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Gideon v. Wainwright (1963)

– CASE BRIEF –

Citation: 372 U.S. 335

Docket No.: —

Date Filed: 1963-03-18



Gideon v. Wainwright (1963) – Case Brief

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Unknown Court

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<https://www.courtlistener.com/opinion/8954562/gideon-v-wainwright/>

Judges:

Black, Clark, Douglas, Harlan

Procedural History:**Attorneys:**

Abe Fortas, by appointment of the Court, 370 U. S. 932, argued the cause for petitioner. With him on the brief were Abe Krash and Ralph Temple., Bruce R. Jacob, Assistant Attorney General of Florida, argued the cause for respondent. With him on the brief were Richard W. Ervin, Attorney General, and A. G. Spicola, Jr., Assistant Attorney General., J. Lee Rankin, by special leave of Court, argued the cause for the American Civil Liberties Union et al., as amici curiae, urging reversal. With him on the brief were Norman Dorsen, John Dwight Evans, Jr., Melvin L. Wulf, Richard J. Medalie, Howard W. Dixon and Richard Yale Feder., George D. Mentz, Assistant Attorney General of Alabama, argued the cause for the State of Alabama, as amicus curiae, urging affirmance. With him on the brief were MacDonald Gallion, Attorney General of Alabama, T. W. Bruton, Attorney General of North Carolina, and Ralph Moody, Assistant Attorney General of North Carolina., A brief for the state governments of twenty-two States and Commonwealths, as amici curiae, urging reversal, was filed by Edward J. McCormack, Jr., Attorney General of Massachusetts, Walter F. Mondale, Attorney General of Minnesota, Duke W. Dunbar, Attorney General of Colorado, Albert L. Coles, Attorney General of Connecticut, Eugene Cook, Attorney General of Georgia, Shiro Ka-shiwa, Attorney General of Hawaii,

Frank Benson, Attorney General of Idaho, William G. Clark, Attorney General of Illinois, Evan L. Hultman, Attorney General of Iowa, John B. Breckinridge, Attorney General of Kentucky, Frank E. Hancock, Attorney General of Maine, Frank J. Kelley, Attorney General of Michigan, Thomas F. Eagle-ton, Attorney General of Missouri, Charles E. Springer, Attorney General of Nevada, Mark McElroy, Attorney General of Ohio, Leslie R. Bur gum, Attorney General of North Dakota, Robert Y. Thornton, Attorney General of Oregon, J. Joseph Nugent, Attorney General of Rhode Island, A. C. Miller, Attorney General of South Dakota, John J. O'Connell, Attorney General of Washington, C. Donald Robertson, Attorney General of West Virginia, and George N. Hayes, Attorney General of Alaska., Robert Y. Thornton, Attorney General of- Oregon, and Harold W. Adams, Assistant Attorney General, filed a separate brief for the State of Oregon, as amicus curiae.

Facts:

Clarence Earl Gideon, a Florida native, was charged with breaking and entering a poolroom with intent to commit petty larceny. He appeared in court without funds for legal assistance and requested counsel, but his request was denied by the trial judge. Gideon conducted his own defense and was convicted (Page 336-337).

Issue:

Whether the Sixth Amendment's right to counsel, when made applicable to the states through the Fourteenth Amendment, requires that indigent defendants in criminal cases be provided with appointed counsel when the offense charged carries potential imprisonment (Page 339-340).

Rule of Law:

The Sixth Amendment's right to counsel, made applicable to the states through the Fourteenth Amendment's Due Process Clause, requires that indigent defendants in criminal cases be provided with appointed counsel when the offense charged carries potential imprisonment (Page 342).

Holding & Reasoning:

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Disposition:

The Supreme Court of the United States reversed and remanded the decision of the Florida Supreme Court, which had denied Clarence Earl Gideon's request for a lawyer during his trial for felony breaking and entering (Page 345).

Dissent:

Justices Harlan and Clark filed dissenting opinions, arguing that the Court's decision was not supported by historical evidence or previous Supreme Court decisions. They maintained that the right to counsel should be limited to cases in which an accused faces a real risk of losing his life or liberty (Page 345-346, 351).



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