

THE HEARSAY RULE

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SECOND EDITION

G. Michael Fenner

JAMES L. KOLEY '54 PROFESSOR OF CONSTITUTIONAL LAW
CREIGHTON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

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For Anne

For Hilary, Ben, Tashi, and Alex

And for Yangdon, Kalden, and Lyle

CONTENTS

Table of Authorities	xxiii
Foreword	lix
Acknowledgments	lxiii
Chapter One · The Basic Definition	3
I. Introduction to Hearsay	4
II. The Definition of Hearsay	9
A. The Definition	9
B. The Formula	9
C. An Explanation of the Definition	9
1. A Statement	9
2. An Out-of-Court Statement	13
3. An Out-of-Court Statement by a Person	15
4. Offered to Prove the Truth of the Matter Asserted	16
III. The Top Ten Approaches to Hearsay	20
A. The Top Ten Approaches	20
1. The Formula	20
2. The Manufactured-Evidence Approach	21
3. The Real-Witness Approach	25
4. The Two-Boxes Approach	29
5. The Comic-Balloons Approach	29
6. The Plain-Fact-That-the-Words-Were-Spoken Approach	30
7. The Credibility Approach	30
8. The Effect-on-the-Mind-of-the-Hearer Approach	31
9. The Words-with-Independent-Legal-Effect Approach, a.k.a. the Verbal-Acts Approach	32
10. The Flow-Chart Approach	34
B. Some Analysis and a Few Caveats	37
1. Rule 801(d)	37
2. Overlap	37
3. Imprecision	38

4. The Best of the Ten	38
IV. Examples—The Basic Definition Applied	38
A. Variations from <i>Shepard v. United States</i>	38
1. <i>Shepard</i> Example One	38
2. <i>Shepard</i> Example Two	40
3. <i>Shepard</i> Example Three	41
4. <i>Shepard</i> Example Four	42
5. <i>Shepard</i> Example Five	42
B. Lee Harvey Oswald	43
C. “I Want to Discontinue My Insurance Policy”	44
D. “He Killed My Brother and He’ll Kill My Mommie Too”	45
Chapter Two · The Definitional Exclusions	47
I. The Definitional Exclusions versus the Exceptions— Evidentiary Burdens	48
II. Nonhearsay Prior Statements by a Witness: Rule 801(d)(1)	54
A. Prior Inconsistent Statements: Rule 801(d)(1)(A)	54
1. Text of the Rule	54
2. Foundational Elements	54
3. Need + Reliability = 1	54
4. Use Note	55
B. Prior Consistent Statements: Rule 801(d)(1)(B)	58
1. Text of the Rule	58
2. Foundational Elements	58
3. Need + Reliability = 1	59
4. Use Note	59
C. Statement of Identification of a Person: Rule 801(d)(1)(C)	64
1. Text of the Rule	64
2. Foundational Elements	64
3. Need + Reliability = 1	64
4. Use Note	65
III. Nonhearsay “Admissions”: Rule 801(d)(2)	67
A. General Use Note	67
1. Exclusions, Not Exceptions	68
2. The Two Sets of Definitional Exclusions	68
3. Need + Reliability = 1?	68
4. Using the Out-of-Court Statement Itself to Establish Foundational Elements of These Exclusions	69
B. A Party’s own Statement: 801(d)(2)(A)	70

1. Text of the Rule	70
2. Foundational Elements	70
3. Use Note	71
C. A Statement by an Agent: 801(d)(2)(D)	73
1. Text of the Rule	73
2. Foundational Elements	73
3. Use Note	73
D. Statement by Person Authorized to Speak: 801(d)(2)(C)	78
1. Text of the Rule	78
2. Foundational Elements	78
3. Use Note	78
E. Adoptive Admission: 801(d)(2)(B)	81
1. Text of the Rule	81
2. Foundational Elements—Two Kinds of Adoptive Admissions	81
3. Use Note	83
F. Admission by a Coconspirator: 801(d)(2)(E)	96
1. Text of the Rule	96
2. Foundational Elements	96
3. Use Note	96
G. Rule 801(d)(2) Admissions Need Not Be Based on Personal Knowledge	109
1. Rule 805 and Double Hearsay	111
2. Rule 602 and Personal Knowledge	114
3. Rule 403 and Low Probative Value Substantially Outweighed by the Danger of Unfair Prejudice	119
IV. Additional Examples of Various Applications of the Hearsay Definition	120
A. “I Give to You [but Mostly] You Give to Me, Love Forever True,” Plus Half-a-Million in Cash and Some Lovely Jewelry	120
1. The Facts	120
2. The First Issue: Kritzik’s Intent	121
3. The Second Issue: Harris’s Intent	122
4. What to Do with Evidence That Is Hearsay to One Issue and Nonhearsay to Another?	123
B. Auto Accident Examples	123
Chapter Three · Rule 803, Selected Exceptions	127
I. Introduction to the Exceptions Generally, and Rule 803 in Particular	131

A. Exceptions: A Brief History	131
B. $N + R = 1$: The Shared Theoretical Basis for Each Exception	133
C. The Foundational Elements, the Evidentiary Burden, and the Decision Maker	134
D. Rule 803's Exceptions versus Rule 804's: The Availability of the Live, Firsthand, In-Court Testimony of the Out-of-Court Declarant	136
II. Present Sense Impression: Rule 803(1)	137
A. Text of the Rule	137
B. Foundational Elements	137
C. Need + Reliability = 1	137
1. Need	137
2. Reliability	138
D. Use Note	140
III. Excited Utterance: Rule 803(2)	141
A. Text of the Rule	141
B. Foundational Elements	142
C. Need + Reliability = 1	142
1. Need	142
2. Reliability	142
D. Use Note	144
1. The Unidentified Onlooker As Out-of-Court Declarant	144
2. Self-Serving Statements	144
3. Laying the Foundation for the Statement with the Statement Itself	145
4. The Keys to the Excited Utterance Exception: The Particular Event and the Individual Declarant	146
5. An Excited Utterance Provided in Response to Questioning	149
6. Two Differences between the Present Sense Impression Exception and the Excited Utterance Exception	150
7. A Series of Exciting Events (the Rolling Exciting-Event) or a Subsequent Related Event Triggering Excitement Anew	154
8. Often an Out-of-Court Statement Will Be Both a Present Sense Impression and an Excited Utterance	156
9. The Excited Utterance and the Child Witness	158
IV. State of Mind or Statement of Then-Existing Mental, Emotional, or Physical Condition: Rule 803(3)	162
A. Text of the Rule	162
B. Foundational Elements	162

C. Need + Reliability = 1	163
1. Need	163
2. Reliability	164
D. Use Note	165
1. The Breadth of the Exception	165
2. The “No Elaboration” Rule	167
3. A Statement That Looks to the Past	172
4. A Statement That Looks to the Future	174
5. The Out-of-Court Statement Must Reflect the Declarant’s Own State of Mind	176
6. The Out-of-Court Statement Must Be a Direct Statement of the Declarant’s State of Mind	180
7. Just Because an Out-of-Court Statement Fits under This Exception Does Not Mean It Is Admissible into Evidence	181
8. State of Mind Evidence That Is Not Hearsay in the First Place	181
9. The State of Mind Exception and the Excited Utterance and Present Sense Impression Exceptions	183
10. The Intertwining of the Admissible and the Inadmissible: Redaction and Rule 403	183
V. Statements for Purposes of Medical Diagnosis or Treatment: Rule 803(4)	184
A. Text of the Rule	184
B. Foundational Elements	184
C. Need + Reliability = 1	185
1. Need	185
2. Reliability	185
D. Use Note	186
1. The Person to Whom the Statement Was Made	186
2. The Person by Whom the Statement Was Made	189
3. The Reason the Statement Is Made	192
4. Statements Regarding Mental Health	193
5. The Content of the Statement	196
6. The Timing of the Facts Stated	198
7. Admissibility of the Statement as Nonhearsay Basis Evidence	199
VI. Recorded Recollection: Rule 803(5)	199
A. Text of the Rule	199
B. Foundational Elements	199
C. Why Not Let the Paper or Other Record into Evidence?	200
D. Need + Reliability = 1	201

1. Need	201
2. Reliability	201
E. Use Note	202
1. Past Recollection Recorded versus Present Recollection Refreshed	202
2. Present Recollection Refreshed	205
3. A Past Recollection That Was Recorded by Someone Other Than the In-Court Witness	207
4. The Record Must Have Been Made while the Event Was Fresh in the Witness's Memory	208
5. Showing that the Record Correctly Reflects the Witness's Past Knowledge	208
6. Statements Recorded in Memory, Rather Than on Paper	210
7. A Re-Recording of Original Notes	210
8. Foreign Records as Past Recollection Recorded	210
VII. Records (and Absence of Records) of a Regularly Conducted Activity: Rules 803(6) & (7)	211
A. Text of the Rules	211
B. Foundational Elements	212
C. Need + Reliability = 1	213
1. Need	213
2. Reliability	213
D. Use Note	214
1. Made in the Course of a Regularly Conducted Business Activity (by a Person Acting in the Regular Course of his or her Business)	214
2. Information Automatically Gathered and Retained by Computer	217
3. The Sponsoring Witness	218
4. Multiple Levels of Hearsay	222
5. The "Trustworthiness" Clause	224
6. Foreign Records of Regularly Conducted Activities	226
7. The Absence of an Entry and the Hearsay Rule	226
VIII. Public Records and Reports: Rule 803(8)	228
A. Text of the Rule	228
B. Foundational Elements	228
C. A Variation of This Rule That Is Worth Considering	229
D. Need + Reliability = 1	229
1. Need	229

2. Reliability	230
E. Use Note	231
1. Establishing the Foundation with Certified Copies of the Record	231
2. Multiple Levels of Hearsay	231
3. Records Prepared by Private Parties and Filed with Public Agencies	233
4. The “Trustworthiness” Clause	234
5. Introducing the Entire Investigatory File	238
6. Reports Prepared by State, Local, and Foreign Governments	238
7. Police Reports	239
8. Near-Miss Evidence—Documents That Just Miss Fitting under This Exception and Fit under Some Other Exception	240
IX. Absence of Public Record or Entry: Rule 803(10)	241
A. Text of the Rule	241
B. Foundational Elements	241
C. Need + Reliability = 1	242
1. Need	242
2. Reliability	242
D. Use Note	242
X. Statements in Documents Affecting an Interest in Property: Rule 803(15)	244
A. Text of the Rule	244
B. Foundational Elements	245
C. Need + Reliability = 1	245
1. Need	245
2. Reliability	245
D. Use Note	247
1. The Kinds of Documents Covered by This Exception—In General	247
2. The Kinds of Documents Covered by This Exception—Examples	248
XI. Statements in Ancient Documents: Rule 803(16)	249
A. Text of the Rule	249
B. Foundational Elements	250
C. Need + Reliability = 1	250
1. Need	250
2. Reliability	250
D. Use Note	252

1. The Increasing Importance of This Exception	252
2. Old Age and Authenticity Alone Establish This Exception, without Any Special Regard for Trustworthiness	253
3. Nonhearsay Admissions and Ancient Documents	256
4. Undated Documents	256
5. Photographs and Other Such Ancient “Documents”	256
6. Foreign Ancient Documents	256
7. Multiple Levels of Hearsay	257
8. Ancient Documents and Rule 403	258
XII. Market Reports, Commercial Publications: Rule 803(17)	259
A. Text of the Rule	259
B. Foundational Elements	259
C. Need + Reliability = 1	259
1. Need	259
2. Reliability	260
D. Use Note	260
XIII. Learned Treatises: Rule 803(18)	261
A. Text of the Rule	261
B. Foundational Elements	261
C. Need + Reliability = 1	262
1. Need	262
2. Reliability	262
D. Use Note	263
Chapter Four · Rule 804 Exceptions	267
I. In-Court Testimony Unavailable: Rule 804(a)	269
A. Text of the Rule	269
B. Who or What Must Be Unavailable?	270
C. Unavailability Defined	271
II. Former Testimony Exception: Rule 804(b)(1)	274
A. Text of the Rule	274
B. The Three Principal Versions of the Former Testimony Exception and the Foundational Elements of Each	275
1. Criminal Cases under the Federal Rules of Evidence	275
2. Civil Cases under the Federal Rules of Evidence	276
3. The Proposed Federal Rules, Which Are the Rules Adopted in Some States	276
C. The Difference in the Three Variations in the Rule Summed Up in Three Sentences	277
D. Need + Reliability = 1	277

1. Need	277
2. Reliability	277
E. Use Note	277
1. Other Ways to Get Former Testimony around the Hearsay Rule	277
2. Predecessor in Interest	280
3. Opportunity to Examine the Witness	283
4. Similarly Motivated to Examine the Witness	285
5. Grand Jury Testimony Summarized	291
6. The Confrontation Clause	292
III. Statements under Belief of Impending Death: Rule 804(b)(2)	292
A. Text of the Rule	292
B. Foundational Elements	292
C. Need + Reliability = 1	293
1. Need	293
2. Reliability	293
D. Use Note	294
1. Unavailability—By Death or Otherwise	294
2. The Imminence of Expected Death	296
3. Evidence of a Belief in the Imminence of Death	297
4. The Statement Must Relate to the Cause or Circumstances of the Anticipated Death	299
5. The Competence and Confusion of the Declarant and the Danger of Unfair Prejudice Associated with the Statement	300
6. The Confrontation Clause	303
IV. Statements Against Interest: Rule 804(b)(3)	303
A. Text of the Rule	303
B. Foundational Elements	304
C. Need + Reliability = 1	304
1. Need	304
2. Reliability	304
D. Use Note	305
1. Timing—“Against Interest” and “Declarant’s Knowledge” Are Judged as of the Time the Statement was Made	305
2. The Extent to Which the Statement Must Be Against the Declarant’s Interest	305
3. A Statement Partly Against the Declarant’s Interest and Partly in the Declarant’s Interest	308
4. Corroboration	311

V. A Comparison: Statements by a Party Opponent versus Statements Against Interest	316
VI. Statement of Personal or Family History: Rule 804(b)(4)	318
A. Text of the Rule	318
B. Foundational Elements	319
C. Need + Reliability = 1	320
1. Need	320
2. Reliability	320
D. Use Note	320
1. The Relationship between This Exception and Rule 803(19), the Exception for Reputation Concerning Personal or Family History	320
2. Admission of Evidence beyond the Fact of the Event or Relationship—the Details	320
3. Competence, Double Hearsay, and This Exception	321
VII. Forfeiture by Wrongdoing Exception: Rule 804(b)(6)	322
A. Text of the Rule	322
B. Foundational Elements	322
C. Need + Reliability = 1	322
1. Need	322
2. Reliability	322
D. Use Note	323
1. The Motivation behind Procuring Unavailability	323
2. The Subject Matter of the Statement	323
3. The Exception Is Not Available to the Wrongdoing Party	324
4. Unavailability Procured by the Wrongdoing of a Coconspirator	324
5. Arguing This Exception in the Hearing of the Jury	325
6. Action Outside of the Rule As Literally Interpreted	327
7. The Burden of Establishing that the Party Against Whom the Evidence Is Offered Engaged or Acquiesced in Wrongdoing	329
Chapter Five · The Residual Exception—Rule 807	331
I. Know This If Nothing Else	332
II. Text of Rule 807	332
III. Foundational Elements	333
A. Five Required Findings ...	333
B. ... Reduced to Three Required Findings	334
IV. Need + Reliability = 1	334

A. The Need for, and the Reliability of, the Evidence	334
1. The Need for the Evidence in Question	334
2. Reliability	335
B. The Need for the Residual Exception Itself	335
V. Use Note	336
A. Near-Miss Evidence—the Relationship between the Residual Exception and the Specific Exceptions of Rules 803 and 804	336
B. Grand Jury Testimony	342
C. Notice—Use of the Residual Exception Requires Notice in Advance of the Trial or Hearing	346
1. The Substance of the Notice That Must Be Given	346
2. The Timing of the Notice That Must Be Given	347
3. The Form of the Notice That Must Be Given	349
4. A Conclusion Regarding Notice	350
D. Trustworthiness	350
1. Trustworthiness As Measured Against the Other Exceptions	350
2. Focus on the Statement, Not the Testifying Witness	354
3. Focus on the Circumstances at the Time the Statement Was Made, Not Hindsight	355
4. Independent Evidence of the Fact Asserted Is Not a Circumstantial Guarantee of Trustworthiness	356
5. The Trustworthiness of the Statement of an Incompetent Declarant	356
E. Probative Value	357
1. Probative Value in General	357
2. The Turncoat Witness—Using This Exception to Admit Prior Statements by Witnesses Who Take the Stand and Change Their Stories	358
F. Using the Residual Exception to Promote Social Agendas	366
G. The Residual Exception in Child-Abuse Cases	368
H. Findings Made on the Record	370
I. Miscellaneous Uses of the Residual Exception	371
Chapter Six · Rules of Civil and Criminal Procedure as Hearsay Exceptions	375
I. Rule 32 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure	376
A. Overview	376
B. Text of the Rule	377
C. Foundational Elements	379
D. Need + Reliability = 1	379

1. Need	379
2. Reliability	380
E. Use Note	381
1. The Relationship between Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 32 and Federal Rule of Evidence 804	381
2. This Rule Applies in Civil Cases Only	382
3. Depositions Offered in Cases Other Than the Case in Which They Were Taken	382
4. Objections to Evidentiary Problems within the Deposition, Including Multiple Hearsay	383
5. Against Whom the Deposition May Be Used	384
6. The Witness Who Is Over 100 Miles from the Courthouse	384
7. Old, Infirm, or in Prison and Unavailable	386
8. Deposition Strategy	387
9. The Ability of the Opponent of the Deposition to Counteract a Rule 32 Use of Deposition	387
10. Error in Refusing to Allow the Use of a Deposition May Be Harmless Error	388
11. Ex Parte Depositions	389
12. The Evidentiary Burden	389
13. The Confrontation Clause	389
14. Miscellaneous Points	389
II. Rule 15(e) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure	390
A. Text of the Rule	390
B. Foundational Elements	391
C. Need + Reliability = 1	391
1. Need	391
2. Reliability	391
D. Use Note	392
1. Cross-References	392
2. Application of the Rule	393
3. Use of Depositions in Criminal Trials Is Disfavored	394
4. Rule 15's Requirement of Unavailability or Inconsistency	394
5. The Confrontation Clause	396
III. The Non-Exclusivity of These Rules	396
Chapter Seven · State-of-Mind Evidence	399
I. Introduction	399
II. Eight Ways of Handling State-of-Mind Evidence	400
A. Live, Firsthand Testimony: Nonhearsay	400

B. Verbal Acts: Nonhearsay	400
C. Statements That Circumstantially Assert the State of Mind of the Speaker: Nonhearsay	404
D. Statements Offered for Their Effect on Those Who Heard Them: Nonhearsay	407
E. Statements That Directly Assert Declarant's Then-Existing Mental State: Hearsay	413
F. Statements of Declarant's Intention Offered as Evidence That Declarant Did the Thing Intended: Hearsay	415
G. Statements of Declarant's Intention Offered to Prove What Someone Else Did: Hearsay	415
H. Statements Reflecting Back on a Past State of Mind, Offered to Prove State of Mind at That Time Past: Hearsay	416
III. State-of-Mind Evidence and the Question of Relevance	417
A. Introduction	417
B. Nonhearsay State-of-Mind Evidence That Is Irrelevant	417
C. Nonhearsay State-of-Mind Evidence That Is Inadmissible under Rule 403	419
D. Conclusion	422
Chapter Eight · Opinion Evidence as a Way around the Hearsay Rule	425
I. Expert Opinion	425
A. Text of Rules 702 and 703	425
B. "Foundational Elements"	426
C. Need + Reliability	427
1. Need	427
2. Reliability	427
D. Use Note	428
1. Identifying and Qualifying the Expert	428
2. The Importance of Expert Witnesses to a Discussion of the Hearsay Rule	429
3. The Expert's Reliance upon Inadmissible Evidence Must Be Reasonable	434
4. Basis Evidence	436
II. Lay Opinion	450
A. Text of Rule 701	450
B. Lay Opinion Based on Hearsay	450
C. Situations in Which Counsel May Need to Have a Putative Expert Testify As a Lay Witness	457

