Double Taxation of Partnership Income in Illinois

Carlos A. Saavedra

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarship.kentlaw.iit.edu/cklawreview

Part of the Law Commons

Recommended Citation
Carlos A. Saavedra, Double Taxation of Partnership Income in Illinois, 58 Chi.-Kent L. Rev. 137 (1981). Available at: https://scholarship.kentlaw.iit.edu/cklawreview/vol58/iss1/6

This Notes is brought to you for free and open access by Scholarly Commons @ IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law. It has been accepted for inclusion in Chicago-Kent Law Review by an authorized editor of Scholarly Commons @ IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law. For more information, please contact jwenger@kentlaw.iit.edu, ebarney@kentlaw.iit.edu.
A state's power to tax is inherently broad, subject only to state and federal constitutional restraints. One of the lesser known state constitutional limitations on a state's taxing power consists of the unfavorable treatment generally accorded to "double taxation." Essentially, double taxation results where a second tax is imposed on something that is already subject to tax. In a few states, double taxation is expressly prohibited. In most states, double taxation is judicially disfavored, unless its imposition is accompanied by a clear legislative intent. Upon finding double taxation, courts will generally

1. International Harvester Co. v. Wisconsin Dep't of Taxation, 322 U.S. 435, 444-45 (1944) ("The power to tax is an incident of sovereignty, and is coextensive with that to which it is an incident. All subjects over which the sovereign powers of a state extends, are objects of taxation. . . . "). See also Allied Stores of Ohio, Inc. v. Bowers, 358 U.S. 522 (1959); Shaffer v. Carter, 252 U.S. 37 (1920). See generally E. Stimson, Jurisdiction & Power of Taxation (1933); 2 T. Cooley, Constitutional Limitations 986-1107 (8th ed. 1927).


Challenges to state taxes under the federal constitution are generally made under the equal protection clause and the privileges and immunities clause. A state tax will be found unconstitutional under the equal protection clause only if it is based on a classification that is arbitrary and capricious. So long as the tax's classification is found to have a rational basis, it will not be found violative of the equal protection clause. See, e.g., Allied Stores of Ohio, Inc. v. Bowers, 358 U.S. 522 (1959). See also Sholley, Equal Protection in Tax Legislation, 24 Va. L. Rev. 229 (1938). A state tax will be found unconstitutional under the privileges and immunities clause if it discriminates against citizens of another state. See, e.g., Toomer v. Witsell, 334 U.S. 385 (1948). See also Lomen, Privileges and Immunities under the Fourteenth Amendment, 18 Wash. L. Rev. 120, 129-34 (1943).

A state's power to tax is also subject to such restraints as may be imposed by its own constitution. E.g., Lane County v. Oregon, 74 U.S. (7 Wall) 71 (1868). Such limitations vary among the states. See generally Morrow, State Constitutional Limitations on the Taxing Authority of State Legislatures, 9 Nat. Tax J. 126 (1956).

3. The United States Constitution does not prohibit double taxation by a state. E.g., Baker v. Druesedow, 263 U.S. 137 (1923). To be found in violation of the federal constitution, a state's imposition of double taxation must be shown to be arbitrary and capricious under the equal protection clause. Id. at 142. See note 2 supra.

4. Double taxation actually consists of the concurrence of four elements. Two taxes must be imposed 1) by the same unit of state government, 2) for the same purpose, 3) over the same time period and 4) the objects of the two taxes—the persons, property, or privileges taxed—must partially overlap. E.g., Federated Mutual Implement Hardware Ins. Co. v. Commissioner, 266 F.2d 66 (8th Cir. 1959); T. Cooley, The Law of Taxation § 223 (4th ed. 1924) [hereinafter cited as COOLEY]. The elements of double taxation are further discussed in the text accompanying notes 62-93 infra.

5. E.g., Idaho Const. art. 7, § 5. See note 93 infra for a compilation of authorities.

construe one of the two taxes involved in such a manner as to eliminate the double imposition of tax.\(^7\)

Prior to 1979, Illinois followed the vast majority of states and the federal government in treating a partnership\(^8\) as a "conduit" for purposes of the state's general income tax.\(^9\) Under this approach, partnership income is deemed to flow through the partnership to the individual partners.\(^10\) No income tax is levied on the partnership itself; instead, each partner's share of partnership income is treated as his own income, which is then subject to tax.\(^11\) In 1979, the Illinois legislature enacted an additional income tax on partnerships themselves.\(^12\) Because the legislature left intact the conduit provision of the state's general income tax, partnership income became subject to two income taxes: the new tax at the partnership level and the general income tax at the individual partner level.

Relying on an express state constitutional ban against double taxation of an individual's income,\(^13\) a local partnership challenged the new tax\(^14\) in *Continental Illinois National Bank & Trust Co. v. Zagel*.\(^15\) The Illinois Supreme Court rejected the claim that the partnership income tax resulted in double taxation of the individual partners' income. As the sole ground for its decision, the court distinguished a partnership

---

12. Personal Property Tax Replacement Income Tax Act, P.A. 81-1st Sp. Sess.-I, § 2(c), 1979 Ill. Laws 4925 (1979). The partnership income tax was one of four taxes enacted to replace the state's personal property tax. For details of the other three taxes enacted, see note 146 infra. For details of the circumstances surrounding the replacement of the state's personal property tax, see text accompanying notes 140-43 infra.
13. Ill. Const. art. IX, § 3(a). See note 141 infra for the text of this provision.
14. The validity of the other taxes enacted to replace the state's personal property tax was also challenged in what became a consolidated action. See note 146 infra. The issues raised with respect to these other taxes are not discussed in this case comment.
15. 78 Ill. 2d 387, 401 N.E.2d 491 (1979).
from its partners. By viewing the partnership income tax as falling on the income of a separate legal entity as distinguished from the general income tax which falls on the income of the individual partners, the court precluded a finding of double taxation. The dissent argued that the income of a partnership was also the income of the individual partners so that the new tax, together with the general income tax, resulted in double taxation.

This case comment will examine the Zagel court's treatment of the double taxation issue. The law of double taxation will be presented and applied to Illinois' partnership and general income taxes to analyze and expand upon the court's finding that no double taxation resulted. The analysis will confirm that the key factor in determining the double taxation issue is whether the income of a partnership is to be deemed the partnership's or the individual partners'. After reviewing the court's basis for its decision that partnership income should be deemed the partnership's and finding it lacking in substantive merit, the case comment will conclude that the rationale underlying the widely accepted conduit approach represents the better view. If the partnership income tax is then viewed as a second tax on the income of the individual partners, double taxation results. Surprisingly, the new tax came within an exception to the state's constitutional ban against double income taxation so that a finding of double taxation would not have precluded the court from upholding the new tax. However, this exception was overlooked in the decision.

**Classification of Taxes**

Double taxation involves an overlap in the things that are subject to two particular taxes. The "thing" subject to a given tax is termed the tax's "object" and it is generally classified in terms of persons, property or privileges. When the issue of double taxation arises, it is first necessary to establish the objects of the two taxes in question. Once the objects of the two taxes are established, it can then be determined if

16. Id. at 407, 401 N.E.2d at 501.
17. Id. at 415-16, 401 N.E.2d at 505-06 (Clark, J., concurring in part and dissenting in part).
18. ILL. CONST. art. IX, § 5(c). The text of this section appears in note 142 infra.
19. An overlap between the objects of the two taxes at issue is but one of the four elements of double taxation. For an explanation and discussion of the four elements, see text accompanying notes 62-93 infra.
an overlap between them exists. Establishing the object of a tax is largely a matter of statutory interpretation in light of the general characteristics that taxes which are imposed on persons, property or privileges exhibit.\(^{22}\)

**Taxes on Persons**

Taxes on persons are termed capitation or poll taxes. These taxes are levies of a fixed amount imposed on all persons, or a selected group of persons, within the taxing jurisdiction.\(^{23}\) These taxes are levied without regard to a person’s property, income or other circumstances.\(^{24}\) A state tax of $1.00 per year on all inhabitants between the ages of twenty-one and sixty is typical of such taxes.\(^{25}\) Poll taxes were popular during the early history of this country although they have long since fallen into disuse.\(^ {26}\)

**Taxes on Property**

Taxes on real and personal property are commonly termed property taxes. These taxes are imposed on property itself\(^{27}\) within the taxing jurisdiction and are generally measured by a specified percentage of the property’s value.\(^{28}\) The taxes are typically imposed once a year.\(^ {29}\) Perhaps the most familiar type of property tax is a tax on real estate.\(^ {30}\)

Some property taxes are measured by a percentage of the income derived from the property subject to tax. This method of measuring property taxes is generally used where the value of the property would be otherwise difficult to determine. Although the tax is measured on the basis of the income derived from the property, the object of the tax is nevertheless considered to be the income-producing property itself.\(^ {31}\) In *Redfield v. Fisher*,\(^ {32}\) the Oregon Supreme Court found that a tax

\(^{22}\) *Id.*


\(^{24}\) 302 U.S. at 281.

