

Butz v. Economou

438 U.S. 478 (1978)

Supreme Court of the United States

Issue: *Related absolute immunity (agency adjudicators)*

Holding on Judicial Immunity

While most executive officials receive only qualified immunity, the Court extended ABSOLUTE immunity to agency officials who perform adjudicatory or prosecutorial functions within a federal agency (administrative law judges, agency prosecutors), reasoning that their functions are 'functionally comparable' to those of judges and prosecutors.

Key Quotations (verbatim)

“[P]ersons ... performing adjudicatory functions within a federal agency are entitled to absolute immunity from damages liability for their judicial acts. Those who complain of error in such proceedings must seek agency or judicial review.”

— Butz v. Economou, 438 U.S. 478, 514 (1978).

“Judges have absolute immunity not because of their particular location within the Government but because of the special nature of their responsibilities.”

— Butz v. Economou, 438 U.S. 478, 511 (1978).

Note / Caveat: Adjacent doctrine: extends judicial-style absolute immunity to agency adjudicators.

Full opinion (authoritative source): <https://www.courtlistener.com/opinion/109932/butz-v-economou/>

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