

# Byron White U.S. Courthouse new history exhibit installed June 2020





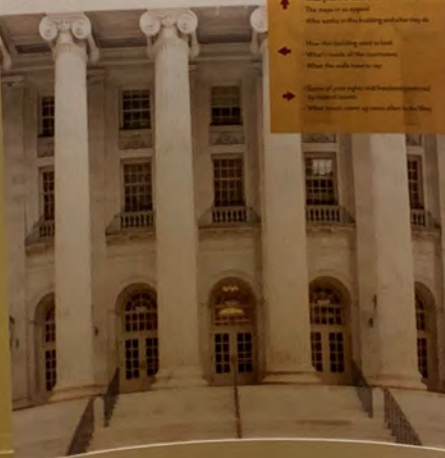
UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE TENTH CIRCUIT

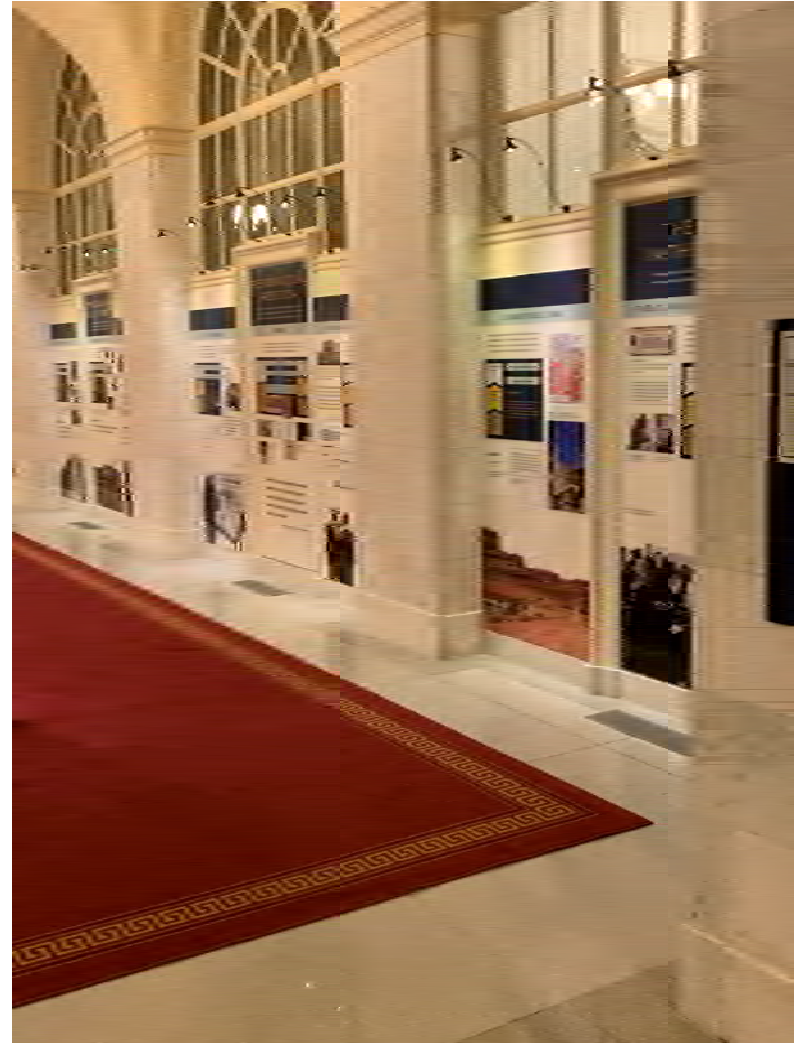
## SPEAKING FOR THE CONSTITUTION

Most employees in this building work for the court of appeals. Sometimes people disagree with the outcome of their cases in federal trial courts. They can ask an appeals court to reconsider the lower courts' decisions.

On your behalf, the courts of the Tenth Circuit apply the nation's laws. Decisions made in the federal building affect millions of lives, including yours. Find out:

- ▶ What gives the Tenth Circuit its authority
- ▶ How cases are argued
- ▶ What happens in this building and what they do
- ▶ How this building used to look
- ▶ What it means, all the courtrooms
- ▶ What the walls have to say
- ▶ How it was built and how it was designed
- ▶ What stories come up over time in the files







### USING PUBLIC LAND

To encourage settlement, an 1862 law allowed new roads over federal land. It gave natural areas a 100-year holiday from the right. Courts have been deciding which roads can remain on public land, often one road at a time.