\(^{25}\) *Id* at 282.

\(^{26}\) *See* Segilman, *Essays in Taxation* 16-17 (10th ed. 1931).


\(^{28}\) See, e.g., Ill. Rev. Stat. ch. 120, §§ 501, 502 (1979); *see also* Cooley, *supra* note 4, § 39.

\(^{29}\) See, e.g., Ill. Rev. Stat. ch. 120, § 508(a) (1979).


\(^{31}\) *See, e.g.*, Great Northern Ry. Co. v. Minnesota, 278 U.S. 503 (1929) (a tax on the in-state trackage of railroads measured by a percentage of a railroad’s income is a property tax). *See also* Shaffer v. Carter, 252 U.S. 37 (1920) (a tax on oil and gas production measured by a percentage of income derived is a tax in lieu of a property tax). *See generally* Cooley, *supra* note 4, § 46.

\(^{32}\) 135 Or. 180, 292 P. 813 (1930), cert. denied, 284 U.S. 617 (1931).
measured by 5% of the income derived from stocks, bonds and other intangible personal property had as its object the intangible personal property itself.

**Taxes on Privileges**

Privileges represent the residual category for objects of taxation.33 The category includes all those acts, transactions or privileges that are subject to tax.34 These acts, transactions or privileges are typically numerous and varied.35 A privilege tax generally accrues only upon the exercise of the specified privilege or the occurrence of the specified act.36 Thus, an income tax accrues upon the earning of income37 and a

33. Commentators are not in perfect agreement on the terminology of this category of objects of taxes. Some term this category "excise taxes" while others differentiate between income taxes and excise taxes. Compare Hellerstein, supra note 20, at 29 with Cooley, supra note 4, § 38.

34. See Pears, General Principles of Taxation: An Initial Survey, 6 TAX. L. REV. 267, 292 (1951); Cooley, supra note 4, §§ 42-47.

35. In Illinois, the following acts, transactions or privileges are subject to tax: privilege of earning income, ILL. REV. STAT. ch. 120, §§ 1-101 to 17-1701 (1979); transfer of property at death, id. §§ 375-404; privilege of operating motor vehicles on state highways, id. §§ 417-434; privilege of using tangible personal property in the state purchased at retail from a retailer, id. §§ 439.1-22; privilege of carrying on a retail business, id. §§ 440-453; privilege of engaging in a cigarette sales business at retail and wholesale, id. §§ 453.1-30; privilege of using cigarettes, id. §§ 453.31-67; privilege of carrying on a message transmission business, id. §§ 467.1-15; privilege of carrying on a gas distribution business, id. §§ 467.16-30; privilege of carrying on an electricity generation and distribution business, id. §§ 468-481a; privilege of operating coin-operated amusement devices, id. §§ 481b.1-16; privilege of carrying on a hotel business, id. §§ 481b.31-40; privilege of transferring title to real estate, id. §§ 1001-1008; privilege of conducting bingo games, id. §§ 1101-1107.

See generally Cooley, supra note 4, §§ 45, 1670-1718.

36. See Hellerstein, supra note 20, at 29; Cooley, supra note 4, § 45.


At one time, there was a split among state courts concerning the object of an income tax. The seminal case for the view that the object of an income tax is property was Pollock v. Farmers' Loan & Trust Co., 157 U.S. 429 (1895). In Pollock, the United States Supreme Court interpreted a federal income tax that included income from property as a tax on property itself. The Court held that this property tax violated the requirement in article 1, section 2 of the United States Constitution that federal taxes be equally apportioned among the states on the basis of population. Id. at 442. The Pollock decision prompted the passage of the sixteenth amendment authorizing the imposition of a non-apportioned federal income tax in 1913.

When states began enacting income taxes during the first half of this century, their constitutionality was challenged. Interpreting these taxes as property taxes provided courts with a vehicle for bringing income taxes within state constitutional taxing frameworks that were largely property tax oriented. A few state supreme courts took this approach. See, e.g., In re Opinion of the Justices, 220 Mass. 613, 108 N.E. 570 (1915). The majority of state supreme courts viewed income taxes as privilege or excise taxes. See, e.g., Ludlow-Saylor Wire Co. v. Wollbrinck, 275 Mo. 339, 205 S.W. 196 (1918). The cases are collected in Annot., 11 A.L.R. 313 (1921); Annot., 70 A.L.R. 468 (1931); Annot., 71 A.L.R. 1226 (1931); Annot., 97 A.L.R. 1488 (1935).

In New York ex rel. Cohn v. Graves, 300 U.S. 308 (1937), the United States Supreme Court abandoned its view of an income tax as a tax on property and adopted the view that it is a privilege tax. Id. at 314-15. This is now the established view. See W. Newhouse, Constitutional Uniformity and Equality in State Taxation 743-60 (1959) [hereinafter referred to as Newhouse].

For a comprehensive discussion of this controversy, see Newhouse, supra, at 690-766.
business occupation tax accrues when one engages in the occupation subject to tax.\textsuperscript{38}

Income taxes are generally measured by a percentage of net income, \textit{i.e.,} total income received less related expenses and other adjustments.\textsuperscript{39} In contrast, business occupation taxes are generally measured as a percentage of the total or gross income obtained from the taxed occupation, without any adjustments.\textsuperscript{40} Other privilege taxes are generally also measured as a percentage of the gross amount of money transferred in the taxed transaction.\textsuperscript{41}

In establishing the object of a particular tax, courts look beyond the relevant statutory language and consider the tax's operation and effect.\textsuperscript{42} In \textit{Dawson v. Kentucky Distilleries and Warehouse Co.},\textsuperscript{43} the United States Supreme Court examined a fifty-cent per gallon tax on whiskey withdrawn from bond or transferred to another state. The tax was described statutorily as an occupation tax: it was ostensibly imposed on the privilege of engaging in the business of manufacturing or storing whiskey.\textsuperscript{44} The Court rejected the statute's characterization of the tax, noting that the tax did not accrue during the manufacture or storage of the whiskey but only upon its removal from bond or transfer to another state.\textsuperscript{45} Finding the object of the tax to be the whiskey itself, the Court concluded that the tax was actually a property tax.\textsuperscript{46} By conducting this type of operative analysis of a tax's statutory language, the true objects of the two taxes alleged to result in double taxation can be established and the determination made whether double taxation has occurred.

\textsuperscript{38} See, \textit{e.g.}, ILL. REV. STAT. ch. 120, §§ 440-453 (1979) (Retailers' Occupation Tax); Central Television Service, Inc. v. Isaacs, 27 Ill. 2d 420, 189 N.E.2d 333 (1963) (Retailers' Occupation Tax is not a tax on the privilege of buying or upon the individual sale, but is a tax on the occupation of selling at retail). For a compilation of other business occupations that are taxed in Illinois, see note 35 supra.

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{E.g.,} ILL. REV. STAT. ch. 120, §§ 2-201(b), 202-204 (1979). \textit{See also} \textit{Cooley, supra} note 4, § 49. \textit{See generally} \textit{State Tax Handbook} (CCH Oct. 1, 1980).

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{E.g.,} ILL. REV. STAT. ch. 120, §§ 440-453 (1979) (Retailers' Occupation Tax). \textit{See generally} \textit{State Tax Handbook} (CCH Oct. 1, 1980).

\textsuperscript{41} \textit{E.g.,} ILL. REV. STAT. ch. 120, §§ 417-434 (1979) (tax on the privilege of operating motor vehicles on public highways measured by a percentage of the purchase price of gasoline). \textit{See generally} \textit{State Tax Handbook} (CCH Oct. 1, 1980).


\textsuperscript{43} 255 U.S. 288 (1921).

