applied to employees of county board of education; despite argument that a difference in net wages occurred based on where employees of county board of education provided services within county, nothing in ordinance prohibited county board of education from paying employees gross wages exactly as required under the mandated salary schedule, and statute in question did not state that employees of local boards of education were otherwise exempt from local, state, or federal taxes.