

Davis v. Bandemer

Decided by

Burger Court (1981-1986)
Jun 30, 1986

Facts of the case

A group of Democrats challenged Indiana's 1981 state apportionment scheme on the ground of political gerrymandering. The Democrats argued that the apportionment unconstitutionally diluted their votes in important districts, violating their rights. A three-judge District Court sustained the Democrats' challenge.

Question

Did Indiana's 1981 state apportionment violate the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment?

Conclusion

No. The Court held that while the apportionment law may have had a discriminatory effect on the Democrats, that effect was not "sufficiently adverse" to violate the Equal Protection Clause. The mere lack of proportional representation did not unconstitutionally diminish the Democrats' electoral power. The Court also ruled that political gerrymandering claims were properly justiciable under the Equal Protection Clause, noting that judicially manageable standards could be discerned and applied in such cases.