

Pierson v. Ray

386 U.S. 547 (1967)

Supreme Court of the United States

Issue: Judicial immunity survives § 1983

Holding on Judicial Immunity

The Court held that 42 U.S.C. § 1983 did not abolish the common-law absolute immunity of judges. A municipal judge who convicted civil-rights demonstrators under an unconstitutional statute could not be sued for damages, even if he acted maliciously and corruptly.

Key Quotations (verbatim)

“[This immunity applies] even when the judge is accused of acting maliciously and corruptly, and it 'is not for the protection or benefit of a malicious or corrupt judge, but for the benefit of the public, whose interest it is that the judges should be at liberty to exercise their functions with independence and without fear of consequences.'”

— Pierson v. Ray, 386 U.S. 547, 554 (1967).

“I do not think that all judges, under all circumstances, no matter how outrageous their conduct[,] are immune from suit under [§ 1983].”

— Pierson v. Ray, 386 U.S. 547, 559 (1967) (Douglas, J., dissenting).

Full opinion (authoritative source): <https://www.courtlistener.com/opinion/107411/pierson-v-ray/>

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