

Criminal Justice: An Overview of the System

Module 5: Courts and Sentencing

Section 5.1: State and Federal Courts

Affirmed: In the practice of the court of appeals, it means that the court of appeals has concluded that the lower court decision is correct and will stand as rendered by the lower court.

Assembly Line Justice: A term used to describe the extremely rapid processing of cases by lower courts, often without due concern for defendants' rights.

Certiorari Power: The authority of an appellate court to order a lower court to send up the record of a case for review.

Courts of General Jurisdiction: A court with the authority to hear cases of all kinds as opposed to a court of limited jurisdiction which can only hear relatively minor cases.

Doe v. Renfrow (1981): A ruling by the Seventh Circuit that suspicionless dog sniffs of public school children are not searches for Fourth Amendment purposes.

Judicial Independence: The idea that the judiciary should be kept separated from the undue influence of other branches of government and private political interests.

Judicial Misconduct: Unethical behavior by a judge.

Kent v. United States (1966): A landmark SCOTUS decision holding that juveniles must be afforded certain due process rights.

Lower Courts: A court which makes decisions that are subject to appeal; often used by appellate courts to describe trial courts.

Municipal Courts: A lower court having jurisdiction over minor offenses within a particular city.

New Jersey v. TLO (1985): A landmark SCOTUS decision in which the Court ruled that school officials do not need a warrant to search students under their supervision.

Police Courts: Lower courts that have jurisdiction over minor crimes and violations.

Quib v. Strauss (1993): A U.S. Court of Appeals decision that held that curfew laws were constitutional, balancing the good of the community against the liberty of the juvenile.

Reversed: Invalidated or revoked by a higher court.

Speedy Trial Act of 1974: A federal statute which established time limits for indictments, arraignments, and criminal prosecutions.

Traffic Courts: A lower court charged with the disposition of petty offenses such as traffic citations.

U.S. Courts of Appeal: Court in each of the 11 federal judicial districts of the U.S. that functions as an appellate court for the lower federal courts.

U.S. District Courts: The trial courts of general jurisdiction in the federal court system.