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CourtListener.com

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Case name

Federal Appeals Courts

- ☒ All Courts (764,651)
- ☒ Supreme Court (61,264)
- ☒ First Circuit (27,057)
- ☒ Second Circuit (47,291)
- ☒ Third Circuit (48,809)
- ☒ Fourth Circuit (83,642)
- ☒ Fifth Circuit (130,301)
- ☒ Sixth Circuit (54,743)
- ☒ Seventh Circuit (40,989)
- ☒ Eighth Circuit (44,051)
- ☒ Ninth Circuit (65,486)
- ☒ Tenth Circuit (45,165)
- ☒ Eleventh Circuit (57,837)
- ☒ District of Columbia (23,664)
- ☒ Federal Circuit (26,014)
- ☒ Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces (363)
- ☒ Federal Claims (1,267)
- ☒ Customs and Patent Appeals (2,868)
- ☒ Emergency Court of Appeals (70)
- ☒ Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court of Review (1)

Precedential Status

- ☒ Precedential (508,893)
- ☒ Non-Precedential (137,500)
- ☒ En banc (160)
- ☒ In chambers (10)
- ☒ Relating to orders (78)

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Jones v. Murphy, 10-3997-pr (2d Cir. 2012)
View Original: From the court | Our backup Date Filed: August 29th, 2012 Status: Precedential
... 10-3997-pr Jones v. Murphy UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE SECOND CIRCUIT August Term, 2011 (Argued: June 21, 2012 Decided: August 29, 2012) Docket No. 10-3997-pr JERMAINE JONES, Petitioner ...

Virgil Hall, III v. Michael Zenk, 11-3911 (7th Cir. 2012)
View Original: From the court | Our backup Date Filed: August 29th, 2012 Status: Precedential
... In the United States Court of Appeals For the Seventh Circuit No. 11-3911 VIRGIL HALL, III, Petitioner-Appellee, v. MICHAEL ZENK, Superintendent, Respondent-Appellant. Appeal from the United States District Court for the Northern District of Indiana, South Bend Division. No. ...

United States v. Jeffery Carter, 11-3608 (7th Cir. 2012)
View Original: From the court | Our backup Date Filed: August 29th, 2012 Status: Precedential
... In the United States Court of Appeals For the Seventh Circuit No. 11-3608 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, Plaintiff-Appellee, v. JEFFERY CARTER and KENTRELL WILLIS, Defendants-Appellants. Appeal from the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division. ...

BIM Intermobiliare SGR v. Grant Thornton LLP, 10-4028-cv(L) (2d Cir. 2012)
View Original: From the court | Our backup Date Filed: August 29th, 2012 Status: Precedential
... 10-4028-cv(L) BIM Intermobiliare SGR v. Grant Thornton LLP 1 2 UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS 3 FOR THE SECOND CIRCUIT 4 5 6 August Term, 2011 7 8 Argued: November 2, 2011 Decided: July 19, 2012 Amended: August 29, 2012 9 10 Docket Nos. 10-4028-cv(L), 10-4289-cv(CON) 11 12 13 ...

United States v. Reyes, 10-1400-cr (2d Cir. 2012)
View Original: From the court | Our backup Date Filed: August 29th, 2012 Status: Precedential
... 10-1400-cr United States v. Reyes 1 UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS 2 3 FOR THE SECOND CIRCUIT 4 5 6 7 August Term, 2011 8 9 (Argued: March 8, 2012 Decided: August 29, 2012) 10 11 Docket No. 10-1400-cr 12 13 14 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, 15 16 Appellee, 17 18 ...

Loretta Capeheart v. Melvin Terrell, 11-1473 (7th Cir. 2012)
View Original: From the court | Our backup Date Filed: August 29th, 2012 Status: Precedential
... In the United States Court of Appeals For the Seventh Circuit No. 11-1473 LORETTA CAPEHEART, Plaintiff-Appellant, v. MELVIN C. TERRELL, et al. Defendants-Appellees. Appeal from the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division. No. 1 ...

Bettie Pullen-Walker v. Executive Committee, 12-1071 (7th Cir. 2012)
View Original: From the court | Our backup Date Filed: August 29th, 2012 Status: Non-Precedential
... NONPRECEDENTIAL DISPOSITION To be cited only in accordance with Fed. R. App. P. 32.1. United States Court of Appeals For the Seventh Circuit Chicago, Illinois 60604 Submitted August 28, 2012* Decided August 29, 2012 By the Court. No. 1 ...

United States v. Corey Winters, 11-3527 (7th Cir. 2012)
View Original: From the court | Our backup Date Filed: August 29th, 2012 Status: Precedential
... In the United States Court of Appeals For the Seventh Circuit No. 11-3527 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, Plaintiff-Appellee, v. COREY D. WINTERS, Defendant-Appellant. Appeal from the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Wisconsin. No. 09 CR 254—Charles N. Cleveland, Jr. ...