Chapter Nine · Miscellaneous Other Ways around the Hearsay Rule	459
I. Trial to the Judge	459
II. Background Evidence	460
III. The Rule of Completeness as a Hearsay “Exception”	462
IV. Judicial Notice	464
V. Trial by Affidavit in Bankruptcy Court	466
VI. Opening Statements and the Hearsay Rule	467
Chapter Ten · Having Found One Way around the Hearsay Rule, Keep Looking for Others	471
I. Stack Up the Exceptions	471
II. Put on Evidence of All of the Foundational Elements for Each Exception in the Pile	479
III. Stacking Up the Exceptions, of Course, Does Not Always Work	479
Chapter Eleven · Multiple Levels of Hearsay and Rule 805	481
I. Rule 805 and Multiple Levels of Hearsay	481
II. For Multiple Hearsay to Be Admissible, There Must Be an Exception or an Exclusion for Each Layer	483
A. Multiple Applications of Definitional Exclusions	483
B. Multiple Applications of Exceptions	484
C. Multiple Applications with a Mix of Exclusions and Exceptions	486
III. In Some Courts, Certain Exceptions or Exclusions Cleanse Preceding Levels of Hearsay	487
IV. Multiple Hearsay and Rule 403	489
Chapter Twelve · A Statement that Is Inadmissible Hearsay to One Issue and Either Nonhearsay or Admissible Hearsay to Another	491
I. Introduction	491
II. Redact the Statement	493
III. Apply Rule 403	493
IV. Consider a Limiting Instruction	496
V. Four Sentence Summary of Chapter 12	497
Chapter Thirteen · Competency: The Declarant’s Competence and the Hearsay Rule	499
I. Competency as Another Way to Look at Many of the Hearsay Cases	499
A. Out-of-Court Declarant Must Have Personal Knowledge of the Facts Declared	499
B. Competency and the Hearsay Rule	502

II. Using Hearsay to Avoid Incompetence	504
A. Getting Around the Out-of-Court Declarant's Lack of Personal Knowledge	505
B. Getting Around Other Incompetencies	506
C. Modern Trend?	509
Chapter Fourteen · The Confrontation Clause	511
I. The Confrontation Clause	511
II. The Confrontation Clause and Hearsay	512
III. Use Note	513
A. The Right Attaches to Out-of-Court Statements That Are Testimonial, Offered Against the Accused in a Criminal Prosecution, and Offered to Prove the Truth of the Matter Asserted	513
1. Offered Against the Accused in a Criminal Prosecution	513
2. An Out-of-Court Statement Offered to Prove the Truth of the Matter Asserted	514
3. The Statement Must Be "Testimonial"	515
B. Forfeiture of the Confrontation Right	526
C. Situations Where the Right Attaches but Is Not Infringed	526
1. The Testifying Declarant	527
2. A Pretrial Opportunity to Cross-Examine the Declarant	528
3. The Declarant who is Present in the Courtroom but Invokes a Privilege or Otherwise Refuses to Testify	528
4. The Child Victim Who Will Be Further Traumatized if Made to Testify	528
D. <i>In Limine</i> Procedures	532
E. Harmless Constitutional Error	532
Index	533

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

FEDERAL CONSTITUTION AND RULES

United States Constitution

The Sixth Amendment Confrontation
Clause: 57, 58, 64, 67, 68, 90, 137,
144, 161, 291, 292, 303, 315, 327,
342, 345, 365–369, 371, 389, 394,
396, 443, 511–532

Federal Rules of Evidence

Art. I

Fed.R.Evid. 102: 316, 328, 333, 334, 341,
345, 361, 363
Fed.R.Evid. 103: 111, 114, 384, 466, 502
Fed.R.Evid. 103(a)(1): 111, 114, 384,
502
Fed.R.Evid. 106: 63, 324, 462, 463

Art. II

Fed.R.Evid. 201: 465
Fed.R.Evid. 201(b)(2): 465

Art. IV

Fed.R.Evid. 401: 4, 17, 117, 195, 504
Fed.R.Evid. 402: 49, 261, 419
Fed.R.Evid. 403: 120, 184, 192, 195, 254,
258, 261, 302, 440, 450, 457, 468,
489, 494, 504
Fed.R.Evid. 404: 117, 118
Fed.R.Evid. 407: 118

Art. V

Fed.R.Evid. 501: 5, 118, 271

Art. VI

Fed.R.Evid. 601: 195

Fed.R.Evid. 602: 4, 49, 111, 114, 116,
157, 203, 244, 301, 487, 500–502, 504
Fed.R.Evid. 603: 505
Fed.R.Evid. 611: 504
Fed.R.Evid. 612: 203, 206
Fed.R.Evid. 613: 206

Art. VII

Fed.R.Evid. 701: 117, 450, 453, 454,
456–458
Fed.R.Evid. 702: 426, 428, 429, 457
Fed.R.Evid. 703: 426, 427, 434, 438, 439,
454, 457
Fed.R.Evid. 705: 444

Art. VIII

Fed.R.Evid. art. VIII, advisory committee
note: 131
Fed.R.Evid. 801(a): 10, 12, 226, 243
Fed.R.Evid. 801(c): 9, 16, 28, 402, 404,
467, 491
Fed.R.Evid. 801(d) (generally): 48–54
Fed.R.Evid. 801(d)(1)(A): 57, 345, 359,
376, 492,
Fed.R.Evid. 801(d)(1)(B): 59, 61, 376,
478
Fed.R.Evid. 801(d)(1)(C): 65, 359, 364,
376
Fed.R.Evid. 801(d)(2) (generally): 67–70
Fed.R.Evid. 801(d)(2)(A): 70, 105, 342,
376, 401, 403, 486
Fed.R.Evid. 801(d)(2)(B): 105
Fed.R.Evid. 801(d)(2)(C): 78
Fed.R.Evid. 801(d)(2)(D): 74, 79, 256,
376, 474, 484
Fed.R.Evid. 801(d)(2)(E): 70
Fed.R.Evid. 802: 8, 132, 381, 438

Fed.R.Evid. 803 (generally): 131–137
 Fed.R.Evid. 803(1): 62, 141, 183, 241, 473
 Fed.R.Evid. 803(2): 62, 105, 146, 162, 291, 473, 486
 Fed.R.Evid. 803(3): 163, 173, 176, 183, 337, 345
 Fed.R.Evid. 803(4): 186, 188, 192, 195, 196, 198
 Fed.R.Evid. 803(5): 200, 203, 209, 241, 478
 Fed.R.Evid. 803(6): 62, 189, 212, 213, 216–218, 220, 241, 256, 428, 473, 474, 478
 Fed.R.Evid. 803(7): 189
 Fed.R.Evid. 803(8): 228, 230, 231, 234–236, 238, 239, 479, 488
 Fed.R.Evid. 803(15): 245–247
 Fed.R.Evid. 803(16): 250, 257, 258, 351, 446, 474, 486, 489
 Fed.R.Evid. 803(17): 464, 465
 Fed.R.Evid. 803(18): 263–265, 445
 Fed.R.Evid. 803(24): 335, 339, 343
 Fed.R.Evid. 804 (generally): 131–137, 269–274
 Fed.R.Evid. 804(a): 270, 394, 529
 Fed.R.Evid. 804(b)(1): 5, 270, 283, 345
 Fed.R.Evid. 804(b)(2): 136
 Fed.R.Evid. 804(b)(3): 105, 291, 304–306, 311, 315, 345
 Fed.R.Evid. 804(b)(4): 319, 320, 345
 Fed.R.Evid. 804(b)(5): 349, 364
 Fed.R.Evid. 804(b)(6): 322, 327, 329, 345
 Fed.R.Evid. 805: 110, 111, 144, 215, 232, 481, 487
 Fed.R.Evid. 806: 49, 116, 196, 301, 308, 388, 500, 502
 Fed.R.Evid. 807: 36, 159, 270, 333, 334, 338, 345, 346, 356, 357, 512

Art. IX

Fed.R.Evid. 901(a): 255
 Fed.R.Evid. 901(b)(8): 254, 255
 Fed.R.Evid. 902: 220, 231
 Fed.R.Evid. 1001: 27
 Fed.R.Evid. 1101: 460, 467

Federal Rules of Civil Procedure

Fed.R.Civ.P. 26: 454, 456
 Fed.R.Civ.P. 32: 36, *passim* 376–390
 Fed.R.Civ.P. 45(b): 273

Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure

Fed.R.Crim.P. 15: 36, *passim* 390–397
 Fed.R.Crim.P. 16: 454, 456
 Fed.R.Crim.P. 17: 273
 Fed.R.Crim.P. 36: 392, 393, 395

UNITED STATES STATUTES

15 U.S.C.A. §23: 273
 18 U.S.C. §3505 (2001): 226
 18 U.S.C. §3509: 501
 18 U.S.C. §3509(c)(3): 501
 18 U.S.C. §3509(c)(4): 501
 42 U.S.C. §1983: 157

STATE STATUTES

7A S.D.Codified Laws §19-15-5.2 through 19-15-8 (Michie 1995): 434
 Fla. Stat. §90.803(23) (2000): 368
 Neb.Evid.R. 803(5) & (6), Neb. Rev. Stat. §§27-803(5) & (6): 212
 Neb.Evid.R. 803(7), Neb. Rev. Stat. §27-803(7) (Reissue 1995): 229
 Neb.Evid.R. 803(15): 250
 Neb.Evid.R. 804(2)(a), Neb. Rev. Stat. §27-804(2)(a) (Reissue 1995): 275
 Neb.Evid.R. 804(2)(b), Neb. Rev. Stat. §27-804(2)(b) (Reissue 1995): 293
 Neb. Rev. Stat. §25-12,115 (Reissue 1995): 434
 Uniform Composite Reports as Evidence Act: 433

FEDERAL CASES

A

- Acme Printing Ink Co. v. Menard, Inc.,
812 F.Supp. 1498 (E.D. Wisc. 1992),
283, 383
- Affronti v. United States, 145 F.2d 3, 7
(8th Cir. 1944), 63
- Agent Orange Prod. Liab. Litig., 611
F.Supp. 1223, 1245 (E.D.N.Y. 1985),
428
- Agfa-Gevaert v. A.B. Dick Co., 879 F.2d
1518 (7th Cir. 1989), 451
- Ahlberg v. Chrysler Corp., 481 F.3d 630,
(8th Cir. 2007), 75
- Air and Land Forwarders, Inc. v. United
States, 172 F.3d 1338 (F.C. 1999), 223
- Alberty v. United States, 162 U.S. 499
(1896), 12
- Alexander v. Conveyors & Dumpsters,
Inc., 731 F.2d 1221 (5th Cir. 1984),
346, 349
- Alexander v. FBI, 198 F.R.D. 306 (D.D.C.
2000), 206
- Allen v. Montgomery, 728 F.2d 1409
(11th Cir. 1984), 326
- Allen v. Sybase, Inc. 468 F.3d 642 (10th
Cir. 2006), 174, 177
- Am. Auto. Accessories, Inc. v. Fishman,
175 F.3d 534 (7th Cir. 1999), 315, 316
- American Auto Accessories, Inc. v. Fish-
man, 175 F.3d 534 (7th Cir. 1999), 49,
312
- American Eagle Ins. Co. v. Thompson, 85
F.3d 327 (8th Cir. 1996), 50, 51, 54,
76
- Amtrust, Inc. v. Larson, 388 F.3d 594
(8th Cir. 2004), 223, 232, 488
- Anderson v. United States, 417 U.S. 211
(1974), 16, 33, 403
- Angelo v. Armstrong World Indus., Inc.,
11 F.3d 957 (10th Cir. 1993), 381
- Apanovitch v. Houk, 466 F.3d 460 (6th
Cir. 2006), 167
- Arpan v. United States, 260 F.2d 649 (8th
Cir. 1958), 93, 94
- Asplundh Mfg. Div. v. Benton Harbor
Eng'g, 57 F.3d 1190 (3d Cir. 1995),
453, 456

B

- Bado-Santana v. Ford Motor Co., 364
F.Supp.2d 79 (D.P.R. 2005), 439
- Baker v. Elcona Homes Corp., 588 F.2d
551 (6th Cir. 1978), 236, 239
- Ballou v. Henri Studios, Inc., 656 F.2d
1147 (5th Cir. 1981), 4
- Bank of Lexington & Trust Co., 959 F.2d
606 (6th Cir. 1992), 225, 236
- Barraza v. United States, 526 F.Supp.2d
637 (W.D. Tex. 2007), 372
- Barrel of Fun, Inc. v. State Farm Fire &
Cas. Co., 739 F.2d 1028 (5th Cir.
1984), 440, 441
- Barry v. Trustees of the Int'l Ass'n Full-
Time Salaried Officers and Emps. of
Outside Local and Dist. Counsel's
(Iron Workers) Pension Plan, 467
F.Supp.2d 91 (D. D.C. 2006), 357
- Barsamian v. City of Kingsburg, 76 Fed.
R. Evid. Serv. 766 (E.D. Cal. 2008), 74
- Battle v. Memorial Hosp. at Gulfport, 228
F.3d 544 (5th Cir. 2000), 389
- Beech Aircraft Corp. v. Rainey, 488 U.S.
153 (1988), 66, 228, 236, 248, 463
- Bemis v. Edwards, 45 F.3d 1369 (9th Cir.
1995), 49, 147, 149, 153, 154, 156,
157, 158
- Bennett v. Saint-Gobain Corp., 507 F.3d
23, (1st Cir. 2007), 110
- Bennett v. Yoshina, 98 F.Supp.2d 1139 (D.
Haw. 2000), 168
- Bickerstaff v. Nordstrom, Inc. 48
F.Supp.2d 790 (N.D. Ill. 1999), 75
- Blakey v. Continental Airlines, 1997 U.S.
Dist. LEXIS 22074, *13 (D.N.J. Sept.
9, 1997), 450
- Blancha v. Raymark Indus., 972 F.2d 507
(3d Cir. 1992), 4
- Bobadilla v. Carlson, 570 F.Supp.2d 1098,
1111 (D. Minn. 2008), 518
- Boca Investering P'ship v. United States,
128 F.Supp.2d 16 (D.C.D.C. 2000),
217, 224
- Boca Investering P'ship v. United States,
197 F.R.D. 18 (D.C.D.C. 2000), 386
- Bohler-Uddeholm America, Inc. v. Ell-
wood Group, Inc., 247 F.3d 79 (3d
Cir. 2001), 339

- Bombard v. Fort Wayne Newspapers, Inc., 92 F.3d 560 (7th Cir. 1996), 191
- Borawick v. Shay, 68 F.3d 597 (2d Cir. 1995), 116
- Boren v. Sable, 887 F.2d 1032 (10th Cir. 1989), 489
- Bourjaily v. United States, 483 U.S. 171 (1987), 51, 52, 329
- Bowser v. Synar, 478 U.S. 714 (1986), 524
- Boy Scouts of America v. Dale, 530 U.S. 640 (2000), 530
- Boyce v. Eggers, 513 F.Supp.2d 139 (D. N.J. 2007), 177
- Boyd v. Dutton, 405 U.S. 1 (1972), 530
- Brennan v. Reinhart Inst'l Foods, 211 F.3d 449 (8th Cir. 2000), 434
- Broad. Music, Inc. v. Airhead Corp., 1990 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 19382, *5 (E.D. Va Dec. 27, 1990), 249
- Brookover v. Mary Hitchcock Memorial Hosp., 893 F.2d 411 (1st Cir. 1990), 116
- Brown v. Crown Equip. Corp., 445 F.Supp.2d 59, 67 (D. Me. 2006), 342
- Brown v. Keane, 355 F.3d 82 (2d Cir. 2004), 499
- Brown v. Philip Morris, Inc., 228 F.Supp.2d 506 (D. N.J. 2002), 339
- Brown v. Seaboard Airline and R.R., 434 F.2d, 1101 (5th Cir. 1970), 196
- Bruton v. United States, 391 U.S. 123 (1968), 448
- Bryan v. John Bean Div. of FMC Corp., 566 F.2d 541 (5th Cir. 1978), 438
- Bulthuis v. Rexall Corp., 789 F.2d 1315, 1316 (9th Cir. 1985), 191
- Burlington N. RR Co. v. Nebraska, 802 F.2d 994, (8th Cir. 1986), 455
- Burns v. Board of County Comm'rs of Jackson County, 330 F.3d 1275 (10th Cir. 2003), 110
- B-W Acceptance Corp. v. Porter, 568 F.2d 1179 (5th Cir. 1978), 79
- C**
- California v. Green, 399 U.S. 149 (1970), 6, 7, 396, 530
- Cal-Mat Co. v. United States Dept. of Labor, 364 F.3d 1117 (9th Cir. 2004), 32
- Canatxx Gas Storage Ltd. v. Silverhawk Capital Partners, LLC, 76 Fed. R. Evid. Serv. 500 (S.D. Tex. 2008), 76, 141, 336
- Carden v. Westinghouse Electric Corp., 850 F.2d 996 (3d Cir. 1988), 76
- Carey v. Bahama Cruise Lines, 864 F.2d 201 (1st Cir. 1988), 381, 385
- Cargill v. Turpin, 120 F.3d 1366 (11th Cir. 1997), 468
- Carr v. Deeds 453 F.3d 593 (4th Cir. 2006), 95
- Carter v. Kentucky, 450 U.S. 288 (1981), 92
- Caruolo v. John Crane, Inc., 226 F.2d 46 (2d Cir. 2000), 263, 264
- Castro-Pu v. Mukasey, 540 F.3d 864 (8th Cir. Aug. 28, 2008), 428
- Catellus Dev. Corp. v. L.D. McFarland Co., 1993 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 14124 (D. Oregon May 14, 1993), 257
- Celebrity Cruises, Inc. v. Essef Corp. 434 F.Supp.2d 169 (S.D.N.Y. 2006), 441
- Central R.R. Co. v. Monahan, 11 F.2d 212 (2d Cir. 1926), 452
- Chadwell v. Koch Ref. Co., 251 F.3d 727 (8th Cir. 2001), 226
- Chambers v. Mississippi, 410 U.S. 284 (1973), 476
- Champagne Metals v. Ken-Mac Metals, Inc, 458 F.3d 1073 (10th Cir. 2006), 107
- Chapman v. California, 386 U.S. 18 (1967), 532
- Chapple v. Gangar, 851 F.Supp. 1481 (E.D. Wash. 1994), 362
- Claar v. Burlington N. R.R. Co., 29 F.3d 499 (9th Cir. 1994), 362
- Clarendon Trust v. Dwek, 970 F.2d 990 (1st Cir. 1992), 389
- Clay v. Johns-Manville Sales Corp, 722 F.2d 1289 (6th Cir. 1982), 283
- Clevenger v. CNH America, LLC, 76 Fed. R. Evid. Serv. 897, 903 (M.D. Pa. 208), 483
- Cloverland-Green Spring Dairies, Inc. v. Pennsylvania Milk Mktg. Bd. 298 F.3d 201 (3d Cir. 2003), 402
- Coleman v. Home Depot, Inc., 306 F.3d 1333 (3d Cir. 2002), 230, 235, 236