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Id.} at 289.

\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Id.} at 293.

\textsuperscript{46} \textit{Id.} at 294.
DOUBLE TAXATION: ORIGINS AND DEFINITION

The unfavorable treatment accorded to double taxation springs from an intuitive feeling that something which is already subject to one tax should not be subject to additional taxes.\(^{47}\) At law, this feeling is reflected in the notion that taxes should be equitably imposed. As noted by the United States Supreme Court:

Justice requires that the burdens of government shall as far as is practicable be laid equally on all, and, if property is taxed once in one way, it would ordinarily be wrong to tax it again in another way, when the burden of both taxes falls on the same person.\(^ {48}\)

This notion of an equitable distribution of the tax burden has been incorporated into most state constitutions in what have been termed "uniformity" clauses.\(^ {49}\) These clauses generally require that all objects of a given class or type must be uniformly or equally taxed.\(^ {50}\)

The primary effect of these uniformity clauses has been to insure an equal tax burden distribution with respect to any one particular tax.\(^ {51}\) Under these clauses, if a tax is imposed on a given class or type of object, all such objects must be subject to the same tax.\(^ {52}\) If some objects of a class or type are taxed while others of the same type or class are not, or if the objects of the same class or type are taxed differently, the tax is found to be nonuniformly applied and is invalidated.\(^ {53}\) In *Flynn v. Kucharski*,\(^ {54}\) a county property tax was being collected in such a manner that, in some parts of the county, a small percentage of the tax funds was retained by units of local government and not paid into the county treasury. The Illinois Supreme Court found that the effect of this practice was that people paid less county tax in some areas of the

47. *See* Zenith Radio Corp. v. United States, 437 U.S. 443, 457 (1978) (the Court referring to the policy of avoiding the imposition of custom duties on the same goods by both the exporting and importing countries as based on the "intuitively appealing principle regarding double taxation").
49. *Newhouse*, *supra* note 37, at 3.
52. *Id.*
county than in others, thus violating the uniformity clause of the Illinois Constitution.

A secondary effect of uniformity clauses has resulted from their application to situations where an inequitable tax burden distribution results not from one but from two taxes. This extended application of the requirement for a uniform tax burden evolved into the doctrine of double taxation. 55

The doctrine of double taxation developed at a time when property taxes were the predominant form of state taxation. 56 The imposition of a second property tax on some but not all the property already taxed in a taxing jurisdiction was readily recognized by the courts as an unequal distribution of the tax burden and was, therefore, disallowed. 57

For example, in Campbell County v. Newport 58 the Kentucky Court of Appeals considered two real property taxes, one county-wide and the other limited to real property in cities and towns within the county. The court noted that a relatively greater tax burden was placed on property located in cities and towns than on other property in the county. 59 Citing the uniformity clause of the Kentucky Constitution, the court found that this unequal distribution of the tax burden amounted to double taxation and overturned the cities-and-towns tax. 60

With the advent of new types of state privilege taxes in the first half of this century, 61 the definition of double taxation was expanded beyond its property tax context and given a more generalized form.

Double taxation has come to be defined in terms of four elements. Three of these elements establish that the same governmental burden is being supported by both taxes. These elements require that both taxes be imposed by the same unit of state government, for the same purpose, and that both taxes be levied over the same time period. The fourth element of the definition tests for the unequal distribution of this burden: both taxes must have objects that partially overlap. 62
taxes exhibit all four elements, no double taxation results.

**Both Taxes Imposed By Same Unit Of State Government**

The requirement that both taxes be imposed by the same unit of state government concerns the governmental entity under whose authority and jurisdiction the two taxes are levied. The entity may be the state itself, a county, a municipality, a school district or any other unit of state government that exercises taxing authority. If the two taxes are imposed by different units of state government, no double taxation results. In *People ex rel. Hanrahan v. Caliendo*, the Illinois Supreme Court observed that the City of Chicago and the Chicago Urban Transportation District were distinct governmental entities and thus held that the real property taxes imposed by each entity did not result in double taxation.

**Both Taxes Imposed For Same Purpose**

The requirement that both taxes be imposed for the same purpose involves the application or use of the revenue from the two taxes. A tax may have a specific purpose, such as funding particular public works or providing particular public services, or it may have a general revenue-raising purpose. Where the two taxes have different purposes, no double taxation results. In *People ex rel. Hanrahan v. Caliendo*, the Illinois Supreme Court also noted that funding public transportation and raising general revenues for a municipality were different purposes so that the two taxes having these purposes did not result in double taxation.

**Both Taxes Imposed Over Same Time Period**

Both taxes must also be imposed over the same time period. For

dismissed, 406 U.S. 965 (1972); Milwaukee Motor Transp. Co. v. Commissioner, 292 Minn. 66, 193 N.W.2d 605 (1971). See also Cooley, supra note 4, § 223.

63. Kucharski v. White, 42 Ill. 2d 335, 247 N.E.2d 428 (1969) (no double taxation where two taxes are imposed by different taxing bodies). Accord, People v. Francis, 40 Ill. 2d 204, 239 N.E.2d 129 (1968). See also Jamison v. City of Charlotte, 239 N.C. 682, 80 S.E.2d 904 (1954) (no double taxation where two taxes are imposed by a city and a county).

64. 50 Ill. 2d 72, 277 N.E.2d 319 (1971), appeal dismissed, 406 U.S. 965 (1972).

65. It is well established that taxes may be levied only for public purposes. E.g., Jones v. City of Portland, 245 U.S. 217 (1917). See also Cooley, supra note 4, § 235.

66. E.g., Bardon v. Nudelman, 369 Ill. 214, 15 N.E.2d 836 (1938) (a tax for general revenue-raising and a tax for funding regulatory activity do not result in double taxation); Klemm v. Davenport, 100 Fla. 627, 129 So. 904 (1930) (a tax for general revenue-raising and a tax for funding improvements do not result in double taxation). See also *People ex rel. Witte v. Franklin*, 352 Ill. 528, 186 N.E. 137 (1933).

the large majority of taxes this period consists of a twelve-month period termed the taxable year. Where the two taxes are imposed over non-overlapping time periods, no double taxation results. In *People ex rel. Carey v. Board of Education*, the Illinois Supreme Court found that two taxes, respectively imposed from January through August and from September through December had non-overlapping time periods and therefore did not result in double taxation.

**Objects of the Two Taxes Partially Overlap**

The requirement that the objects of the two taxes partially overlap concerns the persons, property or privileges that are the objects of the two taxes. Partial overlap occurs when some of the objects of one tax are also the objects of a second tax. This may only occur if both taxes are imposed on the same type of object, be it the same type of property or the same privilege. If the two taxes are imposed on different types of objects, such as different types of property or different privileges, no partial overlap can occur and no double taxation will result. Similarly, if one of the two taxes is imposed on property and the other on a privilege, no double taxation will result.

The partial overlap required for double taxation is most evident when some of the property that is subject to one property tax is also subject to another property tax. In *City of Chicago v. Collins*, for example, automobiles were among the personal property that was sub-

68. *E.g.*, ILL. REV. STAT. ch. 120, § 15-1501(24) (1979) (income tax); *id.* § 508a (real property tax). See generally *STATE TAX HANDBOOK* (CCH Oct. 1, 1980). The twelve-month period may coincide with the calendar year but not in all cases.


70. 55 Ill. 2d 533, 304 N.E.2d 273 (1973).

71. For a discussion of the various objects of taxes, see text accompanying notes 20-46 *supra*.

72. *See, e.g.*, Harvey Coal & Coke Co. v. Dillon, 59 W. Va. 605, 53 S.E. 928 (1905) (two taxes, each imposed on different estates in land do not result in double taxation). See also *COOLEY, supra* note 4, §§ 239, 240.

73. *See, e.g.*, People v. Deep Rock Oil Corp., 343 Ill. 388, 175 N.E. 572 (1931) (a tax on the privilege of operating an automobile and a tax on the privilege of using state highways do not result in double taxation); C.F. Smith Co. v. Fitzgerald, 270 Mich. 659, 259 N.W. 352, *appeal dismissed*, 296 U.S. 659 (1935) (a tax on the privilege of operating chain stores and a tax on the privilege of carrying on a retail business do not result in double taxation). See also *COOLEY, supra* note 4, §§ 233, 1684.