United States v. Jeanette Grigsby, 11-2473 (7th Cir. 2012)
View Original: From the court | Our backup Date Filed: August 29th, 2012 Status: Precedential
... In the United States Court of Appeals For the Seventh Circuit No. 11-2473 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, Plaintiff-Appellee, v. JEANETTE GRIGSBY, Defendant-Appellant. Appeal from the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division. No. 1 ...

Requests for Removal

- “PLEASE IN THE NAME OF GOD, I WOULD PREFER YOU PROTECT MY PRIVACY AND REMOVE THIS CASE FROM THE WEBB SITE. I HAVE ENOUGH INJUSTICE AND HUMILIATION IN REGARDS TO THIS CASE. I THEREFORE WOULD PREFER IT OFF THE WEB SITE, WHERE THE WHOLE WORLD WOULD SEE IT. THANK YOU VERY MUCH. YOUR COOPERATION IS HIGHLY APPRECIATED IN THIS MATTER. SINCERELY,”

Requests for Removal

- “i was really disgusted with this article my brother is [Full Name]. Thanks, and i hope all your indecency gets aired to the world. People make mistakes my brother is paying for his, but he is still a good person. You don't know all the facts unless you were there. GO TO HELL!!!!!!”

Requests for Removal

- “SIR, PLEASE REMOVE MY CASE FROM UNIVERSAL GOGGLE POSTING. THE FACTS ARE INCORRECT AND WHAT IS CONTAINED IN THIS VIOLATES MY PRIVACH AND HAS CAUSED MANY PROBLEMS IN MY LIFE. I HAD TO HIRE AN ATTORNEY TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUES. PLEASE RESPOND; PLEASE UNDERSTAND IF YOU DO NOT REMOVE THE "RAILROAD JOB" I RECIEVED AT THE HANDS OF THE US GOV'T., SPECIFIC LAWYERS, ARBITRATORS ETC. AND THE INACCCURATE ACCOUT OF THIS CASE...

Requests for Removal

- ... [case name] I WILL BE FORCED TO BRING APPROPRIATE LEGAL ACTION AGAINST YOU. SOMEONE HAS BEEN POSTING THIS ON ALL SITES FOR YEARS TO DISCREDIT MY REPUTATION. YOUR COMPLICATE PART IN THIS TRAVESTY OF JUSTICE WILL BE MEET WITH.”

CourtListener.com

- Motivations:
 - Daily Awareness Tool (researchers, journalists, lawyers)
 - Public Access to the Law
 - The *complete* case law corpus is simply not online without enormous expense (yet!)
 - Survivability/Persistence (The “If I get hit by a bus” test)
 - All the code is under open source licenses on bitbucket.org
 - All the documents can be downloaded by anyone
 - General purpose case law research tool and citator
 - Give it all away for free

Features of our corpus

- 766,000+ documents (with more added daily)
- Coverage of the federal appellate courts, *i.e.*, the 13 circuit courts within the federal system and the Supreme Court of the United States (with more jurisdictions, e.g., the 50 states, to be added soon).
- The entire Supreme Court corpus from 1754 to the present. (From 1 U.S. 1 on; 61,256 documents)
- A (mostly complete) Circuit Court corpus from the late 1940s to present.
- Inter-linked citations.

Collecting Legal Decisions

- In August 2012 we added 2,195 documents, or about 100 documents added each weekday.
- This is from the federal appellate courts. We are in the process of adding all the state appellate courts and the federal district courts and that will increase the document count significantly.
- Unique web scrapers for each court, often multiple scrapers for the same court!
- Unified in our “Juriscraper” project at bitbucket.org

Requests for Removal

- Stated reasons for requesting removal/blocking:
- (Preliminary data; review is still ongoing)
 - 10% - Damage to business / career
 - 40% - Privacy
 - 4% - Disputes the court's statement of the facts
 - 17% - Reputation
 - 19% - Safety
 - 10% - No reason given

Requests for Removal

- Career:
 - “I'm requesting that you remove all information from your site containing my name, [name]. The info dated [date] regarding my discrimination litigation could be very detrimental to my career, namely future business opportunities. I can be reached at the above email address if you need to contact me.; I understand you can publish public material. However, please block any articles containing my name, [name] from the search engines.”

Requests for Removal

- Privacy:
 - “I am writing to you because on your website there is my wife asylum case published. in this document my wife and friends personal information like compleate name are displayed without any consultaiton. i would like to request a name removal or change in this document as is a private and personal matter. my wife name is [name] and i belive that the documet is a thesis of a master student. again i would like to request that the names on the published document were either changed or erased in order to protect my wife and our privacy.”

