

Key US Court Cases of Constitutional Significance

United States v Criukshank (1876)

Application of the Bill of Rights to state governments following the adoption of the Fourteenth Amendment.

District of Columbia v Heller (2008)

Amendment to the United States Constitution applies to federal enclaves and protects an individual's right to possess a firearm for traditionally lawful purposes, such as self-defence within the home.

Dred Scott v Sandford (1857)

Held that "a negro, whose ancestors were imported into [the U.S.], and sold as slaves", whether enslaved or free, could not be an American citizen and therefore had no standing to sue in federal court.

Plessy v Ferguson (1896)

Upheld state racial segregation laws for public facilities under the doctrine of "separate but equal".

Morgan v Virginia (1946)

Court decided on June 3, 1946, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a Virginia law requiring racial segregation on commercial interstate buses as a violation of the commerce clause of the Constitution.

Brown v Board of Education (1954)

Court declared state laws establishing separate public schools for black and white students to be unconstitutional.

Browder v Gayle (1956) - associated with Rosa Parks and the Alabama bus boycott

Bus segregation was unconstitutional under the Fourteenth Amendment protections for equal treatment.

Gomillion v Lightfoot (1960)

Found an electoral district with boundaries created to disenfranchise blacks violated the Fifteenth Amendment.

Stromberg v California (1931)

Court ruled 7–2 that a 1919 California statute banning red flags was unconstitutional because it violated the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution.

New York Times Co. v Sullivan (1964)

Landmark United States Supreme Court case that established the actual malice standard, which has to be met before press reports about public officials can be considered to be defamation and libel and hence allowed free reporting of the civil rights campaigns in the southern United States

Griswold v Connecticut (1965)

Constitution protected the use of birth control.

Roe v Wade (1973)

The court recognized for the first time that the constitutional right to privacy “is broad enough to encompass a woman's decision whether or not to terminate her pregnancy” (*Roe v Wade*, 1973). Roe has come to be known as the case that legalized abortion nationwide.