**UTAH, 1996-2002**

By the late 1990s, the federal government had transferred 10 million acres of public land to state and local governments. This was part of a larger effort to reduce federal land ownership and to give local governments more control over their own land.

**THE BLM, 1946**

The U.S. Department of the Interior created the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in 1946. The BLM is responsible for managing the nation's public lands, which include 2.6 billion acres of land. The BLM's mission is to sustain the health and productivity of public lands for the benefit of the people of the United States.




## THE LAW IN THE WEST

Because of their location, Tenth Circuit courts decide many cases about public lands and Indian reservations.

### PUBLIC LAND, MONEY, AND OIL

The court system protected the nation from corrupt government officials involved in the Teapot Dome scandal. It stopped a corporation from profiting from bribery of a member of the President's Cabinet. The U.S. got back \$12 million from the company, which is nearly \$200 million in today's dollars.




**TEAPOT DOMES, 1923**

The Teapot Dome scandal was a major political scandal in the United States. It involved the secret leasing of oil reserves to private companies by the Secretary of the Interior, Albert B. Fall. The scandal led to the conviction of Fall and other officials for bribery.


**1923-1927**

The Supreme Court ruled in *Ex parte Jackson* that the government could not sue a corporation for bribery. This decision was a major victory for the oil industry and other corporations.




**1927-1928**

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### NATIONS INSIDE THE U.S.

Indian tribes have rights of sovereign nations, which bordering states often challenge. The court didn't just fix a traffic ticket; it protected tribal self-government and blocked Utah from claiming jurisdiction over the Ute Tribe's land.





**WISCONSIN LAWS APPLIED**

The court ruled that Wisconsin laws applied to the Ute Tribe's land. This was a major victory for the tribe, as it protected their self-government and blocked Utah from claiming jurisdiction over their land.

**UTAH, 2015-2016**

The court ruled that the Ute Tribe's land was not subject to Utah's jurisdiction. This was a major victory for the tribe, as it protected their self-government and blocked Utah from claiming jurisdiction over their land.



Reason is the soul of the Law

No...  
The law IS Justice

DEALS

COURT HEARS BOTH CIVIL AND CRIMINAL CASES

UPHOLDING THE BILL OF RIGHTS

RIGHT TO PRIVACY

FOR GENE...



PREMIER COURT





## PRISONERS' RIGHTS

Prisoners must give up many rights. In this case, however, Tenth Circuit courts underscored that the Constitution guarantees certain rights to everyone, even convicts in a maximum security prison.

U.S. SUPREME COURT 1981	Ramos v. Loren
COURT OF APPEALS 10th Circuit 1981	COLORADO, 1978-1980
DISTRICT COURT 10th Circuit 1981	

**UNFIT FOR HUMAN HABITATION**  
The court found the housing conditions and related conditions in the prison. The judge noted in his decision, "While we called with due care the prison and its conditions, we found that the conditions were so bad that they were unfit for human habitation."



The district court opinion emphasized that the "unfit for human habitation" standard is a constitutional one. The court also noted that the prison's conditions were so bad that they were unfit for human habitation.

**8th Amendment:**  
Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.



## UPHOLDING THE BILL OF RIGHTS

Congress added the Bill of Rights to the Constitution in 1791. The Bill of Rights and later amendments limit the government's ability to infringe on the rights of individuals.

### FREEDOM OF RELIGION

The relevant law in this case protected individuals' freedom as well as their health. But it seemed to contradict itself. The courts decided the congregation's right to worship freely mattered more than protecting them from drugs.

U.S. SUPREME COURT 1987	United States v. Lynch
COURT OF APPEALS 10th Circuit 1987	NEW MEXICO, 2002-2006
DISTRICT COURT 10th Circuit 1987	



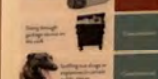
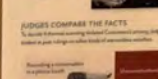
The Supreme Court opinion addressed the issue of whether the First Amendment's right to free exercise of religion was violated. The court held that the government's actions were not unconstitutional.

**1st Amendment:**  
Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...



### RIGHT TO PRIVACY

New surveillance devices raise new questions about our right to privacy. Courts sometimes go back and forth on the issues, as they did with thermal scans, until they more fully explore the facts and relevant law.



U.S. SUPREME COURT 1987	United States v. Katz
COURT OF APPEALS 10th Circuit 1987	WYOMING, 1994-1998
DISTRICT COURT 10th Circuit 1987	

The Supreme Court opinion addressed the issue of whether the Fourth Amendment's right to privacy was violated. The court held that the government's actions were not unconstitutional.

