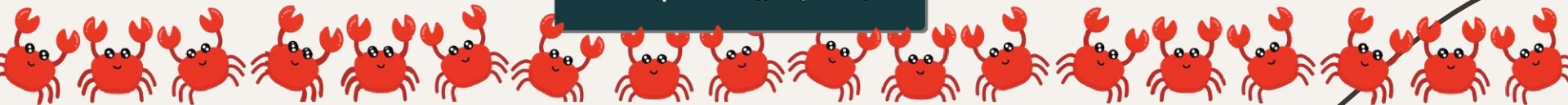
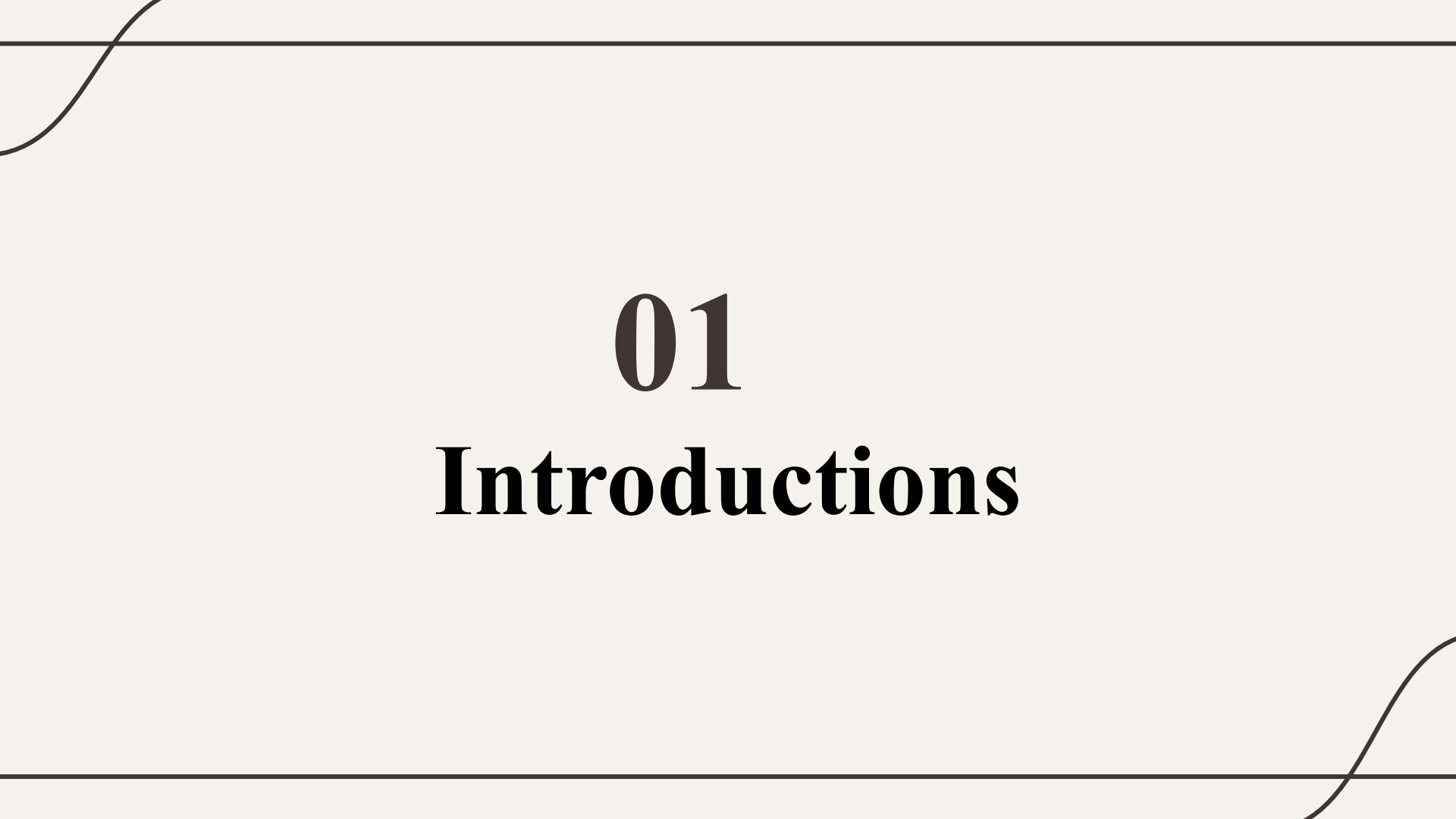


How to be a Court Listener

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01

Introductions

Presenters:



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Journalist
Wall Street Journal

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Coulter.Jones@wsj.com



Mollie Simon

Research Reporter
ProPublica

✕ @mrsimon22

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Michael Lissner

Executive Director
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mike@free.law



William Palin

Lead for Case Law
Free Law Project

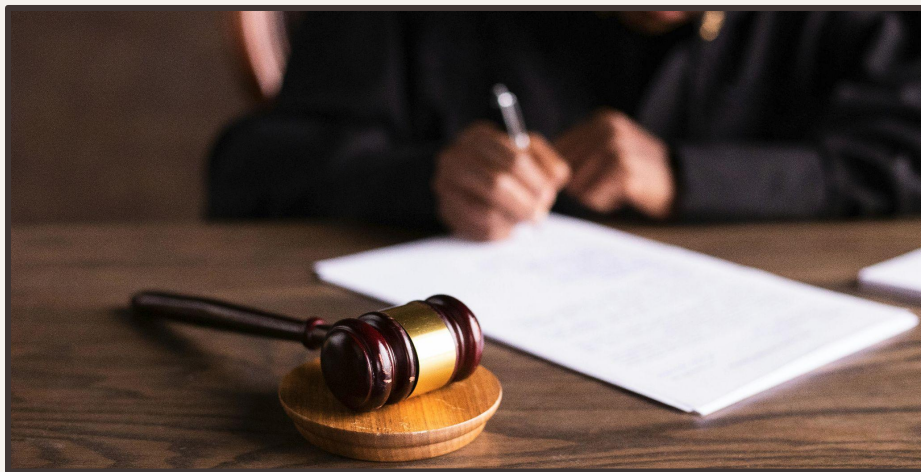
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02 Court Basics

