

Timeline of Personhood Rights and Powers

<u>People</u> Gain or Lose Rights and Powers	<u>Year</u>	<u>Corporations</u> Gain or Lose Rights and Powers
<i>Somerset's Case</i> [England, 1772] An English judge rules slavery does not exist in England. A slave becomes free by stepping on English soil. The colonists wonder if slavery will soon be abolished in all English colonies. Runaway slaves attempt to flee to England to gain their freedom.	1772	
	1776	Revolutionary War Begins [1776]
<i>Bill Of Rights</i> [1791] The first 10 Amendments to the U.S. Constitution were adopted to protect We the People from excesses of government. At this time, We the People meant only white males who owned property and were over 21 years old. The states decided how much property must be owned to qualify to vote or run for office.	1791	U.S. Constitution [1791] The writers of the Constitution were very interested in protecting their property. Without using the words "slave" or "slavery," they made slavery legal and institutionalized it. "No person held in Service or Labour in one State, under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in Consequence of any regulation therein, be discharged from such Service or Labour, but shall be delivered up on Claim of the Party to whom such Service or Labour may be due." [Art. 4, Sec. 2]
	1803	<i>Marbury v. Madison</i> [1803] This case established the concept of judicial review. The Supreme Court ruled that they were Supreme and Congress did not contest it. This gave them the power to make law.
	1819	<i>Dartmouth College v. Woodward</i> [1819] A corporate charter is ruled to be a contract and can't be altered by government. The word "corporation" does not appear in the Constitution and this ruling gave the corporation a standing in the Constitution. It also made it difficult for the government to control corporations, so states began to write controls into the charters they granted. The Supreme Court had "found" the corporation in the Constitution.
States Begin to Loosen Property Requirements for white males to obtain voting and citizenship rights. [1840 on]	1840	
<i>Dred Scott v. Sanford</i> [1857] Supreme Court decides that slaves are property and Congress cannot deprive citizens of their property. Slaves are "not citizens of any state" and "have no rights a court must respect." This decision is the functional opposite of <i>Somerset's Case</i> .	1857	
	1861	Civil War Begins [1861]
13th Amendment [1865] Slavery is abolished in the U.S. and any place subject to its jurisdiction. This amendment changed the third paragraph of Article 4, Section 2 of the Constitution.	1865	
14th Amendment [1868] Black males are now citizens of the USA: "...nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."	1868	<i>Paul v. Virginia</i> [1868] Corporate lawyers argued that under the privileges and immunities clause, corporations are citizens. Supreme Court ruled that corporations are not citizens under Article IV, Section 2. "The citizens of each State shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of citizens in the several States."
15th Amendment [1870] Black males get the right to vote. "The right of citizens... to vote shall not be denied or abridged... on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."	1870	

Minor v. Happersett [1874]

Women argued that under the 14th Amendment equal protection clause, the U.S. Constitution established that their right to vote could not be denied by the state. The Supreme Court rejected this stating that the 14th Amendment was only intended to apply to black males.

Compromise of 1877

To settle a disputed presidential election, the Republicans made a deal with the Democrats (the party of slavery) that if the Republican Hayes became president, he would remove the Union troops from the South, the last obstacle to the reestablishment of white supremacy there.

Of the 14th Amendment cases brought before the Supreme Court between 1890 and 1910, 19 dealt with African Americans, 288 dealt with corporations.

Plessy v. Ferguson [1896]

The Supreme Court ruled that state laws enforcing segregation by race are constitutional if separate accommodations are equal. Black males effectively lost 14th Amendment rights and much access to the “white world.” *Plessy* legalized “Jim Crow” laws.

19th Amendment [1920]

Women finally get the vote after 75 years of struggle. “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.”

1874 **Slaughterhouse Cases** [1874]

The Supreme Court said: “...the main purpose of the last three Amendments [13, 14, 15] was the freedom of the African race, the security and perpetuation of that freedom and their protection from the oppression of the white men who had formerly held them in slavery.” Corporations were not included in these protections.

1877 **Munn v. Illinois** [1877]

Supreme Court ruled that the 14th Amendment **cannot** be used to protect corporations from state law. They did not actually rule on personhood.

1882 **The Railroad Tax Cases** [1882]

In one of these cases, *San Mateo County v. Southern Pacific Railroad*, it was argued that corporations were persons and that the committee drafting the 14th Amendment had intended the word person to mean corporations as well as natural persons. Senator Roscoe Conkling waved an unknown document in the air and then read from it in an attempt to prove that the intent of the Joint Committee was for corporate personhood. The court did not rule on corporate personhood, but this is the case in which they heard the argument.

1886 **Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad** [1886]

“The court does not wish to hear argument on the question whether the provision in the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, which forbids a State to deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws, applies to corporations. We are all of the opinion that it does.” This statement by the Supreme Court before the hearing began gave corporations inclusion in the word “person” in the 14th Amendment to the Constitution and claim to equal protection under law. (The case was decided on other grounds.)

1889 **Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroad v. Beckwith** [1889]

Supreme Court rules a corporation is a “person” for both due process and equal protection.

1893 **Noble v. Union River Logging** [1893]

For the first time corporations have claim to the Bill of Rights. The 5th Amendment says: “...nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.”

1906 **Hale v. Henkel** [1906]

Corporations get 4th Amendment “search and seizure” protection. Justice Harlan disagreed on this point: “...the power of the government, by its representatives, to look into the books, records and papers of a corporation of its own creation, to ascertain whether that corporation has obeyed or is defying the law, will be greatly curtailed, if not destroyed.”

