

INTERPRETING THE CONSTITUTION

LANDMARK CASES OF THE SUPREME COURT

CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Power of state government vs. the power of the federal govt.
2. The ability of the federal government to regulate business.
3. The extent of civil rights under the 14th Amendment

CASES AND SUMMARY

1. Marbury v. Madison (1803)

The decision established the Supreme Cts. power of judicial review of laws passed by the legislature.

2. Mc. Culloch v. Maryland (1819)

The case dealt with the ability of the state to tax the Bank of the United States. The case extended the implied powers doctrine of to allow the federal government to establish the bank. It also established the supremacy of the federal government by not allowing the state to intrude into government activities.

3. Dartmouth College v. Woodward (1819)

This case was the result of an attempt by the state of New Hampshire to terminate Dartmouth's charter from the King of England and make it a state university. The court ruled that the charter could not be revoked due to the fact that state government could not interfere with contracts. This was viewed as probusiness ruling.

4. Gibbons v. Ogden (1824)

This case focused on a dispute of the granting of charters to operate on the Hudson River. The decision in the case expanded the federal power to control interstate commerce.

5. Charles River Bridge v. Warren Bridge (1837)

The Charles River Bridge Co. argued that their charter of 1785 gave them the right to prevent the construction of a second bridge. The court recognized the the Constitutions prohibition against interfering with contracts, but ruled that a monopoly would not be in the publics interest. This extended government power of control and commitment to free enterprize.

6. Dred Scott v. Sanford (1857)

The court ruled that a slave taken into free territory was to be regarded a property of the owner and thus remained a slave. This was based on the due process clause of the 5th Amendment. The decision also made the Missouri Compromise unconstitutional and allowed slave owners to take their slaves into what had been considered free territory.

7. Ex Parte Milligan (1866)

This case dealt with President Lincoln's suspension of the writ of habeas corpus. The court ruled that Milligan must be tried in a civilian and not a military court and that the suspension of this rights was in violation of the Constitution.

8. Munn v. Illinois (1877)

The case eminated from the Granger movements attempt to get state legislatures to regulate railroad abuses. The court ruled that states could regulate privately owned businesses, such as railroads, if they affected the public interest.

9. Plessy v. Ferguson (1896)

The court ruled that the Fourteenth Amendment allwed states to provide "separte but equal" facilities for blacks. This case established the basis for segregation in the South and North.

10. Northern Securities Co. Et AL v. United States (1904)

The Sherman Anti-Trust Act (1890) prohibited business combynations in restraint of trade. Northern Securities Co. controlled the railroads in a large section of the nation. The court ruled that Norhthern Securities, even though it only owned stock in the companies, was in violation of ~~the~~ Sherman Act. This decision gave the government extended powers to deal with monopolies.

11. Muller v. Oregon (1908)

This case arose out of attempts by states to regulat~~e~~ the working conditions of laborers. The question was did limiting the maximum number of working hours by the government deprive factory owners of their property without due process. The court allowed evidence that was sociological and not strictly legal and extend the power of the government to regulate working conditions.

12. Schenck v. United States (1919)

During WWI Schenck printed and mailed fliers denouncing to draft to men who were eligible for the draft. He was arrested and convicted of violating the Espionage Act of 1917. The question of First Amendment protection was obvious. The court ruled that under conditions of a "clear and present danger" that the government has the authority to limit speech. In time of peace Schenck would have been free to publish but not in time of war.

13. Schechter Poultry Corp. v. United States (1935)

The Court ruled that the economic conditions of the depression did not authorize the federal government's regulation of business under the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933. The NIRA has gone beyond the regulation of interstate commerce.

14. United States v. Curtiss-Wright Export Corp. (1936)

With authority provided by Congress, President Roosevelt placed an embargo on the sale of weapons to Bolivia and Paraguay (the two nations were at war). The court upheld the government's authority to place an embargo. The ruling extended the President's power to control foreign policy.

15. Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954)

This case, argued by the NAACP, reversed the Plessy v. Ferguson case. The Court ruled that separate can never be equal and ordered schools to integrate. This case began a broad application of the 14th amendment and the beginning of the end of segregation in the South.

16. Gideon v. Wainwright (1963)

Clarence Earl Gideon had been tried and convicted without the assistance of a lawyer. The Court ruled that the 6th Amendment applied to all cases and not just in special circumstances (Betts v. Brady, 1942) and in cases involving the death penalty (Powell v. Alabama, 1932)

17. Reynolds v. Sims (1964)

The court ruled that the 14th amendment required states establish equally populated electoral districts. This ruling prevented states from giving large populating centers limited influence in state governments.

18. Miranda v. Arizona (1966)

The court ruled that the 5th amendment requires that the police inform suspects of their rights and that unless the rights are waived, interrogation cannot proceed until a lawyer is present.

