

CASE BRIEF OUTLINE

I. CITATION

GIDEON v. WAINWRIGHT 372 U.S. 335 (1963)

II. PROCEDURAL POSTURE

1. Florida State Court. Gideon was indicted for breaking and entering into a poolroom. Gideon pled to be relieved of the charges. The court found him guilty and Gideon was sentenced to five years in a state prison.

2. Florida State Supreme Court. Gideon filed a *habeas corpus* petition attempting to overturn his conviction and punishment claiming he was denied legal counsel as outlined in the Bill of Rights. The court could not decide and denied relief.

3. The U.S. Supreme Court is currently hearing the action.

III. ISSUE

Are the Bill of Rights guarantees obligatory on the states?

IV. RULE

The governing authorities include: State constitutions and the First, Fifth, Sixth and Fourteenth Amendments of the Constitution.

V. FACTS

The Petitioner, Gideon, argued his conviction in the belief that his rights to legal representation had been violated when he was denied counsel in his original case. Gideon sought the relief of an appeal of his conviction and release from prison.

The Defendant, Bruce R. Jacob (Assistant Attorney General of Florida), contended that the state of Florida was correct in its original holding because the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment held no domain over a state criminal case.

The Assistant Attorney General of Alabama, as *amicus curiae*, pled affirmation of the original holding.

The ACLU and 22 state governments, as *amicus curiae*, filed a brief urging a reversal of the original holding.

VI. HOLDING

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled the Bill of Rights was obligatory on the states and reversed the judgment of the lower courts.

VII. RATIONALE

This very issue had arisen on more than once in the past (*Betts v. Brady*, *Powell v. Alabama*) and the precedent of each case weighed heavily upon the final decision of the Court. The Court ultimately decided (while taking into consideration other amendments beside the Sixth and Fourteenth Amendments) that certain rights outlined in the Constitution are of a “fundamental nature” and should not be subject to the invasion of state law.

VIII. DISSENT

None.