

SIGNIFICANT SUPREME COURT CASES IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Marbury v. Madison (1803, Marshall). The court established its role as the arbiter of the constitutionality of federal laws, the principle is known as judicial review (see also Federalist Papers, 78).

Fletcher v. Peck (1810, Marshall). The decision stems from the Yazoo land cases, 1803, and upholds the sanctity of contracts.

McCulloch v. Maryland (1819, Marshall). The Court ruled that states cannot tax the federal government, i.e. the Bank of the United States; the phrase "the power to tax is the power to destroy"; confirmed the constitutionality of the Bank of the United States.

Dartmouth College v. Woodward (1819, Marshall). New Hampshire had attempted to take over Dartmouth College by revising its colonial charter. The Court ruled that the charter was protected under the contract clause of the U. S. Constitution; upholds the sanctity of contracts.

Gibbons v. Ogden (1824, Marshall). Affirmed Congressional power over interstate commerce.

Cherokee Nation v. Georgia (1831, Marshall). "The conditions of the Indians in relation to the U.S. is perhaps unlike that of any two people in existence," Chief Justice John Marshall wrote, "their relation to the United States resembles that of a ward to his guardian. . . (they were a) domestic dependent nation." Established a "trust relationship" with the tribes directly under federal authority.

Worcester v. Georgia (1832, Marshall). Established tribal autonomy; Tribes were "distinct political communities, having territorial boundaries within which their authority is exclusive."

Charles River Bridge v. Warren Bridge (1837, Taney). The interests of the community are more important than the interests of business; the supremacy of society's interest over private interest.

Commonwealth v. Hunt (1842). Declared that labor unions were lawful organizations and that the strike was a lawful weapon.

Dred Scott v. Sanford (1857, Taney). Speaking for a widely divided court, Chief Justice Taney ruled that Dred Scott was not a citizen and had no standing in court; Scott's residence in a free state and territory had not made him free since he returned to Missouri; Congress had no power to prohibit slavery in a territory (based on the 5th Amendment right of a person to be secure from seizure of property), thus voiding the Missouri Compromise of 1820.

Wabash, St. Louis, and Pacific Railway Co. v. Illinois (1886). Declared state-passed laws that regulated interstate commerce unconstitutional.

U. S. v. E. C. Knight Co. (1895). Due to a narrow interpretation of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, the Court undermined the authority of the federal government to act against monopolies.

Plessy v. Ferguson (1896). Legalized segregation on the basis of "separate but equal."

"Insular Cases"/*Downes v. Bidwell* (1901). Confirmed the right of the federal gov't to place tariffs on goods entering the U. S. from its territories on the grounds that "the Constitution does not follow the flag."

Northern Securities Co. v. U. S. (1904). Re-established the authority of the federal government to fight monopolies under the Sherman Anti-Trust Act.

Lochner v. New York (1905). Declared unconstitutional a New York act limiting the working hours of bakers due to a denial of the 14th Amendment rights.

Muller v. Oregon (1908). First case to use the "Brandeis brief"; recognized a 10-hour work day for women laundry workers on the grounds of health and community concerns.

Schenck v. U. S. (1919). Unanimously upheld the Espionage Act of 1917 which declared that people who interfered with the war effort were subject to imprisonment; declared that the 1st Amendment right to freedom of speech was not absolute; free speech could be limited if its exercise presented a "clear and present danger."

Schechter v. U. S. (1936). Unanimously declared the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) unconstitutional on three grounds: that the act delegated legislative power to the executive; that there was a lack of constitutional authority for such legislation; and that it sought to regulate businesses that were wholly intrastate in character.

Korematsu v. U. S. (1941). The court upheld the constitutionality of detention camps for Japanese-Americans during WW2.

Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas (1954, Warren). Unanimous decision declaring "separate but equal" unconstitutional.

Gideon v. Wainwright (1963). Extends to the defendant the right of counsel in all state and federal criminal trials regardless of their ability to pay.

Escobedo v. Illinois (1964). Ruled that a defendant must be allowed access to a lawyer *before* questioning by police.

Miranda v. Arizona (1966). The court ruled that those subjected to in-custody interrogation be advised of their constitutional right to an attorney and their right to remain silent.

Roe v. Wade (1973). The court legalized abortion by ruling that state laws could not restrict it during the first 3 months of pregnancy. Based on 4th Amendment rights of personal privacy.

U. S. v. Richard Nixon (1974). The court rejected Richard Nixon's claim to an absolutely unqualified privilege against any judicial process.

Bakke v. Regents of the University of California (1978). Ambiguous ruling by a badly divided court that dealt with affirmative action programs that used race as a basis of selecting participants. The court general upheld affirmative action, but with a 4/4/1 split, it was a very weak decision.

Bush v Gore (2000) U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of George W. Bush and ordered the state of Florida to stop ballot recounts; The decision led to an electoral victory for Bush