

CASE

Marbury v. Madison (1803)

FACTS

Pres. John Adams made a series of appts. to fill gov't. posts with Federalists. Madison did not deliver Marbury's appt. & Marbury sued, asking court to enforce his appointment.

KEY SUPREME COURT CASES

ISSUE

Whether the Supreme Court has the power to interpret the constitutionality of a law or statute delivered by Congress.

DECISION

Marbury's request was based on a law passed by Congress that the Court held to be unconstitutional.

IMPACT

McCulloch v. Maryland (1819)

State of Maryland brought an action against McCulloch, a cashier at Bank of US for not paying a tax the state of Maryland imposed on Bank of US

Whether the state of Maryland had right to tax a federal agency which was set up by Congress.

Court ruled that "power to tax is power to destroy" & fed. gov.'s bank was immune to taxation. Bank established under "necessary & proper clause"

Gibbons v. Ogden (1824)

Gibbons was operating steamboats btwn. NY & NJ under the authority of a license obtained from fed. gov. Ogden petitioned NY court for an injunction against Gibbons

Whether the NY statute that prohibited vessels licensed by fed. gov. from navigating waters of NY was unconstitutional and therefore void

Court ruled that injunction against Gibbons was invalid because NY statute conflicted with valid federal law. Congress regulates interstate trade.

Worcester v. Georgia (1832)

Georgia law required all whites living in Cherokee territory to obtain a state license & 2 missionaries refused to obey law b/c state laws were unconstit.

Whether states had the reserve power to pass laws concerning the Indian Nations which are sovereign nations according to treaties with fed gov.

Court ruled that states had no power to pass any laws affecting Indian nations b/c federal jurisdiction over treaties with Indians was exclusive.

Dred Scott v. Sandford (1857)

Scott, a slave, taken to free northern land under Miss. Comp. Scott sued owner upon return to Missouri for his freedom.

Whether a slave was a citizen of US and legally entitled to use courts to sue.

Court ruled that slaves were property, not citizens & could not sue. Also declare Miss. Comp. unconstitutional.

Civil Rights Cases (1883)

Congress passed Civil Rights Act of 1875 which made it a crime to equal access based on race, but private business still discriminated.

Whether the 13th & 14th Amend. provided the Congress power to establish laws barring discrimination in private businesses.

Court ruled that Congress had overstepped its authority to enforce 14th Amend & Civil Rights Act was invalid.

Plessy v. Ferguson (1896)

Plessy, of mixed race, took a seat in whites only section of train & refused to move to non-white train car when asked.

Whether laws which provided for separation of races violated the rights of blacks as guaranteed by equal protection of 14th Amend.

Court ruled that separate but equal facilities did not violate the Constitution.