

How the Three Branches of our Government Impact my Life

Executive

Food Stamps

The food stamp program helps low-income people buy food. Although it is a federal government program, it is run by state or local agencies and anyone can apply for food stamps. To get food stamps, you and the other people in your household must meet certain conditions. Although my parents do not necessarily meet the requirements that are needed in order to get food stamps, sometimes they use them to make grocery shopping less of a stranglehold on their wallets. But the use of food stamps in my house is rare since they are not depended upon due to my parents not having low-income paying jobs.

Child Custody

Child custody is a term used in family law courts to define legal guardianship of a child under the age of 18. During divorce or marriage annulment proceedings, the issue of child custody often becomes a matter for the court to determine. In most cases, both parents continue to share legal child custody but one parent gains physical custody. When I was younger, my parents had a conversation over custody but they decided that they could share custody over me without bringing any drama into the situation. But for my brother, who has a different mother than I do, he had to go through the custody battle stage since my father and his mother could not come to a compromise on whom he would stay with for a majority of the time.

Green Card (Permanent Residence)

A permanent resident is someone who has been granted authorization to live and work in the United States on a permanent basis. As proof of that status, a person is granted a permanent resident card, commonly called a "green card." The steps to become a permanent resident are different for each category and will depend on if you are currently living inside or outside the United States. My parents were residents of the United States when I was born so there was no need for a green card. The rest of my family was also born in the United States so overall, we are all practically permanent residents.

Divorce

A divorce is a legal action between married people to terminate their marriage relationship. It can be referred to as dissolution of marriage and is basically, the legal action that ends the marriage before the death of either spouse. The legal process for divorce may also involve issues of child custody, child support, distribution of property and division of debt. Of course like any other person in the United States that watches TV dramas, I know that divorce is looked upon as a bad thing. But since neither of my parents were ever married, to each other or any extra party member, divorce has never been an issue in my life.

H.R.3962 - Affordable Health Care for America Act

The Affordable Health Care for America Act seeks to expand health care coverage to the approximately 40 million Americans who are currently uninsured by lowering the cost of health care and making the system more efficient. It includes a new government-run insurance plan to compete with the private companies, a requirement that all Americans have health insurance. A ban on denying coverage because of a pre-existing condition and, to pay for it all, a surtax on individuals with incomes above \$500,000. Before this act was passed, it was more of a complicated situation for my mother to get me a reasonable life insurance plan due to money and other complications.

H.R.3567 - Respect for Marriage Act of 2009

The Respect for Marriage Act restores the rights of all lawfully married couples, including same-sex couples, to receive the benefits of marriage under federal law. The bill also provides same-sex couples with certainty that federal benefits and protections would flow from a valid marriage celebrated in a state where such marriages are legal. The law would stay in effect even if a couple decided to move or travel to another state. With the existence of this act, my grandmother was able to go to one of the legal states and get married to the woman that she fell in love with. The law also gives a chance for my mother to be happy with her partner as well.

H.R. 3396 - Defense of Marriage Act

The Defense of Marriage Act defines marriage as a legal union between one man and one woman for purposes of all federal laws. It provides that states need not recognize a marriage from another state if it is between persons of the same sex. It also disallows benefits to federal employees' same-sex partners, who may be considered spouses or domestic partners under state law. I do not entirely see why people who are in same-sex relationships are unable to be treated like anyone else in a relationship. But this law does not allow my grandmother to get the same benefits of any other married couple, which is overall unfair.

H.R.137 - Animal Fighting Prohibition Enforcement Act

The Animal Fighting Prohibition Enforcement Act amends the federal criminal code to impose a fine and/or prison term of up to three years for violations of the Animal Welfare Act. And that means: No sponsoring or exhibiting an animal in an animal fighting venture; No buying, selling, transporting, delivering, or receiving for purposes of transportation, in interstate or foreign commerce, any dog or other animal for participation in an animal fighting venture; And no using the mails or other instrumentality of interstate commerce to promote or further an animal fighting venture. Now, this one has nothing to do with me because I do not own *any* pets whatsoever. The reason for me not owning a pet is because the people that I live with have dander allergies, it has nothing to do with previous animal cruelty or anything of the sort. But anyone who does own a pet that is in my family does not use the animal for fighting purposes, only as companionship.

Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier

Administrators may edit the content of school newspapers.

In 1983, the principal of Hazelwood East High School edited two articles in the school newspaper that he found to be inappropriate toward the school. The authors of the said newspaper were students and they argued that what the principal had done went against their first amendment right to freedom of speech. When the issue was taken to the Supreme Court, it was argued that it did not go against their rights since administrators can edit materials that reflect school values. While attending Science Leadership Academy, students, like myself, are free to post whatever they please onto the school forum SLA Talk. But while being given that freedom, each administrator, is able to edit any post that they see to be an inappropriate comment toward the discussion or toward the school.

Engel v. Vitale

School-sponsored prayer in public schools is unconstitutional.

In 1962, a New York State Law required public schools to open each day with the pledge of allegiance and a non-denominational prayer in which the students recognized their dependence upon God. The law allowed students to absent themselves from this activity if they found it objectionable. A parent sued on behalf of his child, arguing that the law violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, as made applicable to the states through the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. When I was in middle school, we had to say the pledge of allegiance whether we wanted to do so or not and looking back at it now, not to say that my beliefs go against the pledge but being an Agnostic, it can be an issue. When saying the pledge was forced upon me, I feel like it was not entirely fair since I do not believe half of the things I was reciting, not *just* the “under God” part per-say.

Loving v. Virginia

In 1958, two residents of Virginia, whom were a interracial couple, were married in the District of Columbia. When the couple returned to Virginia, they were charged with violating the state's antimiscegenation statute, which banned inter-racial marriages. The newlyweds were found guilty and sentenced to a year in jail. While I am all for interracial marriages, both of my parents are of African American or Native American decent. My parents have never been married either, the least they would have to deal with would be the bickering of having a child out of wedlock.

Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe

Students may not use a school's loudspeaker system to offer student-led, student-initiated prayer.

In 2000, before football games, members of the student body of a Texas high school elected one of their classmates to address the players and spectators. These addresses were conducted over the school's loudspeakers and usually involved a prayer. Three students sued the school arguing that the prayers violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. This would not happen at SLA since no one here really pushes their religion on other people. It is a known fact that everyone in the school is not a Christian or Jewish or Buddhist but no one pushes any of their beliefs onto anyone else in that community.

Sources

http://www.oyez.org/cases/1990-1999/1999/1999_99_62

<http://www.uscourts.gov/EducationalResources/ConstitutionResources/LegalLandmarks/LandmarkSupremeCourtCasesAboutStudents.aspx>

http://www.opencongress.org/issues/by_most_viewed