- Coltrane v. United States, 418 F.2d 1131 (D.C. Cir. 1969), 63
- Compton v. Davis Oil Co., 607 F.Supp. 1221 (D. Wyo. 1985), 245, 251
- Constantino v. Herzog, 203 F.3d 164 (2d Cir. 2000), 134, 263, 265
- Conwood Co. v. U.S. Tobacco Co., 290 F.3d 768 (6th Cir. 2002), 430
- Cook v. Hoppin, 783 F.2d 684 (7th Cir. 1986), 196, 197
- Cooper Sportswear Mfg. Co. v. Hartford Cas. Ins. Co., 818 F.Supp. 721 (D.N.J. 1993), 484
- Coy v. Iowa, 487 U.S. 1012 (1988), 530
- Crawford v. Washington, 541 U.S. 36 (2004), 52, 292, 303, 315, 342, 512–17, 520–22, 524–527, 530–31
- Crowley v. L.L. Bean, Inc., 303 F.3d 387 (1st Cir. 2002), 408
- Cummins v. Lyle Indus., 93 F.3d 362 (7th Cir. 1996), 438
- Curtis v. Oklahoma Pub. Sch. Bd. of Educ., 147 F.3d 1200 (10th Cir. 1998), 52
- D**
- Daigle v. Maine Medical Center, Inc., 14 F.3d 684 (1st Cir. 1994), 385
- Dallas County v. Commercial Union Assurance Co., 286 F.2d 388 (5th Cir. 1961), 133, 251, 253, 257, 258, 503
- Danaipour v. McLarey, 386 F.3d 289 (1st Cir. 2004), 186, 189
- Dartez v. Fiberboard Corp., 765 F.2d 456 (5th Cir. 1985), 255, 265, 347
- Daubert v. Merrell Dow Pharms, 509 U.S. 579 (1993), 66, 248, 362, 429, 430
- David v. Pueblo Supermarket of St. Thomas, 740 F.2d 230 (3d Cir. 1984), 153
- Davignon v. Clemmey, 322 F.3d 1 (1st Cir. 2003), 186, 187, 194
- Davignon v. Hodgson, 524 F.3d 91 (1st Cir. 2008), 229
- Davila v. Corporacion de P. R. Para a la Difusion Publica, 498 F.3d 9 (1st Cir. 2007), 75, 140
- Davis v. Washington, 547 U.S. 813 (2006), 515, 516, 518
- Delaney v. Merchants River Transp., 829 F.Supp. 186 (W.D. La. 1993), aff'd, 16 F.3d 1214 (5th Cir. 1992), 429
- Delaney v. United States, 77 F.2d 916 (3d Cir. 1935), 204
- Deleware v. Fensterer, 474 U.S. 15 (1985), 528
- de Mars v. Equitable Life Assurance Society of the United States, 610 F.2d 55 (1st Cir. 1979), 373
- Deravin v. Kerik, 2007 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 24696, *35 (S.D.N.Y. 2007), 179
- DesRosiers v. Moran, 949 F.2d 15 (1st Cir. 1991), 49
- De Weerth v. Baldinger, 658 F.Supp. 688 (S.D.N.Y. 1987), 256
- Dhyne v. Meiners Thriftway, Inc., 184 F.3d 983 (8th Cir. 1999), 388, 390
- Diaz v. United States, 223 U.S. 442 (1912), 328
- Distaff, Inc. v. Springfield Contracting Corp., 984 F.2d 108 (4th Cir. 1993), 235
- District of Columbia v. Heller, 128 S. Ct. 2783 (2008), 530
- Doe v. United States, 976 F.2d 1071 (7th Cir. 1992), 356
- Donlin v. Aramark Corp., 162 F.R.D. 149 (D. Utah 1995), 109
- Doyle v. Ohio, 426 U.S. 610 (1976), 92
- DSC Sanitation Mgmt., Inc. v. Occupational Safety & Health Rev. Comm'n, 82 F.3d 812 (8th Cir. 1996), 49
- Duncan v. Louisiana, 391 U.S. 145 (1968), 532
- Dura Automotive Sys. v. CTS Corp., 285 F.3d 609 (7th Cir. 2002), 443
- Dyno Constr. Co. v. McWane, Inc. 198 F.3d 567 (7th Cir. 1999), 219
- E**
- Echo Acceptance Corp. v. Household Retail Servs., 267 F.3d 1068 (10th Cir. 2001), 402, 463
- EEOC v. HBE Corp., 135 F.3d 543 (8th Cir. 1998), 484
- EEOC v. Watergate at Landmark Condo., 24 F.3d 635 (4th Cir. 1994), 76
- Eliserio v. United Steelworkers of Am. Local 310 F.3d 1071 (8th Cir. 2005), 75

- Ellipsis, Inc. v. Color Works, Inc. 428 F.Supp.2d 752 (W.D. Tenn 2006), 434
- Ellis v. Int'l Playtex, Inc., 745 F.2d 292 (4th Cir. 1984), 225
- EnergyNorth Natural Gas, Inc. v. UGI Utils., Inc., 2003 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 5681, at *3-4 (D.N.H. 2003), 503
- Engelbreten v. Fairchild Aircraft Corp., 21 F.3d 721 (6th Cir. 1994), 437, 441, 443, 447
- Estenfelder v. Gates Corp., 199 F.R.D. 351 (D. Colo. 2001), 389
- F**
- FAA v. Landy, 705 F.2d 624 (2d Cir. 1983), 238
- Fagiola v. Nat'l Gypsum Co. AC & S, Inc., 906 F.2d 53 (2d Cir. 1990), 255
- Fairfield 274-278 Clarendon Trust v. Dwek, 970 F.2d 990 (1st Cir. 1992), 389
- Faries v. Atlas Truck Body Mfg. Co, 797 F.2d 619 (8th Cir. 1986), 235, 237, 435
- Farner v. Paccar, Inc., 562 F.2d 518 (8th Cir. 1977), 452
- Faulkner v. Super Valu Stores, Inc., 3 F.3d 1419 (10th Cir. 1993), 409
- Field v. Trigg County Hosp., Inc., 386 F.3d 729 (6th Cir. 2004), 191
- Finizie v. Principi, 69 Fed.Appx. 571 (3d Cir. 2003) 272
- Fischer v. Forestwood Co., Inc., 525 F.3d 972 (10th Cir. 2008), 78
- Fisher v. United States, 78 Fed. Cl. 710 (Fed. Cl. 2007), 263
- Florida Conf. Ass'n of Seventh-Day Adventists v. Kyriakides, 151 F.Supp.2d 1223 (C.D. Cal. 2001), 13
- Fox v. Taylor Diving & Salvage Co., 694 F.2d 1349 (5th Cir. 1983), 437, 443
- Frale v. Rockwell Int'l Corp., 470 F. Supp. 1264 (S.D. Ohio 1979), 236
- Fraser v. Goodale, 342 F.3d 1032 (9th Cir. 2003), 203
- Frechette v. Welch, 621 F.2d 11 (1st Cir. 1980), 390
- FSLIC v. Griffin, 935 F.2d 691 (5th Cir. 1991), 221, 222
- FTC v. Amy Travel Serv., Inc. 875 F.2d 564 (7th Cir. 1989), 351
- FTC v. Kitco of Nevada, Inc., 612 F.Supp. 1282 (D.C. Minn. 1985), 349
- Freeman v. Metropolitan Life Ins. Co., 468 F.Supp. 1269 (W.D. Va. 1979), 45
- Fulkerson v. Holmes, 117 U.S. 389 (1886), 252
- Fun-Damental Too, Ltd. v. Gemmy Indus. Corp., 111 F.3d 993 (2d Cir. 1997), 414
- Furtado v. Bishop, 604 F.2d 80 (1st Cir. 1979), 348
- G**
- Garbinicius v. Boston Edison Co., 621 F.2d 1171 (1st Cir. 1980), 265
- Garcia v. Portuondo, 459 F.Supp.2d 267 (S.D. N.Y. 2006), 337
- Garcia-Martinez v. City and County of Denver, 392 F.3d 1187 (10th Cir. 2004), 135, 385, 270
- Garner v. Missouri Dept. of Mental Health, 439 F.3d 958 (8th Cir. 2006) 18, 32
- General Elec. Co. v. Joiner, 522 U.S. 136 (1997), 52
- Gentile v. County of Suffolk, 129 F.R.D. 435, 457 (E.D.N.Y. 1990), 235
- Gilbert v. California, 388 U.S. 263 (1967), 365
- Giles v. California, 128 S.Ct. 2678 (2008), 526
- Glendale Fed. Bank v. United States, 39 Fed. Cl. 422 (Ct. Fed. Cl. 1997), 79, 80
- Globe Newspaper Co. v. Superior Court, 457 U.S. 596 (1982), 367
- Globe Newspaper Co. v. Superior Court, 457 U.S. 596, (1982), 531
- Goldsmith v. Bagby Elevator Co., 513 F.3d 1261 (11th Cir. 2008), 229
- Gomes v. Rivera Rodriguez, 344 F.3d 103 (1st Cir. 2003), 52, 76
- Gong v. Hirsch, 913 F.2d 1269 (7th Cir. 1990), 441
- Gonzalez v. Digital Equip. Corp., 8 F.Supp.2d 194 (E.D.N.Y. 1998), 251

- Gonzalez v. Digital Equip. Corp., 8 F.Supp.2d 194 (E.D.N.Y. 1998), 351
- Grace United Methodist Church v. City of Cheyenne, 451 F.3d 643 (10th Cir. 2006) 80, 109, 270
- Grace v. Keystone Shipping Co., 805 F.Supp. 436 (E.D. Tx. 1992), 109
- Graham v. Wyeth Labs., 906 F.2d 1399 (10th Cir. 1990), 265
- Greater Kansas City Laborers Pension Fund v. Superior Gen. Contrs., 104 F.3d 1050 (8th Cir. 1997), 460
- Griffin v. California, 380 U.S. 609 (1965), 92
- Grines v. Employers Mut. Liab. Ins. Co., 73 F.R.D. 607 (D. Alaska 1977), 372
- Gross v. Burggraf Const. Co., 53 F.3d 1531 (10th Cir. 1995), 119
- Gross v. Burggraf Constr. Co., 53 F.3d 1531 (10th Cir. 1995), 499
- Gross v. King David Bistro, Inc., 84 F.Supp.2d 675 (D. Md. 2000), 230
- Grundberg v. The Upjohn Co., 137 F.R.D. 365 (D. Utah 1991), 187
- Grunewald v. United States, 353 U.S. 391 (1957), 102
- Guerra v. N.E. Indep. Sch. Dist., 496 F.3d 415 (5th Cir. 2007), 236
- Guzman v. Abbott Labs, 59 F.Supp.2d 747 (N.D. Ill. 1999), 69
- H**
- Hall v. Forest River, Inc., 2007 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 49376, *18 (N.D. Ind. July 5, 2007), 467
- Hannah v. City of Overland, 795 F.2d 1385 (8th Cir. 1986), 286
- Harris v. Itzhaki, 183 F.3d 1043 (9th Cir. 1999), 74
- Harris v. New York, 401 U.S. 222 (1971), 395
- Harris v. Rivera, 454 U.S. 339 (1981), 459, 460
- Hartley v. Dillard's, Inc., 310 F.3d 1054 (8th Cir. 2002), 437
- Henry v. Hess Oil V. I. Corp., 163 F.R.D. 237 (D.V.I. 1995), 435
- Herb v. Pitcairn, 324 U.S. 117 (1945), 475
- Herrick v. Garvey, 298 F.3d 1184 (10th Cir. 2002), 228, 346
- Hertz v. Luzenac Am., Inc., 370 F.3d 1014 (10th Cir. 2004), 215, 235
- Hicks v. Charles Pfizer & Co., 466 F. Supp. 2d 799 (E.D. Tex. 2005), 258, 348
- Hoppe v. G.D. Searle & Co., 779 F.Supp. 1413 (S.D.N.Y. 1991), 288, 289, 386
- Horne v. Owens-Corning Fiberglass Corp., 4 F.3d 276 (4th Cir. 1993), 257, 282, 503
- Horton v. Allen, 370 F.3d 75 (1st Cir. 2004), 164
- Horvath v. Rimtec Corp., 102 F.Supp.2d 219 (D.N.J. 2000), 85
- Hoselton v. Metz Baking Co., 48 F.3d 1056 (8th Cir. 1995), 483
- Houser v. Snap-On-Tools Corp, 202 F.Supp. 181 (D. Md. 1962), 385
- Hub v. Sun Valley Co., 682 F.2d 776 (9th Cir. 1982), 383
- Huff v. White Motor Corp., 609 F.2d 286 (7th Cir. 1979), 333, 341, 355, 476, 477
- Hughes v. United States, 953 F.2d 531 (9th Cir. 1992), 231
- Hynes v. Coughlin, III, 79 F.3d 285 (2d Cir. 1996), 479
- Hynix Semiconductor Inc. v. Rambus Inc., 250 F.R.D. 452, 458 (N.D. Cal. 2008), 282
- Hynix Semiconductor, Inc. v. Rambus, Inc., 2008 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 10859, *20 (N.D. Cal. 2008), 439
- I**
- Idaho v. Wright, 497 U.S. 805 (1990), 49, 133, 293, 351, 355, 356
- Ieradi v. Mylan Labs., Inc., 230 F.3d 594 (3rd Cir. 2000), 465
- Illinois v. Allen, 397 U.S. 337 (1970), 530
- Imperial Meat Co. v. United States, 316 F.2d 435 (10th Cir. 1963), 204, 205
- In re Agent Orange Prod. Liab. Litig., 611 F.Supp. 1223 (E.D.N.Y. 1985), 428
- In re Bankers Trust Co., 752 F.2d 874 (3d Cir. 1984), 381
- In re Complaint of Bankers Trust Co., 752 F.2d 874 (3d Cir. 1984), 381, 386

- In re James Wilson Assoc'd, 965 F.2d 160 (7th Cir. 1992), 430, 437, 443, 447
- In Re Japanese Elec. Prods. Antitrust Litig., 723 F.2d 238 (3d Cir. 1983), 80, 135, 290, 338, 339
- In re Oil Spill by the Amoco Cadiz, 954 F.2d 1279 (7th Cir. 1992), 232, 238, 258
- In re Roberts, 210 B.R. 325 (Bankr. N.D. Iowa 1997), 260, 464, 466
- In re Slatkin, 525 F.3d 805 (9th Cir. 2008), 351, 352
- In re Welding Fume Prods. Liab. Litig., 534 F.Supp.2d 761 (N.D. Ohio 2008), 263
- In re Wierschem, 152 B.R. 345 (Bankr. M.D. Fla. 1993), 464
- INS v. Chadha 462 U.S. 919, 944 (1983), 524
- International Adhesive Coating Co. v. Bolton Emerson Int'l, 851 F.2d 540 (1st Cir. 1988), 437
- J**
- J.E.M. Ag Supply, Inc. v. Pioneer Hi-Bred Int'l, Inc., 534 U.S. 124 (2001), 134
- Jacklyn v. Schering-Plough Healthcare Prods. Sales Corp., 176 F.3d 921 (6th Cir. 1999), 75, 80
- Jewell v. CSX Transp., Inc., 135 F.3d 361 (6th Cir. 1998), 135
- Jewett v. Anders, 521 F.3d 818 (7th Cir. 2008), 410
- Jewett v. United States, 15 F.2d 955 (9th Cir. 1926), 204, 206
- John McShain, Inc. v. Cessna Aircraft Co., 563 F.2d 632 (3d Cir. 1977), 233, 238
- Johnson v. California, 543 U.S. 499 (2005), 530
- Johnson v. New Jersey, 384 U.S. 719 (1966), 530
- K**
- Kelley v. American Heyer-Schulte Corp., 957 F.Supp. 873 (W.D. Tex. 1997), 435
- Kennon v. Slipstreamer, Inc., 794 F.2d 1067 (5th Cir. 1986), 448
- Kentucky v. Stincer, 482 U.S. 730 (1987), 513, 527
- Kepner-Tregoe Inc. v. Leadership Software, 12 F.3d 527 (5th Cir. 1994), 402
- Kingsley v. Baker/Beech-Nut Corp., 546 F.2d 1136 (5th Cir. 1977), 81
- Kirk v. Raymark Indus., Inc. 61 F.3d 147 (3d Cir. 1995), 77, 288, 346
- Knoster v. Ford Motor Co., 200 Fed. Appx. 106 (3d Cir. 2006) 453
- Koch Indus., Inc. and Subsidiaries v. United States, 564 F.Supp.2d 1276 (D. Kan. 2008), 223
- Kraft, Inc. v. United States, 30 Fed. Cl. 739 (Fed. Cl. 1994) 250, 254
- Kramer v. Time Warner Inc. 937 F.2d 767 (2d Cir. 1991), 456
- Krulewitch v. United States, 336 U.S. 440 (1949), 103
- Kumho Tire Co. v. Carmichael, 526 U.S. 137 (1999), 362, 429
- KW Plastics v. United States Can Co., 130 F.Supp.2d 1297 (M.D. Ala. 2001), 14
- KW Plastics v. United States Can Co., 131 F.Supp.2d 1265 (M.D. Ala. 2001), 450, 455
- KZK Livestock, Inc. v. Production Credit Servs. of W. Cent. Illinois, 221 B.R. 471 (Bankr. C.D. Ill. 1998), 397
- L**
- L.W. ex rel. Whitson v. Knox County Bd. of Educ., 76 Fed. R. Evid. Serv. 796 (E.D. Tenn. 2008), 72
- LaCombe v. A-T-O, Inc., 679 F.2d 431 (5th Cir. 1982), 426, 428, 430
- LaRouche v. Webster, 175 F.R.D. 452 (S.D.N.Y. 1996), 244
- Lee v. McCaughtry, 892 F.2d 1318 (7th Cir. 1990), 87, 112
- Lewis v. Velez, 149 F.R.D. 474 (S.D.N.Y. 1993), 233, 235, 485
- Lexington Ins. Co. v. Western Pa. Hosp., 423 F.3d 318 (3d Cir. 2005), 14, 109
- Liberty Mut. Ins. Co. v. Rotches Pork Packers, Inc., 969 F.2d 1384 (2d Cir.1992), 465
- Lightning Lube, Inc. v. Witco Corp., 4 F.3d 1153 (3d Cir. 1993), 79
- Lilley v. Home Depot U.S.A., Inc., 2008 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 53903, *8 (S.D. Tex. July 15, 2008), 430
- Limone v. United States, 497 F.Supp.2d 143 (D. Mass. 2007), 346