74. *See, e.g.*, Ohio Tax Cases, 232 U.S. 576 (1914) (a property tax and a tax on the privilege of conducting a railroad business do not result in double taxation); Bode v. Barrett, 412 Ill. 204, 106 N.E.2d 521 (1952) (a property tax on automobiles and a tax on the privilege of using state highways do not result in double taxation). See also *COOLEY, supra* note 4, §§ 228, 232.


76. 175 Ill. 445, 51 N.E. 907 (1898).
ject to a personal property tax. A second property tax imposed only on automobiles produced a partial overlap as to automobiles between the personal property that was the object of the two taxes. The Illinois Supreme Court held that the second tax resulted in double taxation.

Where the two taxes are imposed on the same privilege, partial overlap is tested in terms of the legal entities whose privilege is being taxed. If the privilege of a given group of entities is subject to one tax, and the same privilege of some of those entities is subject to a second tax, a partial overlap exists.\(^7\) In *New York R.R. v. Stevenson*,\(^7\) a tax had been imposed on all corporations on the privilege of issuing stock. When another tax was then imposed on the same privilege of incorporated public utilities, such utilities became subject to two taxes while the same privilege of other corporations was subject to only one tax.\(^7\) The Illinois Supreme Court found that the second tax on the privilege of incorporated public utilities to issue stock resulted in double taxation. Of course, where the entities whose privilege is taxed are distinct and do not overlap, no double taxation will result.\(^8\)

Interestingly, if the objects of the two taxes overlap exactly so that both taxes are imposed on the same property or privilege, no prohibited double taxation exists. Courts regard the second tax as merely an increase of the first tax.\(^8\) This treatment is consistent with the fact that no unequal distribution of the tax burden exists in this type of situation.

The determination of whether two taxes result in double taxation may thus be seen as a two-step process. The first step is to establish the objects of each of the two taxes at issue.\(^8\) The second step is to determine whether all of the four elements of double taxation are present. If both taxes are imposed by the same unit of state government for the same purpose and over the same time period, and if the objects of both

---

77. *See, e.g.*, Franklin County Coal Co. v. Ames, 359 Ill. 178, 194 N.E. 268 (1934) (a tax on the privilege of carrying on a retail business, imposed on different retailers selling the same product, is not double taxation). *See also* *Cooley*, supra note 4, §§ 233, 1684.

78. 277 Ill. 474, 115 N.E. 633 (1917).

79. *Id* at 481, 115 N.E. 635 ("Both ... [taxes] are exacted for the privilege of exercising a corporate franchise. ... ").

80. *See* Milwaukee Motor Transp. Co. v. Commissioner, 292 Minn. 66, 193 N.W.2d 605 (1971) (a parent corporation and its subsidiary are different entities so that taxing each corporation's privilege of earning income does not result in double taxation). *See also* Union Central Life Ins. Co. v. Lowe, 349 Ill. 464, 182 N.E. 611 (1932).

81. *See, e.g.*, Independent School Dist. of Cedar Rapids v. Iowa Employment Security Comm'n, 237 Iowa 1301, 25 N.W.2d 491 (1946); Van Dyke v. Wisconsin Tax Comm'n, 217 Wis. 528, 259 N.W. 700 (1935). *See also* *Cooley*, supra note 4, § 233.

taxes partially overlap, double taxation results.\textsuperscript{83}

This two-step process was followed by the Illinois Supreme Court in \textit{New York R.R. v. Stevenson}.\textsuperscript{84} There, the court first determined that the two taxes at issue were both imposed on a corporation's privilege of issuing stock.\textsuperscript{85} The court then proceeded to establish that both taxes were imposed by the state itself for general state purposes and that both taxes accrued over the same time period—upon the issuance of stock.\textsuperscript{86} Noting that one tax was imposed on the stock-issuing privilege of all corporations and that the other tax was imposed on the same privilege of incorporated public utilities, the court concluded that this partial overlap—with regard to incorporated public utilities—resulted in double taxation.\textsuperscript{87}

Given a finding of double taxation, courts will generally construe one of the two taxes involved in such a manner as to eliminate the partial overlap between the objects of both taxes.\textsuperscript{88} Such action is consistent with the established rule that if a statute can fairly be given a constitutional construction, courts should adopt that construction, on the ground that legislatures are presumed to act within their authority.\textsuperscript{89} In \textit{New York R.R. v. Stevenson},\textsuperscript{90} the Illinois Supreme Court construed the tax on the stock-issuing privilege of all corporations as inapplicable to the privilege of incorporated public utilities. Through this construction, the court eliminated the partial overlap that existed between the tax on the privilege of all corporations and the tax on the privilege of incorporated public utilities and thereby eliminated double taxation.

The only significant exception allowing double taxation involves situations where a state legislature clearly intended to impose double taxation and it is not prohibited by the state's constitution. In most such states, courts will allow double taxation only where the legislative intent is unmistakable.\textsuperscript{91} This high standard of clarity significantly

\textsuperscript{83.} See note 62 supra.
\textsuperscript{84.} 277 Ill. 474, 115 N.E. 633 (1917).
\textsuperscript{85.} \textit{Id.} at 481, 115 N.E. at 635-36.
\textsuperscript{86.} \textit{Id.} at 481-82, 115 N.E. at 635-36.
\textsuperscript{87.} \textit{Id.} at 483, 115 N.E. at 636.
\textsuperscript{90.} 277 Ill. 474, 115 N.E. 633 (1917).
narrow the scope of the exception, making it largely unavailable. In nine states where double taxation is deemed absolutely prohibited, no exception to the general treatment of remedial construction is recognized.

PARTNERSHIPS AND DOUBLE TAXATION: THE ENTITY AND AGGREGATE VIEWS

Partnership law is characterized by a tension between the entity and aggregate views of a partnership. Under the entity view, a partnership is recognized as a separate legal entity to which rights and duties accrue. Under the aggregate view, a partnership is deemed to be no more than a collection of individuals to whom all the rights and duties arising from a partnership accrue. Both approaches are well represented among the various legal contexts in which a partnership is viewed. The view adopted becomes particularly significant to partnership taxation where the approach utilized can affect the determination of whether double taxation results.

At common law, artificial legal entities could only be created by the sovereign. Thus, early partnership law was based on the agreg-

371 S.W.2d 456, 458 (1963) ("[D]ouble taxation [is] not proscribed . . . where it is plain that the Legislature intended such result.").

92. Research has not revealed any cases in which this exception has been successfully invoked.


96. See, e.g., Abbott v. Anderson, 265 Ill. 285, 106 N.E. 782 (1914); Adams v. Church, 42 Or. 270, 70 P. 1037 (1902). See also Lewis, The Uniform Partnership Act—A Reply to Mr. Crane’s Criticism, 29 Harv. L. Rev. 158, 291 (1916).


98. See 1 C. Bates, The Law of Partnership § 171 (1888); Crane, supra note 94, at 10.
The right to manage the partnership business, the right to share in partnership profits and civil liability for partnership acts were among the rights and duties that accrued to the individual partners.\(^{100}\) The rapid commercial expansion that characterized the industrial revolution brought about an increased use of partnerships as a form of doing business.\(^{101}\) The increase in partnership litigation which followed unearthed some commercial shortcomings in the aggregate theory that prompted a different approach in the law.

The entity view of a partnership had its origin in the English mercantile law. This law initially developed during the close of the Middle Ages in special courts and later in courts of equity. Forged by the needs of its mercantile constituency, the law was based largely on the commercial customs of the day. Noting that the commercial world accorded de facto entity status to a partnership, courts were increasingly persuaded to recognize a partnership as a separate entity.\(^{102}\)

Property ownership was one of the earlier aspects of a partnership in which the common law aggregate view was supplanted by the entity view. Courts had initially attempted to fit partnership ownership of property within the concepts of joint tenancy or tenancy in common.\(^{103}\) Thus, title to partnership property was held among the individual partners. This approach had the effect of relegating a partnership creditor to the status of personal creditor of the individual partners, thereby depriving his claim of any priority over partnership assets.\(^{104}\) This approach also made partnership property available to satisfy a partner's personal obligations whether or not these obligations were related to the partnership business and whether or not this would be detrimental to the partnership and its business creditors.\(^{105}\) In order to strengthen the rights of partnership creditors and to insulate the partnership from


\(^{100}\) See generally Rowley, supra note 94; Crane, supra note 94.

\(^{101}\) See 1 Barrett, supra note 99, at 13.

\(^{102}\) See 1 Barrett, supra note 99, at 10-13. See also Rowley, supra note 94, § 1.1; Burdick, What is a Law Merchant?, 2 Col. L. Rev. 470 (1902). See also F. Mechem, Elements of the Law of Partnership § 7 (2d ed. 1920).


\(^{105}\) See F. Burdick, Law of Partnership 269-71 (3d ed. 1917).
non-related personal obligations of the individual partners, courts began to recognize a partnership as a separate entity for purposes of property ownership.106 This recognition was eventually adopted by the Uniform Partnership Act.107

In contrast, the treatment of partnership income has always reflected the aggregate view. The common law's view is consistent with the definition of a partnership as an association of individuals engaged in business for profit.108 Partners are seen as individually sharing in the profits and losses of their undertaking,109 thus rendering the entity view inappropriate. Perhaps because the distribution of its income is a matter internal to a partnership, there were no creditors or other outside parties urging the courts to adopt the entity view. The aggregate view of partners sharing in the profits and losses of a partnership was also adopted by the Uniform Partnership Act.110

The treatment accorded to partnerships under state taxes also reflects both the entity and aggregate views.111 Generally, the view taken for purposes of a particular tax will be the same as the view taken for the underlying substantive aspect of a partnership most closely related to the object of the tax. Thus, where a tax classifies property according to the different entities owning it, partnership property is taxed separately from the property of the individual partners because a partnership is treated as a separate entity for purposes of owning property.112 Similarly, the aggregate view of partners sharing in the profits and losses of a partnership has been adopted by the vast majority of state income tax laws.113 Under these laws, a partnership is treated as sim-

111. Both the entity and aggregate views have been adopted by courts in resolving federal tax controversies. Compare Burde v. Commissioner, 352 F.2d 995 (2d Cir. 1965) (two partnerships treated as separate entities for purposes of transferring a patent between them), with Liflans Corp. v. United States, 390 F.2d 965 (Cl. Ct. 1968) (a partnership treated as an aggregate of individuals for purposes of qualifying for a deduction between related taxpayers). See A. Willis, Partnership Taxation §§ 2.01-04 (2d ed. 1976); Crane, supra note 94, at 20 n.34.
ply a "conduit" through which partnership income flows unimpeded to the individual partners. No income tax is imposed on the partnership itself; rather, each partner's share of partnership income is treated as his own income which is then subject to tax.

As to other privilege taxes, the entity view has generally been favored. Perhaps reflecting the same deference to commercial reality that motivated the English mercantile courts, most other state privilege taxes treat a partnership as the entity whose particular privilege is taxed. In Illinois, a partnership is recognized as a separate entity for purposes of taxes on such privileges as utilizing state highways, engaging in a retail business and operating a hotel.

The choice between the entity and aggregate views with respect to how a partnership is treated under the law of a given state can affect the determination of whether double taxation exists where two taxes on the same privilege are involved. For two such taxes, partial overlap of

---

114. See 1 C. BATES, THE LAW OF PARTNERSHIP § 175 (1888).
115. See, e.g., ILL. REV. STAT. ch. 120, § 417.11 (1979) (privilege of operating motor vehicles on state highways); id. § 440 (privilege of carrying on a retail business); id. § 481b.32(8) (privilege of carrying on a hotel business).
116. Differences between the entity and aggregate views of a partnership do not affect double taxation where two property taxes are involved. The object of such taxes is property and the partial overlap required for double taxation must occur with respect to the property taxed, not with respect to the property owners. See, e.g., Bode v. Barrett, 412 Ill. 204, 106 N.E.2d 521 (1952). Because a partnership can hold title to property in its own name, see 6 UNIFORM LAWS ANNOT., Uniform Partnership Act, §§ 8(3), 25(2)(c), such property would not also be deemed owned by the individual partners, so even where property is classified by the type of entity owning it for tax
their objects is tested in terms of the legal entities whose privilege is subject to the two taxes. If the entities partially overlap, the requisite partial overlap for a finding of double taxation exists.\textsuperscript{117} Where one tax is imposed on the privilege of a partnership, the choice between the entity and aggregate views in construing the second tax will determine if a partial overlap exists. If the entity view is taken, no partial overlap can occur between the distinct entities of a partnership and the individual partners. However, under the aggregate view, partners are also individuals so that a partial overlap would exist and double taxation could result.

Although not in a double taxation context, courts have previously addressed the question of whether a privilege subject to tax is to be attributed to a partnership or to the individual partners. In \textit{Corn v. Fort},\textsuperscript{118} the Tennessee Supreme Court considered a tax imposed on the privilege of doing business as a partnership. Although the statute referred to the privilege taxed as that of a partnership, the court treated the privilege as that of the individual partners and overturned the tax.\textsuperscript{119} More recently, in \textit{Tax Review Board v. Shapiro},\textsuperscript{120} the Pennsylvania Supreme Court considered a municipal income tax that the municipality sought to apply to a partnership as a separate entity. By finding that the tax was not applicable to the income of partners residing outside the municipality, the court effectively treated the income-earning privilege taxed as that of the individual partners and not that of the partnership.\textsuperscript{121} Unfortunately, the absence of a supporting rationale in these two cases for the courts' applications of the aggregate view leaves other courts without guidance as to the factors which should be considered when deciding whether the entity or the aggregate view should be applied to a particular tax.

\begin{quote}

\textit{purposes, no overlap and, hence, no double taxation would result. See 1 C. Bates, The Law of Partnership} \textit{§§ 175, 176 (1888).}

\textsuperscript{117} See text accompanying notes 78-80 \textit{supra.}

\textsuperscript{118} 170 Tenn. 377, 95 S.W.2d 620 (1936).

\textsuperscript{119} \textit{Id.} at 387, 95 S.W.2d at 623-24. Noting that a single individual's privilege of doing business was not subject to tax while that of two or more individuals in a partnership was taxed, the court found such a classification of individuals to be arbitrary and capricious in violation of the equal protection clause of the Tennessee Constitution and U.S. Constitution. \textit{Id.} See note 2 \textit{supra.}

\textsuperscript{120} 409 Pa. 253, 185 A.2d 529 (1962).

\textsuperscript{121} \textit{Id.} The court stated: "[W]e must hold that the weight of authority in this Commonwealth is to the effect that a partnership is treated as an aggregate of individuals and not as a separate entity." \textit{Id.} at 260, 185 A.2d at 533.
\end{quote}
DOUBLE TAXATION, INCOME TAXES AND PARTNERSHIPS
UNDER ILLINOIS LAW

As in other jurisdictions, the doctrine of double taxation in Illinois developed as an extended application of its constitution's uniformity clause to double property taxes. As privilege taxes came into vogue, the doctrine expanded to consider these types of taxes. The doctrine has enjoyed continued vitality to the present day.

The Illinois legislature first enacted a general income tax in 1932. The tax was graduated in nature, whereby the rate at which income was taxed increased with the amount of income received. In *Bachrach v. Nelson*, the constitutionality of this income tax was challenged. After stating that the Illinois Constitution empowered the legislature to enact only property and privilege taxes, the Illinois Supreme Court concluded that an income tax was really a tax on personal property. Examining the tax in light of the constitution's uniformity clause, the court then found that the tax's graduated rate violated the uniformity requirement. Accordingly, the income tax was overturned.

It was not until 1969 that the Illinois legislature again enacted a general income tax. Mindful of the Illinois Supreme Court's limited view of the state's taxing power in *Bachrach* and perhaps acting on the suggestion of one commentator, the legislature imposed the new tax


126. *Id.*

127. 349 Ill. 579, 182 N.E. 909 (1932).

128. *Id.* at 591-92, 182 N.E. at 914. The court stated:

[M]oney or any other thing of value acquired as gain or profit... is property, and... in the aggregate, these acquisitions constitute income, and, in accordance with the axiom that the whole includes all of its parts, income includes property and nothing but property and therefore is itself property.

*Id.* at 592, 182 N.E. at 914. For a discussion of the split among state courts that developed concerning whether the object of an income tax is property or a privilege, *see* note 37 supra.

