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White New Haven firefighters win Supreme Court case



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In Washington Monday the U.S. Supreme Court has handed down a major ruling that could affect not only how you're hired or promoted at work, but also whether judge Sonia Sotomayor will be the next member of the Supreme Court.

In a 5-to-4 ruling, the Supreme Court said the city of New Haven, Connecticut, was wrong to deny promotions to white firefighters because no blacks scored high enough to be promoted.

City officials said because statistically some black applicants should have been in the top tier. They feared the test itself was flawed and that the blacks who didn't get promotions might sue.

"The city, in order to avoid that suit, engaged on, in, outright racial discrimination - and that's the worst kind of discrimination," Roger Pilon, of the Cato Institute Center for Constitutional Studies, said.

The court ruled today that fear of a lawsuit - or uneven test results - or even the city's five days of hearings - were not enough.

It ruled the city needs a "strong basis in evidence" of discrimination.

"This decision to us is a real head scratcher because it essentially ties employers' hands," Sarah Crawford, a

member of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights, said.

“Once they administer a test and they find that it is discriminatory, the court is essentially saying ‘your hands are tied, and you need to proceed with the results of that test.’”

The decision overturned a ruling by Supreme Court nominee judge Sonia Sotomayor.

She'll undoubtedly have some explaining to do when she appears before the Senate Judiciary Committee for confirmation hearings next month.

One member of the Judiciary committee who will vote whether to confirm Sotomayor called today's ruling a “victory” and noted that the justices were critical of the ruling judge Sotomayor endorsed.