**4th Amendment:**  
The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated...



# THIS COURT HEARS BOTH CIVIL AND CRIMINAL CASES

## CIVIL CASES

A civil case begins when one party files a complaint, claiming another party or parties caused them harm. They might ask for money to compensate them or for the other side to stop causing the harm. When a civil case ends, the judge or jury decides if the defendant party actually caused the harm and what kind of relief they should provide.

**APPEALING A CIVIL CASE**  
Either side in a lawsuit can ask an appellate court to reconsider the trial court's decision.



## CRIMINAL CASES

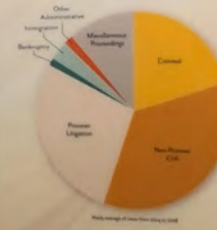
To start a criminal case, a prosecutor from the Department of Justice charges someone with having broken a federal law. For more serious crimes, a grand jury must decide if there is enough evidence that a crime has been committed to charge someone. A criminal case usually ends with a judgment of either guilty or not guilty.

**APPEALING A CRIMINAL CASE**  
If found guilty, a criminal defendant may appeal. However, the government cannot appeal when a defendant is found not guilty. Either side can ask an appellate court to reconsider the sentence of someone who was found guilty.



## ALL KINDS OF APPEALS

Civil and criminal appeals make up most of the cases heard by the Tenth Circuit. But there are other types of cases, too.



## ALL KINDS OF FEDERAL COURTS

Each federal district has a single bankruptcy court and there are around 950 bankruptcy judges in the country. Here are some examples.

- Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court
- Court of International Trade
- Alien Terrorist Removal Court
- Patent Trial and Appeal Board
- Tax Court
- United States Court of Federal Claims
- Immigration courts
- Military courts



## RESEARCH FIND RELEVANT LAW

When you are researching a legal issue, you need to find the relevant law. This means looking for the laws that apply to your case. The judge will then use that law to decide the case.



"How often do they refer to the law books, or the research they do? It's often only once or twice. They're a family affair."

PRINCIPLES INTO THE WALLS

DEMOCRATIC TEMPLE

RESEARCH

ST. PROC



# THE COURTROOMS

## INSIDE THE COURTROOM

**APPELLATE COURTROOMS LOOK A LITTLE DIFFERENT FROM OTHER COURTROOMS.** They are larger and more formal, with a high ceiling and a large chandelier. They are used for appeals from lower courts.



**DISTRICT COURTROOM**  
 A photograph of a district courtroom, showing a judge's bench, a clerk's desk, and a public seating area.

**IN-BENCH JUDGE'S BENCH**  
 A photograph of a judge's bench, showing the judge's seat and the clerk's desk.

**JUDGE'S BENCH**  
 A photograph of a judge's bench, showing the judge's seat and the clerk's desk.

**LAW CLERK'S DESK**  
 A photograph of a law clerk's desk, showing the clerk's seat and the judge's bench.

**COUNSEL TABLES**  
 A photograph of counsel tables, showing the seats for the attorneys.

**COURTROOM DEPUTY'S DESK**  
 A photograph of a courtroom deputy's desk, showing the deputy's seat and the judge's bench.

**PUBLIC SEATING**  
 A photograph of public seating, showing the seats for the public.

## THE WALLS TALK

References to legal history and values appear on our courtrooms' walls. Many phrases are in Latin, our legal system traces its roots back to ancient Rome.



**A MOTIF APPEARS IN EACH CORNER OF THE DISTRICT COURTROOM**  
 A photograph of a wall in a district courtroom, featuring a Latin phrase: 'PEACE DEPENDS ON JUSTICE'.

"Project emphasis at irregularities rather (Dis)tain bombast and words half a yard long; speak effectually, plainly, and shortly."  
 Edward Coke



## A GLIMPSE BEHIND THE BENCH

**CONFERENCE ROOM**  
 A photograph of a conference room, showing a table and chairs.

**JUDGES' CHAMBERS**  
 A photograph of a judge's chambers, showing a desk and a chair.

**JUDGES' CHAMBERS**  
 A photograph of a judge's chambers, showing a desk and a chair.

**JUDGES HAVE THEIR OWN OPINIONS ABOUT WHY A BLACK ROBE IS APPROPRIATE:**

"The judge... wears a black robe in part to emphasize the comparative unimportance of his or her own personality."  
 Justice Stephen G. Breyer

"It shows that all of us judges are engaged in upholding the Constitution and the rule of law. We have a common responsibility."  
 Justice Sandra Day O'Connor







## A CASE IN POINT

As DNA testing became more reliable, it opened new doors for death row inmates to appeal their convictions. One dramatic example found its way to the Sixth Circuit.