- Lippay v. Christos, 996 F.2d 1490 (3d Cir. 1993), 76, 77
- Lloyd v. American Export Lines, Inc., 580 F.2d 1179 (3d Cir. 1978), 281, 282, 283
- Lloyd's v. Sinkovich, 232 F.3d 200 (4th Cir. 2000), 213, 215
- Lorraine v. Markel Am. Ins. Co., 241 F.R.D. 534 (D. Md. 2007), 12, 15, 137, 166, 402
- Louisiana v. Langley, 128 S.Ct. 493 (2007), 172
- Lovejoy v. United States, 92 F.3d 628 (8th Cir. 1996), 191, 358, 359, 363, 365
- Luckie v. Ameritech Corp., 389 F.3d 708 (7th Cir. 2004), 409
- Lust v. Sealy, Inc., 383 F. 3d 580, 588 (7th Cir. 2004), 140, 214, 235
- Lutwak v. United States, 344 U.S. 604 (1953), 102, 103, 105
- Louis Vuitton Malletier v. Dooney & Bourke, Inc., 525 F.Supp.2d 576 (S.D.N.Y. 2007), 439, 443
- M**
- M.B.A.F.B. Fed. Credit Union v. Cumis Ins. Soc., 681 F.2d 930 (4th Cir. 1982), 501
- Mahlandt v. Wild Canid Survival & Research Ctr., Inc., 588 F.2d 626 (8th Cir. 1978), 88, 109, 113, 115, 504, 506
- Mancusi v. Stubbs, 408 U.S. 204, 216 (1972), 351
- Marra v. Philadelphia Housing Auth., 497 F.3d 286 (3d Cir. 2007), 75
- Marsee v. United States Tobacco Co., 866 F.2d 319 (10th Cir. 1989), 233
- Marseilles Hydro Power, LLC v. Marseilles Land and Water Co., 518 F.3d 459 (7th Cir. 2008), 408
- Martinez v. McCaughtry, 951 F.2d 130 (7th Cir. 1991), 408
- Maryland v. Craig, 497 U.S. 836 (1990), 396, 530
- Matsushita Elec. Indus. Co. v. Zenith Radio Corp., 475 U.S. 574 (1986), 80, 135, 290, 338, 339
- Matthews v. Ashland Chem., Inc., 770 F.2d 1303 (5th Cir. 1985), 237
- Mattox v. United States, 146 U.S. 140 (1892), 297
- McCullock v. H.B. Fuller Co., 61 F.3d 1038 (2d Cir. 1995), 428
- McGuire v. Blount, 199 U.S. 142 (1905), 252
- McInnis v. Fairfield Cmty., Inc., 458 F.3d 1129 (10th Cir. 2006) 167, 409
- McIntosh v. Partridge, 540 F.3d 325 (5th Cir. 2008), 409
- McLendon v. Georgia Kaolin Co., 841 F.Supp. 415 (M.D. Ga. 1994), 435
- Meaney v. United States, 112 F.2d 538 (2d Cir. 1940), 185
- Meder v. Everest & Jennings, Inc., 637 F.2d 1182 (8th Cir. 1891), 479
- Meecker v. Vitt, 2006 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 15009, *10–11 (N.D. Ohio March 31, 2006) 462
- Melendez-Diaz v. Massachusetts, 128 S.Ct. 1647 (2008), 516, 520, 522
- Melville v. Am. Home Assurance Co., 443 F.Supp. 1064 (E.D.Pa. 1997), 230
- Messner v. Lockheed Martin Energy Sys., Inc., 126 F.Supp.2d 502 (E.D. Tenn. 2000), 80
- Metropolitan St. Ry. v. Gumby, 99 F. 192 (2d Cir. 1900), 281
- Michaels v. Michaels, 767 F.2d 1185 (7th Cir. 1985), 140
- Mike's Train House, Inc. v. Lionel, L.L.C., 472 F.3d 398 (6th Cir. 2006) 238, 316
- Miller v. Field, 35 F.3d 1088 (6th Cir. 1994), 237
- Miller v. Keating, 754 F.2d 507 (3d Cir. 1985), 49
- Mitchell v. Esparza, 540 U.S. 12 (2003) 532
- Moore v. Kuka Welding Sys., 171 F.3d 1073 (6th Cir. 1999), 76
- Moore v. United States, 429 U.S. 20 (1976), 460
- Morgan Guar. Trust Co. v. Hellenic Lines Ltd., 621 F. Supp. 198 (S.D.N.Y. 1985), 238
- Morgan v. Foretich, 846 F.2d 941 (4th Cir. 1998), 149, 161, 194, 507
- Moss v. Ole S. Real Estate, Inc., 933 F.2d 1300 (5th Cir. 1991), 255, 235, 238

- Mueller v. Abdnor, 972 F.2d 931 (8th Cir. 1992), 402, 404
- Mullins v. Crowell, 228 F.3d 1305 (11th Cir. 2000), 428
- Mutual Life Ins. Co. v. Hillmon, 145 U.S. 285 (1892), 174, 175
- N**
- Nachtsheim v. Beech Aircraft Corp., 47 F.2d 1261 (7th Cir. 1988), 440, 494
- National Bank of Commerce v. Dow Chem. Co., 965 F.Supp. 1490 (E.D. Ark. 1996), 362
- Nees v. SEC, 414 F.2d 211 (9th Cir. 1969), 203, 204, 205
- New York v. Ferber, 458 U.S. 747 (1982), 367, 531
- Nichols v. American Risk Mgmt., Inc., 45 Fed.R.Serv.3d (Callaghan) 1311 (S.D.N.Y. 2000), 389
- Nipper v. Snipes, 7 F.3d 415 (4th Cir. 1993), 228
- Northern Securities Co. v. United States, 193 U.S. 197 (1904), 336
- Noviello v. City of Boston, 398 F.3d 76 (1st Cir. 2005), 37, 403, 409
- Nowell v. Universal Elec. Co., 792 F.2d 1310 (5th Cir. 1986), 347
- O**
- O'Conner v. Commonwealth Edison Co., 13 F.3d 1090 (7th Cir. 1994), 429
- O'Quinn v. United States, 411 F.2d 78 (10th Cir. 1969), 203, 205
- Ohio v. Roberts, 448 U.S. 56 (1980), 512
- Old Chief v. United States, 519 U.S. 172 (1997), 4
- Osborne v. Ohio, 495 U.S. 103 (1990), 530
- Ostad v. Oregon Health Sciences Univ., 327 F.3d 876 (9th Cir. 2003), 400
- P**
- Paddack v. Dave Christensen, Inc., 745 F.2d 1254 (9th Cir. 1984), 447
- Palmer v. Hoffman, 318 U.S. 109 (1943), 213, 214, 216, 442
- Pappas v. Middle Earth Condo. Ass'n, 963 F.2d 534 (2d Cir. 1992), 68, 74
- Parents Involved in Cmty. Schs. v. Seattle Sch. Dist. No. 1, 127 S.Ct. 2738 (2007), 530
- Parker v. Reda, 327 F.3d 211 (2d Cir. 2003), 202, 208, 209, 213, 337, 472
- Parliament Ins. Co. v. Hanson, 676 F.2d 1069 (5th Cir. 1982), 202, 203
- Pearce v. E.F. Hutton Group, Inc., 653 F. Supp. 810 (D.D.C. 1987), 236
- Pearl v. Keystone Consolidated Industries, Inc., 884 F.2d 1047 (7th Cir. 1989), 283
- Pekelis v. Transcontinental & W. Air, Inc., 187 F.2d 122 (2d Cir. 1951), 85
- Peterkin v. Horn, 176 F.Supp.2d 342 (E.D. Pa. 2001), 468
- PG&E v. United States, 73 Fed. Cl. 333 (Ct. Fed. Cl. 2006), 80
- PG&E v. United States, No. 2007-5046, 2008 WL 3089272 (Fed. Cir. 2008), 80
- Phan v. Trinity Reg'l Hosp., 3 F.Supp.2d 1014 (N.D. Iowa 1998), 358, 366
- Pierce v. Atchison Topeka, Santa Fe Ry., 110 F.3d 431 (7th Cir. 1997), 235
- Pilgrim v. The Trustees of Tufts College, 118 F.3d 864 (1st Cir. 1997), 85
- Pinkerton v. United States, 328 U.S. 640 (1946), 325
- Pittman v. Grayson, 149 F.3d 111 (2d Cir. 1998), 114
- Pittsburgh Press Club v. United States, 579 F.2d 751 (3d Cir. 1978), 135, 371
- Pointer v. Texas, 380 U.S. 400 (1965), 511
- Polozie v. United States, 835 F.Supp. 68 (D. Conn. 1993), 286, 289
- Portuouodo v. Agard, 529 U.S. 61 (2000), 92
- Prather v. Prather, 650 F.2d 88 (5th Cir. 1981), 181, 419
- Preferred Properties Inc. v. Indian River Estates Inc., 276 F.3d 790 (6th Cir. 2002), 402
- R**
- R.B. Matthews, Inc. v. Transamerica Transp. Servs., Inc., 945 F.2d 269 (9th Cir. 1991), 388
- Rambus, Inc. v. Infineon Techs. AG, 222 F.R.D. 101 (E.D. Va 2004), 439

- Ramrattan v. Burger King Corp, 656 F.Supp. 522 (D. Md. 1987), 198
- Redvanly v. Nynex Corp., 152 F.R.D. 460 (S.D.N.Y. 1993), 206
- Reedy v. White Consol. Ind., Inc., 890 F.Supp. 1417 (N.D. Iowa 1995), 237
- Regan-Touhy v. Walgreen Co., 526 F.3d 641 (10th Cir. 2008), 483
- Reichhold Chems., Inc. v. Textron, Inc., 888 F.Supp. 1116 (N.D. Fla. 1995), 253, 473
- Reid Bros. Logging Co. v. Ketchikan Pulp Co., 699 F.2d 1292 (9th Cir.1983), 79
- Remtech, Inc. v. Fireman's Fund Ins. Co., 2006 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 1145, *3 (E.D. Wash. Jan. 4, 2006), 434, 442
- Reno v. ACLU, 521 U.S. 844 (1997), 367, 531
- Reno v. Flores, 507 U.S. 292, 301-02 (1993), 530
- Research Sys. Corp. v. IPOS Publicite, 276 F.3d 914 (7thCir. 2002), 200
- Reynolds v. United States, 98 U.S. 145 (1878), 327, 526
- Ricciardi v. Children's Hospital Medical Center, 811 F.2d 18 (1st Cir. 1987), 471, 478, 479
- Richmond v. Brooks, 227 F.2d 490 (2d Cir. 1955), 386
- Ring v. Erikson, 983 F.2d 818 (8th Cir. 1992), 188
- Rock v. Huffco Gas & Oil Co., 922 F.2d 272 (5th Cir. 1991), 198
- Rosario v. City of Chicago, 2008 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 40562, *6 (N.D. Ill. May 15, 2008), 201
- Rosenthal v. Justices of Supreme Court, 910 F.2d 561 (9th Cir. Cal. 1990), 514
- Ross v. Saint Augustine's Coll., 103 F.3d 338 (4th Cir. 1996), 60, 138, 166
- Rowland v. American Gen. Fin., Inc., 340 F.3d 187 (4th Cir. 2003), 346, 419
- Rush v. Illinois Cent. R.R. Co., 399 F.3d 705 (6th Cir. 2005), 200
- Russo v. Abington Mem. Hosp. Health-care Plan, 1998 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 18598, *9 (E.D. Pa Nov. 18, 1998), 339
- Ryan v. Illinois, 1999 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 1095, *9 (N.D. Ill. 1999), 248
- Ryder v. Westinghouse Elec. Corp., 128 F.3d 128 (3d Cir. 1997), 76
- S
- Sabel v. Mead Johnson & Co., 737 F.Supp. 135 (D. Mass. 1990), 79
- Sanchez v. Brokop, 398 F.Supp.2d 1177 (D. N.M. 2005), 346, 439
- Schafer v. Time, 142 F.3d 1361 (11th Cir. 1998), 435
- Schering Corp. v. Pfizer Inc., 189 F.3d 218 (2d Cir. 1999), 114, 164
- Schindler v. Joseph C. Seiler & Synthes Spine Co., 474 F.3d 1008 (7th Cir. 2007), 141, 402, 403
- Schneble v. Florida, 405 U.S. 427 (1972), 532
- Schneider v. Revici, 817 F.2d 987 (2d Cir. 1987), 264
- Scott v. Ross, 140 F.3d 1275 (9th Cir. 1998), 434
- Scroggins v. Norris, 77 F.3d 1107 (8th Cir. 1996), 290
- Sea Land Serv., Inc. v. Lozen Int'l, LLC, 285 F.3d 808 (9th Cir. 2002), 52, 77, 95, 109, 218
- SEC v. Antar, 120 F.Supp.2d 431 (D.N.J. 2000); 397
- Shedd-Bartush Foods v. Commodity Credit Corp, 135 F.Supp. 78 (D. Ill. 1955), aff'd, 231 F.2d 555 (7th Cir. 1956), 459
- Shelton v. Consumer Prods. Safety Comm'n, 277 F.3d 998 (8th Cir. 2002), 217, 225
- Shepard v. United States, 290 U.S. 96 (1933), 38, 86, 170, 172, 178, 296, 419, 502, 504
- Sherman v. Burke Contracting, Inc., 891 F.2d 1527 (11th Cir. 1990), 449
- Simple v. Walgreen Co., 511 F.3d 668 (7th Cir. 2007), 74
- Smith v. Isuzu Motors Ltd., 137 F.3d 859 (5th Cir. 1998), 237
- Smith v. Pathmark Stores, Inc., 485 F.Supp.2d 235 (E.D.N.Y. 2007), 74, 194
- Sosna v. Binnington, 321 F.3d 742 (8th Cir. 2003), 217

- Sphere Drake Insurance PLC v. Trisko, 226 F.3d 951 (8th Cir. 2000), 428, 432, 435, 438, 447
- Spivey v. United States, 912 F.2d 80 (4th Cir. 1990), 466
- Staheli v. The University of Mississippi, 854 F.2d 121 (5th Cir. 1988), 75
- Stallings v. Bobby, 464 F.3d 576 (6th Cir. 2006), 459
- Steele v. Taylor, 684 F.2d 1193 (6th Cir. 1982), 327
- Stephens, Inc. v. Geldermann, Inc., 962 F.2d 808 (8th Cir. 1992), 310
- Sterling v. United States, 516 U.S. 1105 (1996), 295
- Sternhagen v. Dow Co., 108 F.Supp.2d 1113 (D. Mont. 1999), 296, 337, 351–354
- Stevens v. Cessna Aircraft Co., 634 F.Supp. 137 (E.D. Pa. 1986), *aff'd* 806 F.2d 252 (3d Cir. 1986), 433
- Stull v. Fuqua Industries, Inc., 906 F.2d 1271 (8th Cir. 1990), 191
- Sullivan v. Louisiana, 508 U.S. 275 (1993), 532
- Supermarket of Marlinton, Inc. v. Meadow Gold Dairies, Inc., 71 F.3d 119 (4th Cir. 1995), 282
- T**
- Talley v. Bravo Pitino Rest., Ltd., 61 F.3d 1241 (6th Cir. 1995), 403, 404
- Tatam v. Collins, 938 F.2d 509 (4th Cir. 1991), 385
- Tatmahn v. Collins, 938 F.2d 509 (4th Cir. 1991), 389
- Teen-Ed, Inc. v. Kimball International, Inc., 620 F.2d 399 (3d Cir. 1980), 453, 458
- Tennessee v. Street, 471 U.S. 409 (1985), 515
- Territory of Guam v. Cepeda, 69 F.3d 369 (9th Cir. 1995), 150
- Territory of Guam v. Ignacio, 10 F.3d 608 (9th Cir. 1993), 187, 197
- Territory of Guam v. Ojeda, 758 F.2d 403 (9th Cir. 1985), 71
- Thanongsinh v. Bd. of Educ., 462 F.3d 762 (7th Cir. 2006), 71, 221, 213
- Thomas v. Newton Int'l Enters., 42 F.3d 1266 (9th Cir. 1994), 428
- Threadgill v. Armstrong World Indus., 928 F.2d 1366 (3d Cir. 1991), 252, 254
- Thurman v. Missouri Gas Energy, 107 F.Supp.2d 1046 (W.D. Mo. 2000), 434
- Tome v. United States, 513 U.S. 150 (1995), 58, 61, 180
- Tompkins v. Cyr, 202 F.3d 770 (5th Cir. 2000), 403
- Torraco v. Port Authority of New York & New Jersey, 539 F.Supp.2d 632 (E.D.N.Y. 2008), 411
- Trepel v. Roadway Express, Inc., 194 F.3d 708 (6th Cir. 1999), 52, 402
- Tucker v. Housing Auth. of the Birmingham Dist., 507 F.Supp.2d 1240 (M.D. Ala. 2006), 407
- Tucker v. Nike, Inc., 919 F.Supp. 1192 (N.D. Ind. 1995), 362
- Tucker v. Osthue Tire & Rubber Co., Ltd., 49 F.Supp.2d 456 (D. Md. 1999), 443, 445
- Tumey v. Ohio, 273 U.S. 510 (1927), 532
- U**
- Ueland v. United States, 291 F.3d 993 (7th Cir. 2002), 377
- Union Mut. Life Ins. Co. v. Chrysler Corp., 793 F.2d 1 (1st Cir. 1986), 75
- Union Pac. R.R. Co. v. Kirby Inland Marine, Inc., 296 F.3d 671 (8th Cir. 2002), 235
- United States Football League v. National Football League, 842 F.2d 1335 (2d Cir. 1988), 463
- United States v. 0.59 Acres of Land, 109 F.3d 1493 (9th Cir. 1997), 447
- United States v. 14.38 Acres of Land, 80 F.3d 1074 (5th Cir. 1996), 428
- United States v. Adams, 74 F.3d 1093 (11th Cir. 1996), 467
- United States v. Adams, 74 F.3d 1093 (11th Cir. 1996), 467
- United States v. Adcock, 558 F.2d 397 (8th Cir.), 411
- United States v. Aikins, 923 F.2d 650 (9th Cir. 1990), 231

- United States v. Alexander, 1989 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 17812 (W.D. Mich. 1989), 246
- United States v. Alfonso, 66 F.Supp.2d 261 (D.P.R. 1999), 174
- United States v. Allen J., 127 F.3d 1292 (10th Cir. 1997), 501
- United States v. Alvarez, 584 F.2d 694 (5th Cir. 1978), 315
- United States v. Alverez, 584 F.2d 694 (5th Cir. 1978), 307
- United States v. Alzanki, 54 F.3d 994 (1st Cir. 1995), 166, 167
- United States v. Amerson, 185 F.3d 676 (7th Cir. 1999), 311, 312
- United States v. Anderson, 303 F.3d 847 (7th Cir. 2002), 61
- United States v. Andreas, 216 F.3d 645 (7th Cir. 2002), 305
- United States v. Arias, 252 F.3d 973 (8th Cir. 2001), 97
- United States v. Arnold, 486 F.3d 177 (6th Cir. 2007), 49, 517
- United States v. Ary, 518 F.3d 775 (10th Cir. 2008), 213, 218, 223
- United States v. Aspinall, 389 F.3d 332 (2d Cir. 2004), p. 12
- United States v. Astorga-Torres, 682 F.2d 1331 (9th Cir. 1982), 11
- United States v. AT&T, 498 F. Supp. 353 (D.D.C. 1980), 77
- United States v. Atkins, 558 F.2d 133 (3d Cir. 1977), 355
- United States v. Avants, 367 F.3d 433 (5th Cir. 2004), 289, 292
- United States v. Aviles-Colon, 536 F.3d 1 (1st Cir. 2008), 98, 100, 108
- United States v. Bachsian, 4 F.3d 796 (9th Cir. 1993), 348
- United States v. Badalamenti, 794 F.2d 821 (2d Cir. 1986), 174
- United States v. Bagley, 537 U.S. 162 (5th Cir. 1976), 306
- United States v. Bagnell, 679 F.2d 826 (11th Cir. 1982), 428
- United States v. Bagnell, 679 F.2d 826 (11th Cir. 1982), 429
- United States v. Bailey, 581 F.2d 341 (3d Cir. 1978), 339, 348, 356
- United States v. Baker, 693 F.2d 183 (D.C. Cir. 1982), 213, 223
- United States v. Baker, 985 F.2d 1248 (4th Cir. 1993), 348
- United States v. Banks, 514 F.3d 769 (8th Cir. 2008), 352, 353
- United States v. Barlow, 693 F.2d 954 (6th Cir. 1982), 343
- United States v. Barone, 114 F.3d 1284 (1st Cir. 1997), 307, 314, 315
- United States v. Barrett, 539 F.2d 244 (1st Cir. 1976), 306, 307, 309, 311
- United States v. Barrett, 8 F.3d 1296 (8th Cir. 1993), 190
- United States v. Barror, 20 M.J. 501 (A.F.C.M.R. 1985), 368, 531
- United States v. Bartelho, 129 F.3d 663 (1st Cir. 1997), 135, 285, 289
- United States v. Becker, 230 F.3d 1224 (10th Cir. 2000), 404, 460, 461, 492
- United States v. Beckham, 968 F.2d 47 (D.C. Cir. 1992), 84, 475
- United States v. Bedonie, 913 F.2d 782 (10th Cir. 1990), 509
- United States v. Benavente Gomez, 921 F.2d 378 (1st Cir. 1990), 348, 350
- United States v. Bennett, 363 F.3d 947 (9th Cir. 2004), p. 217
- United States v. Bercier, 506 F.3d 625 (8th Cir. 2007), p. 59
- United States v. Best, 219 F.3d 192 (2d Cir. 2000), 174
- United States v. Beverly, 369 F.3d 516 (6th Cir. 2004), p. 155
- United States v. Bigelow, 914 F.2d 966 (7th Cir. 1990), 463
- United States v. Blackburn, 992 F.2d 666 (7th Cir. 1993), 215
- United States v. Bloome, 773 F.Supp. 545 (E.D.N.Y. 1991), 116
- United States v. Bobo, 994 F.2d 524 (8th Cir. 1993), 312, 313
- United States v. Bolivar, 532 F.3d 599 (7th Cir. 2008), 97
- United States v. Boulware, 384 F.3d 794 (9th Cir. 2004), vacated, 128 S.Ct. 1168 (2008), 248
- United States v. Bowman, 215 F.3d 951 (9th Cir. 2000), 101

