Cases That Changed Rules

Alabama cases and the reach of government power

SS24.USG.6e "Describe the significance of Alabama landmark cases that impacted American society and governance."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one effect on people and circle one change or limit on government power for each case. Then number the cases from earliest to latest decision.

From Alabama to the Supreme Court

1. In 1956, Alabama demanded the NAACP's membership lists while the organization was helping Black residents challenge segregation. Officials said the state needed the names to enforce its registration laws. The NAACP argued that disclosure could expose members to threats and discourage people from joining. In *NAACP v. Alabama* (1958), the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that forcing disclosure violated the freedom to associate protected by the Fourteenth Amendment. The ruling did not erase Alabama's power to regulate organizations, but it limited that power when disclosure would chill lawful political action. It strengthened civil rights groups' ability to organize without revealing their supporters.

2. During the Montgomery bus boycott, Black women challenged city and state laws requiring segregated seating on public buses. Their case, *Browder v. Gayle* (1956), reached a three-judge federal district court. That court held the segregation laws unconstitutional under the Fourteenth Amendment, and the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the decision. After the ruling took effect, Montgomery's buses were desegregated, and the boycott ended. The case showed how a federal court could stop a state and city from enforcing unequal treatment, not merely award damages after harm occurred. It also turned the boycotters' demand into a binding legal change.

3. Decades later, Shelby County, Alabama, challenged part of the Voting Rights Act. Under Section 5, certain jurisdictions had to obtain federal approval before changing voting rules; Section 4(b) determined which jurisdictions were covered. In *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013), the Supreme Court struck down the Section 4(b) coverage formula because it relied on outdated data. The Court did not strike down Section 5, but without that formula its approval requirement no longer applied to places covered by the formula. Supporters saw the ruling as a limit on federal supervision of states; critics warned that it removed a tool for preventing discriminatory voting changes before they took effect.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did the ruling in *NAACP v. Alabama* matter to civil rights organizing beyond Alabama?

2. How did *Browder v. Gayle* change both bus riders' lives and the power of Montgomery and Alabama officials?

3. What changed about federal review of voting rules after *Shelby County v. Holder*, and why did critics consider that significant?

4. Compare the effect of *Browder v. Gayle* and *Shelby County v. Holder* on federal checks of state or local power.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 75- to 105-word museum label with a title. Choose two cases, explain what each changed for people and government, connect them with a claim about state and federal power, and end with a question for visitors.

ANSWER KEY

Cases That Changed Rules

GRADE 12 · SS24.USG.6e

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one effect on people and circle one change or limit on government power for each case. Then number the cases from earliest to latest decision. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did the ruling in *NAACP v. Alabama* matter to civil rights organizing beyond Alabama?	**It limited states' ability to demand membership lists when disclosure would discourage lawful political action, helping civil rights groups organize without exposing supporters.**
2	How did *Browder v. Gayle* change both bus riders' lives and the power of Montgomery and Alabama officials?	**Montgomery's buses were desegregated. City and state officials could no longer enforce the bus-segregation laws.**
3	What changed about federal review of voting rules after *Shelby County v. Holder*, and why did critics consider that significant?	**The Court struck down the coverage formula, so places it had covered no longer had to seek approval under Section 5. Critics said this removed a way to stop discriminatory changes before they took effect.**
4	Compare the effect of *Browder v. Gayle* and *Shelby County v. Holder* on federal checks of state or local power.	**Browder used federal judicial authority to stop state and city enforcement of bus segregation. Shelby County removed the coverage formula that had subjected certain jurisdictions' voting changes to federal approval.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Who Gets to Set the Rules? *Browder v. Gayle* and *Shelby County v. Holder* belong together because both changed how federal law constrained state decisions. Browder ended the enforcement of bus-segregation laws in Montgomery, allowing Black riders to sit without legally required separation. Shelby County invalidated the formula identifying places needing federal approval for voting changes, so places covered by that formula no longer faced that review. The first ruling protected riders against discriminatory state and city rules; the second reduced a federal check on voting rules. When should federal oversight of states begin or end?

Accept any accurate pair of cases in Part 3 if the label explains an effect on people and government for each, makes a defensible connection, and ends with a visitor question. For Shelby County, do not accept claims that the Court struck down Section 5 itself.