

Required Supreme Court cases: equal protection and federal power

Equal protection

Case	Provision	Facts	Holding and reasoning
Brown v. Board of Education (1954)	14th Amendment: Equal Protection Clause	Segregation laws in Kansas kept Linda Brown from attending a school close to her house. She challenged the "separate but equal" doctrine of <i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i> (1896), which allowed public places to be separated by race	Overtaken "separate but equal": the mere existence of all-Black and all-white schools violated the Equal Protection Clause and made Black children feel inferior
Baker v. Carr (1962)	14th Amendment: Equal Protection Clause	The Tennessee state legislature had not redistricted since 1901. Residents of urban areas challenged this, since it ignored the state's major population shift to urban areas	Citizens may challenge legislative redistricting in federal courts: it is not a "political question" the courts must leave to the legislature. The ruling opened the door to the "one person, one vote" doctrine, which <i>Reynolds v. Sims</i> (1964) applied to state legislatures
Shaw v. Reno (1993)	14th Amendment: Equal Protection Clause	North Carolina created two majority-minority districts to increase minority representation in its congressional delegation. White residents of those districts challenged their bizarre shape as an unconstitutional drawing of districts purely by race	Struck down the race-based districts on equal protection grounds: race cannot be the dominant factor in drawing district lines

Federal power and judicial review

Case	Provision	Facts	Holding and reasoning
Marbury v. Madison (1803)	Article III: the Supreme Court's original and appellate jurisdiction	John Adams appointed a number of federal judges as he was leaving the presidency. Marbury's commission was not delivered before Thomas Jefferson took over, and Jefferson asked his Secretary of State, James Madison, not to deliver it. Marbury sued Madison under the Judiciary Act of 1789, asking the Supreme Court to order his commission delivered	Marbury was entitled to his commission, but the Judiciary Act of 1789 violated Article III, which defines the Court's original jurisdiction and does not include the authority to issue such an order. The ruling made judicial review a power of the Court
McCulloch v. Maryland (1819)	Article I: Necessary and Proper Clause; Article VI: Supremacy Clause	Congress chartered the Second Bank of the United States in 1816. Maryland passed a law requiring all banks not chartered by the state to pay a tax. McCulloch, cashier of the bank's Baltimore branch, refused to pay, and Maryland sued him to collect it	Congress may create a national bank: the Necessary and Proper Clause gives it implied powers to carry out its expressed powers to tax, borrow money, and regulate commerce. Since the power to tax involves the power to destroy, the Supremacy Clause does not allow a state to tax a federal entity
United States v. Lopez (1995)	Article I: Commerce Clause	A Texas high school senior brought a concealed handgun with bullets to school. He was convicted under a federal law banning guns in a school zone, and challenged his conviction, arguing the federal government had no authority to regulate guns in local schools	Struck down the federal law: possessing a gun in school is not substantially related to interstate commerce, and allowing Congress to pass such a law would lead to the federal government regulating many aspects of people's lives