- United States v. Boyce, 849 F.2d 833 (3d Cir. 1988), 315
- United States v. Brassard, 212 F.3d 54 (1st Cir. 2000), 468
- United States v. Brito, 427 F.3d 53 (1st Cir. 2005), p. 520
- United States v. Brooke, 4 F.3d 1480 (9th Cir. 1993), 4
- United States v. Brown, 254 F.3d 454 (3d Cir. 2001), 146
- United States v. Brown, 459 F.3d 509 (5th Cir. 2006), 71
- United States v. Brown, 490 F.2d 758 (D.C. Cir. 1973), 492
- United States v. Bucci, 525 F.3d 116 (1st Cir. 2008), 462
- United States v. Burreson, 643 F.2d 1344 (9th Cir. 1981), 463
- United States v. Butler, 71 F.3d 243 (7th Cir. 1995), 312
- United States v. Caballero, 277 F.3d 1235 (10th Cir. 2002), 448, 458
- United States v. Capaldo, 402 F.2d 821 (2d Cir. 1968), 343
- United States v. Cardascia, 951 F.2d 474 (2d Cir. 1991), 135, 172
- United States v. Cardenas, 9 F.3d 1139 (5th Cir. 1993), 459
- United States v. Carlson, 547 F.2d 1346 (8th Cir. 1976), 348
- United States v. Carmine Persico, 832 F.2d 705 (2d Cir. 1987), 99
- United States v. Carson, 455 F.3d 336 (D.C. Cir. 2006), 288
- United States v. Carvalho, 742 F.2d 146 (4th Cir. 1984), 320, 321
- United States v. Casamento, 887 F.2d 1141 (2d Cir. 1989), 315
- United States v. Cazares, 521 F.3d 991 (8th Cir. 2008), 101
- United States v. Chang, 207 F.3d 1169 (9th Cir. 2000), 52
- United States v. Chapman, 345 F.3d 630 (8th Cir. 2003), 273, 310
- United States v. Cherry, 217 F.3d 811 (10th Cir. 2000), 325
- United States v. Childs, 539 F.3d 552 (6th Cir. 2008), 10, 403
- United States v. Cisneos-Gutierrez, 517 F.3d 751 (5th Cir. 2008), 57
- United States v. Clark, 96 U.S. 37 (1877), 335
- United States v. Clarke, 2 F.3d 81 (4th Cir. 1993), 338, 340, 341
- United States v. Cohen, 631 F.2d 1223 (5th Cir. 1980), 168
- United States v. Cole, 488 F.Supp.2d 792 (N.D. Iowa 2007), 307
- United States v. Cole, 525 F.3d 656 (8th Cir. 2008), 313, 315
- United States v. Collicott, 92 F.3d 973 (9th Cir. 1996), 462, 463
- United States v. Colon-Diaz, 521 F.3d 29 (1st Cir. 2008), 496
- United States v. Concepcion Sablan, 555 F. Supp.2d 1205 (D. Colo. 2007), 514
- United States v. Connors, 825 F.2d 1384 (9th Cir. 1987), 49
- United States v. Conroy, 424 F.3d 833 (8th Cir. 2005), p. 63
- United States v. Cooper, 91 F.Supp.2d 79 (D.D.C. 2000), 393
- United States v. Coppola, 526 F.2d 764 (10th Cir. 1975), 91
- United States v. Cordero, 18 F.3d 1248 (5th Cir. 1994), 371
- United States v. Cordova, 157 F.3d 587 (8th Cir. 1998), 101
- United States v. Corey, 207 F.3d 84 (1st Cir. 2000), 434
- United States v. Costa, 31 F.3d 1073 (11th Cir. 1994), 309
- United States v. Costner, 684 F.2d 370 (6th Cir. 1982), 463
- United States v. Cowley, 720 F.2d 1037 (9th Cir. 1983), 371, 465
- United States v. Cree, 778 F.2d 474 (8th Cir. 1985), 367, 368–369
- United States v. Cromer, 389 F.3d 662 (6th Cir. 2004), 521
- United States v. Cucuzzella, 66 M.J. 57 (C.A.A.F. 2008), 187, 192, 193, 195
- United States v. Curry, 187 F.3d 762 (7th Cir. 1999), 101
- United States v. Czachorowski, 66 M.J. 432 (U.S. Armed Forces 2008), 357

- United States v. Daulton, 266 Fed. Appx. 381, 387 (6th Cir. 2008), 532
- United States v. Davis, 170 F.3d 617 (6th Cir. 1999), 211
- United States v. Davis, 40 F.3d 1069 (10th Cir. 1994), 434
- United States v. Davis, 571 F.2d 1354 (5th Cir. 1978), 350
- United States v. Davis, 792 F.2d 1299 (5th Cir. 1986), 49
- United States v. Davis, 826 F.Supp. 617 (D.R.I. 1993), 225
- United States v. De Bright, 730 F.2d 1155 (9th Cir. 1989), 173, 176
- United States v. De La Cruz, 514 F.3d 121, (1st Cir. 2008), 428, 524
- United States v. DeCastris, 798 F.2d 261 (7th Cir. 1986), 449
- United States v. DeCastris, 798 F.2d 261 (7th Cir. 1986), 449
- United States v. DeGeorgia, 420 F.2d 889 (9th Cir. 1969), 217
- United States v. Demjanjuk, 367 F.3d 623 (6th Cir. 2004), 255
- United States v. Dennis, 497 F.3d 765 (7th Cir. 2007), 71, 120
- United States v. DeNoyer, 811 F.2d 436 (8th Cir. 1987), 367, 531
- United States v. Dent, 984 F.2d 1453 (7th Cir. 1993), 342
- United States v. Dhinsa, 243 F.3d 635 (2d Cir. 2001), 323, 324, 329
- United States v. Dickerson, 248 F.3d 1036 (11th Cir. 2001), 218
- United States v. DiDomenico, 78 F.3d 294 (7th Cir. 1996), 102, 103
- United States v. DiNapoli, 8 F.3d 909 (2d Cir. 1993), 285, 286, 287–288
- United States v. Distler, 671 F.2d 954 (6th Cir. 1981), 57
- United States v. Doerr, 886 F.2d 944 (7th Cir. 1989), 101, 356
- United States v. Dolah, 245 F.3d 98 (2d Cir. 2001), 271
- United States v. Donlon, 909 F.2d 650 (1st Cir. 1990), 337, 342, 343, 344
- United States v. Dorian, 803 F.2d 1439 (8th Cir. 1986), 361
- United States v. Dotson, 821 F.2d 1034 (5th Cir. 1987), 90
- United States v. Doyle, 130 F.3d 523 (2d Cir. 1997), 231, 234
- United States v. Drogoul, 1 F.3d 1546 (11th Cir. 1993), 393
- United States v. Drury, 396 F.3d 1303 (11th Cir. 2005), p. 58
- United States v. Duncan, 919 F.2d 981 (5th Cir. 1990), 79
- United States v. Duran Samaniego, 345 F.3d 1280 (11th Cir. 2003), 167
- United States v. Durham, 464 F.3d 976 (9th Cir. 2006), 458
- United States v. Earles, 113 F.3d 796 (8th Cir. 1997), 340, 342
- United States v. Edwards, 159 F.3d 1117 (8th Cir. 1998), 463
- United States v. Eiland, 71 Fed.R.Evid.Serv. (Callaghan) 455, (D.C.D.C. 2006), 458
- United States v. Elekwachi, 1997 U.S. App. LEXIS 6381, *9–10 (9th Cir. April 2, 1997), 454, 456
- United States v. Ellis, 121 F.3d 908 (4th Cir. 1997), 60
- United States v. Ellis, 460 F.3d 920 (7th Cir.2006), 523
- United States v. Emery, 186 F.3d 921 (8th Cir. 1999), 324
- United States v. Emmert, 829 F.2d 805 (9th Cir. 1987), 168
- United States v. Emuegbunam, 268 F.3d 377 (6th Cir. 2001), 98, 99
- United States v. Engler, 521 F.3d 965 (8th Cir. 2008), 70, 106
- United States v. Enterline, 894 F.2d 287 (8th Cir. 1990), 230, 240
- United States v. Ettinger, 344 F.3d 1149 (11th Cir. 2003), 61, 63
- United States v. Evans, 216 F.3d 80 (D.C. Cir. 2000), 32, 419, 460, 461
- United States v. Evans, 635 F.2d 1124 (4th Cir. 1980), 310
- United States v. Faison, 679 F.2d 292 (3d Cir. 1982), 272
- United States v. Farmer, 543 F.3d 363 (7th Cir. Sept. 9, 2008), 428

- United States v. Faulkner, 439 F.3d 1221 (10th Cir. 2006), 52
- United States v. Ferber, 966 F.Supp. 90 (D. Mass. 1997), 151, 216, 473
- United States v. Fernandez, 892 F.2d 976 (11th Cir. 1989), 352, 489
- United States v. Finley, 708 F.Supp. 906 (N.D. Ill. 1989), 87, 112
- United States v. Firishchak, 468 F.3d 1015 (7th Cir. 2006), 256, 337, 472, 473
- United States v. Flecha, 539 F.2d 874 (2d Cir. 1976), 92
- United States v. Fontenot, 14 F.3d 1364 (9th Cir. 1994), 167
- United States v. Fowlie, 24 F.3d 1059 (9th Cir. 1994), 306
- United States v. Franklin, 235 F.Supp. 338 (D.D.C. 1964), 289
- United States v. Freundlich, 95 F.2d 376 (2d Cir. 1938), 343
- United States v. Fujii, 152 F.Supp.2d 942 (N.D. Ill. 2000), 307, 314
- United States v. Fuller, 162 F.3d 256 (4th Cir. 1998), 326
- United States v. Gabe, 237 F.3d 954 (8th Cir. 2001), 134
- United States v. Gajo, 290 F.3d 922 (7th Cir. 2002), 57
- United States v. Gallagher, 57 Fed. Appx. 622 (6th Cir. 2003), 462
- United States v. Garcia, 413 F.3d 201 (2d Cir. 2005), 458
- United States v. Garcia, 994 F.2d 1499 (10th Cir. 1993), 450
- United States v. Gardner, 447 F.3d 558 (8th Cir. 2006), 101
- United States v. Garland, 991 F.2d 328 (6th Cir. 1993), 239
- United States v. Garth, 540 F.3d 766 (8th Cir. 2008), 221
- United States v. Garza, 435 F.3d 73 (1st Cir. 2006), 71
- United States v. George, 960 F.2d 97 (9th Cir. 1992), 188
- United States v. Gil, 58 F.3d 1414 (9th Cir. 1995), 141
- United States v. Gil, 604 F.2d 546 (7th Cir. 1979), 108
- United States v. Goins, 11 F.3d 441 (4th Cir. 1993), 109, 117
- United States v. Goins, 11 F.3d 441 (4th Cir. 1993), 505
- United States v. Goldberg, 105 F.3d 770 (1st Cir. 1997), 68, 102
- United States v. Goldberg, 538 F.3d 280 (3d Cir. 2008), 532
- United States v. Gomez, 67 F.3d 1515 (10th Cir. 1995), 428
- United States v. Gomez, 939 F.2d 326 (6th Cir. 1991), 337, 342, 343
- United States v. Gonzalez, 533 F.3d 1057, 1061 (9th Cir. 2008), 59
- United States v. Gonzalez, 559 F.2d 1271 (5th Cir. 1997), 345
- United States v. Gonzalez-Lopez, 548 U.S. 140, 148 (2006), 532
- United States v. Goosby, 523 F.3d 632 (6th Cir. 2008), 410
- United States v. Grady, 544 F.2d 598 (2d Cir. 1976), 238
- United States v. Grant, 38 M.J. 684 (USAF Ct. Mil. Rev. 1993), 337, 352
- United States v. Grant, 56 M.J. 410 (C.A.A.F. 2002), 223
- United States v. Grassi, 783 F.2d 1572 (11th Cir. 1986), 411
- United States v. Gray, 405 F.3d 227 (4th Cir. 2005), 323
- United States v. Green, 180 F.3d 216 (5th Cir. 1999), 100
- United States v. Green, 258 F.3d 683 (7th Cir. 2001), 60, 486
- United States v. Green, 541 F.3d 176 (8th Cir. 2008), 138, 150
- United States v. Gresham, 118 F.3d 258 (5th Cir. 1997), 431, 434
- United States v. Griham, 76 Fed. R. Evid. Serv. 761, 764 (11th Cir. 2008), 61
- United States v. Grooms, 978 F.2d 425 (8th Cir. 1992), 368, 369
- United States v. Guevara, 598 F.2d 1094 (7th Cir. 1979), 348
- United States v. Hajda, 135 F.3d 439 (7th Cir. 1998), 251, 258
- United States v. Hale, 422 U.S. 171 (1975), 91

- United States v. Hale, 978 F.2d 1016 (8th Cir. 1992), 243
- United States v. Hall, 165 F.3d 1095 (7th Cir. 1999), 313, 314
- United States v. Hanson, 994 F.2d 403 (7th Cir. 1993), 123
- United States v. Harper, 463 F.3d 663 (7th Cir. 2006), 407
- United States v. Harris, 542 F.2d 1283 (7th Cir. 1976), 98, 99, 123
- United States v. Harris, 942 F.2d 1125 (7th Cir. 1991), 120, 492, 495, 496
- United States v. Hartmann, 958 F.2d 774 (7th Cir. 1991), 171, 174, 404
- United States v. Harvey, 959 F.2d 1371 (7th Cir. 1992), 419
- United States v. Hayes, 190 F.3d 939 (9th Cir. 1999), 393
- United States v. Hebeke, 25 F.3d 287 (6th Cir. 1994), 62
- United States v. Hedgcoth, 873 F.2d 1307, 1313 (9th Cir. 1989), 419
- United States v. Hendircks, 395 F.3d 173 (3d Cir. 2005), 521
- United States v. Heppner, 519 F.3d 744 (8th Cir. 2008), 71
- United States v. Hernandez, 105 F.3d 1330 (9th Cir. 1997), 321
- United States v. Hernandez, 750 F.2d 1256 (5th Cir. 1985), 417
- United States v. Hernandez-Mejia, 2007 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 54792, *29 (D. N.M. April 30, 2007), 443
- United States v. Hilario-Hilario, 529 F.3d 65 (1st Cir. 2008), 452
- United States v. Hitt, 981 F.2d 422 (9th Cir. 1992), 4
- United States v. Hogan, 886 F.2d 1497 (7th Cir. 1989), 176
- United States v. Hong, 545 F.Supp.2d 281 (W.D. N.Y. 2008), 349
- United States v. Hoosier, 542 F.2d 687 (6th Cir. 1976), 82
- United States v. Houlihan, 92 F.3d 1271 (1st Cir. 1996), 323, 324, 462, 482
- United States v. Hubbard, 22 F.3d 1410 (7th Cir. 1994), 99
- United States v. Hughes, 970 F.2d 227 (7th Cir. 1992), 170
- United States v. Humphrey, 279 F.3d 372 (6th Cir. 2002), 203
- United States v. Hutchings, 751 F.2d 239 (8th Cir.), 393
- United States v. Iaconetti, 406 F.Supp. 554 (E.D.N.Y.), 347, 348
- United States v. IBM Corp., 90 F.R.D. 377 (S.D.N.Y. 1981), 389
- United States v. Iglesias, 535 F.3d 150 (3d Cir. 2008), 56
- United States v. Innamorati, 996 F.2d 456 (1st Cir. 1993), 305
- United States v. Iron Shell, 633 F.2d 77 (8th Cir. 1980), 185, 197, 198
- United States v. Ironi, 525 F.3d 683 (8th Cir. 2008), 313
- United States v. Jackson, 540 F.3d 578 (7th Cir. 2008), 313
- United States v. Jackson-Randolph, 282 F.3d 369 (6th Cir. 2002), 235, 236, 272
- United States v. Jahagirdar, 466 F.3d 149 (1st Cir. 2006), 154, 155, 158, 159
- United States v. Jiminez Recio, 537 U.S. 270 (2003), 100
- United States v. Jinadu, 98 F.3d 239 (6th Cir. 1996), 87, 112
- United States v. Joe, 8 F.3d 1488 (10th Cir. 1993), 167, 168, 169, 177, 197
- United States v. Johnson, 219 F.3d 349 (4th Cir. 2000), 323
- United States v. Johnson, 28 F.3d 1487 (8th Cir. 1994), 428, 453
- United States v. Johnson, 495 F.2d 1097 (5th Cir. 1974), 203
- United States v. Johnson, 575 F.2d 1347 (5th Cir. 1978), 429, 453
- United States v. Jones, 124 F.3d 781 (6th Cir. 1997), 312
- United States v. Jones, 29 F.3d 1529 (11th Cir. 1994), 228
- United States v. Jones, 482 F.2d 747 (D.C. Cir. 1973), 509
- United States v. Jordan 810 F.2d 262 (D.C. Cir. 1987), 87, 112