129. 349 Ill. at 595-96, 182 N.E. at 915.


on the privilege of earning income\textsuperscript{132} and measured the tax with a single, non-graduated rate.\textsuperscript{133} In \textit{Thorpe v. Mahin},\textsuperscript{134} the Illinois Supreme Court upheld the tax by overruling \textit{Bachrach} and adopting the legislature's view that the tax was imposed on the income-earning privilege and not on property.\textsuperscript{135} The court also adopted a more expansive interpretation of the state's taxing power.

The newly enacted tax followed the majority of states in treating a partnership as a conduit.\textsuperscript{136} No income tax was levied on the income of the partnership per se.\textsuperscript{137} Instead, the tax was imposed on partnership income accruing to partners in their individual capacity.\textsuperscript{138} As individuals, the net income of the partners was made subject to a 2.5% tax.\textsuperscript{139}

On December 15, 1970, Illinois adopted a new constitution.\textsuperscript{140} Two provisions of the new constitution concerned double taxation. Section 3(a) of article IX prohibited double taxation of an individual's income.\textsuperscript{141} Section 5(c) of article IX, however, called for an end to the personal property tax and directed the Illinois legislature to replace lost revenue by imposing other types of taxes.\textsuperscript{142} Section 5(c) further pro-

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{132.} \textit{ILL. REV. STAT.} ch. 120, § 2-201(a) (1979) ("A tax . . . is hereby imposed . . . on the privilege of earning income in or as a resident of this State.").
\textsuperscript{133.} \textit{ILL. REV. STAT.} ch. 120, § 2-201(b) (1979).
\textsuperscript{134.} 43 Ill. 2d 36, 250 N.E.2d 633 (1969).
\textsuperscript{135.} \textit{Id.} at 39-40, 250 N.E.2d at 635. The Illinois Supreme Court quoted approvingly from New York ex \textit{rel.} Cohn v. Graves, 300 U.S. 308 (1937), as follows:

\begin{quote}
The incidence of a tax on income differs from that of a tax on property. Neither tax is dependent upon the possession by the taxpayer of the subjects of the other. His income may be taxed although he owns no property, and his property may be taxed although it produces no income. The two taxes are measured by different standards, the one by the amount of income received over a period of time, the other by the value of the property at a particular date. Income is taxed but once; the same property may be taxed recurrently.
\end{quote}
\textit{Id.} at 314.
\textsuperscript{136.} \textit{See} text accompanying note 113 \textit{supra}.
\textsuperscript{137.} \textit{ILL. REV. STAT.} ch. 120, § 2-205(b) (1977) (amended 1979) provided in part:

A partnership as such shall not be subject to the tax imposed by this Act. . . . Persons carrying on business as partners shall be liable for the tax imposed by this Act only in their separate or individual capacities.
\textsuperscript{138.} \textit{Id}.
\textsuperscript{139.} \textit{ILL. REV. STAT.} ch. 120, § 2-201(b)(1) (1979).
\textsuperscript{140.} \textit{See} \textit{ILL. REV. STAT.}, Const. of the State of Ill., at 15 (1979).
\textsuperscript{141.} \textit{ILL. CONST.} art. IX, § 3(a) provides:

A tax on or measured by income shall be at a non-graduated rate. At any one time there may be no more than one such tax imposed by the State for State purposes on individuals and one such tax imposed on corporations. In any such tax imposed on corporations the rate shall not exceed the rate imposed on individuals by more than a ratio of 8 to 5.
\textsuperscript{142.} \textit{ILL. CONST.} art. IX, § 5(c) provides:

On or before January 1, 1979, the General Assembly by law shall abolish all ad valorem personal property taxes and concurrently therewith and thereafter shall replace all revenue lost by units of local government and school districts as a result of the abolition of ad valorem personal property taxes subsequent to January 2, 1971. Such revenue shall be replaced by imposing statewide taxes, other than ad valorem taxes on real estate, solely
vided that if an additional income tax on individuals was levied to replace the lost revenue, that income tax would not be subject to the ban against double taxation of an individual's income which appears in section 3(a).  

From 1970 through 1978, the Illinois legislature failed to comply with the mandate of section 5(c) that the property tax be abolished and other taxes be enacted to replace it on or before January 1, 1979. In *Client Follow-Up Co. v. Hynes*, the Illinois Supreme Court held that the effect of this mandate was to invalidate the personal property tax after 1978. In the summer of 1979, the Illinois legislature abolished the personal property tax and enacted four taxes to replace the lost revenue. One of the four taxes was the partnership income tax.

The partnership income tax consists of a 1.5% levy on partnership net income. Because the conduit provision of the state's general income tax was left untouched by the legislature when it enacted the partnership tax, partnership income continues to flow to the individ-

on those classes relieved of the burden of paying ad valorem personal property taxes because of the abolition of such taxes subsequent to January 2, 1971. If any taxes imposed for such replacement purposes are taxed on or measured by income, such replacement taxes shall not be considered for purposes of the limitations of one tax and the ratio of 8 to 5 set forth in Section 3(a) of this Article.

Illinois' personal property tax, ILL. REV. STAT. ch. 120, §§ 499, 502, 508a (1977) (repealed 1979), was abolished due to its high administrative burden and to the inequity arising from the fact that the tax is not well related to a taxpayer's ability to pay. See Note, *Taxation: Assessment and Collection of Personal Property Taxes*, 28 Okla. L. Rev. 933 (1975).

143. ILL. CONST. art. IX, § 5(c) (1970).
144. *Id.* The text of section 5(c) appears in note 142 supra.
145. 75 Ill. 2d 208, 390 N.E.2d 847 (1979).
146. Personal Property Tax Replacement Income Tax Act, P.A. 81-1st Sp. Sess.-1, 1979 Ill. Laws 4925 (1979). The taxes were: an additional 2.85% corporate income tax; a 1.5% income tax on the income of partnerships and subchapter S corporations; an additional 1.5% income tax on trusts; and a 0.8% levy on the invested capital of public utilities. *Id.*
147. The partnership income tax is imposed on what is termed state partnership net income. This income figure is defined as partnership income per I.R.C. § 703, modified by certain adjustments. These include adding the federal deductions for interest and dividends received, for capital gains, for state income tax paid and for any guaranteed payments (salary) to partners. The adjustments also include subtracting from capital gains the valuation limitation amount (Illinois' basis for property acquired before the imposition of the state income tax in 1969); income tax refunds; amounts exempt from the state income tax; personal service income per I.R.C. § 1348(b)(1) or reasonable compensation to partners for personal service to the partnership; and amounts distributed to a partner which is itself an entity subject to one of the taxes enacted to replace the revenue lost from the abolished personal property tax. See ILL. REV. STAT. ch. 120, §§ 2-202, 2-203(d) (1979).
148. ILL. REV. STAT. ch. 120, § 2-205(b) (1979) now provides:

A partnership as such shall not be subject to the . . . [general income tax] but shall be subject to the . . . [partnership income tax] . . . . The partners in a partnership shall be liable for the . . . [partnership income tax] to the extent such tax is not paid by the partnership . . . . Persons carrying on business as partners shall be liable for the . . . [general income tax] only in their separate or individual capacities.
ual partners where it is subject to a 2.5% general income tax as well.\textsuperscript{149}

Although the statute declares that the tax is imposed on a partnership’s privilege of earning income,\textsuperscript{150} the interpretation of whose privilege is being taxed was not altogether clear to one of the delegates at the constitutional convention which drafted section 5(c). Noting that section 5(c) authorizes an additional income tax to replace lost revenue from the abolished personal property tax, Delegate McCracken discussed whose income would be the object of such a tax:

I am thinking about individuals, . . . perhaps in their capacities as partners. I am not sure whether I am talking about them or not, because I am not sure of the Supreme Court’s interpretation of the term ‘individual’; . . . I may be talking about partnerships.\textsuperscript{151}

This potential ambiguity was not considered by the Illinois legislature when it enacted the partnership income tax,\textsuperscript{152} and this ambiguity became the central issue in \textit{Continental Illinois National Bank & Trust Co. v. Zagel}.