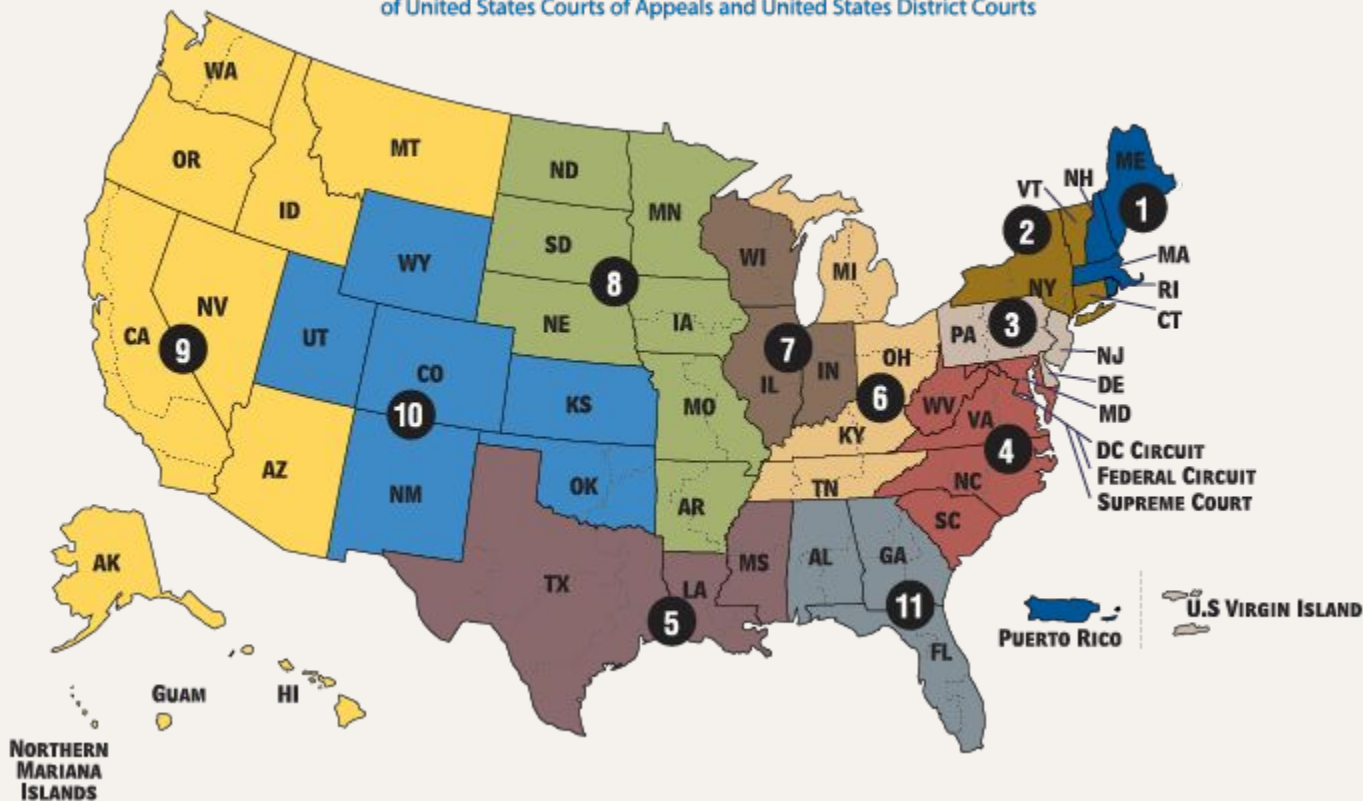


What is the Federal Judicial Branch?

- ~200 courts: district, bankruptcy, appellate, special
 - Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts
 - Judicial Conference of the U.S.
 - Federal Judicial Center (FJC)
 - 81 Federal Public Defender Organizations
 - U.S. Sentencing Commission
 - Supreme Court Police
-

Geographic Boundaries

of United States Courts of Appeals and United States District Courts



What about State Courts?

- This is where 98% of cases are filed
 - 50M cases/year vs. < 400k in federal
 - *Thousands* of state courthouses (mayoral, city, county, state appellate, supreme, etc.)
 - Data access varies, can be expensive, difficult, non-existent
-

Documents vs. Dockets:

Know What You Are Looking At



Dockets

This is like looking through the table of contents for a book.

- Easier to access
- Basics of a case
- Give you a roadmap



Documents

This is where you actually read the book.

- Not every document is equally relevant: learn which ones matter

The New York Times Company v. Microsoft Corporation (1:23-cv-11195)

District Court, S.D. New York

[Add Note](#) [Tags](#) [Get Alerts](#) [View on PACER](#)**Last Updated:** March 4, 2024, 9:07 a.m.**Assigned To:** [Sidney H. Stein](#)**Citation:** The New York Times Company v. Microsoft Corporation, 1:23-cv-11195, (S.D.N.Y.)**Date Filed:** Dec. 27, 2023**Date of Last Known Filing:** March 4, 2024**Cause:** 17:501 Copyright Infringement**Nature of Suit:** 820 Copyright**Jury Demand:** Plaintiff**Jurisdiction Type:** Federal Question[DOCKET ENTRIES](#)[PARTIES AND ATTORNEYS](#)[AUTHORITIES](#)

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(Attachments: # 1 Exhibit A, # 2 Exhibit B, # 3 Exhibit C, # 4 Exhibit D, # 5 Exhibit E, # 6 Exhibit F, # 7 Exhibit G, # 8 Exhibit H, # 9 Exhibit I, # 10 Exhibit J, # 11 Exhibit K, # 12 Exhibit L, # 13 Exhibit M, # 14 Exhibit N, # 15 Exhibit O, # 16 Exhibit P, # 17 Exhibit Q, # 18 Exhibit R, # 19 Exhibit S, # 20 Exhibit T, # 21 Exhibit U, # 22 Exhibit V, # 23 Exhibit W, # 24 Exhibit X, # 25 Exhibit Y, # 26 Exhibit Z, # 27 Exhibit AA, # 28 Exhibit AB, # 29 Exhibit AC, # 30 Exhibit AD, # 31 Exhibit AE, # 32 Exhibit AF, # 33 Exhibit AG, # 34 Exhibit AH, # 35 Exhibit AI, # 36 Exhibit AJ, # 37 Exhibit AK, # 38 Exhibit AL, # 39 Exhibit AM, # 40 Exhibit AN, # 41 Exhibit AO, # 42 Exhibit AP, # 43 Exhibit AQ, # 44 Exhibit AR, # 45 Exhibit AS, # 46 Exhibit AT, # 47 Exhibit AU, # 48 Exhibit AV, # 49 Exhibit AW, # 50 Exhibit AX, # 51 Exhibit AY, # 52 Exhibit AZ, # 53 Exhibit BA, # 54 Exhibit BB, # 55 Exhibit BC, # 56 Exhibit BD, # 57 Exhibit BE, # 58 Exhibit BF, # 59 Exhibit BG, # 60 Exhibit BH, # 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ORDER granting 43 Motion for Rose S. Lee to Appear Pro Hac Vice (HEREBY ORDERED by Judge Sidney H. Stein) (Text Only Order) (lab) (Entered: 02/20/2024)

[Main Document](#)[Order on Motion to Appear Pro Hac Vice](#)[Buy on PACER](#)[Order on Motion to Appear Pro Hac Vice](#)

NOTICE OF APPEARANCE by Eudokia Spanos on behalf of The New York Times Company..(Spanos, Eudokia) (Entered: 02/20/2024)