- United States v. Juvenile NB, 59 F.3d 771 (8th Cir. 1995), 355, 368
- United States v. Kairys, 782 F.2d 1374 (7th Cir. 1986), 255
- United States v. Kaplan, 490 F.3d 110 (2d Cir. 2007), 450
- United States v. Kappell, 418 F.3d 550 (6th Cir. 2005), 186, 188, 194
- United States v. Kelinson, 205 F.2d 600 (2d Cir. 1953), 343
- United States v. Kelley, 36 F.3d 1118 (D.C. Cir. 1994), 393
- United States v. Kelley, 446 F.3d 688 (7th Cir. 2006), 514
- United States v. Kelly, 436 F.3d 992 (8th Cir. 2006), 509
- United States v. Kenyon, 481 F.3d 1054 (8th Cir. 2007), 13, 149
- United States v. Khoury, 901 F.2d 948 (11th Cir. 1990), 116, 501
- United States v. Kilcullen, 546 F.2d 435 (1st Cir. 1976), 448
- United States v. Kimball, 15 F.3d 54 (5th Cir. 1994), 271
- United States v. King, 713 F.2d 627 (11th Cir. 1983), 4
- United States v. Koziy, 728 F.2d 1314 (11th Cir. 1984), 254, 255, 257
- United States v. L.E. Cooke Co., 991 F.2d 336 (6th Cir. 1993), 437
- United States v. Lafferty, 503 F.3d 293 (3d Cir. 2007), 92
- United States v. Lamons, 532 F.3d 1251 (11th Cir. 2008), 15, 514
- United States v. Lanci, 669 F.2d 391 (6th Cir. 1982), 501,
- United States v. Lang, 589 F.2d 92 (2d Cir. 1978), 117, 306
- United States v. Lara, 181 F.3d 183 (1st Cir. 1999), 104
- United States v. Laster, 258 F.3d 525 (6th Cir. 2001), 339, 341, 342
- United States v. Lawrence, 349 F.3d 109 (3d Cir. 2003), 147, 296, 335, 355
- United States v. Lechoco, 542 F.2d 84 (D.C. Cir. 1976), 194
- United States v. LeClair, 338 F.3d 882 (8th Cir. 2003), 434
- United States v. Lentz, 524 F.3d 501 (4th Cir. 2008), 462
- United States v. Leo, 941 F.2d 181 (3d Cir. 1991), 455
- United States v. LeShore, 543 F.3d 935 (7th Cir. 2008), 213, 219
- United States v. Levy, 904 F.2d 1026 (6th Cir. 1990), 467, 468
- United States v. Lindemann, 85 F.3d 1232 (7th Cir. 1996), 117
- United States v. Liu, 960 F.2d 449 (5th Cir. 1992), 167, 169
- United States v. Locascio, 6 F.3d 924 (2d Cir. 1993), 430, 434
- United States v. Loggins, 486 F.3d 977 (7th Cir. 2007), 306
- United States v. Long, 905 F.2d 1572 (D.C. Cir. 1990), 12
- United States v. Lopez, 271 F.3d 472 (3d Cir. 2001), 65, 66
- United States v. Lopez, 937 F.2d 716 (2d Cir. 1991), 371
- United States v. Love, 521 F.3d 1007 (8th Cir. 2008), 404, 410
- United States v. Love, 767 F.2d 1052 (4th Cir. 1985), 461
- United States v. Loyola-Dominguez, 125 F.3d 1315 (9th Cir. 1997), 225
- United States v. Lykes Bros. Steamship Co., 432 F.2d 1076 (5th Cir. 1970), 234, 238
- United States v. Lyon, 567 F.2d 777 (8th Cir. 1977), 361
- United States v. Mackey, 117 F.3d 24 (1st Cir. 1997), 233, 311, 313, 314
- United States v. Mancillas, 580 F.2d 1301 (7th Cir. 1978), 16, 25, 461, 491
- United States v. Manfre, 368 F.3d 832 (8th Cir. 2004), 404
- United States v. Mangan, 575 F.2d 32 (2d Cir. 1978), 265
- United States v. Marchese, 842 F.Supp. 1307 (D. Colo. 1994), 392
- United States v. Marchini, 797 F.2d 759 (9th Cir. 1986), 342
- United States v. Marcy, 814 F.Supp. 670 (N.D. Ill. 1992), 493

- United States v. Marino, 658 F.2d 1120 (6th Cir. 1981), 85
- United States v. Marrowbone, 211 F.3d 452 (8th Cir. 2000), 150
- United States v. Martinez, 430 F.3d 317 (6th Cir. 2005), p. 103
- United States v. Martino, 648 F.2d 367 (5th Cir. 1981), 509
- United States v. Mastrangelo, 693 F.2d 269 (2d Cir. 1982), 328
- United States v. Mathis, 559 F.2d 294 (5th Cir. 1977), 360
- United States v. Matlock, 109 F.3d 1313 (8th Cir. 1997), 56
- United States v. Matta-Ballesteros, 71 F.3d 754 (9th Cir. 1995), 193
- United States v. Mayberry, 540 F.3d 506 (6th Cir. 2008), 56, 345
- United States v. Mazloun, 563 F.Supp.2d 779 (N.D. Ohio 2008), p. 168
- United States v. McDaniel, 398 F.3d 540 (6th Cir. 2005), p. 72
- United States v. McGuire, 307 F.3d 1192 (9th Cir. 2002), 272
- United States v. McKeeve, 131 F.3d 1 (1st Cir. 1997), 394
- United States v. McPartlin, 595 F.2d 1321 (7th Cir. 1979), 337, 353
- United States v. McPike, 512 F.3d 1052 (8th Cir. 2008), 147, 149
- United States v. Medico, 557 F.2d 309 (2d Cir. 1977), 347
- United States v. Medina-Gasca, 739 F.2d 1415 (9th Cir. 1984), 321
- United States v. Mendez, 514 F.3d 1035 (10th Cir. 2008), 514, 521
- United States v. Mendoza, 85 F.3d 1347 (8th Cir. 1996), 315
- United States v. Meserve, 271 F.3d 314 (1st Cir. 2001), 407, 418
- United States v. Meyer, 113 F.2d 387 (7th Cir. 1940), 234
- United States v. Meza-Urtado, 351 F.3d 301 (7th Cir. 2003), 57
- United States v. Miles, 290 F.3d 1341 (11th Cir. 2002), 101, 285
- United States v. Milkiewicz, 470 F.3d 390 (1st Cir. 2006), 439
- United States v. Miller, 904 F.2d 65 (D.C. Cir. 1990), 290
- United States v. Mitchell, 145 F.3d 572 (3d Cir. 1998), 339
- United States v. Mitchell, 502 F.3d 931 (9th Cir. 2007), 462
- United States v. Mobley, 421 F.2d 345 (5th Cir. 1970), 136, 298
- United States v. Montana, 199 F.3d 947 (7th Cir. 1999), 402
- United States v. Monteleone, 257 F.3d 210 (2d Cir. 2001), 99
- United States v. Moore, 791 F.2d 566 (7th Cir. 1986), 151
- United States v. Moreno, 233 F.3d 937 (7th Cir. 2000), 403
- United States v. Mouzin, 785 F.2d 682 (9th Cir. 1986), 97, 98
- United States v. Munoz, 16 F.3d 1116 (11th Cir. 1994), 349
- United States v. Munoz-Franco, 487 F.3d 24 (1st Cir. 2007), p. 458
- United States v. Murdock, 290 U.S. 389 (1933), 326
- United States v. Murphy, 193 F.3d 1 (1st Cir. 1999), 104
- United States v. Muscato, 534 F.Supp. 969 (E.D.N.Y. 1982), 407, 421
- United States v. Napier, 518 F.2d 316 (9th Cir.), 149, 154, 508
- United States v. Narciso, 446 F.Supp. 252 (E.D. Mich.1977), 198
- United States v. Natson, 469 F.Supp.2d 1243 (M.D. Ga. 2006), 177, 178
- United States v. Nazemian, 948 F.2d 522 (9th Cir. 1991), 371
- United States v. Neeley, 25 M.J. 105, 107 (U.S. C.M.A. 1987), 440
- United States v. Nelson, 530 F.Supp.2d 719 (D. Md. 2008), 97
- United States v. Nettles, 476 F.3d 508 (7th Cir. 2007), 521
- United States v. Newell, 315 F.3d 510 (5th Cir. 2002), 168, 172
- United States v. New-Form Mfg. Co., 277 F.Supp. 2d 1313 (Ct. Int'l Trade 2003), 465

- United States v. Nick, 604 F.2d 1199 (9th Cir. 1979), 198, 369, 507
- United States v. Nigao, 656 F.Supp. 1499 (D.N.J. 1987), 343
- United States v. Nixon, 418 U.S. 683, 701 (1974), 107
- United States v. Nnanyererugo, 39 F.3d 1205 (D.C. Cir. 1994), 114, 502
- United States v. Nutter, 22 M.J. 727 (U.S. Army Ct. of Mil. Rev. 1986), 315
- United States v. Oates, 560 F.2d 45 (2d Cir. 1977), 240, 347
- United States v. Obayagbona, 627 F.Supp. 329 (E.D.N.Y. 1985), 347, 449
- United States v. Odom, 736 F.2d 104 (4th Cir. 1984), 509
- United States v. Omar, 104 F.3d 519 (1st Cir. 1997), 284, 290
- United States v. Omene, 143 F.3d 1167 (9th Cir. 1998), 393
- United States v. One 1968 Piper Navajo Twin Engine Aircraft, 594 F.2d 1040 (5th Cir. 1979), 346
- United States v. One Star, 979 F.2d 1319 (8th Cir. 1992), 305
- United States v. Orellana-Blanco, 294 F.3d 1143, 1148 (9th Cir. 2002), 83
- United States v. Orozco, 590 F.2d 789 (9th Cir. 1979), 237
- United States v. Ortega, 203 F.3d 675 (9th Cir. 2000), 462, 463
- United States v. Osyp Firishchak, 468 F.3d 1015, 1022 (7th Cir. 2006), 256
- United States v. Owens, 484 U.S. 554 (1988), 56, 60, 67, 239, 272, 527
- United States v. Pacheco, 154 F.3d 1236 (10th Cir. 1998), 185
- United States v. Page, 521 F.3d 101 (1st Cir. 2008), 87, 89
- United States v. Palow, 777 F.2d 52 (1st Cir. 1985), 98
- United States v. Pang, 362 F.3d 1187 (9th Cir. 2004), 403
- United States v. Parsee, 178 F.3d 374 (5th Cir. 1999), 219
- United States v. Paxson, 861 F.2d 730 (D.C. Cir. 1988), 76
- United States v. Payne, 437 F.3d 540 (6th Cir. 2006), 97, 101–103, 483
- United States v. Peacock, 654 F.2d 339 (5th Cir. 1981), 138
- United States v. Pecora, 798 F.2d 614 (3d Cir. 1986), 102
- United States v. Pelullo, 964 F.2d 193 (3d Cir. 1992), 337
- United States v. Pena-Gutierrez, 222 F.3d 1080 (9th Cir. 1999), 273, 320
- United States v. Pendas-Martinez, 845 F.2d 938 (11th Cir. 1988), 463
- United States v. Peneaux, 432 F.3d 882 (8th Cir. 2005), 197, 346
- United States v. Peoples, 250 F.3d 630 (8th Cir. 2001), 325, 326
- United States v. Perez, 989 F.2d 1574 (10th Cir. 1993), 100
- United States v. Perez-Ruiz, 353 F.3d 1 (1st Cir. 2003) 52, 100, 527
- United States v. Peterson, 100 F.3d 7 (2d Cir. 1996), 271
- United States v. Pheaster, 544 F.2d 353 (9th Cir. 1976), 171
- United States v. Pheaster, 544 F.2d 353 (9th Cir. 1976), 174
- United States v. Phelps, 168 F.3d 1048 (8th Cir. 1999), 147
- United States v. Phillips, 219 F.3d 404 (5th Cir. 2000), 101
- United States v. Pinto-Mejia, 720 F.2d 248 (2d Cir. 1983), 243
- United States v. Poitierr, 623 F.2d 1017 (5th Cir. 1980), 98
- United States v. Ponticelli, 622 F.2d 985 (9th Cir. 1980), 173, 176
- United States v. Porter, 986 F.2d 1014 (6th Cir. 1992), 202, 209
- United States v. Portsmouth Paving Corp., 694 F.2d 312 (4th Cir. 1982), 75, 139
- United States v. Posada-Rios, 158 F.3d 832 (5th Cir. 1998), 411
- United States v. Pratt, 239 F.3d 640 (4th Cir. 2001), 99
- United States v. Preston, 608 F.2d 626 (5th Cir. 1979), 326

- United States v. Prevatte, 16 F.3d 767 (7th Cir. 1994), 77
- United States v. Price, 265 F.3d 1097 (10th Cir. 2001), 329
- United States v. Prieto, 232 F.3d 816 (11th Cir. 2000), 63
- United States v. Qualls, 553 F. Supp. 2d 241, 242 (E.D.N.Y. 2008), 522
- United States v. Quinones, 511 F.3d 289, 311–12 (2d Cir. 2007), 176
- United States v. Ramos, 45 F.3d 1519 (11th Cir. 1995), 393
- United States v. Ramos, 725 F.2d 1322 (11th Cir. 1984), 441
- United States v. Ramos-Caraballo, 375 F.3d 797, 803 (8th Cir. 2004), 463
- United States v. Rappy 157 F.2d 964 (2d Cir. 1946), 206
- United States v. Ray, 530 F.3d 666 (8th Cir. 2008), 514
- United States v. Reed, 167 F.3d 987 (6th Cir. 1999), 76
- United States v. Regner, 677 F.2d 754 (9th Cir. 1982), 238
- United States v. Renville, 779 F.2d 430 (8th Cir. 1985), 198
- United States v. Rettenberger, 344 F.3d 702 (7th Cir. 2003), 408
- United States v. Reyes, 239 F.R.D. 591 (N.D. Cal. 2006), 200
- United States v. Riccardi, 174 F.2d 883 (3d Cir. 1949), 204
- United States v. Richards, 204 F.3d 177 (5th Cir. 2000), 475
- United States v. Richards, 967 F.2d 1189 (8th Cir. 1992), 305
- United States v. Richardson, 537 F.3d 951, 960 (8th Cir. 2008), 526
- United States v. Riley, 236 F.3d 982 (8th Cir. 2001), 218
- United States v. Rioux, 97 F.3d 648 (2d Cir. 1996), 75
- United States v. Rittweger, 524 F.3d 171 (2d Cir. 2008), 532
- United States v. Rivera, 412 F.3d 562 (4th Cir. 2005), 329
- United States v. Rodriguez, 525 F.3d 85 (1st Cir. 2008), 100
- United States v. Rouse, 111 F.3d 561 (8th Cir. 1997), 367, 531
- United States v. Rubin, 591 F.2d 278 (5th Cir.), 407
- United States v. Ruffin, 12 M.J. 952 (USAF Ct. Mil. Rev. 1981), 354
- United States v. Ruiz, 249 F.3d 643 (7th Cir. 2001), 62, 135, 139, 144, 145
- United States v. Running Horse, 175 F.3d 635 (8th Cir. 1999), 461
- United States v. Saccoccia, 58 F.3d 754 (1st Cir. 1995), 109
- United States v. Sadler, 234 F.3d 368 (8th Cir. 2000), 56, 60, 64
- United States v. Safavian, 435 F.Supp.2d 36 (D.C. D.C. 2006), 409
- United States v. Saks, 964 F.2d 1514 (5th Cir. 1992), 76
- United States v. Salameh, 152 F.3d 88 (2d Cir. 1988), 67
- United States v. Salerno, 505 U.S. 317 (1992), 283, 284, 290, 343
- United States v. Salgado, 250 F.3d 438 (6th Cir. 2001), 100, 101, 217, 218
- United States v. Samaniego, 187 F.3d 1222 (10th Cir. 1999), 49
- United States v. Samaniego, 345 F.3d 1280 (11th Cir. 2003), 166, 273, 338, 472
- United States v. Sanders, 749 F.2d 195 (5th Cir. 1984), 79
- United States v. Sarmiento-Perez, 633 F.2d 1092 (5th Cir. 1981), 313
- United States v. Satterfield, 572 F.2d 687, 691 n.1 (9th Cir. 1978), 306
- United States v. Schaff, 948 F.2d 501 (9th Cir. 1991), 92
- United States v. Schalk, 515 F.3d 768 (7th Cir. 2008), 87, 100
- United States v. Schoenborn, 4 F.3d 1424 (7th Cir. 1993), 207
- United States v. Scirma, 819 F.2d 996 (11th Cir. 1987), 419
- United States v. Sears, 663 F.2d 896 (9th Cir. 1981), 95
- United States v. Seguro-Gallegos, 41 F.3d 1266 (9th Cir. 1994), 102
- United States v. Senak, 257 F.2d 129 (7th Cir. 1975), 208

- United States v. Sesay, 313 F.3d 591 (D.C. Cir. 2002), 419
- United States v. Sheets, 125 F.R.D. 172 (D. Utah 1989), 341, 372
- United States v. Shores, 33 F.3d 438 (4th Cir. 1994), 101, 103,
- United States v. Short, 790 F.2d 464 (6th Cir. 1986), 49
- United States v. Shoup, 476 F.3d 38 (1st Cir. 2007), 141
- United States v. Shryock, 342 F.3d 948 (9th Cir. 2003), 66, 306
- United States v. Siddiqui, 235 F.3d 1318 (11th Cir. 2000), 18, 71, 394
- United States v. Silverstein, 732 F.2d 1338 (7th Cir. 1984), 313
- United States v. Simonelli, 237 F.3d 19 (1st Cir. 2001), 60
- United States v. Smith, 197 F.3d 225 (6th Cir. 1999), 208
- United States v. Smith, 354 F.3d 390 (5th Cir. 2003), 403
- United States v. Smith, 520 F.2d 1245 (8th Cir. 1975), 98, 100
- United States v. Smith, 893 F.2d 1573 (9th Cir. 1989), 62, 63
- United States v. Smith, 893 F.2d 1573 (9th Cir. 1990), 98
- United States v. Smithers, 212 F.3d 306 (6th Cir. 2000), 4
- United States v. Socony-Vacuum Oil Co., 310 U.S. 150 (1940), 204, 206
- United States v. Spano, 421 F.3d 599 (7th Cir. 2005), 235
- United States v. Squillacote, 221 F.3d 542 (4th Cir. 2000), 231
- United States v. Stelmokas, 100 F.3d 302 (3d Cir. 1996), 256
- United States v. Stone, 222 F.R.D. 334 (E.D. Tenn. 2004), 434
- United States v. Sumner, 204 F.3d 1182 (8th Cir. 2000), 190
- United States v. Sutton, 801 F.2d 1346 (D.C. Cir. 1986), 462
- United States v. Taggart, 944 F.2d 837 (11th Cir. 1991), 315
- United States v. Tann, 425 F. Supp. 2d 26 (D.D.C. 2006), 402
- United States v. Tannehill, 49 F.3d 1049 (5th Cir. 1995), 289
- United States v. Taplin, 954 F.2d 1256 (6th Cir. 1992), 283, 284, 287
- United States v. Taylor, 802 F.2d 1108 (9th Cir. 1986), 105
- United States v. Thevis, 84 F.R.D. 57 (N.D. Ga. 1979), 294
- United States v. Thomas, 571 F.2d 285 (5th Cir. 1978), 307
- United States v. Thomas, 62 F.3d 1332 (11th Cir. 1995), 315
- United States v. Thompson, 449 F.3d 267 (1st Cir. 2006), 101
- United States v. Tietjen, 264 F.3d 391 (4th Cir. 2001), 271
- United States v. Tocco, 135 F.3d 116 (2d Cir. 1998), 91
- United States v. Tocco, 200 F.3d 401 (6th Cir. 2000), 309
- United States v. Tolliver, 454 F.3d 660 (7th Cir. 2006), 71
- United States v. Tolliver, 61 F.3d 1189 (5th Cir. 1995), *vacated on other grounds*, *Sterling v. United States*, 516 U.S. 1105 (1996), 295
- United States v. Tome, 61 F.3d 1446 (10th Cir. 1995), 180, 355, 356
- United States v. Torres, 519 F.2d 723 (2d Cir. 1975), 83, 89
- United States v. Townley, 472 F.3d 1267 (10th Cir. 2007), 99
- United States v. Townsend, 206 Fed.Appx. 444 (6th Cir. 2006), 72
- United States v. Tracy, 12 F.3d 1186 (2d Cir. 1993), 108
- United States v. Turner, 104 F.3d 217 (8th Cir. 1997), 264
- United States v. Turner, 104 F.3d 217 (8th Cir. 1997), 264
- United States v. Two Shields, 497 F.3d 789 (8th Cir. 2007), 49, 353, 354, 355
- United States v. Tyler, 281 F.3d 84 (3d Cir. 2002), 404, 410
- United States v. Udey, 748 F.2d 1231 (8th Cir. 1984), 181, 271, 419
- United States v. Urena, 27 F.3d 1487 (10th Cir.), 108