1920

Louis K. Liggett Co. v. Lee [1933]

Justice Brandeis dissents: "The Prevalence of the corporation in America has led men of this generation to act, at times, as if the privilege of doing business in corporate form were inherent in the citizen; and has led them to accept the evils attendant upon the free and unrestricted use of the corporate mechanism as if these evils were the inescapable price of civilized life, and hence to be borne with resignation. Throughout the greater part of our history a different view prevailed."

1933

Louis K. Liggett Co. v. Lee [1933]

The people of Florida passed a law that levied higher taxes on chain stores. The Supreme Court overturned the law citing the due process and equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment and the Interstate Commerce clause.

National Labor Relations Act of 1935

The National Labor Relations Board required employer neutrality when it came to the self organization of workers. It was a violation of the act if an employer interfered in any way with a union organizing drive.

1935

Connecticut General Life Insurance v. Johnson [1938]

Justice Black dissents: "I do not believe the word 'person' in the Fourteenth Amendment includes corporations."

1938

Wheeling Steel Corporation v. Glander [1949]

Justice Douglas dissents. Regarding the ruling that corporations are given rights as persons under the 14th Amendment, he said, "There was no history, logic or reason given to support that view nor was the result so obvious that exposition was unnecessary."

1947

Taft-Hartley Act [1947]

Corporations are granted "free speech" in the union certification process, usurping the worker's right to "freedom of association" and greatly weakening the Labor Relations Act of 1935.

1949

Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka [1954]

Public schools cannot be racially segregated. Often said to have overturned *Plessy*. The Supreme Court recognized that separate was not equal.

1954

Slavery is the legal fiction that a Person is Property. Corporate Personhood is the legal fiction that Property is a Person.

Civil Rights Act [1964]

This act ended voting discrimination and literacy testing as a qualification for voting, established the Commission on Equal Employment Opportunity, and ended discrimination in public facilities.

1964

24th Amendment [1964]

Poll taxes, which were used to keep Blacks and others from voting in some states, were abolished. "The right... to vote ... shall not be denied... by reason of failure to pay any poll tax or other tax."

1967

See v. City of Seattle [1967]

Supreme Court grants corporations 4th Amendment protection from random inspection by fire department.

26th Amendment [1971]

Voting age changed from 21 to 18 years of age. Passed to recognize that if 18-year-olds could be drafted into military service, they should be allowed to vote.

1971

Reed v. Reed [1971]

Women get the 14th Amendment. There were earlier cases where it was assumed that women had equal protection. This was the case in which the 14th was ruled to apply to women.

Roe v. Wade [1973]

The Supreme Court rules that state statutes against abortion are vague and infringe on a woman’s 9th and 14th Amendment rights (to privacy). Abortion is legalized in the first trimester of pregnancy.

First National Bank of Boston v. Bellotti [1977]

Dissent by Justices White, Brennan, Marshall: “...the special status of corporations has placed them in a position to control vast amounts of economic power which may, if not regulated, dominate not only our economy but the very heart of our democracy, the electoral process... The State need not allow its own creation to consume it.” Rehnquist also dissented: “The blessings of perpetual life and limited liability ... so beneficial in the economic sphere, pose special dangers in the political sphere.”

Pacific Gas & Electric Co. v. Public Utilities Commission [1986]

Dissent by Justices Rehnquist, White, Stevens: “To ascribe to such entities an ‘intellect’ or ‘mind’ for freedom of conscience purposes, is to confuse metaphor with reality.”

*Judge-made law
is not democracy.*

This timeline was compiled by Jan Edwards with much help from Doug Hammerstrom, Bill Meyers, Molly Morgan, Mary Zepernick, Virginia Rasmussen, Thomas Linzey, Jane Anne Morris, and Richard Grossman. A full annotation of all items in this timeline is available from WILPF or at www.wilpf.org.

1971 **Buckley v. Valeo** [1976]

The Supreme Court rules that political money is equivalent to speech. This ruling expanded the First Amendment’s protections to include financial contributions to candidates or parties.

1973 **U.S. v. Martin Linen Supply** [1976]

A corporation successfully uses the 5th Amendment to protect itself against double jeopardy to avoid retrial in an anti-trust case.

1976

Virginia Board of Pharmacy v. Virginia Consumer Council [1976]

The Supreme Court protects commercial speech. Advertizing is now free speech.

1977 **First National Bank of Boston v. Bellotti** [1977]

The First Amendment is used to overturn state restrictions on corporate spending on political referenda. The Court reverses its longstanding policy of denying such rights to non-media business corporations. This precedent is used, with *Buckley v. Valeo*, to thwart attempts to remove corporate money from politics.

1978 **Marshall v. Barlow** [1978]

This case gave corporations the 4th Amendment right to require OSHA to produce a warrant to check for safety violations.

1986 **Pacific Gas and Electric Co. v. Public Utilities Commission** [1986]

Supreme Court decided that PG&E was not required to allow a consumer advocacy group to use the extra space in their billing envelope, upholding the corporation’s right **not** to speak and protecting the corporation’s “freedom of mind.”

1990 **Austin v. Michigan Chamber of Commerce** [1990]

Supreme Court upholds limitations on corporate spending in candidate elections. First Amendment rights can be infringed if the state has a compelling interest.

1996 **International Dairy Foods Association v. Amestoy** [1996]

Supreme Court overturns a Vermont law requiring the labeling of all products containing bovine growth hormone. The right not to speak inheres in political and commercial speech alike and extends to statements of fact as well as statements of opinion.