### COURTROOM DRAMA

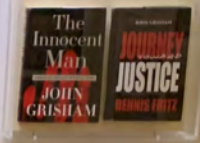
Higher courts have made the playing field a little more even for other John Grisham-style courtroom dramas. At least in part, you can determine your own fate.

### WRONGLY IMPRISONED AND ALMOST EXECUTED



In 1982, the Sixth Circuit agreed that Mr. Williams had not received a fair trial. The three judge panel ruled that the defense attorney, William Williams, had been denied the right to counsel during the trial and was calling for a new trial for his guilty client.

In 1984, DNA testing finally confirmed Mr. Williams' innocence and he was freed from prison.



*"God help us, if ever in this great country we turn our heads while people who have not had fair trials are executed. That almost happened in this case."*  
District Judge Frank Seay

### UPHOLDING THE BILL OF RIGHTS

#### PRISONERS' RIGHTS

#### FREEDOM OF BELIEFS



Daniel Sprick, Federal Courthouse Diptych #2, 1992

Joellyn T. Duesberry, April in New Mexico, 1994

**ART OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION**

Two sculptures of bighorn sheep have guarded a doorway near the corner of Stout and 18th streets since 1936. Gladys Caldwell Fisher sculpted them for the **Works Progress Administration**, an agency that employed out-of-work Americans during the great financial crisis of the 1930s. Fisher went to school just northeast of here, when East High School stood on the next block of Stout Street.



Fisher and two assistants carved the limestone rams.



**PORTRAITS OF JUDGES**

The faces of Tenth Circuit judges line a public hallway on the second floor. It's traditional to honor former and "senior" judges with a portrait. Senior judges take on fewer cases than active judges, though they still accomplish about 15% of the work in federal courts.

You're welcome to visit the second floor via the stairway or elevator located to the right as you leave this gallery.







True freedom requires the rule of law and justice

### STEPS IN AN APPEAL: PROCESS AND PERSONNEL

**DISAGREE**  
THE JUDGE OR JUDGES  
MAY DISAGREE

**FILE**  
COURT OFFICIAL RECORDS  
THE COURT'S DECISION

**BRIEF**  
WRITERS BASED ON THE LAW  
PREPARE A BRIEF

### APPEAL: PROCESS AND PERSONNEL

**ARGUE**  
THE PARTIES PRESENT  
THEIR CASES

**DECIDE**  
RESOLVE DISPUTES IMPARTIALLY

The judge or judges in the appeal will hear the arguments of the parties and make a decision. They will also hear the arguments of the parties and make a decision. They will also hear the arguments of the parties and make a decision.

# A CASE IN POINT

Every court case has important consequences for the parties involved. The life-or-death impact of death penalty decisions sets them apart. Given the extreme result of a death sentence, American law offers many chances for court review.

As DNA testing became more reliable, it opened new doors for death row inmates to appeal their convictions. One dramatic example found its way to the Tenth Circuit.

## WRONGLY IMPRISONED AND ALMOST EXECUTED

An Oklahoma state court convicted Ron Williamson of murder in 1988 and sentenced him to death. Multiple appeals failed. Five days before his scheduled execution in 1994, Williamson's public defender petitioned for habeas corpus in federal court. This last-resort petition challenged Oklahoma's legal reasons for keeping people in prison or executing them.

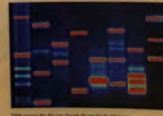
Judge Frank Seay of the Eastern District of Oklahoma ruled that the state's trial had not resulted in a legal conviction. He found that Williamson had not been mentally competent to stand trial and that his lawyer had failed to effectively challenge evidence and represent him.



Williamson (right) was convicted (left convicted), sentenced to the prison, and executed for the crime (left convicted) that he never did (right convicted).

In 1997, the Tenth Circuit agreed that Mr. Williamson had not received a fair trial. The three-judge panel ruled that the defense attorney's errors violated Williamson's Sixth Amendment right to counsel, making the trial unfair and calling into doubt the jury's guilty verdict.

In 1999, DNA testing finally confirmed Williamson's innocence and he was released from prison.



## COURTROOM DRAMA

Unsettling convictions make for gripping stories. In 2006, best-selling author John Grisham wrote about Ron Williamson's wrongful conviction. The book inspired a six-part television series in 2018.

Williamson's co-defendant, Dennis Fritz, became a crusader against the death penalty and wrote about his experience in this book.



*"God help us, if ever in this great country we turn our heads while people who have not had fair trials are executed. That almost happened in this case."*

District Judge Frank Seay