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Clinton v. City of New York (1998)

Circumstances that triggered dispute

The Line Item Veto Act of 1996 gave the President authority to cancel certain spending and tax benefit measures after signing a bill into law. President Clinton exercised this power by canceling two provisions in the Balanced Budget Act of 1997.

Statute or action that triggered dispute

New York City challenged the constitutionality of the Line Item Veto Act and Clinton's cancellations. The District Court ruled that the Line Item Veto Act violated the Presentment Clause of the Constitution. The case was appealed to the Supreme Court of the United States.

What provision of the Constitution?

The provision of the Constitution that was reviewed in this case is the Presentment Clause of Article I, Section 7 of the Constitution.

Basic legal question

Is the Line Item Veto Act constitutional or does it violate the Presentment clause?

Outcome of dispute

In a 6-3 decision the SCOTUS found that the city of New York was harmed and thus had standing. Further, they decided that the cancellation provisions in the Line Item Veto Act are not authorized by the Constitution and are unconstitutional under the Presentment Clause.

Reasoning

The Presentment Clause provides clear options for the President; he can sign a bill into law or veto the entire bill. There is no provision that allows the President to enact, amend, or

repeal specific sections in a bill. The Court reasoned that the Act, which allowed the President to unilaterally amend or repeal parts of enacted statutes by using line-item cancellations, violated the Presentment Clause. Legislation that passes Congress must either be entirely signed or vetoed by the President. By canceling only select portions of the bill, the President was amending laws and violating Article I of the Constitution, which grants Congress legislative powers.

Legal, doctrine standards, or policy

This case led to the enforcement of separation of powers and the limits on executive power by highlighting that Congress is the only branch with legislative powers.

Other views

Justice Stephen Breyer dissented and argued the Act did not violate anything specific in the Constitution or the separation of powers, because it does not encroach on Congress' power. Justice Kennedy wrote a concurring opinion expressing the Act increased presidential powers beyond what the framers imagined.

Works Cited

Clinton v. City of New York, 524 U.S. 417 . 1997.

"Clinton v. City of New York." Oyez, www.oyez.org/cases/1997/97-1374. Accessed 16 Oct. 2021.