

Last updated, 9/22/2022

## How to Search the Civil Rights Litigation Clearinghouse

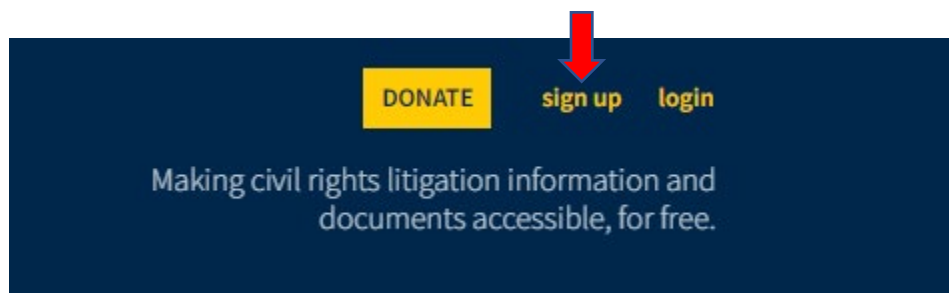
This is a how-to for the Civil Rights Litigation Clearinghouse, <http://clearinghouse.net>, which collects, indexes, and makes publicly available for research and observation a growing universe of civil rights cases, and the settlements and court orders those cases have produced, which regulate government and private entities in myriad important ways.



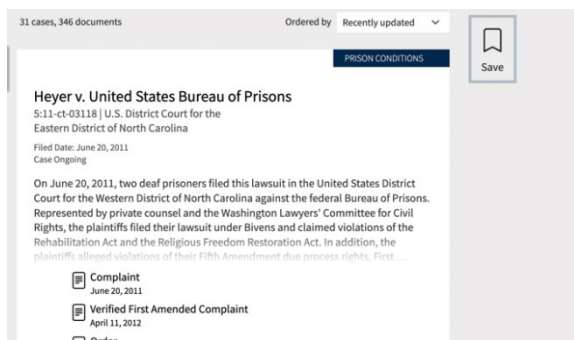
The Clearinghouse collection includes thousands of cases and litigation documents. Not every civil rights case is included: we focus on injunctive cases (that is, cases that ask the court to order defendants to alter their behavior or policy) and on class actions. Each case we include has its own page, which provides a summary of the litigation and related dockets, documents, and resources. And each case has been indexed across various categories, so the database is fully searchable, via the search bar on the homepage, by dozens of criteria including substantive “case type,” legal “cause of action” and/or “constitutional clause” undergirding the legal claim; thematic “issues”; class action status; outcome; available documents, and more. These searches can be run individually or in combination.

You can use the Clearinghouse to explore a case you already know about or to find a case that meets some criteria in which you are interested. Here are the steps:

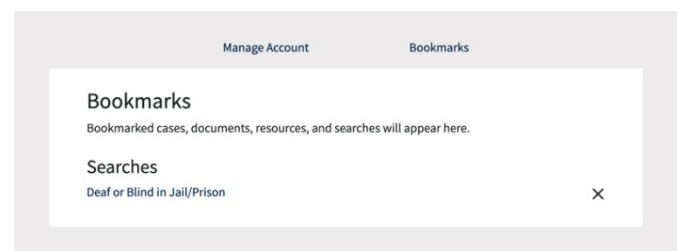
- 1) **Optional but useful:** Get a Clearinghouse account. It’s free, and will allow you to save searches/documents to an account-specific “Bookmarks” page for easy reference later. The signup link is in the upper right of the Clearinghouse home page:



You’ll see the “save” bookmark icon once you do a search or open a case:

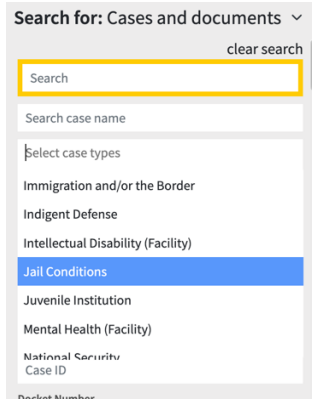


And to see what you’ve saved, go to your account page:

