

The Evolution of Justice in Pennsylvania and the U.S.

PENNSYLVANIA HISTORY

First Court Established

The Provincial Court was established by William Penn after founding and drafting the original Frame of Government

1684

PA Supreme Court Established

Judiciary Act of 1722 renamed the Provincial Court and enshrined the PA Supreme Court as the colony's highest court

1722

First PA Constitution Signed

Laid groundwork for the development of the state's judicial system and established the Courts of Common Pleas

1776

Judiciary Organized

Second PA Constitution recognized the judiciary as a co-equal branch of government and divided the state into judicial districts led by president judges

1790

Judicial Independence Strengthened

Third PA Constitution required two-thirds legislative approval to remove judges, giving the judiciary more independence from political pressure

1838

PA Supreme Court Elections

Adopted a constitutional amendment requiring all Supreme Court justices to be elected

1850

PA Supreme Court Expanded

Fourth PA Constitution added two new justices to the Supreme Court for the current total of 7

1874

Superior Court

Established by the General Assembly and gave each appellate court separate jurisdictions

1895

Commonwealth Court & Judiciary Reorganized

Fifth PA Constitution created the Commonwealth Court and reorganized Pennsylvania's judiciary into a unified system of current and future courts; Also decreased term limits for justices from 21 to 10 years

1968

UNITED STATES HISTORY

Declaration of Independence Signed

Signed in Philadelphia, declaring freedom and self-governance

1776

U.S. Constitution Signed

Created the foundation for federal government and the judiciary as a co-equal branch

1787

U.S. Supreme Court Established

Judiciary Act of 1787 established the high Court and federal court system under the authority of the U.S. Constitution

1789

Marbury v. Madison

Established judicial review, empowering courts to invalidate unconstitutional laws

1803

Dred Scott v. Sandford

Denied citizenship to Black Americans; later overturned by the 14th Amendment (1868)

1857

14th Amendment Ratified

Guaranteed equal protection under the law; greatly expanded federal judicial oversight

1868

Brown v. Board of Education

Landmark civil rights decision that ended racial segregation in public schools

1954

Civil Rights Act of 1964

Prohibited discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin.

1964

Voting Rights Act of 1965

Protected voting rights and prohibited racial discrimination in voting.

1965

