

CONSTITUTION 101

Module 7: The Legislative Branch: How Congress Works

7.4 Case Brief

TESTS OF CONGRESSIONAL POWER

In this activity, you will explore how various Supreme Court cases have interpreted the scope of congressional power in the Supreme Court's own words. Examine these three cases to understand how the Court's rulings shaped these powers over time.

You will work with a group to review one of the following cases:

- [McCulloch v. Maryland \(1819\)](#)
- [Wickard v. Filburn \(1942\)](#)
- [United States v. Lopez \(1963\)](#)

Read excerpts from your assigned case from the *Founders' Library* and complete the chart below as if your role is to brief the case like a constitutional lawyer.

Case Name:

Facts:

Who are all the people (parties) associated with the case? What was the dispute between them?

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Issue:

What is the issue in the case? What constitutional provision is at issue? What is the constitutional question that the Supreme Court has to answer?

Outcome/Ruling:

How does the Court rule? What was the outcome in the case? Who won and who lost? How did the justices vote? What sort of rule does the Court come up with to resolve the issue?

Reasoning:

Why did the Court rule that way? How did this decision shape the powers of Congress? How does the Court apply the rule to the facts of the case? How does the Court reason through the issue? What is the chain of its logic? What factor(s) seem to be driving the Court's reasoning? Is there any connection to separation of powers, federalism, or checks and balances? Is there any connection to the methods of constitutional interpretation that we discussed in Module 1? If relevant, what did the dissenters say?

Conclusion/Holding: