

United States v. Lanier

520 U.S. 259 (1997)

Supreme Court of the United States

Issue: Criminal accountability: immunity is a civil doctrine only

Holding on Judicial Immunity

A sitting state judge was criminally prosecuted under 18 U.S.C. § 242 for sexually assaulting women in his chambers. The Court addressed the standard of 'fair warning' for § 242 and remanded; the decision confirms that judicial immunity is a civil-damages doctrine that provides no shield against criminal prosecution for a judge who violates constitutional rights under color of law. (On remand the conviction was reinstated.)

Key Quotations (verbatim)

“Section 242 is a Reconstruction Era civil rights statute making it criminal to act (1) 'willfully' and (2) under color of law (3) to deprive a person of rights protected by the Constitution or laws of the United States.”

— United States v. Lanier, 520 U.S. 259, 264 (1997).

Full opinion (authoritative source): <https://www.courtlistener.com/opinion/118098/united-states-v-lanier/>

This case file states the court's holding on judicial immunity and reproduces verbatim, pin-cited excerpts for research and citation. It is a research summary, not the complete slip opinion; consult the linked source for the full text and to Shepardize/verify current status before relying on it in a filing.