Requests for Removal

- Rebuttal:
 - “Please let me know how I can remove or submit my side of the story.”
- Reputation:
 - “When my name is Googled this is the first link that comes up. I am not very happy about this. I would like this link to be removed. How can I do that or who do I need to talk to to make this happen.”

Requests for Removal

- Safety:
 - “some important information about me is in your internet page, i would like this information be removal or erase, because of my personal security. I am living in [Country Name], and due this information my personal security is at risk. Thank”

Requests for Removal

- I am compiling not only their stated reasons and attempting to categorize those, but also am gathering the following data:
 - Subjective reason for request
 - Follow-up email?
 - Plaintiff/Defendant, Appellant/Appellee status
 - Jurisdiction; filing date; request date
 - Pro se or represented by counsel?
 - Precedential or non-precedential case? # of citations?
 - Nature of suit; resolution of suit

Requests for Removal

- Preliminary results:
 - ~90% are appellants/petitioners, i.e., they lost their case below. (Most go on to lose their appeal).
 - ~20% pro se litigants & ~80% represented by counsel
 - ~20% precedential cases & ~80% non-precedential
 - ~34% asylum cases
 - Many of these documents describe facts embarrassing to the individual requesting it be removed/blocked, such as drug convictions or failed employment discrimination claims.
 - Some contain information about a minor.

Requests for Removal

- Asylum cases involving countries such as:
 - Albania, Columbia, Indonesia, Jamaica, Mauritania, Poland, South Africa, Yugoslavia, and more
- Some search results:
 - Asylum and “petition granted” = 380 results
 - Asylum and “petition denied” = 2,815 results
 - < ~12% of these appeals succeed (rough estimate)

Reasons for Public Access

- Promotes judicial integrity
- Enables public confidence in judiciary
- Due process; equal protection; free speech
- Democracy

Reasons for *Online Access*

- Convenience
- Reach
- Efficiency
- Lower costs (for providers and users)

Proactive Approach

- When a new document is added to the site, we automatically search it for strings that appear to be social security numbers, tax ID numbers, or alien ID numbers and replace the numbers with 'x' in our display version of the document and try to block search engines from indexing the unredacted version.

Balancing the factors

- Favors Privacy

- Non-precedential cases
- Some safety concerns seem especially compelling

- Favors Access

- You lost your case. So?
- You had counsel

Policy Decision

- CourtListener (inspired by resource.org's policy)
 - will not remove a document without a court order directing us to remove that document, but
 - will try to block search engines from indexing the document upon written request.
- Visitors to our site can still search for and find the document, but those submitting queries to a search engine will (typically) not find the document.
- We believe this typically strikes an appropriate balance between public access and privacy interests.

Relevant Technologies

- Technological fixes:
 - robots.txt file
 - HTML robots noindex metatag
 - The X-Robots-Tag HTTP header
 - sitemap.xml file
 - Search engine-provided webmaster tools
- (Extra special thanks to Michael Lissner for researching all of this!)

robots.txt file

- Pros:
 - Easy
- Cons:
 - Creates a convenient list of pages people want blocked.
 - Addresses only what pages are “crawled” not “indexed”
 - Even search engines that respect robots.txt files may index pages that they don't crawl if, e.g., a third-party site links to the page. Google does this.

HTML robots noindex metatag

- Pros:
 - Easy
 - Addresses *indexing*
- Cons:
 - Not all bots respect these tags (DuckDuckGo)
 - Only works for HTML documents, not PDFs

The X-Robots-Tag HTTP header

- Pros:
 - Addresses any file type, including PDFs
- Cons:
 - Less easy (e.g., use Apache's `mod_headers`)
 - Not all bots respect these tags (DuckDuckGo, I Archive)

sitemap.xml file

- An XML file that lists the URLs for a site.
- Pros:
 - Can be used to encourage a search engine to browse URLs you want blocked so that they will encounter your HTTP header or noindex metatag
 - Unlike robots.txt, pages to be blocked are not singled out
- Cons:
 - Unless you block some bots entirely, you will also be encouraging such search engines to index the very pages you want to block

Search engine-provided webmaster tools

- Pros:
 - Search engines that provide these tools (Google/Bing) will typically do what you ask them to do
- Cons:
 - Laborious manual entry process for each URL
 - These requests can expire

CourtListener's Approach

- Our robots.txt file does not list individual documents, but does block non-cooperative search engines (either completely or by doc types not supported by noindex tag/headers)
- We use the HTML robots noindex metatag
- We use the the X-Robots-Tag HTTP header (and use it on our sitemap.xml file itself)
- Our sitemap.xml file encourages crawling of URLs
- We use search engine-provided webmaster tools

Future Policy Changes?

- When I complete my review of all of these requests, we may conclude that asylum cases represent a special case of a compelling safety concern that justifies efforts to proactively block search engines from indexing these. Stay tuned.

Questions?

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