

NO. 47614-2-II

IN THE COURT OF APPEALS OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON
DIVISION TWO

STATE OF WASHINGTON,

Respondent,

v.

LEO BUNKER,

Appellant.

ON APPEAL FROM THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE
STATE OF WASHINGTON FOR LEWIS COUNTY

The Honorable James W. Lawler, Judge

BRIEF OF APPELLANT

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A. ASSIGNMENT OF ERROR

The sentencing court erred when it ordered Mr. Bunker to pay a \$100 DNA collection fee.

B. ISSUES PERTAINING TO ASSIGNMENT OF ERROR?

1. Does the mandatory \$100 DNA-collection fee authorized under RCW 43.43.7541 violate substantive due process when applied to defendants who do not have the ability, or likely ability, to pay the fee?

2. Does the mandatory \$100 collection fee authorized under RCW 43.43.7541 violate equal protection when applied to defendants who have previously provided a sample and paid the \$100 DNA collection fee?

C. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

After a successful appeal, this court remanded Mr. Bunker's case to the Lewis County Superior Court for resentencing. RP¹ 2. On remand, and prior to resentencing, the court entered an Order Vacating Judgment and Sentence. CP 1; RP 2. Under this court's opinion in No 45006-2-II, the court also vacated the conviction under Count IV. RP 2; CP 1; Supplemental Designation of Clerk's Papers, Mandate and Unpublished Opinion (sub. nom 215).

At resentencing, Mr. Bunker stipulated to criminal history that included four prior Washington felony convictions as follows: twice

¹ There is a single volume of verbatim for this appeal.

Violating the Uniform Controlled Substances Act by Delivering a Controlled Substance, sentencing in August 1994 and January 1996; Second Degree Assault sentenced in June 2003; and Violating a Protection Order sentenced in 2006 and resentenced in October 2011. CP 2-3; RP 2-3.

The court sentenced Mr. Bunker to a Department of Corrections minimum term of 400 months and a maximum term of life. CP 9; RP 8. All four of Mr. Bunker's current convictions are felony offenses: Rape in the Second Degree² (two counts); Harassment (Threat to Kill);³ and Violation of a Domestic Violence Protection Order.⁴ The 400-month sentence was an exceptional sentence. CP 8. In imposing the sentence, the court relied on two aggravating factors found by the jury and an additional court-imposed factor that Mr. Bunker's high offender score resulted in current offenses going unpunished. RP 3-4; CP 8, 21. The court found any of the bases for the exceptional sentence standing alone justified the exceptional sentence. CP 21.

The court made an individual determination that Mr. Bunker could not pay discretionary legal financial obligations. RP 8-9. Mr. Bunker did

² RCW 9A.44.050(1)(a)

³ RCW 9A.46.020(2)(b)

⁴ RCW 26.50.110(5)

not object when the court ordered him to provide a DNA sample and pay a \$100 DNA collection fee. CP 14 (Section 4.4); RP 8.

Mr. Bunker appeals all portions of his judgment and sentence. CP 25.

D. ARGUMENT

1. **RCW 43.43.7541 violates substantive due process and is unconstitutional as applied to defendants who do not have the ability or likely future ability to pay the mandatory \$100 collection fee.**

Both the Washington and United States Constitutions mandate that no person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law. U.S. Const. amends V, XIV; Wash. Const. art. I § 3. “The due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment confers both procedural and substantive protections.” *Amunrud v. Bd. of Appeals*, 158 Wn.2d 208, 216, 143 P.3d 571 (2006).

“Substantive due process protects against arbitrary and capricious government action even when the decision to take action is pursuant to constitutionally adequate procedures.” *Amunrud*, 158 Wn.2d at 218-19. It requires that “deprivations of life, liberty, or property be substantively reasonable;” in other words, such deprivations are constitutionally infirm if not “supported by some legitimate justification.” *Nielsen v. Washington State Dep’t of Licensing*, 177 Wn. App. 45, 52-53, 309 P.3d 1221 (2013)

(citing Russell W. Galloway, Jr., *Basic Substantive Due Process Analysis*, 26 U.S.F. L. Rev. 625, 625-26 (1992)).

Where a fundamental right is not at issue, as is the case here, the rational basis standard applies. *Nielsen*, 177 Wn. App. at 53-54.