\textbf{Continental Illinois National Bank & Trust Co. v. Zagel}

In \textit{Zagel},\textsuperscript{153} the partnership seeking to overturn the partnership income tax characterized the tax as falling on the income of the individual partners and not on the income of a partnership.\textsuperscript{154} Because each partner’s income is also taxed by the state’s general income tax, the plaintiff argued that the new tax resulted in double taxation, thus violating the section 3(a) ban on double taxation of an individual’s income.\textsuperscript{155}

\textsuperscript{149} ILL. REV. STAT. ch. 120, § 2-201(b)(1) (1979).
\textsuperscript{150} Id. § 2-201(c) (1979) (“[T]here is also hereby imposed the Personal Property Tax Replacement Income Tax . . . on every . . . partnership. . . . Such taxes are imposed on the privilege of earning or receiving income in or as a resident of this State.”).
\textsuperscript{151} PROCEEDINGS, SIXTH ILLINOIS CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION 3889 (1972).
\textsuperscript{152} See Illinois General Assembly House of Representatives, Transcript of Proceedings (August 6, 1979).
\textsuperscript{153} 78 Ill. 2d 387, 401 N.E.2d 491 (1979).
\textsuperscript{154} Id. at 407, 401 N.E.2d at 501.
\textsuperscript{155} Id. The partnership income tax was also challenged on two other constitutional grounds. One ground was that section 3(a) authorized the imposition of income taxes on individuals and corporations but not on partnerships. Looking to the constitutional debates pertinent to section 3(a), the court found that such a narrow reading of the section had not been intended. Id. at 405-07, 401 N.E.2d at 500-01. The other ground was that the tax violated the equal protection clause of Illinois’ constitution by treating individuals differently depending on whether or not they were partners. As to this ground, the court found that a showing that this difference in treatment was arbitrary and capricious had not been made. Id. at 407-08, 401 N.E.2d at 501.

The validity of the other taxes that were also enacted to replace the revenue lost by the abolition of the personal property tax was also challenged, although the issues raised by this other challenge are not addressed in this comment. Their validity was upheld. For descriptions of these other taxes, see note 146 supra.
In its brief discussion of the issue, the Illinois Supreme Court\textsuperscript{156} stated:

Petitioners' claim that the act subjects the income of an individual partner to two taxes in violation of section 3(a) of Article IX is disposed of by the opinion of this court in \textit{Lake Shore Auto Parts Co. v. Korzen}, \ldots where it was held that the personal property of a partnership is distinct from and, thus, taxable apart from the personal property of the individual partners. (See also \textit{Hanley v. Kusper}, \ldots).

In both \textit{Lake Shore Auto Parts v. Korzen}\textsuperscript{158} and \textit{Hanley v. Kusper},\textsuperscript{159} the court had considered the scope of the term "individuals" as used in a provision of the old constitution which exempted individuals from the state's personal property tax.\textsuperscript{160} Although partnership property had not been directly at issue in these two cases, the court had noted that partnership personal property remained subject to the personal property tax.\textsuperscript{161}

Justice Clark, in his dissent,\textsuperscript{162} argued that the distinction in \textit{Lake Shore Auto Parts} between partnership personal property and that of the individual partners was not applicable to partnership income. He reasoned that no such distinction could be made for partnership income because the conduit provisions of the general income tax made partnership income and the partners' income the same.\textsuperscript{163} Justice Clark then proceeded to show that the four elements of double taxation were present. He noted that both taxes were imposed by the state, for a general revenue-raising purpose, and that both taxes were levied over the same tax year.\textsuperscript{164} He also noted that the objects of the two taxes partially overlapped in that the income of partners was subject to both the partnership income tax and the general income tax. He urged the elimination of double taxation by construing the general income tax as

\textsuperscript{156} Upon a motion by one of the parties for leave to file an original action, the Illinois Supreme Court, under its power to hear actions challenging the validity of state revenue measures, directly heard the case. 78 Ill. 2d at 393-94, 401 N.E.2d at 494. \textit{See ILL. CONST. art. IV, § 4(a); ILL. SUP. CT. R. 381.}
\textsuperscript{157} 78 Ill. 2d at 407, 401 N.E.2d at 501 (citations omitted).
\textsuperscript{159} 61 Ill. 2d 452, 337 N.E.2d 1 (1975).
\textsuperscript{160} Article IX-A was added to the \textit{ILL. CONST.} of 1870 in November of 1970 by referendum. It provided:

\textit{Notwithstanding any other provision of this Constitution, the taxation of personal property by valuation is prohibited as to individuals.}

\textit{Id.} This provision was repealed in 1971.
\textsuperscript{161} 61 Ill. 2d at 461, 337 N.E.2d at 6; 54 Ill. 2d at 239, 296 N.E.2d at 343.
\textsuperscript{162} 78 Ill. 2d at 415-18, 401 N.E.2d at 505-06 (Clark, J., concurring in part and dissenting in part).
\textsuperscript{163} \textit{Id.} at 416, 401 N.E.2d at 505.
\textsuperscript{164} \textit{Id.} at 416-17, 401 N.E.2d at 505.
inapplicable to the income that individuals obtain from partnerships.  

**Analysis**

The Illinois Supreme Court concluded that the partnership income tax did not result in double taxation of the individual partners' income because partnership personal property is taxed separately from that of the individual partners.  

Assuming that this terse explanation was directed at establishing that no partial overlap between the objects of the two taxes existed, there are two possible underlying rationales that would preclude double taxation. If the partnership income tax was deemed to be a property tax under *Bachrach v. Nelson*, its object would not overlap with the general income tax's object which is the income-earning privilege.  

Alternatively, if the object of the partnership income tax is deemed to be the same income-earning privilege that is taxed by the general income tax, the treatment of a partnership as a separate entity, analogous to the manner in which the property tax had been construed, would also preclude a partial overlap.  

However, neither of these underlying rationales would have been tenable had the majority properly undertaken the same type of comprehensive double taxation analysis which the dissent utilized.

The correct approach to double taxation issues is the two-step analysis which first determines the objects of the two taxes and then determines whether the four elements of double taxation are present. Such a treatment begins in this situation with a determination of the respective objects of the partnership income tax and the general income tax.  

As to the partnership income tax, the statute declares that the tax is imposed on the privilege of earning income. The tax is measured as a specified percentage of net income earned over a twelve-month period, as are most income taxes. In its operation and effect, the tax accrues only upon the earning of income, unaffected by other
circumstances or activities of a partnership. Although the tax was imposed to replace lost revenue from the abolished personal property tax, it cannot be considered a property tax measured by the related income because the tax accrues regardless of whether a partnership has personal property or not. Moreover, such an interpretation of the tax's object would render the tax unconstitutional. Thus, the object of the partnership income tax is clearly the privilege of earning income and any interpretation of the court's terse explanation that would treat the partnership income tax as a tax on personal property lacks a plausible basis in law.

The state's general income tax is also statutorily imposed on the privilege of earning income. In *Thorpe v. Mahin*, the Illinois Supreme Court approved this characterization of the tax's object. Thus, the object of both taxes is the privilege of earning income. The majority's discussion fails to comment on the nature of the partnership income tax's object and, at best, confuses this issue by relying on two personal property tax cases.

Once it is shown that the objects of the two taxes are the same, the second step of the analysis is to determine whether the four elements of double taxation are present. Whether the partnership income tax and the general income tax exhibit the four elements of double taxation, however, is not as straightforward as was portrayed by the dissent. It is uncontroversial that both taxes are imposed by the same unit of state government—the state itself—and that they are imposed over the same time period—the taxable year. However, it is less certain whether both taxes are levied for the same purpose and whether the objects of both taxes partially overlap.

The purpose of the state's general income tax is to raise unrestricted funds. Its purpose is implied by the Illinois legislature's direction that all revenue collected under the tax is to be paid into the

---


175. Cases construing a tax as imposed on property and measured by the derived income assume or require the presence of the property that is subject to tax. See, e.g., *Great Northern Ry. Co. v. Minnesota*, 278 U.S. 503 (1929); *Redfield v. Fisher*, 135 Or. 180, 292 P. 813 (1930), cert. denied, 284 U.S. 617 (1931).

176. In *Client Follow-Up Co. v. Hynes*, 75 Ill. 2d 208, 390 N.E.2d 847 (1979), the Illinois Supreme Court held that a personal property tax would be unconstitutional as of January 1, 1979. Id. at 230, 390 N.E.2d at 857. See text accompanying note 145 supra.

177. *ILL. REV. STAT. ch. 120, § 2-201(a) (1979).*


179. 78 Ill. 2d at 404, 401 N.E.2d at 499.

