

# Key rulings during Rehnquist's years as chief justice

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WASHINGTON - Here are some of the key Supreme Court decisions during William Rehnquist's tenure as chief justice.

- 2004-05: The enemy combatant cases affirmed the existence of some form of "enemy combatant" who could be detained without the filing of criminal charges, but upheld the right of such people to contest their detention in court.
- 2004: *Blakely vs. Washington* invalidated Washington state's sentencing guidelines, saying they took away too much fact-finding power from juries.
- 2003: *Grutter vs. Bollinger* upheld the Michigan Law School's consideration of race and ethnicity in student admissions. However, the court ruled that the university's undergraduate admissions system was "non-individualized" and unconstitutional because it mechanically awarded extra points to Black, Hispanic, and Native American applicants.
- 2003: *Lawrence vs. Texas* struck down Texas' sodomy laws on an equal protection argument and invalidated all such laws nationwide.
- 2003: *McConnell vs. FEC* upheld the sweeping limits on federal campaign donations contained in bipartisan legislation sponsored by Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Russ Feingold, D-Wis., over criticisms that those limits stifled political free speech.
- 2003: *Nevada Department of Human Resources vs. Hibbs* decided that state employees could sue their governmental employers for non-compliance with the family care provision of the Family and Medical Leave Act (which entitles eligible employees to take up to 12 work weeks of unpaid leave annually for the onset of a "serious medical condition" in the employee's spouse, child or parent).
- 2002: *Ring vs. Arizona* ended the practice of having a judge, rather than a jury, decide the critical sentencing issues in death penalty cases.
- 2000: *Boy Scouts of America vs. Dale* decided that gay men may be banned from serving as Scout leaders.
- 2000: *Stenberg vs. Carhart* struck down a Nebraska ban on "partial birth" abortion, finding its language did not include an exception to preserve the health of a woman.

- 2000: *States vs. Morrison* struck down the federal Violence Against Women Act because there was no connection between gender-related violence and interstate commerce, and therefore Congress had no authority to enact the statute under the Constitution's commerce clause.
- 2000: *Bush vs. Gore* stopped the statewide presidential ballot counting in Florida and allowed the state to certify George W. Bush the winner of its crucial electoral votes.
- 2000: *Dickerson vs. United States* upheld *Miranda vs. Arizona*, the 1966 Supreme Court decision requiring police to inform crime suspects of their right against self-incrimination (and to have a lawyer present during questioning), ruling that this is a constitutional protection and not a rule that could be changed by Congress.
- 1996: *Printz vs. United States* declared that the federal government (Congress) did not have the authority, under the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act, to require local law enforcement authorities to conduct background checks of prospective gun purchasers.
- 1996: *Whren vs. United States* allowed police to stop a car and make a temporary arrest for a minor traffic violation to follow up suspicions that the occupants were engaged in something more serious.
- 1996: *Ohio vs. Robinette* ruled that police need not tell drivers during routine traffic stops that they are free to leave before requesting consent to search their cars, essentially letting police use the coercion of a traffic stop to wrest "consent" from drivers.
- 1996: *Romer vs. Evans* affirmed a state court ruling striking down a Colorado state amendment forbidding any government action to protect gays, lesbians and bisexuals from discrimination. The high court found the distinction made between gay and straight Colorado residents violated equal protection rights.
- 1995: *United States vs. Lopez* struck down a federal law criminalizing the possession of guns in a school zone because there was no "economic" transaction in the situation and no impact on interstate trade, and therefore Congress had no authority to enact the statute under the Constitution's commerce clause.
- 1993: *Shaw vs. Reno* called into question legislative redistricting plans that create districts likely to elect a member of a minority race group.
- 1992: *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania vs. Casey* replaced a strict standard established under the 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* decision for what and when restrictions may be imposed on abortions with a less-stringent one.
- 1989: *Texas vs. Johnson* held that flag-burning is protected by the First Amendment.

- 1989: *Webster vs. Reproductive Health Services* upheld a Missouri ban on the use of public employees and facilities for performing abortions, except where necessary to save a woman's life.
- 1989: *Teague vs. Lane* barred courts from affording relief to state prisoners on the basis of any law not clearly established at the time the defendant's conviction became final.
- 1988: *California vs. Greenwood* ruled that when a citizen puts out her garbage, she surrenders any privacy interests in its contents so police do not need either a warrant or probable cause to go through it. The same rule applies to bank records, phone records or any other information shared with another.
- 1988: *Hustler Magazine Inc. vs. Falwell* found that under the First Amendment an obvious satire of a public figure is protected speech even if it distresses that person.