To survive rational basis scrutiny, the state must show its regulation is rationally related to a legitimate state interest. *Nielsen*, 177 Wn. App. at 53-54. Although the burden on the state is lighter under this standard, the standard is not meaningless. The United State Supreme Court has cautioned the rational basis test “is not a toothless one.” *Mathews v. DeCastro*, 429 U.S. 181, 185, 97 S.Ct. 431, 50 L.Ed.2d 389 (1976). As the Washington Supreme Court has explained, “the court’s role is to assure that even under the deferential standard of review the challenged legislation is constitutional.” *DeYoung v. Providence Med. Ctr.*, 136 Wn.2d 136, 144, 960 P.2d 919 (1998) (determining that statute at issue did not survive rational basis scrutiny); *Nielsen*, 177 Wn. App. at 61 (same). Statutes that do not rationally relate to a legitimate state interest must be struck down as unconstitutional under the substantive due process clause. *Id.*

Here, the statute mandates all felony offenders pay the DNA-collection fee. RCW 43.43.7541.⁵ This ostensibly serves the state's interest to fund the collection, analysis, and retention of a convicted offender's DNA profile to help facilitate criminal identification. RCW 43.43.752; RCW 43.43.7541. This is a legitimate interest. But imposing this mandatory fee upon defendants who cannot pay the fee does not rationally serve that interest.

It is unreasonable to require sentencing courts to impose the DNA-collection fee upon all felony defendants regardless of whether they have the ability to or likely future ability to pay. The blanket requirement does not further the state's interest in funding DNA collection and preservation. As the Washington Supreme Court frankly recognized, "the state cannot collect money from defendants who cannot pay." *State v. Blazina*, 182 Wn.2d 827, 344 P.3d 680, 684 (2015). When applied to indigent defendants, the mandatory fee orders are pointless. It is irrational for the

⁵ Every sentence imposed for a crime specified in RCW 43.43.754 must include a fee of one hundred dollars. The fee is a court-ordered legal financial obligation as defined in RCW 9.94A.030 and other applicable law. For a sentence imposed under chapter 9.94A.RCW, the fee is payable by the offender after payment of all other legal financial obligations included in the sentence has been completed. For all other sentences, the fee is payable by the offender in the same manner as other assessments imposed. The clerk of the court shall transmit eighty percent of the fee collected to the state treasurer for deposit in the state DNA database account created under RCW 43.43.7532, and shall transmit twenty percent of the fee collected to the agency responsible for collection of a biological sample from the offender as required under RCW 43.43.754.

state to mandate trial courts impose this debt upon defendants who cannot pay.

In response, the state may argue that the \$100 DNA collection fee is such a small amount that the defendant would likely be able to pay. The problem with this argument, however, is this fee does not stand alone.

The Legislature expressly directs that the fee is “payable by the offender after payment of other legal financial obligations included in the sentence.” RCW 43.43.7541. Thus the fee is paid only after restitution, the victim’s compensation assessment, and all other LFOs have been satisfied. As such, the statute makes this the least likely fee to be paid by an indigent defendant.

Additionally, the defendant will be saddled with a 12% interest rate on his unpaid DNA-collection fee, making the actual debt incurred even more onerous in ways that reach far beyond his financial situation. Imposing mounting debt upon people who cannot pay works against another important state interest – reducing recidivism. See *Blazina*, 344 P.3d at 683-84 (discussing the cascading effect of LFOs with an accompanying 12% interest rate and examining the detrimental impact to rehabilitation that comes with ordering fees that cannot be paid).

When applied to defendants who do not have the ability or likely ability to pay, the mandatory imposition of the DNA-collection fee does

not rationally relate to the state's interest in finding the collection, testing, and retention of an individual defendant's DNA. Thus RCW 43.43.7541 violates substantive due process as applied. Based on Mr. Bunker's indigent status, the order to pay the \$100 DNA collection fee should be vacated.

2. RCW 43.43.7541 violates equal protection because it irrationally requires some defendants to pay a DNA-collection fee multiple times, while others need only pay once.

The equal protection clauses of the state and federal constitutions require that persons similarly situated with respect to the legitimate purpose of the law receive like treatment. U.S. Const. amend XIV; Wash. Const., art I, § 12; *Bush v. Gore*, 531 U.S. 98, 104-05, 121 S.Ct. 525, 148 L.Ed.2d 388 (2000); A valid law administered in a manner that unjustly discriminates between similarly situated persons, violates equal protection. *State v. Gaines*, 121 Wn. App. 687, 704, 90 P.3d 1095 (2004) (citations omitted).

Before an equal protection analysis may be applied, a defendant must establish he is similarly situated with other affected persons. *Gaines*, 121 Wn. App. at 704. Here, the relevant group is all defendants subject to the mandatory DNA-collection fee under RCW 43.43.7541. Having been convicted of a felony, Mr. Bunker is similarly situated to other affected

persons within the afflicted group. See RCW 43.43.754; RCW 43.43.7541.

On review, where neither a suspect/semi-suspect class nor a fundamental right is at issue, a rational basis analysis is used to evaluate the validity of the differential treatment. *State v. Bryan*, 145 Wn. App. 353, 358, 185 P.3d 1230 (2008). That standard applies here.

