

## U.S. Supreme Court Rulings on Religious Freedom

Each of the U.S. Supreme Court cases listed below involved a claim to not follow a generally applied law on religious grounds. Complete the chart as you learn about each case. Use columns 2 and 3 to identify the opposing interests (values, rights, beliefs) in each case. Then circle the one making a case on religious freedom grounds. In column 4, summarize the legal question before the Court. In column 5, use a Y/N to indicate how the Court answered that question. Finally, determine if the Court ruled in favor of religious freedom.

Supreme Court Case	Interest A	Interest B	Legal Question*	Court Ruling (Y/N)	Were arguments for religious freedom upheld? (Y/N)
<b>Reynolds v. United States (1878)</b>	Free exercise of Mormon beliefs	Anti-polygamy laws	"Does the federal anti-bigamy statute violate the First Amendment's free-exercise clause because plural marriage is part of religious practice?"	N	N
<b>Sherbert v. Verner (1963)</b>	Free exercise of Seventh-day Adventist beliefs	Unemployment compensation laws	"Does the denial of unemployment compensation violate the First Amendment's free exercise clause?"	Y	Y
<b>Wisconsin v. Yoder (1971)</b>	Free exercise of Amish beliefs	State compulsory education laws	"Does Wisconsin's requirement that all parents send their children to school at least until age 16 violate the First Amendment by criminalizing the conduct of parents who refuse to send their children to school for religious reasons?"	Y	Y
<b>Employment Division v. Smith (1990)</b>	Free exercise of Native American Church (Peyote) beliefs	Federal drug laws	"Can a state deny unemployment benefits to a worker fired for using illegal drugs for religious purposes?"	Y	N
<b>Burwell v. Hobby Lobby (2014)</b>	Free exercise of Evangelical beliefs	Federal health insurance mandate	"Does the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 allow a for-profit company to deny its employees health coverage of contraception to which the employees would otherwise be entitled based on the religious objections of the company's owners?"	Y	Y

\*Note: All of these questions are drawn from the Oyez Project ([www.oyez.org](http://www.oyez.org)) at Chicago-Kent College of Law at Illinois Institute of Technology.