

American Government & Politics: A Christian Worldview.
Short Film: “*Chisholm v. Georgia* in a Nutshell” (10–12 Minutes)

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

Goal

This short (5:18) film recaps and provides insights on the famous above 1793 Supreme Court case.

Instructions

1. Play the short film above here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ARzbX2iDX98>, and tell students to take notes.
2. Have students in pairs/groups discuss for 3–5 minutes, and then discuss as a class.

Debrief/Wrap-Up Questions

1. What does the speaker point out about Rhode Island and North Carolina’s status when George Washington was inaugurated as President, and how does that confirm our discussion of the definition of the word *state*?
They still had not ratified the Constitution, but continued to act as “independent republics,” which confirms the idea that the word “state” clearly meant “nation.”
2. What did Hamilton say about the possibility of an individual’s suing a sovereign state before the states ratified the Constitution?
He said that that would not be allowed, due to the sovereign status of states (and saying that the U.S. government would have no part in enforcing such a ruling). This was his way of assuring suspicious Federalists that the U.S. government would not try to assert its will over the states.
3. Since the Constitution says in Article III, Section 2 that “The judicial power shall extend...to controversies between...a state and citizens of another state,” how could Federalists argue that this lawsuit shouldn’t have gone to the Supreme Court?
It looks as if the wording says that the Supreme Court may review those types of cases if a state suing a citizen of another state, not the other way around (since in that Article III, Section 2 phrase the state is mentioned first, then the citizens).
4. What does the speaker say about the idea that the U.S. Supreme Court is the “final arbiter [decider] over every constitutional controversy”? What does he say the states are to do to prevent this from occurring?
It was never meant to be so, and the Congress and states should limit the U.S. courts to be checked by limiting the types of cases they may hear, and via amending the Constitution (like what happened with the Eleventh Amendment).
5. How do you think Federalists felt about Nationalists and the U.S. Constitution after four of five (80 percent) of the U.S. Supreme Court decided against the state of Georgia?
AWV, but probably discouraged or angry, since Nationalists repeatedly told them when the ratification debates were occurring that this kind of thing—the U.S. government trying to dominate the states—would never happen.