

Voting Rights Act in sharp focus in Farmers Branch—and at Supreme Court,

By Dianne Solis March 4, 2013

Last week's Supreme Court hearing over Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act raised questions about its intersection with the appeal out of Farmers Branch of its own voting rights case.

The city of Farmers Branch was sued by Maria Fabela and nine other Hispanic plaintiffs based on Section 2 of the 1965 civil rights legislation. U.S. District Judge Sidney Fitzwater ruled in favor of Maria Fabela, a 72-year-old electronics worker, and nine others.

Last week, the city of Farmers Branch voted to appeal.

It's Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act that is really the heart of the civil rights law, according to Ilya Shapiro of the Cato Institute. Neither minority rights nor the ability of the federal government to enforce those rights was at stake in the case before the Supremes, he noted in a recent commentary. The Cato Institute filed an amicus brief in the recent Supreme Court case out of Shelby County, Alabama, supporting the petitioners and against Section 5 of the VRA.

All this makes the case of Fabela versus the city of Farmers Branch all the more interesting and provocative. Last summer, a data-dense trial highlighted the polarization in voting patterns in four Farmers Branch elections.

Here's more in Shapiro's commentary, which also appeared in U.S. News & World Report.

Did Section 5 come into play?

Yes, after the judge's ruling when the defendants came up with a redistricting plan. "Preclearance" was given by the U.S. Justice Department.

Here's more in today's story in The Dallas Morning News.