

Bond Case Briefs

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O'Keeffe v. McClain

Supreme Court of Ohio - June 30, 2021 - N.E.3d - 2021 WL 2671329 - 2021-Ohio-2186

Property owner sought judicial review of a decision of the Board of Tax Appeals affirming tax commissioner's denial of owner's complaint challenging an exemption from property taxation for parcel on which state university operated a full-service airport.

The Supreme Court held that:

- University had burden of proving its entitlement to exemption;
- Exemption could be predicated on operational relationship between use of airport and university's activities;
- University established its right to exemption; and
- Hangars and offices leased for private use did not have to be split-listed as taxable.

State university had the burden of proving its entitlement to an exemption from property taxation for parcel on which the university operated a full-service airport, in action challenging the exemption brought by another property owner.

State university could predicate an exemption from property taxation for parcel on which the university operated a full-service airport on the operational relationship between the use of the airport and the university's activities, subject to a primary-use test.

State university established its right to an exemption from property taxation for parcel on which the university operated a full-service airport; student flight education, course in airport management, and course in airport planning and design were examples of how university's operating a public airport directly served educational purposes, of the approximately 100 employees who maintained airport operations, 35 were student employees, and there were two research facilities on the property, namely, a gas-turbine lab and an aerospace-research center.

Hangars and offices leased for private use on parcel on which state university operated a full-service airport did not have to be split-listed as taxable; statute governing exemption from taxation for property of a state university did not say that property had to be used exclusively in an operational relationship with university activities, but instead the statute used the phrase "used for the support of" the university, which encompassed the receipt of income from ancillary activities on the property.