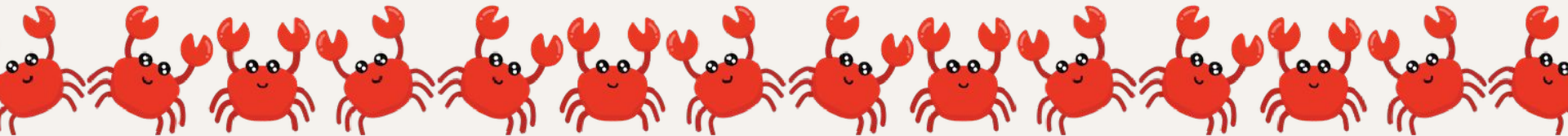
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MOTION to Intervene and Dismiss, Stay or Transfer. Document filed by Paul Tremblay, Ta-Nehisi Coates, Junot Daz, Andrew Sean Greer, David Henry Hwang, Michael Chabon, Matthew Klam, Laura Lippman, Rachel Louise Snyder, Ayelet Waldman, Jacqueline Woodson, Sarah Silverman, Christopher Golden, Richard Kadrey. Return Date set for 4/8/2024 at 12:00 PM. (Attachments: # 1 Supplement Memorandum of Points and Authorities, # 2 Affidavit Christopher J. Hydal, # 3 Exhibit A, # 4 Exhibit B, # 5 Exhibit C, # 6 Exhibit D, # 7 Proposed Order Granting Motion to Intervene, # 8 Supplement Request for Oral Argument).(Hydal, Christopher) (Entered: 02/23/2024)

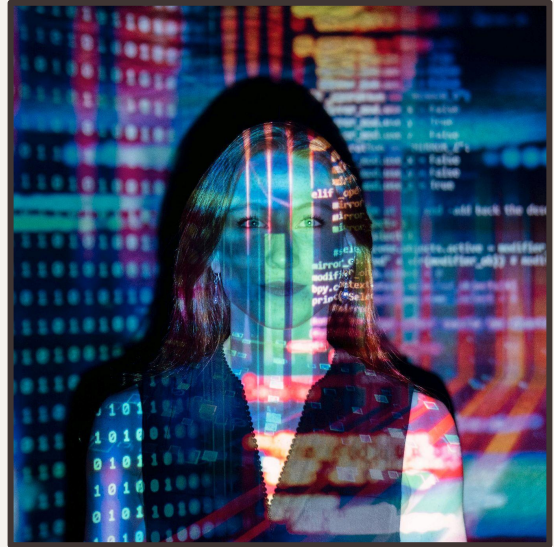
[Main Document](#)[Motion to Intervene](#)[Download PDF](#)[Attachment 1](#)[Supplement Memorandum of Points and Authorities](#)[Download PDF](#)[Attachment 2](#)[Affidavit Christopher J. Hydal](#)[Download PDF](#)[Attachment 3](#)[Exhibit A](#)[Download PDF](#)[Attachment 4](#)[Exhibit B](#)[Download PDF](#)[Attachment 5](#)[Exhibit C](#)[Download PDF](#)[Attachment 6](#)[Exhibit D](#)[Download PDF](#)

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03 How to Gather Data





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- Access to case information costs \$0.10 per page, capped at \$3.00 for most documents.
- Criticisms: out of date, hard to use, expensive, anti-democratic, illegal.
- RECAP is a response that crowdsources documents and makes them freely available.
- Metadata about 350M documents, but only 10M docs.
- Full text searchable.
- Free



Finding a case on PACER

- DOJ announces before PACER has it or it's sealed
- 98 search engines:
 - Central search only updated once daily
 - District search is very bad
 - No full text
- Eventually has everything

Vs. on RECAP

- Very powerful search engine
 - Updated in real time
 - Full text
 - Case name search
 - Date ranges
- Built into RECAP extension
- Only has what is crowdsourced or scrapable



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			2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	# +/-	%
6TH	Tuscaloosa	Criminal	4,773	4,588	3,400	3,892	4,285	-488	-10.2%
		Felony	2,305	2,266	1,325	1,999	2,438	133	5.8%
		Other	2,468	2,322	2,075	1,893	1,847	-621	-25.2%
		Civil	1,763	1,835	1,428	1,391	1,330	-433	-24.6%
		Domestic	1,884	1,724	1,605	1,693	1,672	-212	-11.3%
		Original	1,541	1,432	1,341	1,363	1,363	-178	-11.6%
		Modification	343	292	264	330	309	-34	-9.9%
		Juvenile	1,275	1,099	1,029	949	1,083	-192	-15.1%
		Child Support	1,066	900	642	692	677	-389	-36.5%
		Total	10,761	10,146	8,104	8,617	9,047	-1,714	-15.9%

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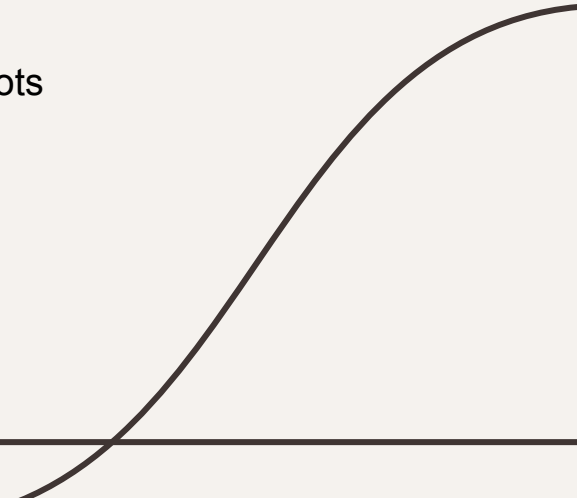
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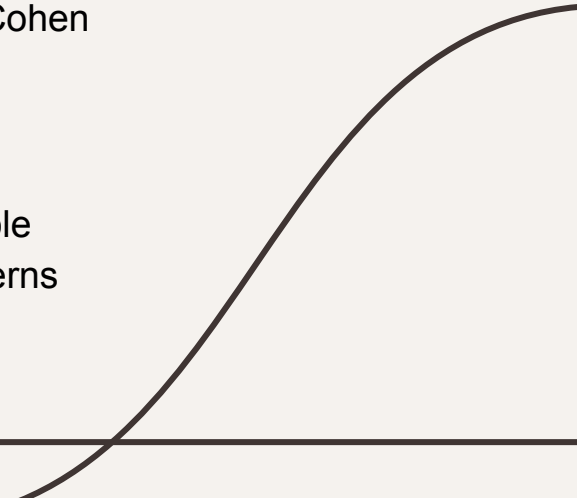


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- 

RECAP Demo



Recorded Demo: <https://youtu.be/NdfuLlcL1CU>

APIs & Webhooks

- An API is like a digital mediator that enables different software applications to talk to each other and exchange information. It defines the methods, parameters, and data formats you can use to access certain features or retrieve data from an application or service.
- A webhook can be thought of as a type of API that is driven by events rather than requests. Instead of one application making a request to another to receive a response, a webhook is a service that allows one program to send data to another as soon as a particular event takes place.

Links to some helpful APIs & Webhooks

- CourtListener REST API: <https://www.courtlistener.com/help/api/rest/>
 - CourtListener Webhooks: <https://www.courtlistener.com/help/api/webhooks/>
-

Other Tools from Free Law Project:



Eyecite

An open source tool for extracting legal citations from text.



Doctor

A microservice for converting and extracting documents and audio files.



Juriscraper

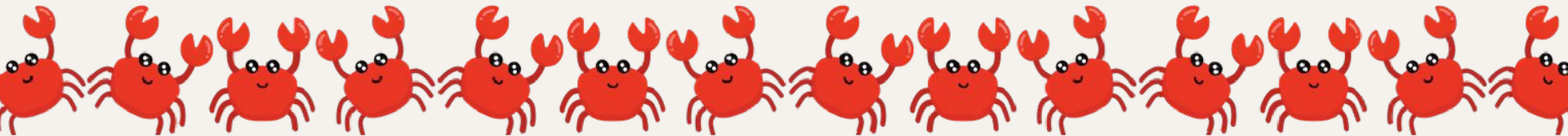
A data gathering library written in Python that collects legal opinions, PACER content, and oral arguments from the American court system.