- United States v. Vasilakos, 508 F.3d 401 (6th Cir. 2007), 71
- United States v. Vazquez, 857 F.2d 864 (1st Cir. 1988), 105
- United States v. Vespe, 868 F.3d 1328 (3d Cir. 1989), 381
- United States v. Vest, 842 F.2d 1319 (1st Cir. 1988), 63
- United States v. Vigneau, 187 F.3d 70 (1st Cir. 1999), 223
- United States v. Vretta, 790 F.2d 651 (7th Cir. 1986), 349, 352, 353
- United States v. Washington, 106 F.3d 983 (D.C. Cir. 1997), 339
- United States v. Washington, 398 F.3d 225 (4th Cir. 2007), 514
- United States v. Watson, 525 F.3d 583 (7th Cir. 2008), 105, 305, 306, 307, 309, 310
- United States v. Weinstock, 863 F.Supp. 1529 (D. Utah 1994), 66, 245, 247–249
- United States v. Wells, 262 F.3d 455, 462 (5th Cir. 2001), 213
- United States v. Welsh, 774 F.2d 670 (4th Cir. 1985), 360
- United States v. Wesela, 223 F.3d 656 (7th Cir. 2000), 146, 148, 158
- United States v. West, 574 F.2d 1131 (4th Cir. 1978), 347
- United States v. Westbrook, 896 F.2d 330 (8th Cir. 1990), 453, 458
- United States v. Westry, 524 F.3d. 1198 (11th Cir. 2008), 306
- United States v. Wexler, 522 F.3d 194 (2d Cir. 2008), 309, 315
- United States v. White, 116 F.3d 903 (D.C. Cir. 1997), 327
- United States v. Wilkerson, 84 F.3d 692 (4th Cir. 1996), 462
- United States v. Williams, 212 F.3d 1305 (D.C. Cir. 2000), 437
- United States v. Williams, 272 F.3d 845 (7th Cir. 2001), 55, 57, 101, 348
- United States v. Williams, 571 F.2d 344 (6th Cir. 1978), 133, 207
- United States v. Williams, 697 A.2d 1244 (D.C. Ct. App. 1997), 404
- United States v. Williams, 952 F.2d 1504 (6th Cir. 1991), 411
- United States v. Wilmer, 799 F.2d 495 (9th Cir. 1986), 240
- United States v. Wilson, 107 F.3d 774 (10th Cir. 1997), 461
- United States v. Wilson, 249 F.3d 366 (5th Cir. 2001), 226, 338
- United States v. Wilson, 36 F.Supp.2d 1177 (N.D. Cal. 1999), 286
- United States v. Woolbright, 831 F.2d 1390 (8th Cir. 1987), 463
- United States v. Yakobov, 712 F.2d 20 (2d Cir. 1983), 244
- United States v. Yazzie, 59 F.3d 807 (9th Cir. 1995), 186, 187, 189, 191, 193
- United States v. Yida, 498 F.3d 945 (9th Cir. 2007), 6, 273
- United States v. Young, 105 F.3d 1 (1st Cir. 1997), 61, 62, 478
- United States v. Zarnes, 33 F.3d 1454 (7th Cir. 1994), 99
- United States v. Zenni, 492 F. Supp. 464 (E.D. Ky. 1980), 13
- United States v. Zizzo, 120 F.3d 1338 (7th Cir. 1997), 89, 99, 100, 106
- V**
- Virgin Islands v. Joseph, 162 Fed. Appx. 175 (3d Cir. 2006), 501
- Virgin Islands v. Morris, 191 F.R.D. 82 (D.V.I. 1999), 190, 196
- Virgin Islands v. Riley, 754 F.Supp. 61 (D.V.I. 1991), 272, 386, 507
- W**
- Wade-Greaux v. Whitehall Labs., Inc., 874 F.Supp. 1441 (D. V.I. 1994), 435
- Walters v. Illinois Farmers Ins. Co., 1988 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 17512, *25 (N.D. Ind. May 26, 1988), 249
- Ward v. Dretke, 420 F.3d 479 (5th Cir. 2005), 441
- Ward v. United States, 838 F.2d 182 (6th Cir. 1988), 265
- Washington v. Recuenco, 548 U.S. 212 (2006), 532
- Webb v. Lewis, 44 F.3d 1387 (9th Cir. 1994), 188

Western Tenn. Ch. of Ass'd Builders & Contrs., Inc. v. City of Memphis, 219 F.R.D. 587 (W.D. Tenn. 2004), 458

Wetherill v. University of Chicago, 565 F.Supp. 1553 (N.D. Ill. 1983), 258

Wezorek v. Allstate Ins. Co., 2007 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 45555, *4–5 (E.D. Pa. 2007), 339

Wheat v. United States, 486 U.S. 153, 159, 160 (1988), 531

White v. Illinois, 502 U.S. 346 (1992), 132, 143, 185, 344

Whitfield v. Pathmark Stores, Inc., 1999 U.S. Dist. Lexis 7096 (D. Del. 1999), 194

Wilkinson v. Carnival Cruise Lines, Inc., 920 F.2d 1560 (11th Cir. 1991), 52, 75

Williams v. Consol. City of Jacksonville, 2006 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 8257, * 24–25 (M.D. Fla. Feb. 8, 2006), 441

Williams v. Pharmacia, Inc., 137 F.3d 944 (7th Cir. 1998), 74

Williamson v. United States 512 U.S. 594 (1994), 305–307, 309, 310, 315, 338

Willingham v. Crooke, 412 F.3d 553 (4th Cir. 2005), 194, 196, 198

Wilson v. City of Des Moines, 442 F.3d 637 (8th Cir. 2006), 403

Wilson v. Zapata Off-Shore Co., 939 F.2d 260 (5th Cir. 1991), 191

Witherspoon v. Navajo Refining Co., 2005 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 46148, *3 (D. N.M. June 28, 2005), 458

Wolff v. McDonnell, 418 U.S. 539 (1974), 514

Woodard v. Branch, 256 B.R. 341 (M.D. Fla. 2000), 383

Woodman v. Haemonetics Corp, 51 F.3d 1087, 1094 (1st Cir. 1995), 75

Woolford v. Rest. Concepts, II, LLC, 2008 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 5187, *15 (S.D. Ga. Jan. 23, 2008), 141

Wright v. Farmers Co-Op of Arkansas & Oklahoma, 681 F.2d 549 (8th Cir. 1982), 75

Wright-Simmons v. City of Oklahoma City, 155 F.3d 1264 (10th Cir. 1998), 85

Y

Yamagiwa v. City of Half Moon Bay, 523 F.Supp.2d 1036, 1075 (N.D. Cal. 2007), 430

Young v. James Green Mgmt., Inc., 327 F.3d 616 (7th Cir. 2003), 229

Young v. James Green Mgmt., Inc., 327 F.3d 616 (7th Cir. 2003), 69, 73, 229

Young v. United States, 214 F.2d 232 (D.C. Cir. 1954), 343

Yuan v. Riveria, 2000 U.S. Dist. Lexis 4483, *13 (S.D.N.Y. 2000), 85

Z

Zenith Radio Corp. v. Matsushita Elec. Indus. Co., Ltd., 505 F. Supp. 1190 (E.D. Pa. 1980), 80, 90, 135, 219, 220, 236, 237, 290, 339, 341

STATE CASES

A

Abney v. Commonwealth, 657 S.E.2d 796 (Va. Ct. App. 2008), 208

Alabama Gold Life Ins. Co. v. Sledge, 62 Ala. 566, 570 (1878), 501

Armstrong v. State, 826 P.2d 1106 (Wyo. 1992), 407, 420, 421, 422

Ayala v. Aggressive Towing and Transp., Inc., 661 S.E.2d 480 (Va. 2008), 273

B

Baker v. State, 371 A.2d 699 (Md. Ct. Spec. App. 1977), 202, 205

Bayne v. State, 632 A.2d 476 (Md. Ct. Spec. App. 1993), 155

Beck v. Dye, 92 P.2d 1113 (Wash. 1939), 93

Beckman v. Carson, 372 N.W.2d 203 (Iowa 1985), 413

Benson v. Shuler Drilling Co., 871 S.W.2d 552 (Ark. 1994), 189, 192

Berry v. State, 611 So.2d 924 (Miss. 1992), 293

Betts v. Betts, 473 P. 2d 403 (Wash. Ct. App. 1970), 46, 152, 154, 405, 503

Bingham v. State, 987 S.W.2d 54 (Tex. Crim. App. 1999), 72

Blanks v. Murphy, 632 A.2d 1264 (N.J. Super. App. Div. 1993), 446

- Blecha v. People, 962 P.2d 931 (Colo. 1998), 102, 135, 468
- Bockting v. State, 847 P.2d 1364 (Nev. 1993), 274
- Bong Jin Kim v. Nazarian, 576 N.E.2d 427 (Ill. App. Ct. 1991), 440, 442, 444, 447
- Booth v. State, 508 A.2d 976 (Md. 1986), 139, 146
- Brainard v. State, 12 S.W.2d 6 (Tx. 1999), 455
- Bridges v. State, 419, 19 N.W.2d 529 (Wis. 1945), 419
- Brown v. State, 671 N.E.2d 401, (Ind. 1996), 61
- Brunner v. Brown, 480 N.W.2d 33 (Iowa 1992), 441, 449
- Brunson v. State, 245 S.W.3d 132, (Ark. 2006), 515
- Butler v. State, 667 A.2d 999, (Md. Ct. Spec. App. 1995), 203
- C**
- Carey v. United States, 647 A.2d 56 (D.C. 1994), 208
- Caron v. GMC, 643 N.E.2d 471 (Mass. App. Ct. 1994), 386
- Chapman v. Ford Motor Co., 245 S.W.3d 123 (Ark. 2006), 407
- Chestnut v. Commonwealth, 250 S.W.3d 288 (Ky. 2008), 404, 411
- City of Denison v. Grisham, 716 S.W.2d 121 (Tex. App. 1986), 206
- Clarke v. United States, 943 A.2d 555 (D.C. 2008), 516
- Clayton v. Fargason, 730 So.2d 160 (Ala. 1999), 408
- Clearwater Corp. v. Lincoln, 301 N.W.2d 328 (Neb. 1981), 438
- Cobb v. State, 658 S.E.2d 750 (Ga. 2008), 443
- Coker v. Burghardt, 833 S.W.2d 306 (Tex. App. 1992), 457
- Cole v. State, 818 S.W.2d 573 (Ark. 1991), 89, 158, 160
- Collins v. State, 294 P. 625 (Ariz. 1930), 296
- Commonwealth v. Babbitt, 723 N.E.2d 17 (Mass. 2000), 91, 93
- Commonwealth v. Chmiel, 738 A.2d 406 (Pa. 1998), 72
- Commonwealth v. Dravec, 227 A. 904 (Pa. 1967), 91, 93
- Commonwealth v. Fiore, 308 N.E.2d 902 (Mass. 1974), 408
- Commonwealth v. Key, 407 N.E.2d 327 (Mass. 1980), 297
- Commonwealth v. MacKenzie, 597 N.E.2d 1037 (Mass. 1992), 92
- Commonwealth v. Melendez-Diaz, 870 N.E.2d 676 (Mass. 2007), 516, 520
- Commonwealth v. Murray, 496 N.E.2d 179 (Mass. App. Ct. 1986), 468
- Commonwealth v. Nesbitt, 892 N.E.2d 299 (Mass. 2008), 517, 520
- Commonwealth v. Nolan, 694 N.E.2d 350 (Mass. 1998), 200
- Commonwealth v. Robinson, 888 N.E.2d 926 (Mass. 2008), 273
- Commonwealth v. Smith, 314 A.2d 224 (Pa. 1973), 293, 297
- Commonwealth v. Verde, 827 N.E.2d 701 (Mass. 2005), 521
- Compton v. WMV Enters., 679 S.W.2d 668 (Tex. App. 1984), 249
- Connor v. State, 171 A.2d 699 (Md. 1961), 297, 300
- Corbett v. State, 746 A.2d 954 (Md. Ct. Spec. App. 2000), 201
- Covington v. Sawyer, 458 N.E.2d 465 (Ohio App. 1983), 80
- Coy v. Renico, 414 F.Supp.2d 744 (E.D. Mich. 2006), 178, 416
- CSX Transportation, Inc. v. Casale, 441 S.E.2d 212 (Va. 1994), 445
- Cummins v. Mississippi, 515 So.2d 869 (Miss. 1987), 341, 350
- Cunningham v. State, 944 P.2d 261 (Nev. 1997), 207
- D**
- Dant v. Commonwealth, 258 S.W.3d 12 (Ky. 2008), 91
- Davis v. State, 872 S.W.2d 743 (Tx. Crim. App. 1994), 313
- Dawn VV v. State, 850 N.Y.S.2d 246 (N.Y. App. Div. 2008), 215, 307

- Dayan v. McDonald's Corp., 466 N.E.2d 958 (Ill. App. Ct. 1984), 205, 210
- Dexheimer v. Indus. Comm'n., 559 N.E.2d 1034 (Ill. Ct. App. 1990), 205
- Drexler v. Seaboard Sys. R.R., 530 So.2d 754 (Ala. 1988), 436
- Duke v. American Olean Tile Co., 400 N.W.2d 677 (Mich. Ct. App. 1986), 185
- E**
- Easterling v. Weedman, 922 S.W.2d 735 (Ark. Ct. App. 1996), 230, 233
- Ex parte Hunt, 744 So.2d 851, 857 (Ala. 1999), 14
- F**
- Ferguson v. Williams, 399 S.E.2d 389 (N.C. Ct. App. 1991), 299
- Fiberboard Corp. v. Pool, 813 S.W.2d 658 (Tex. App. 1991), 233
- Fields v. J Haynes Waters Builders, Inc. 658 S.E.2d 80 (S.C. 2008), 32
- Figgins v. Cochrane, 942 A.2d 736 (Md. 2008), 174, 180
- Flonnelly v. State, 893 A.2d 507 (Del. 2006) 288
- Flynn v. State, 702 N.E.2d 741 (Ind. Ct. App. 1998), 210
- Fomby v. Popwell, 695 So. 2d 628 (Ala. Ct. App. 1996), 168
- G**
- Garcia v. State, 246 S.W.3d 121 (Tex. App. 2007), 516
- Gohring v. State, 967 S.W.2d 459 (Tex. App. 1998), 194
- Goldade v. State, 674 P.2d 721 (Wyo. 1983), 196
- Golob v. People, 180 P.3d 1006 (Colo. 2008), 442, 445
- Graham v. State, 643 S.W.2d 920 (Tex. Crim. App. 1981), 13
- Ground v. State, 702 N.E.2d 728 (Ind. Ct. App. 1998), 221
- Guidry v. State, 9 S.W.3d 133 (Tex. Crim. App. 1999), 249
- H**
- Hall v. Commonwealth, 403 S.E.2d 362 (Va. Ct. App. 1991), 297
- Harris v. State, 846 S.W.2d 960 (Tex. App. 1993), 249
- Hayes v. Texas, 740 S.W.2d 887 (Tex. App. 1987), 297
- Hewitt v. Grand Trunk W.R., 333 N.W.2d 264 (Mich. Ct. App. 1983), 476, 477, 480
- Hill v. Brown, 672 S.W.2d 330 (Ark. 1984), 355
- Holland v. State, 713 A.2d 364 (Md. 1997), 407
- Hollingsworth v. State, 211 S.W. 454 (Tex. Crim. App. 1919), 344
- I**
- In re Egbert Estate, 306 N.W.2d 525 (Mich. 1981), 321
- In re Estate of Spiegelglass, 137 A.2d 440 (N.J. Super. Ct. App. Div. 1958), 173
- In re Fromdahl, 840 P.2d 683 (Or. 1991), 408
- In re Marriage of Theis, 460 N.E.2d 912 (Ill. App. Ct. 1984), 161
- In re Troy P., 842 P.2d 742 (N.M. 1992), 155
- In re Wheeler, 408 N.E.2d 424 (Ill. App. Ct. 1980), 191
- In re Young, 857 P.2d 989 (Wash. 1993), 431, 446
- J**
- Jefferis v. Marzano, 696 P.2d 1087 (Or. 1985), 451, 452
- Johnson v. Skelly Oil, Co., 288 N.W.2d 493 (S.D. 1980), 175
- Johnson v. State, 579 P.2d 20 (Alaska 1978), 297
- Johnson v. State, 967 S.W.2d 410 (Tex. Crim. App. 1998), 209
- Jones v. State, 940 A.2d 1 (Del. 2007), 98
- K**
- Kath v. Burlington N. R.R., 441 N.W.2d 569 (Minn. Ct. App. 1989), 256
- Kennemur v. California, 133 Cal.App.3d 907 (1982), 436

- Kent Village Assocs. Joint Venture v. Smith, 657 A.2d 330 (Md. 1994), 432
- Kim v. Nazarian, 576 N.E.2d 427 (Ill. App. Ct. 1991), 440, 442, 444, 447
- Klever v. Elliot, 320 P.2d 263 (Or. 1958), 93, 94
- Kroth v. Commonwealth, 737 S.W.2d 680 (Ky. 1987), 467
- L**
- Lai v. St. Peter, 869 P.2d 1352 (Haw. 1994), 434, 451, 452
- Large v. State, 177 P.3d 807 (Wyo. 2008), 58, 60, 61
- Leake v. Burlington N. R.R., 892 S.W.2d 359 (Mo. Ct. App. 1995), 441, 442
- Lillard v. State, 994 S.W.2d 747 (Tex. App. 1999), 467
- Linn v. Fossum, 946 So.2d 1032 (Fla. 2006); 443
- Long v. United States, 940 A.2d 87 (D.C. 2007), 517, 518, 519, 523, 525
- Long Trusts v. Atlantic Richfield Co., 893 S.W.2d 686 (Tex. App. 1995), 465
- M**
- MacDonald v. B.M.D. Golf Assocs., 813 A.2d 488 (N.H. 2002), 149, 150
- Madden v. State, 799 S.W.2d 683 (Tex. Crim. App. 1990), 245, 249
- Maresh v. State, 489 N.W.2d 298 (Neb. 1992), 382
- Mashburn v. Wright, 420 S.E.2d 379 (Ga. Ct. App. 1992), 144, 355
- Matuszewski v. Pancoast, 526 N.E.2d 80 (Ohio Ct. App. 1987), 254, 257
- Maui Land & Pineapple Co. v. Infiesto, 879 P.2d 507 (Haw. 1994), 248
- McGuire v. Walker, 423 S.E.2d 617 (W. Va. 1992), 248
- McKenna v. St. Joseph Hosp., 557 A.2d 854 (R.I. 1989), 189, 190, 485
- McLean v. State, 16 Ala. 672 (1849), 296
- Melore v. Great Lakes Dredge & Dock Co., 1996 WL 548142, *4 (E.D.Pa. Sept. 20, 1996), 387
- Melridge, Inc. v. Heublein, 125 B.R. 825 (D. Or. 1991), 238
- Metropolitan Dade County v. Yearby, 580 So.2d 186 (Fla. App. 1991), 109
- Moore v. Goode, 375 S.E.2d 549 (W. Va. 1988), 255, 321
- Morgan v. Mississippi, 703 So. 2d 832 (Miss. 1997), 341, 350
- Morse v. Colombo, 819 N.Y.S.2d 162 (N.Y. App. Div. 2d 2006) 208
- Myers v. American Seating Co., 637 So.2d 771 (La. Ct. App. 1994), 440
- N**
- Nash v. State, 754 N.E.2d 1021 (Ind. Ct. App. 2001), 219
- Neno v. Clinton, 772 A.2d 899 (N.J. 2001), 455
- Newbill v. State, 884 N.E.2d. 383 (Ind. App. 2008), 156
- Nielsen v. Nielsen, 462 P.2d 512 (Idaho 1969), 166
- Noffle v. Perez, 178 P.3d 1141 (Alaska 2008), 214
- Norris v. State, 788 S.W.2d 65 (Tex. App. 1990), 368
- O**
- Ohio v. Lawler, 1999 Ohio App. LEXIS 5998 (Ohio Ct. App. Dec. 15, 1999), 259
- Oldsen v. People, 732 P.2d 1132 (Colo. 1986), 507
- Oliver v. State, 783 A.2d 124 (Del. 2001), 468
- P**
- Pannoni v. Bd. of Trs., 90 P.3d 438 (Mont. 2004), 222
- Parker v. State, 778 A.2d 1096 (Md. 2001), 144, 146, 150
- Paulos v. Covenant Transp. Inc., 86 P.3d 752 (Ut. Ct. App. 2004), 263
- People In the Interest of O.E.P., 654 P.2d 312 (Colo. 1982), 143, 147, 162
- People v. Anderson, 495 N.E.2d 485 (Ill. 1986), 437
- People v. Arnett, 214 N.W. 231 (Mich. 1927), 298