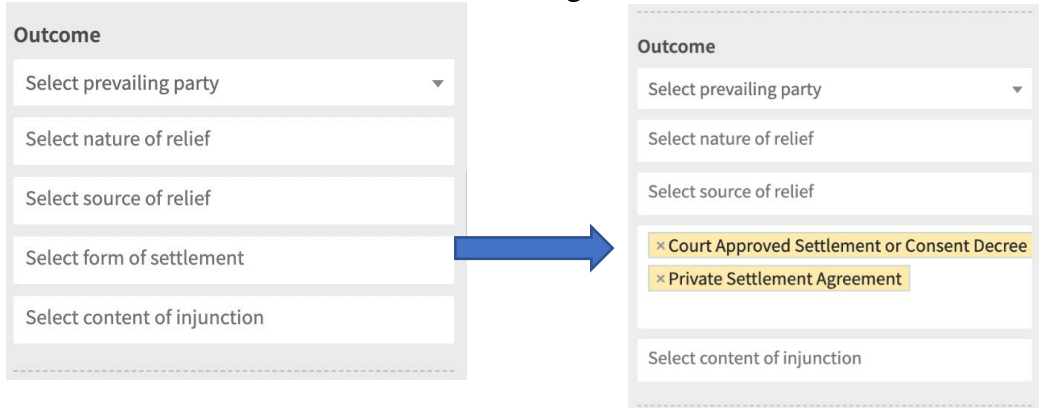


2) **Find cases:** The Clearinghouse offers *many* options for searching. Fuller details follow, but for example:

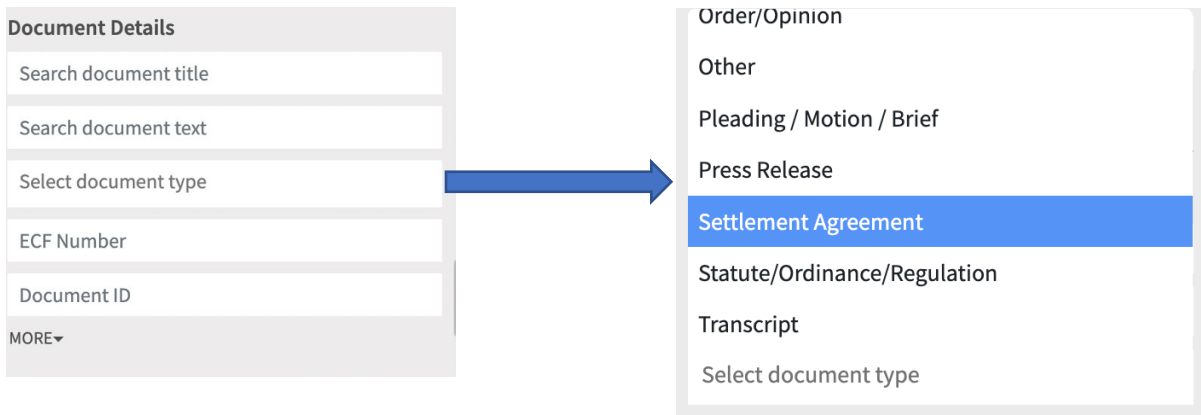
To find cases challenging conditions in jails, choose “Jail Conditions” under “Select case types.” (Or, for prisons cases, “Prison Conditions.”)



To find cases that have settled, under “Outcome,” select both “Court Approved Settlement or Consent Decree” and “Private Settlement Agreement.”



To find copies of these settlement agreements in our database, under “Document Details,” select “Settlement Agreement” under “document type.”



To limit a search to cases filed, settled, and/or terminated on or after a particular date, use the “Key Dates” search functions.

**Key Dates**

Filing Date

From	To
------	----

Settlement / Judgment Date

From	To
------	----

Terminating Date

From	To
------	----

Select case ongoing

Searches can combine various search criteria, across the entire Clearinghouse collection. For example, if you wanted to find cases brought under the ADA and/or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and involving effective communication and hearing and/or visual impairments:

**Case Details**

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 42 U.S.C. § 12101

Section 504 (Rehabilitation Act), 29 U.S.C. § 701

Select constitutional clause

Select special case type

Select available documents

Select summary author

**Search**

**Issues**

Effective Communication (ADA)

Select crowding

Select discrimination-basis

Select race

Select national origin/ethnicity

Select affected gender

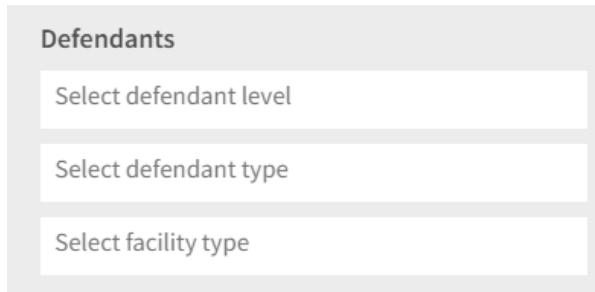
Hearing impairment  Visual impairment

Select language

Select mental disability

**Search**

Users may want to search by defendant. You can search by defendant *type* or *level* (e.g., federal, state, or local). But to search for a particular defendant, you're best off using the very first search box, a text search.