<https://free.law/projects/eyecite>

<https://free.law/projects/doctor>

<https://free.law/projects/juriscraper>

What tools do you like to use?

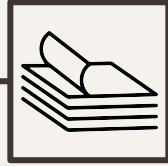




04 Big Data

What Started it

- 1978 Ethics in Government Act
- 2017 Removal of the per disclosure fee



Paper Files

FLP began requesting the files in bulk starting in 2017.



Machine Learning

874 disclosure records added going back to 1987 from Congressional archives



Court Websites

Scraping of online sources provided some disclosures from 2003 to 2010.



Judicial Financial Disclosures Dataset



<https://www.courtlistener.com/financial-disclosures/>

How the Data Arrived:



CONFIRMATION HEARINGS ON FEDERAL APPOINTMENTS

HEARINGS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY UNITED STATES SENATE ONE HUNDRED SECOND CONGRESS FIRST SESSION ON CONFIRMATION HEARINGS ON APPOINTMENTS TO THE FEDERAL JUDICIARY

JULY 24, 29, 31, AND SEPTEMBER 26, 1991

Part 5

Serial No. J-102-7

Printed for the use of the Committee on the Judiciary



PENNSYLVANIA STATE
UNIVERSITY
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U.S. Depository Copy
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794

205-10 FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE REPORT Rev. 9/87		Annual Report Due by May 15 from Federal Officers and certain Judicial Employees (28 USC App. 1, § 131-49)
Person Reporting (Last name, first, middle initial)	Court or Organization	Date of Report
Smith, Fern M.	U.S. Dist. Ct. N.D. Cal.	5/10/88
Title	Date of Entry/Reassignment/Termination (only if initial or final report)	Reporting Period (Calendar year, or interim dates)
Judge	May 9, 1988	11/87 8/30/88
Home or office address	Superior Court - Dept. 25 Hall of Justice - 850 Bryant St. San Francisco, Cal. 94108	
IMPORTANT NOTES: Please read the instructions accompanying this form. The report should include information pertaining to your spouse and dependent children, if any. Attach additional sheets if needed. Identifying each attachment by showing your name, the date of the report, and the section(s) being completed. Complete all sections, checking the NONE box for each section where you have no reportable information. Compare and reconcile this report with last year's and list items in the same order as last year. Type or print clearly. Sign on last page.		

I. POSITIONS. (Reporting individual only; see pp. 15-16 of instructions.)

POSITION

☐ NONE (No reportable positions)

Judge Superior Court - San Francisco
Trustee Fern M. Smith Trust

NAME OF ORGANIZATION/ENTITY

II. AGREEMENTS. (Reporting individual only; see p. 17 of instructions.)

DATE

PARTIES AND TERMS

☐ NONE (No reportable agreements)

Sept. 1986 Fern M. Smith and Bronson Bronson & McKinnon. Part of
Partnership Share as of Sept. 1986 to be made in
annual installments over 5 year period.

III. NON-INVESTMENT INCOME. (Partial disclosure for spouse; see pp. 18-20 of instructions.)

DATE
(Month/year only)

SOURCE AND TYPE

GROSS INCOME
(Yours, not spouse's)

☐ NONE (No reportable non-investment income)

1	State of California - wages	\$ 80,500
2	City/County of San Francisco - wages	\$ 12,760
3	Williams & Burrows, Inc. (S)	\$ -
4	Bronson, Bronson & McKinnon	\$ 4,000
5		\$ -

Enhancing the Data:

- Free Law Project developed a parsing system for the disclosures.
 - Takes the disclosure, whether it's a single-page TIFF, multi-page TIFF or PDF, scanned document or text, and converts it into machine-readable JSON data.
- A machine learning model to identify pages in the Senate hearing records that looked like financial disclosure documents.
 - Extracted 843 Financial Disclosure from over 250k pages of documents.
- Disclosures were converted into good PDF files and ingested the data into the database
- All data available via CourtListener APIs and website
- Connection of Financial Disclosures dataset with FLP's Judges database

Financial Disclosures for J. Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Download



[2004](#)
[2005](#)
[2006](#)
[2007](#)
[2008](#)
[2009](#)
[2010](#)
[2011](#)

[2011 \(2\)](#)
[2012](#)
[2013](#)
[2014](#)
[2015](#)
[2016](#)
[2017](#)
[2018](#)

Investments



	Admin	Description	Gross Val. Code	Gross Val. Method	Income Code	Income Type	Trans. Date	Trans. Value
		Checking account- JP Morgan formerly Morgan Guaranty Trust Co, NYC	100,001-250,000 (M)	Cash Market (T)		None		
		TIAA CREF Retirement Accounts (H)						
		Columbia Universiv Retirement Plan (H)						
		TIAA Traditional		Cash Market (T)	15,001-50,000 (E)	Interest	03/28/18	15,001-50,000 (K)
		NJ ABP Pre 1995 303(B) Plan (H)						
		TIAA Traditional	250,001-500,000	Cash	5,001-15,000	Interest	03/28/18	15,001-50,000

Notes



The data in this file was extracted with OCR technology and may contain typos.

- Links to the PDF row (if possible).
- The row may contain a redaction.
- Indicates failed extraction in the cell.

What's in the Dataset?

32,336 disclosures documenting:

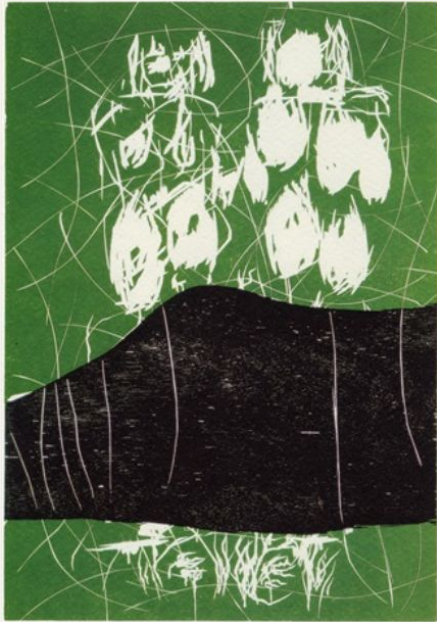
- **1,901,720** investments
- **37,050** positions held outside of the judiciary
- **10,007** legal agreements
- **15,302** sources of non-investment income
- **20,175** sources of spousal income
- **33,472** reimbursements
- **2,028** gifts to judges and judicial employees
- **18,775** debts



Coverage Page: www.courtlistener.com/help/coverage/financial-disclosures/

Inside the Data: Art Collections

Millions of dollars in art investments



Georg Baselitz, *Der Berg*, 1991



George Condo, *Conversations*, 2011



George Condo, *Blue Expanding Figures*, 2006

Owned by Judge Helene N. White, U. S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit

Inside the Data: World Travelers

Travel Reimbursements of just 592 of the 33,472 reimbursements globe.

FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE REPORT

Page 3 of 6

Name of Person Reporting

Davis, Michael J

Date of Report

04/18/2008

V. GIFTS. (Includes those to spouse and dependent children; see pp. 28-31 of filing instructions.)

☐ NONE (No reportable gifts.)

	<u>SOURCE</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>VALUE</u>
1.	Minneapolis Club	Honorary Membership	\$ 4,500.00
2.	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Government	2 briefcases, Figs, crystal obelisk	\$ 150.00
3.			



13.	Japanese Government	Nov. 17-22, 2007	Tokyo, Japan	Educational conference	travel and lodging
14.	Judicial Yuan of Taiwanese Government	Nov. 23-27, 2007	Taipei, China	Educational conference	travel and lodging

Money of the 1% of the 1%

9,653 investments greater than \$1,000,001

- 8,588 investments between \$1,000,001 and \$5,000,000
- 613 investments between \$5,000,001 and \$25,000,000
- 64 investments between \$25,000,001 and \$50,000,000
- 118 investments above \$50,000,001



*This does not account for duplicate investments over multiple years

Redactions *(Ridiculous and others)*

<https://storage.courtlistener.com/us/federal/judicial/financial-disclosures/8587/matthew-joseph-kacsmark-disclosure.2016.pdf>

https://storage.courtlistener.com/us/federal/judicial/financial-disclosures/8587/matthew-joseph-kacsmark-disclosure.2021_1.pdf

10. College Invest 529 Aggressive Growth Allocation	A	Distribution	J	T				
11. Publix Supermarkets, Inc., Common Stock (Private)	G	Distribution	P1	U				
12. Wells Fargo Bank Accounts	A	Interest	K	T				
13.								

13. CollegeInvest Age-Based Aggressive Growth	B	Dividend	K	T	
14. █████ Common Stock	G	Dividend	P2	T	
15.					

Flaws in the Data

- **Self-reported**
 - Misspellings
 - Old companies
 - Different names for same asset or company (The “Wells Fargo” problem)
 - OCR’d from PDFs
- **Investments are reported in ranges so you don’t have an exact dollar amount**
 - How much was really made on a sale or comparing total value of investments may be impossible

	A	B	C
1	description	records	judges
2	Wells Fargo Bank	34	19
3	Wells Fargo Cash Accounts	33	9
4	Wells Fargo (cash)	32	16
5	Wells Fargo Emerg. Mkts. Equity Mut. Fund	25	1
6	Wells Fargo Short Term Mini. Bond Mut. Fund	25	1
7	Wells Fargo	23	15
8	Wells Fargo & Co (WFC)	23	6
9	Wells Fargo Bank (cash)	22	8
10	WFC	21	7
11	WELLS FARGO BK N A - WFC	20	1
12	Wells Fargo Bank Accounts	20	10
13	Wells Fargo Account	15	7
14	Select Bond (MSA/Wells Capital Mgmt)	13	3
15	Wells Fargo Bank Deposit Sweep	13	2
16	Wells Fargo cash account	13	3
17	WELLS FARGO EMERGING MARKETS EQUITY INSTL CL (EMGNX)	12	2
18	Wells Fargo & Co	12	6
19	Wells Fargo 2.6% Jul 2020	12	1
20	Wells Fargo Cash Account	12	8
21	Wells Fargo Common Stock (WFC)	12	1
22	Wells Fargo Muni Bond Fund - Administration Class	12	1
23	Wells Fargo Sweep Account	12	1
24	Wells Fargo & Co New Common	10	2
25	Wells Fargo Bank, N.A.	10	1
26	Wells Fargo CD	10	4
27	Wells Fargo Stock	10	4
28	Wells Fargo Sweep Account (cash)	10	1

Flaws in the Data

IV. REIMBURSEMENTS -- transportation, lodging, food, entertainment.

(Includes those to spouse and dependent children; see pp. 25-27 of filing instructions.)

☐ NONE (No reportable reimbursements.)

	SOURCE	DATES	LOCATION	PURPOSE	ITEMS PAID OR PROVIDED
1.	University of San Diego	06/17/2019 to 06/28/2019	Paris, France	Teaching	Per Diem

IV. REIMBURSEMENTS -- transportation, lodging, food, entertainment.

(Includes those to spouse and dependent children; see pp. 25-27 of filing instructions.)

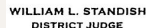
☐ NONE (No reportable reimbursements.)

	SOURCE	DATES	LOCATION	PURPOSE	ITEMS PAID OR PROVIDED
1.	California Bankruptcy Forum	05/17/19-05/19/19	Rancho Mirage, CA	Education Panelist	Hotel / Registration / Meals
2.	UCSD	11/10/19-11/17/19	Paris, France	Education Panelist / Lecturer in Sorbonne Winter Symposium	Airfare / Hotel / Other Transportation

- Values not reported at all for reimbursements

	SOURCE	DATES	LOCATION	PURPOSE	ITEMS PAID OR PROVIDED
	American Law Institute	Jan 16-18, 2019	Philadelphia, PA	Council Meeting	Transportation, meals
2.	American Bar Association	Jan 26-27, 2019	Las Vegas, NV	ROLI Board Meeting	Transportation, lodging, meals
3.	American Bar Association	Mar 28-31, 2019	Seattle, WA	Litigation Magazine Panel	Transportation, lodging, meals
4.	American Law Institute	May 19-22, 2019	Washington, D.C.	Council Meeting	Transportation, meals
5.	University of San Diego	Jun 3-13, 2019	Paris, France	Teaching	Lodging, meals
6.	American Bar Association	Jun 29-Jul 2, 2019	Prague, Czechoslovakia	Speaker, Central European Law Conf. Meeting	Transportation, lodging, meals
7.	American Bar Association	Jul 14-18, 2019	Bogota, Colombia	Judicial Training	Transportation, lodging, meals

- Redactions
- Corrections



July 10, 2008

6170

**809 U.S. COURTHOUSE
PITTSBURGH, PA 15219
(412) 208-7430**

Honorable Ortrrie Smith, Chair
Judicial Conference of the United States
Committee on Financial Disclosure
Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts
One Columbus Circle, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20544

RE: Calendar Year 2007 Filing

Dear Judge Smith:

In response to your June 23, 2008, letter, I have made the following corrections to my Financial Disclosure Report for the calendar year 2007:

1. In the Second Part, No. 1, I removed the position of "Co-Trustee of Trust No. 16" from the report. Copies are enclosed for your review. This Trust has been fully Distributed.

2. In the Second Part, No. 2, I accidentally deleted Pepsico, Inc., from Page 21, lines 300 and 301. Pepsico, Inc., now appears on the enclosed revision of Page 18, lines 249 and 250.

3. In the Second Part, No. 3, I corrected the omissions and enclose herewith three copies of corrected Pages 1, 43, 71, 73, 74 and 100.

Very truly yours,

WLS/md

Page 5 of 39

Name of Person Reporting
Stein, Sidney H

Date of Report
8/16/2005

VII. INVESTMENTS and TRUSTS

- income, value, transactions (includes those of the spouse and dependent children. See pp. 34-57 of filing instructions.)

