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Description

In the student's rights case Vernonia v. Wayne Acton, the Supreme Court rules that schools can ask student athletes to perform a drug test as a prerequisite to participating in a team sport.

Keywords


Citation

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**APA**


**CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE**


**Transcript**

Supreme Court Rules Schools Can Drug Test Athletes

BRIAN WILLIAMS, anchor:

We begin tonight with the sweeping new powers handed out to help schools find out if student athletes are clean. Here's NBC's Pete Williams.

PETE WILLIAMS reporting:

By a 6-3 vote, the court made it possible for the nation's public schools to require that millions of student athletes be tested for drugs, rejecting a legal challenge from a student who said drug testing would invade his privacy. Writing for the majority, Justice Antonin Scalia said school children are under state supervision and expect less privacy than adults, student athletes even less, having to take physical exams and shower and dress in communal locker rooms. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg agreed, and said the Court leaves unanswered the question of whether schools could expand testing beyond just student athletes. But Justice O'Connor, disagreeing with the ruling, said schools should test only those students suspected of using drugs, adding that blanket testing goes too far.

The case comes from rural Oregon, where school officials in the town of Vernonia feared that illegal drug use was on the rise. Finding student athletes to be the most prominent abusers, the school ordered urinalysis drug testing for all students going out for sports. James Acton refused the test, was told he couldn't play football, and sued. Now in high school, he says athletics isn't worth it.

Mr. JAMES ACTON: I'll want to play sports, but I'm not going to take the drug test to play sports.

WILLIAMS: Some civil liberties groups fear the ruling opens the door to testing any public school students, not just athletes.

Mr. STEVE SHAPIRO (American Civil Liberties Union): I am very worried that today's decision will encourage school districts around the country to adopt similar and potentially even more expansive drug-testing programs.

WILLIAMS: The lawyer for a parents' group thinks it should.
Mr. RICHARD WILLARD (Lawyer For Parents' Group): Their decision leaves open the possibility that a school district could test other students if that's where they thought the problem was.

WILLIAMS: Today's ruling sends a clear message to the nation's schools about testing student athletes, but raises new questions about how far school drug testing can go. Pete Williams, NBC News, at the Supreme Court.