

The Legal System

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US Supreme Court—Landmark Supreme Court Decisions

Constitutional Amendments



Acts passed by Congress

Legal Decisions and votes which affect US society

Landmark US Supreme Court Cases

Brown v. Board of Education



1954 decision

separate-but-equal doctrine reversed

1963 Alabama Governor George Wallace vowed “segregation forever” and stood in a school house door to keep blacks from enrolling at the University of Alabama.



President Kennedy orders National Guard to remove governor and allow black students to enroll



1963



That evening Kennedy gave a televised speech, making a plea for civil rights in America.



Landmark US Supreme Court Cases— interracial marriage--Loving v Virginia 1967



- *Richard Loving “They sentenced us to one year in the state penitentiary. Then they suspended for 25 years and said that we had to leave the state.”*

Landmark US Supreme Court Cases



The Pentagon Papers

1971 decision

The *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* published details of the American role in the Vietnam War.

After appeals by the government, the Supreme Court ruled that the newspapers had the right to publish the information.

(First Amendment—Freedom of the Press)

Landmark US Supreme Court Cases



Roe v Wade
1973 decision
Legalized abortion

June 2022—In a 6 to 3 ruling the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, eliminating the constitutional right to abortion after almost 50 years in a decision that will transform American life, reshape the nation's politics and lead to all but total bans on the procedure in about half of the states.

Landmark US Supreme Court Cases

The Death Penalty 1972

The Supreme Court ruled that the death penalty was “cruel and unusual punishment” (against the 8th Amendment)



The Death Penalty 1976

The Supreme Court ruled that the death penalty was not unconstitutional if it was applied fairly.

Landmark US Supreme Court Cases— US Supreme Court decision on Marriage Equality June 2015





Constitutional Amendments

Some are contained in the Bill of Rights
(the first 10 Amendments to the Constitution).

Some have been added by Congress over the years.



Constitutional Amendments

Nineteenth Amendment—Women’s right to vote—The Anthony Amendment 1920





Susan B Anthony

Jailed for voting 1872

At her trial she said, “I shall never pay a dollar of your unjust penalty,” and vowed to “educate all women to do precisely as I have done, rebel against your man-made, unjust unconstitutional forms of law ,which tax, fine, imprison and hang women while denying them the right of representation in the government.”

Act of Congress

The Civil Rights Act of 1964



Passage of the Act **ended** the application of "Jim Crow" laws.



1971 Voting age lowered to 18





How might it affect you personally if you lived in one or another state in the US?

And now, since June 2022, we must add that if you live in a state that restricts abortions, this may affect you personally.

Ballot Measures in States



In elections, voters can decide state-by-state on various issues in ballot measures.



How many states 16
have legalized
recreational
marijuana?

How many states 36
increased their
minimum wage?



How many states 27
have the death
penalty?

How many states 39 have expanded
have expanded
Medicaid under
the ACA
(Obamacare)?
11 have not

A Puzzling Development



Why would voters in some states vote for ballot measures or candidates that are against their own best interests?

We will talk about this more when we discuss social services.