[illegible]

Flaws in the Data

Newer forms: pub.jefs.uscourts.gov/

Get Access and Search

You must agree to the following to access and search reports.

I understand that it is unlawful to obtain or use this or these reports for: any unlawful purpose; any commercial purpose other than by news and communication media for dissemination to the general public; determining or establishing of the credit rating of any individual; or use, directly or indirectly, in the solicitation of money for any political, charitable, or other purpose (5 U.S.C. § 13107).

I understand that whoever, in any manner within the jurisdiction of the executive, legislative, or judicial branch of the Government of the United States, knowingly and willfully (1) falsifies, conceals, or covers up by any trick, scheme, or device a material fact; (2) makes any materially false, fictitious, or fraudulent statement or representation; or (3) makes or uses any false writing or document, knowing the same to contain any materially false, fictitious, or fraudulent statement or entry, shall be fined not more than \$10,000 or imprisoned not more than five years, or both.

[Register for Access to the Database](#)

Section 13107 of title 5, United States Code as requested. Failure to comply with these status disclosure report filed with the Administrative of the Financial Disclosure Requirements of F be disclosed to members of the Judicial Conf judiciary officers and employees who have a the individuals whose reports are accessed, 1 information in the performance of their duties.

I am aware of the prohibitions on the obtain request for examination is a matter of public:

[Begin Registration](#)

Note: Users must register each time they acc

Your Name (First Last) *
1 COULTER JONES

Occupation * * Indicates Required Field
JOURNALIST

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Street Address 2

City *
City

State / Province *
State / Province

Zip / Postal Code *
ZIP / Postal Co...

Requesting on Behalf of *
Name of individual or organization or enter "Self"

☐ I certify under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct. (28 U.S.C. § 1746)

Please note, section 13107(b)(2)(A) of title 5, U.S. Code requires that you provide your name, occupation and address. Section 13107 (b)(2)(B) requires that if you are obtaining a report at the request of, or on behalf of, another individual or an organization, you must specifically list that individual or organization. Failure to comply with these statutory requirements is cause to deny your request.

[Cancel](#) [Enter Database](#)

Search: Gilstrap

Year: Report Type: Court Name: Position: Sort By:

Relevance

Best Matches First

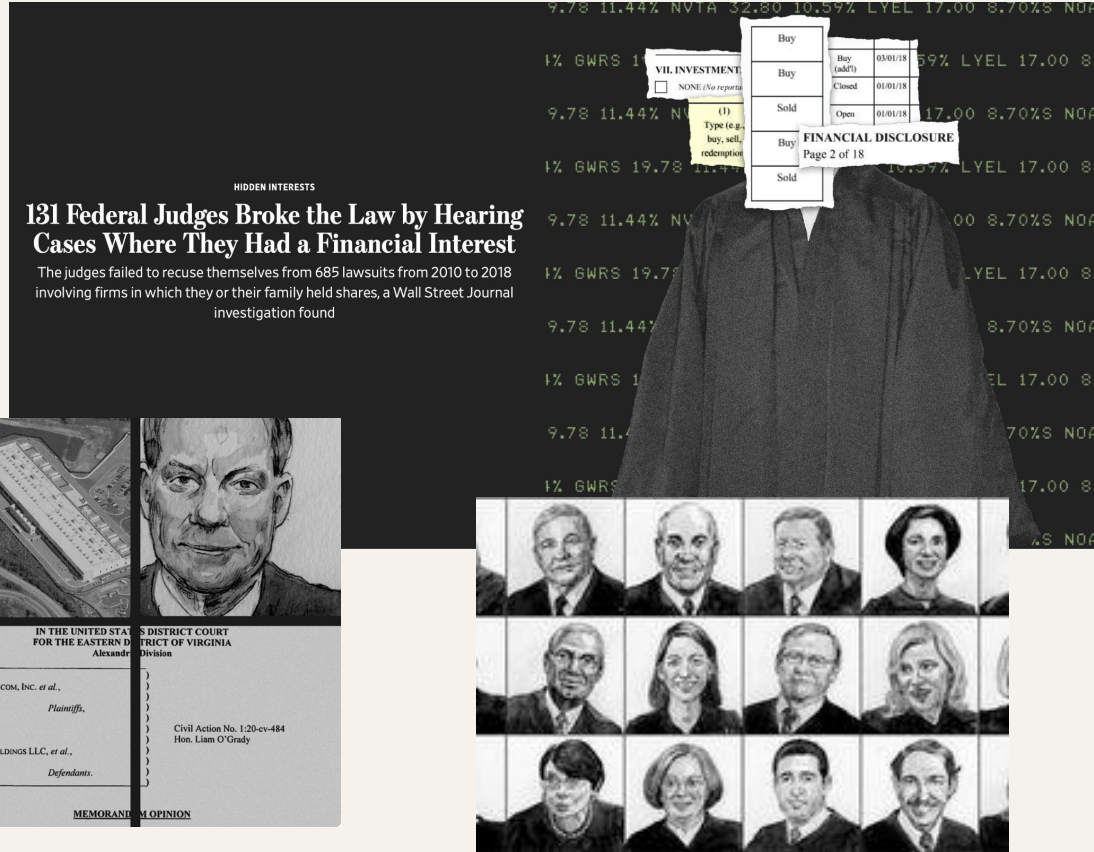
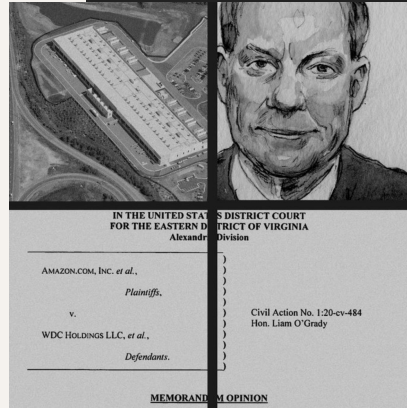
Check the box to the left for each financial disclosure report you wish to download. Refine your search to narrow by categories or adjust your keywords for search. Multiple options in each category may be selected.

Gilstrap, James R.
District Judge
U.S. District Court - Texas Eastern

☐ Annual, 2022 ☐ Periodic Transaction Report, Oct 11, 2022 ☐ Periodic Transaction Report, Sep 21, 2022 ☐ Periodic Transaction Report, Sep 1, 2022 ☐ Annual, 2021

