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1/12/11

Judicial Branch

Positive Cases

a. Brown v. Board was a civil rights case in 1954 that allowed African American students to attend public schools along with white students. This case is one of the most prominent examples of the war against segregation. Brown v. Board has been affecting me for almost every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday of fall, winter, and spring since I was five years old. From kindergarten until the 8th grade, I was one of six non-white kids in a class of 35 attending a predominantly white private school. If this case hadn't turned out the way it did, I would have probably attended Lea elementary school, one of the worst elementary schools in Philadelphia, and I also wouldn't be able to attend Science Leadership Academy.

"Brown v. Board of Education." *U.S. Supreme Court* (updated)2010. n. pag. *FindLaw*. Web. 18 Jan 2011. <http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/scripts/getcase.pl?court=US&vol=347&invol=483>.

b. Grutter v. Bollinger was a case decided on by the Supreme Court. Barbara Grutter was a white college graduate applying to the University of Michigan Law School, but was denied because the school had the right to "{be} seeking to widen its school's diversity." Private schooling institutions are allowed to add ethnicity/sex to one's resume when deciding whether or not they should accept or decline a student. This case affects me and my college pursuits a lot. Both Colby College (my number 4 school) and Lafayette College (my number 2 school) are consistently looking for promising minority students to accept in an attempt to diversify their schools. This gives me a nice advantage over many applicants for both of these private institutions.

Devins, Neal. *JStor*. University of Pennsylvania Law Review, 2003. Web. 18 Jan 2011.

<http://www.jstor.org/pss/3313063>.

Negative Cases

a. New Jersey v. TLO was brought up the Supreme Court in 1984. In this case, a freshman attending a New Jersey public school had been found smoking cigarettes on school grounds during school hours, and this warranted further searches from school officials. In the subsequent searches, the school officials found marijuana, evidence that she had been distributing it to her peers, and other illegal pills. The victim, Tracy Lois Odem, sued the school based on the grounds that the school did not have enough reasonable cause to do any further searches after finding the cigarettes. The Supreme Court ruled in the schools favor based on the fact that in a school environment, not as much reasonable cause is needed in order to warrant further searches. This decision affects me every day because it limits my the rights that a normal citizen would receive the second I step onto school grounds. For example, when students were stealing laptops during my freshman year, all students had to have their backpacks and lockers searched for missing laptops, and we were not allowed to refuse.

Cornell, . "New Jersey v. T.L.O.." *Supreme Court of the United States* n. pag. *Cornell University Law School*. Web. 18 Jan 2011. <http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/historics/USSC_CR_0469_0325_ZS.html>.

Legislative Branch

Positive Bills

a. The Civil Rights Act of 1960 was a law passed by congress that penalized any

citizen who attempted to interfere with the voting process of another individual due to the individual's race. This law affects me in a positive way because even though it had been legal for African Americans to vote for almost 100 years prior to the act, there were many communities across the country in which their fellow white citizens prevented them from voting. Even though in former president George W. Bush's re-election, the votes of thousands of black Floridian citizens were not counted and it allowed him to win the presidency, the act has had major impacts voting in the black community.

"1960 Civil Rights Act." *History Learning Site*. N.p., 2009. Web. 18 Jan 2011. <http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/1960_civil_rights_act.htm>.

b. The Civil Rights Act of 1968 AKA the Fair Housing Act was a bill that ensured there would be no discrimination by realtors based on religious beliefs, sex, or race. I live lived in a predominantly African American neighborhood until I was seven years old when our family moved from deep West Philadelphia to borderline West Philadelphia. As you get closer to center city, you see neighborhoods get whiter. My father is a realtor, so it was simple for us to find a nice house in a new white neighborhood. Sadly, there is a bad history with the University of Penn and West Philadelphia. UPenn tries to expand its campus by pushing people who have lived in West Philadelphia their whole lives further and further west towards 69th street. In the last 50 years, the boarders of UPenn have extended from 33rd street to 45th street. The relocation and gentrification of families is a big problem in West Philadelphia.

United States. *Fair Housing and Presidential Executive Orders*. Washington DC: , 2009. Web. 18 Jan 2011. <http://www.hud.gov/offices/fheo/FHLaws/>.

Negative Bills

a. The Parent's Right To Know Act states that any clinic receiving federal funding would have to notify the parent of a child under the age of 18 if they go to the clinic in order to get different contraceptive tools. This bill was proposed, but it was never passed. If it were passed, it would have affected me and thousands of other teens in a negative way. The aim of this bill was to stop teens from having sexual intercourse because they

wouldn't be able to get any form of birth control without their parents finding out. This may have prevented 5% of teens from stopping their habits, but the rest would just stop using any methods of birth control whatsoever and try pulling out; causing teen pregnancy rates to skyrocket.

"Parent's Right To Know Act." *RH Reality Check*. N.p., 2011. Web. 19 Jan 2011. <http://www.rhrealitycheck.org/policy-watch/parents-right-to-know-act>.

b. On October 8th, 2009, the city of Philadelphia's sales tax rate rose from 7% to 8%. This was an attempt from mayor Nutter's cabinet to raise Philadelphia's low budget and at the same time not hurt the every day citizens too much. The 7% sales tax was already bothering me enough. It was annoying to walk into the dollar store or try to get something off the dollar menu just to find out that you couldn't afford anything because you only had a dollar instead of a dollar and seven cents in your pocket. Adding the extra cent just made the sales tax all the more aggravating. Nobody wants to walk around with 92 cents worth of change in their pocket after buying something that should have been worth one dollar.

"City Sales Tax Hike Gets Mixed Results." *Shoppers, Merchants, Officials Give Their Two Cents* (2009): n. pag. Web. 19 Jan 2011. <http://www.myfoxphilly.com/dpp/news/politics/local_politics/021610_Hiked_Philadelphia_Sales_May_See_Shortfall>.

Executive Branch

Positive Enforcement

a. Four years ago, four kids jumped me, and a witness called the police as soon as it started happening. The police showed up in a timely manner and were able to catch one of the four kids involved right there on the spot. Thanks to diligence and good police work, the other three were eventually caught. All of them were charged with assault and I was able to get back my stolen items. If it weren't for the police enforcing the

punishments for assault, I would have been cheated out of 20$ and an old cell phone.

b. FASFA is a program that gives need based financial aid to students across the country. It is headed up by the department of education, which is part of the executive branch. This affects me because it will hopefully give me lots of money to help me pay for college. GW, my number 1 school, costs 50,000$ a year and FASFA will hopefully help me pay that tuition fee.

Negative Enforcement

a. In the city of Philadelphia, there is an 11:00 curfew for any non-college students under the age of 18. This curfew was put in place because Philadelphia has a high crime rate (as I typed this, I heard a gunshot go off). Large portions of crimes committed in Philadelphia are committed by teenagers, so the curfew was put in place. It is a police officer's duty to stop any child who looks as if they are under the age of 18 and not headed home after 11:00. I have been wrongly stopped and harassed on numerous occasions for walking to the corner store or walking home from a friend's house. Some police officers use the curfew as an excuse for harassment, and the city needs to find a better solution.

b. The FDA (Food & Drug Administration) along with the Department Of Agriculture is in charge of all the protocols we see being put in and taken out of the food industry today. American citizens are commonly seen as nothing more than consumers, and as consumers, it is our responsibility to at least be smart consumers. Since the FDA and DA never do their job correctly and don't put stringent laws and regulations on many food companies, the foods that are available for us to buy are extremely limited. There is a lack in health awareness, environmental awareness, and social responsibility, but the citizens of the United States as well as me often have no choice but to financially support these bad policies.