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Estate of Farrell by Farrell v. State

Supreme Court of Iowa - May 13, 2022 - N.W.2d - 2022 WL 1509713

Estates of motor vehicle occupants who died as result of head-on collision with another vehicle traveling the wrong way on state highway brought action against state and two municipalities, alleging the defendants negligently designed, constructed, and operated a confusing interchange used by the errant driver.

The District Court denied defendants' motion for judgment on the pleadings. Defendants filed interlocutory appeal. The Court of Appeals reversed and remanded. Application for review was granted.

The Supreme Court held that public-duty doctrine did not bar action.

Public-duty doctrine did not bar claims against state and municipalities brought by estates of motor vehicle occupants who died as result of head-on collision with another vehicle traveling the wrong way on state highway, alleging that states and municipalities negligently designed, constructed, and operated a confusing highway interchange, with inadequate lighting and signage, used by the errant driver, which induced the driver mistakenly to drive into oncoming traffic; defendants' alleged affirmative negligence created a dangerous condition on their own property that was allegedly a cause of the fatal accident.

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