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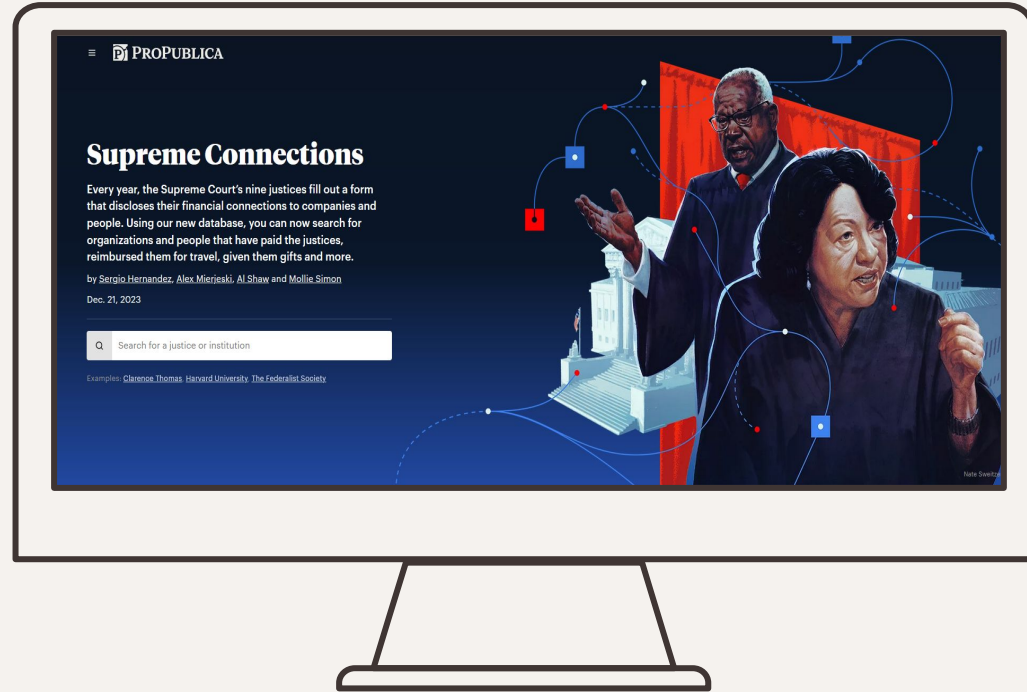
To discover recusal violations, The Wall Street Journal reviewed the financial holdings of roughly 700 federal district and appellate judges and compared them against tens of thousands of court cases.



www.wsj.com/articles/dozens-of-federal-judges-broke-the-law-on-conflicts-what-you-need-to-know-11632922140

Mollie Simon

ProPublica's database: you can now search for organizations and people that have paid the justices, reimbursed them for travel, given them gifts and more.



<https://projects.propublica.org/supreme-connections/>

Bulk Data from Free Law Project

Bulk Data Download

- Free monthly dataset
- Full data for case law, disclosures, judges, and more
- Massive CSVs

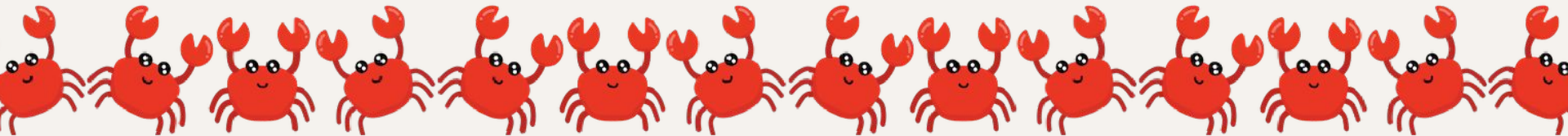
Replication

- Complete database accessible via SQL
- Incredible for building custom tools
- Updated in real time

Custom Data Gathering

- Can do almost anything
 - Win-win-win
 - PACER fees get expensive
-

**What questions
can you ask to
contextualize a case?**



05 Other Ways to Gather Data



Hitting the Digital Wall

Interrogate Your Search

- Name variations
- Court jurisdiction
- Available time period

Look Offline

- Public terminals
- Archives

Talk to People

- Clerks
- Attorneys
- Prosecutors
- Academics

Consult Outside Resources

- Law review articles
 - News coverage
 - Press releases
 - Public records
-

FOIA: The Status Quo

- Secretive culture; difficult to get anything beyond court docs
- Common Law right of access
 - Frequently used for court records
 - Little (visible) use on administrative records
- Common Law's two tenets:
 - Is it a public document?
 - Is the public's need greater than the gov't privacy?

What Could We Get - Top Ten (1/2)

1.

Disciplinary actions and complaints for judges and attorneys, whistleblower reports, disbarment proceedings, admission records

2.

Financial records and contracts

3.

Fines and fees levied

4.

AO court guidance letters

5.

Security audits, recovery plans, and incident reports

What Could We Get - Top Ten (2/2)

6.

SCOTUS public
calendar

7.

Judicial Conference
committee membership
and minutes

8.

List of all judges past
and present

9.

FJC Integrated DB but
with judge information

10.

The next top ten list



Include/Exclude?

- Sealed documents?
- Court documents (e.g. trial exhibits)?
- Judicial papers?
- Clerk selection criteria?
- Retirement letters to the president?
- FISA courts?

Problems to Overcome

- How do you appeal rejected requests?
- How close to judicial proceedings and papers do you go?
- Will judges sour on FOIA oversight?
- Huge requests: “I want all filings, please.”



Bad Redactions: Sharpies

ng bank records obtained from East West Bank (.25); research
ng [REDACTED] City National Bank, identify general counsel, and prepare letter

Bad Redactions: Side Channel



<https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2020/10/ghislaine-maxwell-deposition-redactions-epstein-how-to-crack.html>

Bad Redactions: Font Metrics

MATT BURGESS

SECURITY NOV 25, 2022 7:00 AM

Redacted Documents Are Not as Secure as You Think

Popular redaction tools don't always work as promised, and new attacks can reveal hidden information, researchers say.

<https://www.wired.com/story/redact-pdf-online-privacy/>

<https://arxiv.org/pdf/2206.02285v2.pdf>

Bad Redactions: Rectangles

She answered . (Ex. 1 at p. 61 of 68; Ex. 2 at p. 45 of 52).

<https://www.wired.com/story/redact-pdf-online-privacy/>

<https://arxiv.org/pdf/2206.02285v2.pdf>

For Example:



<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-46804127>

<https://www.courtlistener.com/docket/6183591/471/united-states-v-manafort/>

X-RAY

- Fast and effective tool to identify bad redactions in PDF files.
- Released as a well-maintained open source utility
- API coming soon!

