

Title: Taxicab Operators of Metro Manila, Inc., Felicisimo Cabigao, and Ace Transportation Corporation vs. The Board of Transportation and The Director of the Bureau of Land Transportation

Facts:

Taxicab Operators of Metro Manila, Inc. (TOMMI) and its two member operators, Felicisimo Cabigao and Ace Transportation Corporation, challenged Memorandum Circular No. 77-42 issued by the Board of Transportation (BOT) on October 10, 1977, and Memorandum Circular No. 52 issued by the Bureau of Land Transportation (BLT) on August 15, 1980. These circulars mandated the phasing out of taxicabs in Metro Manila that were over six years old, with the aim of ensuring the safety and comfort of the riding public.

The petitioners' case began when they filed a petition with the BOT seeking to nullify BOT MC No. 77-42, which was docketed as Case No. 80-7553. The BOT heard the case and after the petitioners presented their evidence, they submitted additional documentary proofs. However, the BOT did not render a decision and the records of the case were reportedly misplaced. As their 1975 model cabs were soon to be phased-out by January 1, 1982, the petitioners filed this case with the Supreme Court on December 29, 1981, raising questions about due process and the equal protection of the law.

Issues:

1. Whether the BOT and BLT promulgated the questioned memorandum circulars in accord with the procedural requirements of Presidential Decree No. 101, thereby safeguarding the petitioners' constitutional right to procedural due process.
2. Assuming compliance with procedural requirements, whether enforcing the assailed memorandum circulars would violate the petitioners' constitutional rights to:
 - a. Equal protection of the law
 - b. Substantive due process
 - c. Protection against arbitrary and unreasonable classification and standards

Court's Decision:

The Supreme Court denied the writs prayed for and dismissed the petition. The Court found that the discretionary authority given to the BOT allowed it to choose from various options for gathering information without necessarily holding a public hearing. Thus, the petitioners were not deprived of procedural due process. Furthermore, the six-year age limit applied to taxicabs was a reasonable standard ensuring roadworthiness and did not violate substantive due process. With respect to equal protection, the Court recognized the substantial

distinctions in traffic conditions between Metro Manila and other places and upheld the validity of targeted implementation of the circulars. The Court also observed that differential treatment of the taxi industry, compared to other transportation services, does not infringe upon the equal protection clause, as it only requires uniform operation within a specific class similarly situated.

Doctrine:

1. The BOT has discretionary authority to gather information and data for policymaking without necessarily holding a public hearing, as long as the method chosen is reasonable and not arbitrary.
2. The six-year age limit for taxicabs constitutes a reasonable standard for ensuring roadworthiness and does not violate the right to substantive due process.
3. The equal protection clause does not require identical treatment for all persons, but rather, an equality of treatment for those similarly situated.

Class Notes:

- Procedural due process does not require a public hearing prior to the issuance of rules and regulations that govern future conduct for a class of persons unless there's a law stating otherwise.
- Substantive due process is satisfied with the application of a reasonable standard that is not arbitrary or capricious.
- Equal protection allows for reasonable classification based on substantial differences, and such classifications must apply equally to all members of the class.
- Due process does not mandate identical treatment, but rather, a consistent application of laws among those in similar conditions or circumstances.

Historical Background:

The case reflects the exercise of police power in the context of a developing Metro Manila during the late 1970s and early 1980s, where road safety and public convenience were pressing concerns due to the increase in vehicular traffic and the operation of older vehicles. The government's decision to phase out older taxis was an administrative response to societal demands for more reliable and comfortable transportation options, as well as a mechanism aimed at streamlining the regulatory framework for public transport within the region.