- People v. Azmudio, 181 P.3d 105 (Cal. 2008), 10
 People v. Barrett, 747 N.W.2d 797 (Mich. 2008), 148
 People v. Barrett, 749 N.W.2d 797 (Mich. 2008), 146
 People v. Brown, 517 N.E.2d 515 (N.Y. 1987), 150
 People v. Buie, 658 N.E.2d 192 (N.Y. 1995), 337
 People v. Burton, 441 N.W.2d 87 (Mich. Ct. App. 1989), 246
 People v. Cuevas, 906 P.2d 1290 (Cal. 1995), 364
 People v. Davis, 363 N.W.2d 35 (Mich. Ct. App. 1984), 13
 People v. District Court of El Paso County, 776 P.2d 1083 (Colo. 1989), 369
 People v. Gage, 28 N.W. 835 (Mich. 1886), 161
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 People v. Gould, 354 P.2d 865 (Cal. 1960), 365
 People v. Griffin, 93 P.3d 344 (Cal. 2004), 176
 People v. Guardado, 47 Cal.Rptr.2d 81 (1995), 210
 People v. Hendrickson, 586 N.W.2d 906 (Mich. 1998), 146
 People v. Johnson, 441 P.2d 111 (Ca. 1968), 343
 People v. Katt, 662 N.W.2d 12 (Mich. 2003) 337, 341
 People v. Lovett, 272 N.W.2d 126 (Mich. Ct. App. 1976), 160
 People v. Nieves, 492 N.E.2d 109 (N.Y. Ct. App. 1986), 298
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 People v. P.T., 599 N.E.2d 79 (Ill. App. Ct. 1992), 437
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 People v. Raffaelli, 701 P.2d 881 (Colo. 1985), 321
 People v. Reeves, 648 N.E.2d 278 (Ill. App. Ct. 1995), 468
 People v. Reynoso, 534 N.E.2d 30 (N.Y. App. 1988), 172
 People v. Romero, 187 P.3d 56 (Cal. 2008), 517
 People v. Rowland, 841 P.2d 897 (Cal. 1992), 166
 People v. Silva, 754 P.2d 1070 (Cal. 1988), 87, 112
 People v. Speed, 731 N.E.2d 1276 (Ill. App. Ct. 2000), 210
 People v. Zamudio, 181 P.3d 105 (Cal. 2008), 227, 243
 Pierce v. State, 705 N.E.2d 173 (Ind. 1998), 166
 Posner v. Dallas County Welfare, 784 S.W.2d 585 (Tex. App. 1990), 421
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- R**
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 Rabovsky v. Commonwealth, 973 S.W.2d 6 (Ky. 1998), 216
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 Rodriguez v. State, 711 P.2d 410 (Wyo. 1985), 287
 Romano v. State, 909 P.2d 92 (Okla. Crim. App. 1995), 91
 Ruszcyk v. Secretary of Pub. Safety, 517 N.E.2d 152 (Mass. 1988), 109
 Rutherford v. State, 605 P.2d 16 (Alaska 1979), 109

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- S
- Second Med., P.C. v. Auto One Ins. Co., 857 N.Y.S.2d 898 (N.Y. Civ. Ct. 2008), 219
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- Star Rentals, Inc. v. Seeberg Construction Co., 730 P.2d 573 (Or. Ct. App. 1986), 249
- State v. Allred, 505 S.E.2d 153 (N.C. Ct. App. 1998), 468
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State v. Crocker, 435 A.2d 1109 (Me. 1981), 412	State v. Hoffman, 828 P.2d 805 (Haw. 1992), 87, 91, 112
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State v. DeJesus, 947 A.2d 873 (R.I. 2008), 515	State v. Hughes, 584 P.2d 584 (Ariz. Ct. App. 1978), 372
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State v. Dotson, 254 S.W.3d 378 (Tenn. 2008), 309	State v. Irick, 231 S.E.2d 833 (N.C. 1977), 408, 411
State v. Draganescu, 755 N.W.2d 57 (Neb. 2008), 86, 218	State v. Ivy, 188 S.W.2d 132 (Tenn. 2006) 323
State v. East, 481 S.E.2d 652 (N.C. 1997), 176	State v. J.C.E., 767 P.2d 309 (Mont. 1989), 189
State v. Eaton, 524 So.2d 1194 (La. 1988), 408	State v. Jacob, 494 N.W.2d 109 (Neb. 1993), 300, 301, 302
State v. Echeverria, 626 P.2d 897 (Or. Ct. App. 1981), 371	State v. Johnson, 982 So.2d 672 (Fla. 2008), 521
State v. Ferguson, 581 N.W.2d 824 (Minn. 1998), 297, 298	State v. Jones, 532 A.2d 169 (Md. 1987), 139, 144, 146
State v. Flesher, 286 N.W.2d 215 (Iowa 1979), 146	State v. Jones, 873 P.2d 122 (Idaho 1994), 98, 108
State v. Forbes, 953 A.2d 433 (N.H. 2008), 92, 93, 94, 95	State v. Jordan, 5 S.E.2d 156 (N.C. 1939), 294
State v. Frustino, 689 P.2d 547 (Ariz. Ct. App. 1984), 79, 80	State v. Karpenski, 971 P.2d 553 (Wash. Ct. App. 1999), 507, 508
State v. Fulminante, 975 P.2d 75 (Ariz. 1999), 419	State v. Kelly, 1984 Ohio App. LEXIS 9387, *4-5 (Ohio Ct. App. Feb. 16, 1984), 249
State v. Galvan, 297 N.W.2d 344 (Iowa 1980), 160, 161, 507	State v. Kemp, 948 A.2d 636 (N.J. 2008), 404
State v. Gano, 988 P.2d 1153 (Haw. 1999), 87, 91, 93, 94, 95, 112	State v. Kennedy, 343 A.2d 783 (N.J. Super. Ct. App. Div. 1975), 72
State v. Garvey, 283 N.W.2d 153 (N.D. 1979), 373	State v. Lander, 644 S.E.2d 684 (S.C. 2007), 507
State v. Getz, 830 P.2d 5 (Kan. 1992), 412	State v. Langley, 711 So.2d 651 (La. 1998), 172, 173
State v. Gondor, No. 90-P-2260, 1992 Ohio App. Lexis 6219, *17 (1992), 103	State v. Lawler, 1999 Ohio App. Lexis 5998 (1999), 503
State v. Gonzales Flores, 186 P.3d 1038 (Wash. 2008), 532	State v. Laws, 668 S.W.2d 234 (Mo. Ct. App. 1984), 83, 105, 106, 107
State v. Graham, 941 A.2d 848 (R.I. 2008), 148	State v. Letterman, 616 P.2d 505 (Or. Ct. App. 1980), 133
State v. Hammons, 597 So.2d 990 (La. 1992), 314	State v. Levan, 388 S.E.2d 429 (N.C. 1990), 475
State v. Helmick, 495 S.E.2d 262 (W. Va. Ct. App. 1997), 105	State v. Lonergan, 505 N.W.2d 349 (Minn. Ct. App. 1993), 368, 369
State v. Hester, 470 S.E.2d 25 (N.C. 1996), 321	

- State v. Lopez, 974 So.2d 340 (Fla. 2008), 148
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- State v. McCafferty, 356 N.W.2d 159 (S.D. 1984), 350
- State v. McElrath, 366 S.E.2d 442, 450 (N.C. 1988), 475
- State v. Morant, 701 A.2d 1, 8 (Conn. 1997), 116
- State v. Mubita, 188 P.3d 867 (Idaho 2008), 218
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- State v. Quinn, 490 S.E.2d 34 (W.Va. 1997), 61
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- State v. Schreuder, 726 P.2d 1215 (Utah 1986), 195
- State v. Shatterfield, 457 S.E.2d 440 (W. Va. 1995), 293, 294, 299
- State v. Silva, 670 P.2d 737 (Ariz. 1983), 371
- State v. Simbara, 811 A.2d 448 (2002), 522
- State v. Simpson, 945 A.2d 449 (Conn. 2008), 57, 527
- State v. Smallwood, 594 N.W.2d 144 (Minn. 1999), 468
- State v. Smith, 588 S.E.2d 453 (N.C. 2003) 168
- State v. Smith, 909 P.2d 236 240 (Utah 1995), 146, 149
- State v. Snowden, 867 A.2d 314 (Md. 2005), 519
- State v. St. Clair, 282 P.2d 323 (Utah 1955), 297
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- State v. Stephenson Oil Co., 128 S.W.3d 805 (Ark. 2003), 338
- State v. Stevens, 794 P.2d 38 (Wash. Ct. App. 1990), 13
- State v. Stonaker, 945 P.2d 573 (Or. Ct. App. 1997), 135, 143, 155
- State v. Sua, 987 P.2d 959 (Haw. 1999), 210
- State v. Sutphin, 466 S.E.2d 402 (W. Va. 1995), 486

- State v. Sweet, 949 A.2d 809 (N.J. 2008), 215, 522
- State v. Taylor, 420 S.E.2d 414 (N.C. 1992), 176
- State v. Timmons, 178 P.3d 644 (Idaho Ct. App. 2007), 158
- State v. Tonelli, 749 N.W.2d 689 (Iowa 2008), 107
- State v. Vondenkamp, 119 P.ed 653 (Idaho Ct. App. 2005), 501
- State v. Wagoner, 506 S.E.2d 738 (N.C. Ct. App. 1988), 356, 507
- State v. Walker, 691 A.2d 1341 (Md. 1996), 336, 338, 370
- State v. Warsame, 735 N.W.2d 684 (Minn. 2007), 518
- State v. White, 507 N.W.2d 654 (Neb. App. 1993), 194
- State v. Woodward, 646 P.2d 135 (Wash. Ct. App. 1982), 159
- State v. Worthen, 765 P.2d 839 (Utah 1988), 109
- State v. Yelli, 530 N.W.2d 250 (Neb. 1995), 371
- State v. York, 489 S.E.2d 380 (N.C. 1997), 205
- State v. Yslas, 676 P.2d 1118 (Ariz. 1984), 99
- State, ex rel. McDougall v. Johnson, 891 P.2d 871 (Ariz. Ct. App. 1994), 234
- Stevenson v. Commonwealth, 218 Va. 462, 237 S.E.2d 779 (1977), 13
- T**
- T.C.M. v. United States, 93-2 U.S. Tax Cas. (CCH) P50, 583 (D. Ariz.1993), 249
- Tabieros v. Clark Equipment Co., 944 P.2d 1279 (Haw. 1997), 440, 443
- Thomas v. State, 766 So.2d 860 (Ala. Crim. App. 1998), 204
- Thomas v. United States, 914 A.2d 1 (D.C. 2006), 517, 525
- Truman v. Watts, 598 A.2d 713 (Family Ct. Del. 1991), 368
- Turner v. Commonwealth, 248 S.W.3d 543 (Ky. 2008), 515, 521, 532
- Turro v. State, 837 S.W.2d 232 (Tex. 1992), 245
- U**
- Ush Ventures v. Global Telesystems Group, Inc., 796 S.2d 7 (Del. Super. Ct. 2000), 454
- Utsey v. Olshan Found. Repair Co. of New Orleans, 2007 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 85918, *9 (E.D. La. Nov. 19, 2007), 428
- V**
- Velazquez v. State, 655 S.E.2d 806 (Ga. 2008), p. 430
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- W**
- W.C.L., Jr. v. People, 685 P.2d 176 (Colo. 1984), 336, 357
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- Zito v. City of N.Y., 857 N.Y.S.2d 575 (N.Y. App. Div. 2008), 196

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lvii

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FOREWORD

Part of my job as a law professor teaching Evidence is to teach hearsay as a tool. My students need to learn to understand hearsay so that they can use this tool to advocate a position, to convince an opponent, first, and a judge, second, and to win. My students need to learn how to manipulate the hearsay rules to serve the ends of their clients. I hope I am a good teacher of manipulation. Part of my job as a lawyer who works with this subject is to take sides, to argue the rules, to persuade. My job as a lawyer with this specialty calls for me to understand these rules and to engage in the manipulation I hope I teach my students.

This book is about those things. It is about how law students, lawyers, and judges can understand and use the hearsay rules. It is about how students can learn these rules right, right from the beginning (for that is so much easier than trying to relearn them later). It is about how students can use these rules in class and on their final exams. It is about how students can manipulate these rules in their clinics, mock trials, internships, and clerkships. This book is about how lawyers can understand the hearsay rules, how lawyers can build a reputation—as in “Hey, here is a lawyer who actually understands this stuff!”—and how lawyers can manipulate the rules in the interests of their clients. It is about how judges can remain faithful to the rule of law while using the rules to see that justice is served. In the process, the book tells nothing but the truth.

* * *

Chapter 1 begins with a fresh look at the principles and values that underlie the hearsay rule. It presents time-tested and brand-new techniques for recognizing hearsay for, unlike obscenity, sometimes it is not so easy to know it when you see it. Chapter 2 covers the definitional exclusions. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 cover the exceptions in Rule 803, 804, and 805, respectively. Through the first five chapters the topics covered are rather traditional and straightforward for a treatment of the hearsay rule.

Though the organization and much of the content of the first five chapters is very traditional, much of what is in these chapters is not. The key to the ex-

clusions and exceptions is that each has a certain number of foundational facts: The lawyer seeking the admission of hearsay evidence must produce evidence of each of the foundational elements; the lawyer wanting to block admission of hearsay evidence must defeat offering counsel on at least one foundational element. This book takes a foundational approach to hearsay. It breaks out and lists the foundational elements for each exclusion and exception covered in this book. This makes it a handy quick reference. You know exactly what you need to prove or what you need to defeat for each exclusion and exception covered—even when the need arises suddenly, in the heat of battle. Following the foundational elements, is a statement of the values on which each exception is built, which will serve as an interpretative guide to the exception. Following the statement of values, for each exception covered there is a “Use Note” discussing each foundational element and commenting on ways in which each exception, each element, can be used to achieve the student’s, lawyer’s, or judge’s goal. There is the handy, quick reference of the list of foundational elements and the ultimately more helpful detailed discussion, with cases and ideas on the use of each of the foundational elements.

Some other examples of what is new in the first five chapters: Chapter 1 presents new ways of conceptualizing hearsay. The part of Chapter 2 that deals with adoptive admissions presents a whole new way of looking at them, analyzing them, and understanding them—one that seems simpler than the traditional ways of approaching adoptive admissions.

In addition to a very complete treatment of the exclusions and specific exceptions—with foundational elements, the values behind each, and in depth analysis of each foundational element—Chapters 2, 3, and 4 look past the trees of a particular exception and onto how the exception fits into the forest of hearsay. The Use Notes discuss the ways various parts of the hearsay rules interrelate. Surprisingly, this is not commonly addressed in other works, which mostly just talk trees, and not forest. An example of seeing the forest is in the discussion of the former testimony exception. That Use Note begins with a discussion of other ways to get former testimony around the hearsay rule. Students, lawyers, and judges faced with former testimony will see a discussion of eleven ways it might be admissible in spite of the hearsay rule: the former testimony exception and ten other techniques.

Chapter 5 presents the most complete treatment of the residual exception currently available. It includes, for example, a discussion of how that exception can be used to get into evidence an out-of-court statement made by a witness who is testifying—get the out-of-court statement in as substantive evidence of the facts declared and not just as impeachment, even though the out-of-

court declarant is a testifying witness. There is offhand reference to this point in some other writings, but there is no analysis and all of the offhand references come to what I think is the wrong conclusion. This is an important point. Take, for example, a criminal case where the prosecutor has a favorable pretrial statement from a witness and the witness takes the stand at trial and tells a different story. Perhaps the witness has had a change of heart out of love or intimidation. Whatever the reason, the witness tells a different story on the stand and the pretrial statement of this available witness does not fit under any of the exclusions in Rule 801(d) or the exceptions in Rule 803 or 804. Chapter 5 discusses how this pretrial statement may be admissible as substantive evidence of the facts declared... even though the declarant is testifying.

The rest of the book—Chapters 6 through 13—is not so traditional in either the topics covered or the content of the coverage. Chapter 6 goes beyond traditional evidence texts and treatises, goes beyond the rules of evidence, and discusses important hearsay exceptions that are found in Rule 32 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and Rule 15 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure.

Chapter 7 is devoted to state of mind evidence. Every out-of-court statement is in some way or another nonhearsay state of mind evidence. That's right: There are ways in which every out-of-court statement is nonhearsay. Sometimes, however, the nonhearsay use of the statement is not relevant. As a result, the statement will be inadmissible as hearsay in its relevant uses and inadmissible as irrelevant in its nonhearsay uses. This chapter makes an important point about the relationship between the hearsay rule and the rules of relevance. It also provides counsel with a way of turning every hearsay problem into a relevance problem. In addition, Chapter 7 gathers together the uses of state of mind evidence and discusses eight ways that such evidence might be used at trial.

Chapter 8 is devoted to the use of opinion evidence—expert and lay opinion—as a way to get around the hearsay rule. Chapter 9 is devoted to miscellaneous other ways around the hearsay rule—judicial notice and the rule of completeness for two examples. Chapters 10, 11, and 12 are devoted to important concepts such as the benefit of applying many exceptions to a single level of hearsay, the problem of multiple levels of hearsay behind a single statement, and the subject of evidence that is inadmissible hearsay to one issue in a case and either nonhearsay or admissible hearsay to another issue in the same case. Each of these chapters is useful to the student, the lawyer, and the judge alike. Chapter 11, for example, discusses how to make underlying levels of hearsay go away. It discusses cases that have found that one or another of the

exceptions or exclusions does away with multiple hearsay problems. Under certain exceptions and exclusions, the declarant need not have personal knowledge of the facts declared in the statement and offering counsel need not deal with the hearsay that underlies the statement. Chapter 11 discusses where that has been held to be so, and how to argue that it is so elsewhere.

Chapter 13 deals with the interrelation between the hearsay rule and the competence of witnesses. Among other things, Chapter 13 suggests and discusses ways to stand the hearsay rule on its head and use it affirmatively—ways to use hearsay to get into evidence an out-of-court statement by a witness who was incompetent when the statement was made, is incompetent at the time of trial, or both.

Chapter 14 deals with the Confrontation Clause of the United States constitution, its interrelation with the hearsay rule, and its effect on the admissibility of hearsay evidence offered against an accused in a criminal prosecution.

* * *

Hearsay is a tool. Its purpose is to assist the trier of fact in the search for truth by limiting the trier of fact's exposure to unreliable evidence. How effective a tool it is, is open to question. Two things are certain: Hearsay is everywhere, and it either helps you achieve your goal or it stands in your way; either way, it is a tool that must be used to advocate, to win, and to decide. This tool must be mastered by law students, practicing lawyers, and judges alike, and it is for all of them that this book is written.

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