180. See *ILL. REV. STAT. ch. 120, §§ 2-201(a), 2-201(c) (1979).*
In contrast, as stated by section 5(c), the purpose of the partnership income tax is to replace the revenue lost by units of local government and school districts as a result of the abolition of the state's personal property tax. To this end, revenue collected under the tax is deposited in a special fund of the state treasury for distribution in accordance with that purpose.

It is arguable whether this difference between the two taxes is sufficient to conclude that the two taxes have different purposes. The dissent felt that both taxes had the same general purpose of raising operating revenue for the state and its political subdivisions. This view is also supported by the fact that the application of the partnership tax funds remains largely discretionary and is not directed toward specific governmental functions or acts. On the other hand, the fact that some restrictions existed on the entities that were to apply the fund in the case of the partnership income tax imports a narrower and arguably different purpose from that of the general income tax. Although imputing to both taxes the same general revenue-raising purpose appears to be the better reasoned view, a careful court could have relied on this ostensible difference in concluding that no double taxation existed. By so doing, the court would have avoided the deeper doctrinal issue that lurked in the question of whether the objects of the two taxes partially overlap.

Given that the object of both taxes is the privilege of earning income, partial overlap is tested with respect to the legal entities whose income-earning privilege is taxed. Because the two taxes at issue are imposed on the privilege of partnerships and of individuals, the question of partial overlap turns on how a partnership's income-earning privilege is viewed. If the privilege is viewed as that of a legal entity distinct from its individual partners, the groups whose privilege is being taxed—partners and partnerships—do not overlap. If, however, the privilege taxed is viewed as that of the individual partners, a partial overlap between partners and individuals exists. Under this latter

182. ILL. CONST. art. IX, § 5(c). See note 142 supra for the text of § 5(c).
184. 78 Ill. 2d at 416-17, 401 N.E.2d at 505 (Clark, J., concurring in part and dissenting in part).
185. For examples of the distinctions that have been made concerning tax purposes, see note 66 supra.
186. See text accompanying notes 77-80 supra.
187. Partners are treated as individuals for purposes of the state's general income tax. See ILL.
view, the income-earning privilege of individuals who are not partners is only subject to the general income tax while the privilege of those individuals who are partners becomes subject to both the partnership income tax and the general income tax.

The more convincing interpretation of the court's explanation is that it viewed the privilege being taxed as that of a legal entity distinct from the individual partners. Although the two property tax cases on which the court relied are indicative of this distinction, they do not provide a meaningful supporting rationale. A partnership has long been treated as a separate entity for the purpose of owning property. To say that, therefore, a partnership should be treated as a separate entity with respect to the privilege of earning income constitutes an unconvincing analogy.

The recognition of a partnership as a distinct entity for purposes of property ownership developed in response to the inadequacy of applying traditional modes of property ownership to a partnership. In order to strengthen the rights of partnership creditors and insure a measure of financial stability for a partnership, the entity view was adopted. Partnership income, on the other hand, is premised on the sharing of profits and losses among the partners. This premise is an element in the definition of a partnership and is also reflected in the conduit provision of the vast majority of state income tax laws. Given that the underlying rationale for treating a partnership as a separate entity in a property tax setting is markedly different from the considerations attaching to the application of the aggregate view in the income tax context, the analogy to the property tax rule provides scant support for the income tax distinction between partnerships and partners which the court seemed to make.

A more convincing analogy might have been made to the entity treatment generally given to partnerships under non-income privilege taxes, but it would have required more incisive and better articulated reasoning than the court seemed willing to do. Even if such an argument had been made, the fact remains that the entity treatment of partnership income is fundamentally at odds with the income-sharing

Rev. Stat. ch. 120, § 1-205(b) (1979). See note 148 supra for the pertinent text of § 1-205(b).


190. See text accompanying notes 103-07 supra.

191. See text accompanying notes 108-10 supra.

192. See text accompanying notes 114-15 supra.
characteristics of a partnership. Accordingly, for purposes of a tax on partnership income, the aggregate view should prevail.

The Illinois Supreme Court could have based its conclusion that no double taxation existed by finding either that the two taxes had different purposes or that the objects of the two taxes did not partially overlap. However, none of the grounds underlying such findings appear readily supportable. Indeed, the more cogent arguments lead to contrary findings. Thus, the partnership income tax and the general income tax fulfill the four elements and double taxation is the result.

Ironically, a finding that the partnership income tax resulted in double taxation would not have made it unconstitutional under the section 3(a) ban against double income taxation of individuals. Section 5(c) specifically exempts from the section 3(a) ban any income taxes enacted to replace the lost revenue from the abolished personal property tax. Since the partnership income tax was one of the taxes enacted to replace such lost revenue, it is not subject to the section 3(a) ban.

Because the court did not view the partnership income tax as imposed on the income-earning privilege of the individual partners, it did not consider the tax as a second tax on the income of individuals. Hence, there was no occasion to consider the section 5(c) exception. Had the court properly found that the partnership income tax was imposed on the income-earning privilege of the individual partners and that it therefore resulted in double taxation, the court could have then nevertheless applied the section 5(c) exception to uphold the tax. The court would thus have avoided the strained analogy on which it relied. The dissent’s failure to apply the section 5(c) exception was a significant oversight on its part as well.

Absent the section 5(c) exception to the section 3(a) double taxation ban, a finding of double taxation should have led the Zagel court to construe either the partnership income tax or the general income tax in such a manner as to avoid double taxation. The dissent’s suggestion that the general income tax should be construed so as not to tax the income that individuals receive as partners from a partnership would have worked well in this regard. The partnership income tax would then have been viewed as taxing an individual’s privilege of earning

193. ILL. CONST. art. IX, § 3(a). See note 141 supra for the text of § 3(a).
194. ILL. CONST. art. IX, § 5(c). See note 142 supra for the text of § 5(c).
195. See text accompanying notes 144-46 supra.
196. See text accompanying notes 88-93 supra.
197. 78 Ill. 2d at 418, 401 N.E.2d at 506 (Clark, J., concurring in part and dissenting in part).
income through a partnership, while the general income tax would be viewed as taxing an individual's privilege of earning income from all other sources, so that no partial overlap of the objects of the two taxes would occur and, thus, no double taxation would result.

In Zagel, the Illinois Supreme Court sanctioned a substantive departure from the aggregate view of a partnership which is generally followed in partnership income taxation. The court adopted the entity view of a partnership in rather brusque fashion, neglecting to provide a plausible rationale for upholding this change in the law. Without such a rationale, the decision offers no guidance to other courts that may be called upon to decide between the entity and aggregate view of a partnership both in the income tax context and in other areas of partnership law.198

The court's decision also serves to disparage the doctrine of double taxation. The majority's cursory treatment of the double taxation issue is inappropriate to the vitality which the doctrine has enjoyed in Illinois as well as in other jurisdictions.199 In an era in which the need for state tax revenues is increasing dramatically and in which the scheme of state taxes is growing in complexity,200 the doctrine of double taxation has an important role to play in ensuring an equitable distribution of the tax burden.201 Accordingly, it should continue to be applied by the courts. In failing to apply the doctrine adequately to the situation before it, the Illinois Supreme Court has permitted an inequitable and legally indefensible tax burden to fall on those individuals who are partners.

CONCLUSION

In Zagel, the Illinois Supreme Court faced a double taxation challenge to a novel partnership income tax. It was alleged that the new tax, together with the state's general income tax on individuals, resulted in double taxation of the individual partners' income in violation of section 3(a) of article IX of the Illinois Constitution. By summarily finding a partnership to be a legal entity distinct from its partners for purposes of the new tax, the court avoided a double taxation result. However, in so doing, the court ignored the rationale that supports the

198. The political attractiveness of a partnership income tax as a source of revenue makes it likely that other state courts may soon be faced with double taxation challenges to tax statutes similar to the one at issue in Zagel.
199. See notes 57-93, 122-24 supra.
200. See generally Hellerstein, supra note 20, at 1-26.
201. See notes 47-55 supra.
widely held aggregate view of a partnership with respect to partnership income. The court also undermined the doctrine of double taxation by its cursory treatment of the issue and circumvented the doctrine’s purpose by allowing an inequitable tax burden distribution to stand. Ironically, a finding that the partnership income tax results in double taxation would not have made it unconstitutional under section 3(a) in any event since the tax was one of those enacted to replace revenues lost from the abolished personal property tax. As such, it is exempted from the section 3(a) ban by section 5(c) of article IX of the Illinois Constitution.

Carlos A. Saavedra