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Salt Lake City Corporation v. Utah Inland Port Authority

Supreme Court of Utah - June 29, 2022 - P.3d - 2022 WL 2337654 - 2022 UT 27

City brought action to challenge Utah Inland Port Authority Act, which required that certain municipalities adopt specific zoning regulations and permissions favorable to developing an inland port and directed certain taxes to the project.

The District Court granted Utah Inland Port Authority's motions for summary judgment, and city appealed.

The Supreme Court held that:

- Act's disparate treatment of three cities was rationally related to a legitimate legislative purpose and thus did not violate the Uniform Operation of Laws Clause of the Utah Constitution;
- Court would decline to reach merits of issue of whether the Act violated the Uniform Operation of Laws Clause by redirecting property taxes, as legislature had amended the Act;
- Act's requirement that three cities "allow an inland port," and prohibition against them outlawing the "transporting, unloading, loading, transfer, or temporary storage of natural resources" on authority jurisdictional land, did not violate the Utah Constitution; and
- Court would decline to reach merits of issue of whether the Act violated the Utah Constitution through the redirection of tax revenue to an outside group or entity.

Utah Inland Port Authority Act's disparate treatment of three cities, by requiring them to have certain zoning regulations permitting port area and prohibiting certain regulations of port area activity, was rationally related to a legitimate legislative purpose and thus did not violate the Uniform Operation of Laws Clause of the Utah Constitution; Act's statewide public purpose was to maximize the long-term economic and other benefit for the state, studies projected that an inland port could create thousands of jobs, develop natural resource extraction industries, and make Utah a bigger player in the global economy, and classification cleared the way for the port by requiring the three cities to "allow an inland port" and preventing them from prohibiting activities necessary to operate it.

Utah Inland Port Authority Act's requirement that three cities "allow an inland port," and prohibition against them outlawing the "transporting, unloading, loading, transfer, or temporary storage of natural resources" on authority jurisdictional land, did not violate the Ripper Clause of the Utah Constitution, which prohibited delegation of authority to an outside group or entity; rather, Act's legislative mandates were aimed at certain municipalities.

Supreme Court would decline to reach merits of issue of whether Utah Inland Port Authority Act violated the Ripper Clause of the Utah Constitution through the redirection of tax revenue to an outside group or entity, as legislature had amended the Act to make substantive changes to the funding provisions; instead, Court would order the parties to submit supplemental briefing on whether the tax challenges to the Act were moot and should be dismissed.

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