Under rational basis scrutiny, a legislative enactment that, in effect, creates different classes will survive an equal protection challenge only if: (1) there are reasonable grounds to distinguish between different classes of affected individuals; and (2) the classification has a rational relationship to the proper purpose of the legislation. *DeYoung*, 136 Wn.2d. at 144. Where a statute fails to meet these standards, it must be struck down as unconstitutional. *Id.*

The Legislature has declared that collection of DNA samples and their retention in a DNA database are important tools in “assist[ing] federal, state, and local criminal justice and law enforcement agencies in both the identification and detection of individuals in criminal investigations and the identification and location of missing and unidentified persons.” Laws of 2008 c 97, Preamble. The DNA profile from a convicted offender’s biological sample is entered into the Washington State Patrol’s DNA identification system (database) and

retained until expunged or no longer qualified to be retained. WAC 446-75-010; WAC 446-75-060. Every sentence imposed for a felony crime must include a mandatory fee of \$100. RCW 43.43.754; RCW 43.43.7541.

The purpose of RCW 43.43.754 is to fund the collection, analysis and retention of an individual felony offender's identifying DNA profile for inclusion in a database of DNA records. Once a defendant's DNA is collected, tested, and entered in the database, subsequent collections are unnecessary. This is because DNA – for identification purposes – does not change. The statute itself recognizes this, expressly stating it is unnecessary to collect more than one sample. RCW 43.43.754(2). There is no further need for a biological sample to collect regarding defendants who have already had their DNA profiles entered into the database.

Here, RCW 43.43.7541 does not apply equally to all felony defendants because those who are sentenced more than once have to pay the fee multiple times. This classification is unreasonable because multiple payments are not rationally related to the legitimate purpose of the law, which is to fund the collection, analysis, and retention of an individual offender's identifying DNA profile.

Mr. Bunker's DNA was undoubtedly collected previously pursuant to statute. He has four prior felony convictions dating back to 1994. These prior convictions each required collection of a biological sample for DNA

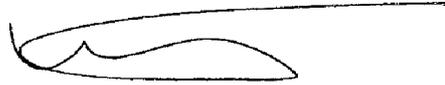
identification. RCW 43.43.754(6)(a); Laws of 2008 c 97 § 2, eff. June 12, 2008; Laws of 2002 c 289 § 2, eff. July 1, 2002; Laws of 1994 c 271 § 1, eff. June 9, 1994. The \$100 DNA collection fee has been in place since at least 2002. Laws of 2002 c 289 § 2, eff. July 1, 2002. Two of Mr. Bunker's prior felony convictions were 2002 or later. There is no evidence suggesting DNA had not been collected as would have been ordered in the prior judgments and sentences and placed in the DNA database. CP 2.

RCW 43.43.7541 discriminates against defendants who have previously been sentenced by requiring them to pay multiple DNA collection fees, while other defendants need only pay one DNA collection fee. The requirement that the fee be collected from such defendants upon each sentencing is not rationally related to the purpose of the statute. As such, RCW 43.43.7541 violates equal protection. The DNA-collection fee ordered must be vacated.

E. CONCLUSION

The \$100 DNA collection fee should be vacated and stricken from Mr. Bunker's judgment and sentence.

Respectfully submitted this 31st day of August 31, 2015.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "LISA E. TABBUT". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

LISA E. TABBUT/WSBA 21344
Attorney for Leo Bunker

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

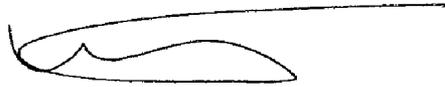
Lisa E. Tabbut declares as follows:

On today's date, I efiled the Brief of Appellant to (1) Lewis County Prosecutor's Office, at appeals@lewiscountywa.gov and sara.beigh@lewiscountywa.gov; (2) the Court of Appeals, Division II; and (3) I mailed it to Leo Bunker – at his request - c/o of his sister, Debra Tsugawa, 7911 Quarry Rd, LaCenter, WA 98629.

Mr. Bunker is now at Clallam Bay Corrections Center. The court should direct any mail to him at the following address: Leo Bunker/DOC #917616, Clallam Bay Corrections Center, 1830 Eagle Crest Way, Clallam Bay, WA 98326.

I CERTIFY UNDER PENALTY OF PERJURY UNDER THE LAWS OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON THAT THE FOREGOING IS TRUE AND CORRECT.

Signed August 31, 2015, in Winthrop, Washington.



Lisa E. Tabbut, WSBA No. 21344
Attorney for Leo Bunker, Appellant

COWLITZ COUNTY ASSIGNED COUNSEL

August 31, 2015 - 8:19 PM

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