

Bond Case Briefs

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City of Crestwood v. Affton Fire Protection District

Supreme Court of Missouri, en banc - April 20, 2021 - S.W.3d - 2021 WL 1554743

City and taxpayers brought action against fire protection district, the Governor, and the Attorney General, alleging that statutes governing the provision of and payment for fire protection services in certain annexed areas were unconstitutional.

The Circuit Court granted judgment on the pleadings for defendants, and city and taxpayers appealed.

The Supreme Court held that:

- Fire district funding statutes were not improper special laws;
- Fire protection service fee imposed upon city which annexed land served by fire district was not a tax on city residents; and
- Statute did not create an unfunded mandate in violation of the Hancock Amendment.

Economic viability of fire protection districts in particular county was a plausible reason for statutory classification, and interrelated exclusion, requiring annexing cities to pay fire protection districts which continue to provide services to the annexed areas what the districts would have collected in tax revenue within the annexed areas, and thus there was a rational basis for the classification scheme and the statutes were not improper special laws.

Statutory fire protection service fee imposed upon city which annexed land served by fire district was not a tax on city residents, and thus did not violate constitutional due process or taxation provisions; statute did not impose a financial obligation upon city residents, and no city resident paid money to the district.

Statute requiring annexing cities in county to pay fire protection districts which continue to provide services to the annexed areas what the districts would have collected in tax revenue within the annexed areas did not create an unfunded mandate in violation of the Hancock Amendment; city voluntarily annexed the unincorporated area within the district, and statute did not shift responsibility for financing fire protection services from the state to a local political subdivision, but rather shifted it between political subdivisions.