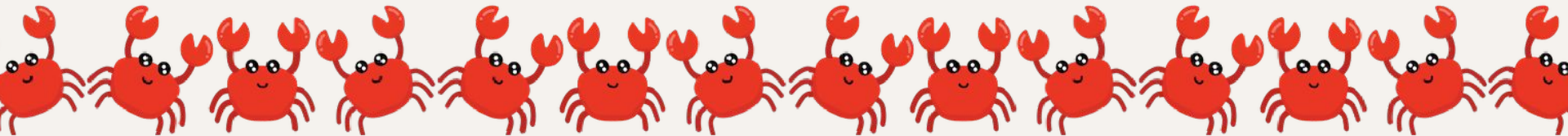


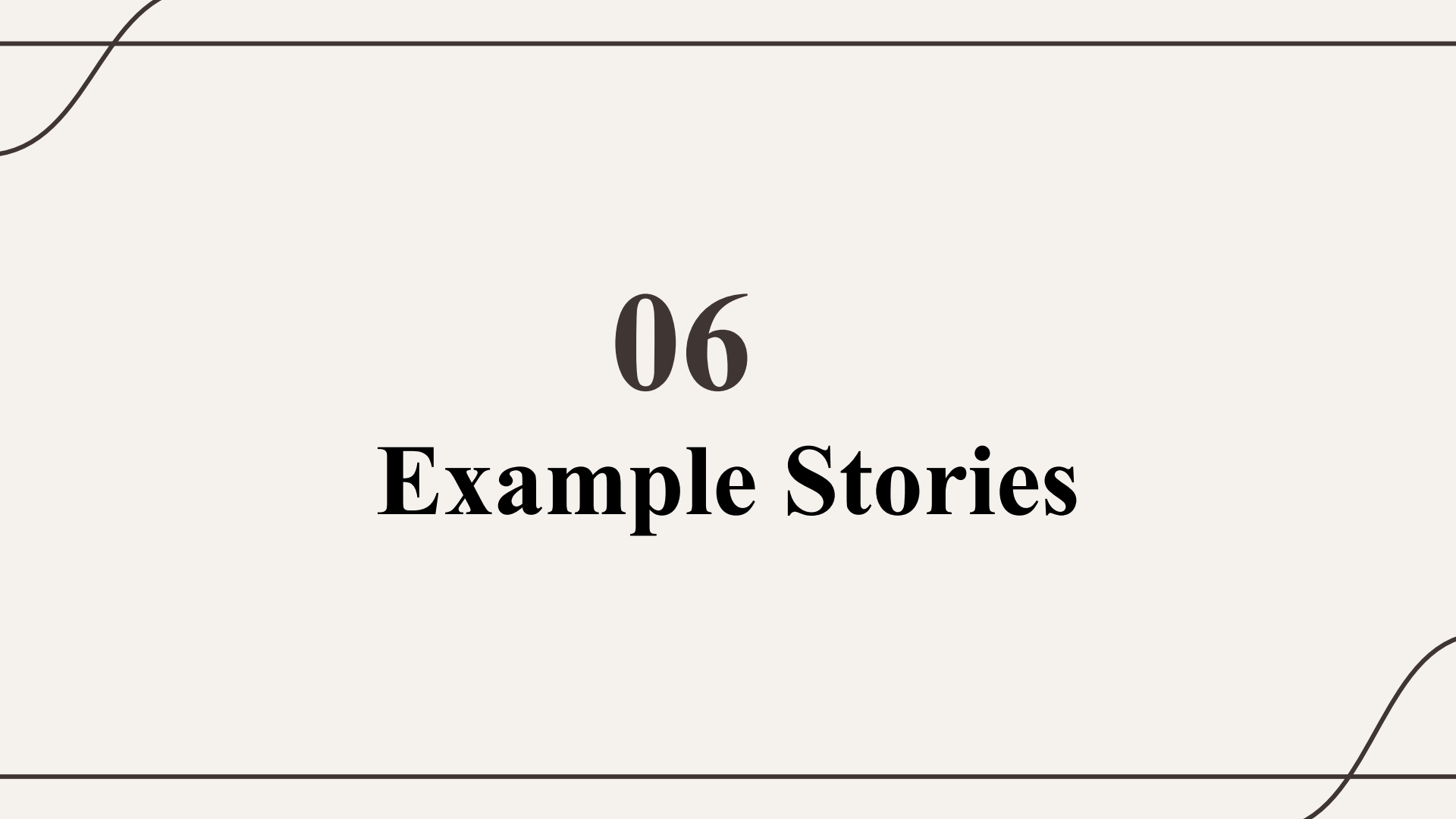
<https://free.law/projects/x-ray>

What do you do when you hit walls in the courts?



What sorts of cases might involve Universities?





06

Example Stories

Mollie Simon

Story Examples & Discussion

www.propublica.org/series/the-title-pawn-trap



Debt

TitleMax Demands High- Interest Payments From Borrowers in Bankruptcy

by Margaret Coker, The Current, and Joel
Jacobs and Mollie Simon, ProPublica,
illustrations by Laila Milevski, special to
ProPublica

July 13, 2023, 5 a.m. EDT

Coulter Jones

Story Examples & Discussion

U.S.

Baltimore Felony Conviction Rates Fall Under State's Attorney Marilyn Mosby

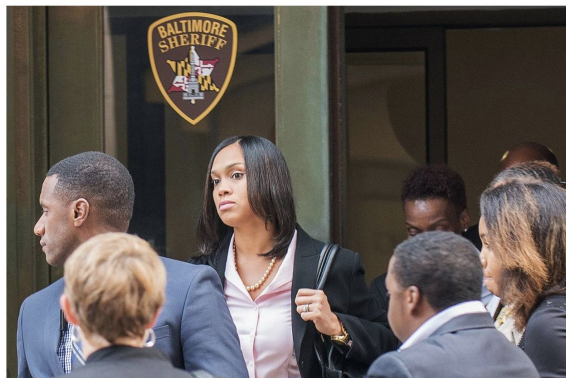
City's top prosecutor says her results are good and blames police in part for rise in cases dropped by DA's office

By [Scott Calvert](#) [Follow](#) and [Coulter Jones](#) [Follow](#)

Updated Nov. 22, 2016 8:28 pm ET

[Share](#) [Bookmark](#) [AA](#) Resize [60](#)

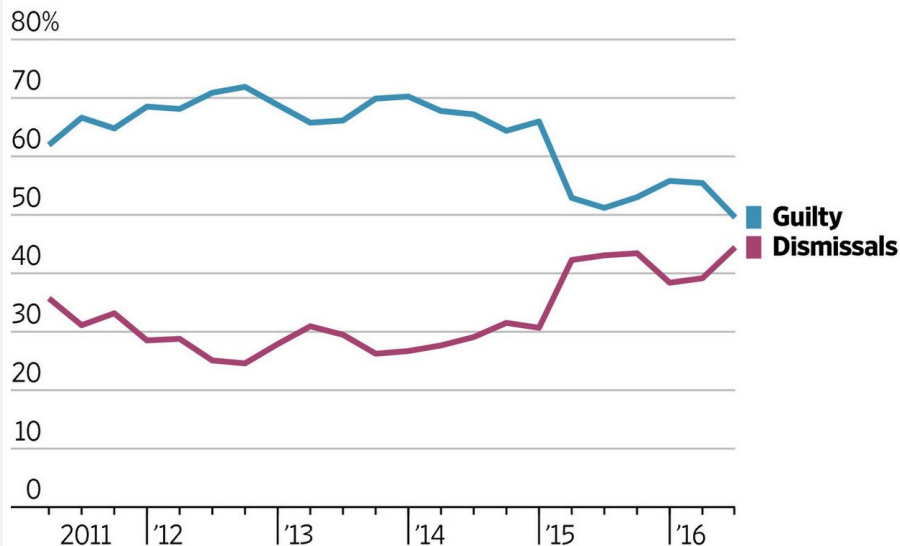
[Gift unlocked article](#)



Baltimore State's Attorney Marilyn Mosby, center, shown in September 2015. PHOTO: BRYAN WOOLSTON/REUTERS

Convictions Decline

Fewer closed felony cases in Baltimore are ending in convictions, as charges dropped or set aside by prosecutors have increased since 2015.



Note: Dismissals include those where charges were dropped or placed on the inactive docket.

Source: Journal analysis of closed felony cases in Baltimore City Circuit Court

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Download the Tips Sheet with Links:



<https://bit.ly/TipSheetNICARbecomingCL>

Questions?



Breakout into Smaller Groups/Hands on Help



Thank you!!



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Wall Street Journal

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William Palin

Lead for Case Law
Free Law Project

bill@free.law
@flooie