**New Jersey v. T.L.O**

T.L.O, a 14-year-old female student at a New Jersey high school and another student, was caught smoking cigarettes in the girl’s restroom of the school building in violation of the school’s rules. The teacher that found them took them to the school administrator who questioned each of them. The other student admitted to smoking cigarettes while T.L.O denies the allegations. The administrator then accused T.LO. of lying to him and demanded to see her purse in an attempt to find the cigarettes. When the administrator opened her purse, he found a pack of cigarettes and a rolling cigarette paper. The administrator knew that cigarette rolling paper is used to smoke marijuana. Hence, he suspected T.L.O. of marijuana use. As a result, he searched her purse further and found a small plastic bag containing a grass-like substance and items, including a pipe, a wad of money, a piece of paper with the names of students who owed T.L.O. money, and a letter that appeared to implicate that T.L.O. deals marijuana. Consequently, the school administrator contacted the police who, in turn, contacted T.L.O.’s mother. Her mother brought T.L.O. to the police station, where she confessed to selling marijuana. T.L.O faced delinquency charges in Juvenile Court even though her lawyer argued that the search of her purse was a violation of the Fourth Amendment. She was put on probation for one year until the U.S. Supreme Court of the United States agreed to hear the case.

The Juvenile Court ruled that the fourth amendment applies to searches carried out by school officials if the official has reasonable suspicion that a crime has been or is in the process of being committed. It also applied if the official has a reasonable cause to believe the search is necessary to maintain school discipline or enforce policies. Applying it to the case, the Court held that the school administrator’s search did not violate the Fourth Amendment. The U.S supreme court agreed with the majority decision by concluding the search of T.L.O.’s purse did not violate the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The Court did not address the issue of whether unlawfully seized evidence should be suppressed in a juvenile delinquency hearing. However, the Court decided that the Fourth Amendment applies to school officials. Unfortunately, other judges such as Justice Stevens taught that the school administrator’s decision to believe that T.L.O’s purse contained evidence of criminal activity or a violation of school rules without any reason at the time that he searched was a violation of the Fourth Amendment.

References

<https://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/educational-activities/facts-and-case-summary-new-jersey-v-tlo>