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Fluoridation can't be mandated, rules court

TACOMA, WA — The Washington State Supreme Court ruled May 13 that the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Board overstepped its authority when it mandated that local water providers add fluoride to drinking water, [The News Tribune](#) reported.

The ruling reversed a February 2003 decision by the Pierce County Superior Court that had upheld the board's power to regulate public health, the article said.

The board had tried to flex that power when it adopted its fluoride resolution two years ago. Facing what public health authorities have called an oral disease epidemic, the board mandated that all water systems serving more than 5,000 customers fluoridate their water. About 238,000 people were affected, according to the paper.

But Justice Charles W. Johnson, writing for a 6-3 Supreme Court majority, said in the article that the board's resolution illegally prohibits "the ability of water districts to regulate the content and supply of their water systems expressly granted to them by statute."

Water providers in the lawsuit include Lakewood Water District and the City of Bonney Lake, along with nonprofit water utilities Fruitland Mutual Water Co., Mountain View-Edgewood Water Co., Spanaway Water Co. and Summit Water & Supply Co, the article said.

In its decision, the high court didn't mention the benefit — or lack thereof — of having fluoride in drinking water. Its ruling was limited to the question of who has ultimate control of local water supplies, the paper reported.

To read the full story, click [here](#).