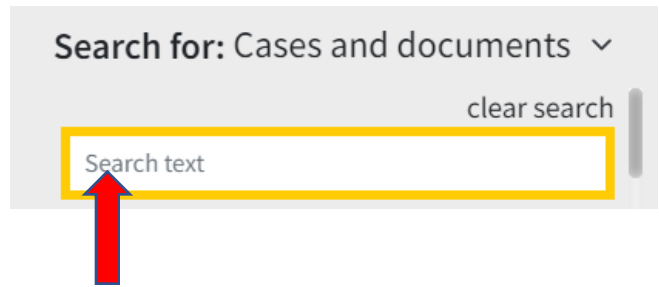


Defendants

Select defendant level

Select defendant type

Select facility type



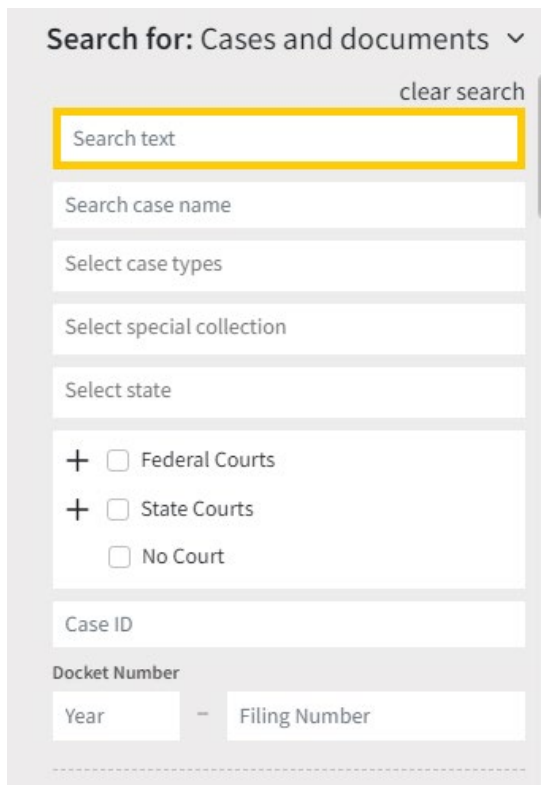
Search for: Cases and documents ▾

clear search

Search text

Put the defendant you want to find here. It performs an exact (not fuzzy) search

3. Here's more on searches:



Search for: Cases and documents ▾

clear search

Search text

Search case name

Select case types

Select special collection

Select state

+  Federal Courts

+  State Courts

No Court

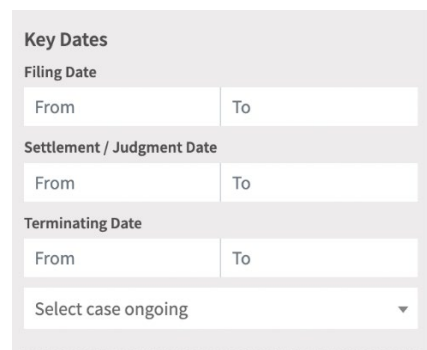
Case ID

Docket Number

Year - Filing Number

- **Text search** examines both the Clearinghouse's summary and document text. It looks for exact matches.
- **Case name searches** are precise. You're best off using only part of a case name. (E.g., Brown, not Brown v. Board of Education)
- **Case types** are general categories. There's a drop down, and you can search for multiples at once.
- We've grouped cases into some "**special collections**" for ease of search. Again, there's a drop down and you can search for multiples.
- **State** is the state of the case (not necessarily of the parties)
- **Case ID** is a Clearinghouse ID
- **Docket numbers** are assigned by the court, and are usually in the format YY (or YYYY) – NNNN. E.g. 22-4176.

You can search by a variety of dates (filing, judgment, closing).



Key Dates

Filing Date

From To

Settlement / Judgment Date

From To

Terminating Date

From To

Select case ongoing ▾

Or you can search by party or case characteristics.

The image shows a search interface with four main sections:

- Plaintiffs:** Search plaintiff description, Select plaintiff type, Select plaintiffs' attorney organization, Select public interest lawyer (dropdown), Select filed pro se (dropdown), Select class action sought (dropdown), Select class action outcome (dropdown).
- Defendants:** Select defendant level, Select defendant type, Select facility type.
- Case Details:** Select cause of action, Select constitutional clause, Select special case type, Select available documents, Select summary author.
- Outcome:** Select prevailing party (dropdown), Select nature of relief, Select source of relief, Select form of settlement, Select content of injunction.

- **Cause of action** means the statute (if any) that authorizes the suit
- You can select cases based on what **documents** are available in the Clearinghouse

You can also search by “issue” – there are MANY possibilities. You’ll want to look at the various groupings to find the search tags most useful to you. (Click “more” to expand and see the whole list). Each grouping has dropdowns.

The image shows the 'Issues' search filter with a dropdown menu labeled 'Select general' and a 'MORE +' button.

Once expanded:

The image shows the 'Issues' search filter expanded into a list of categories:

- Select general
- Select crowding
- Select discrimination-basis
- Select race
- Select national origin/ethnicity
- Select affected gender
- Select disability
- Select language
- Select mental disability
- Select voting

A blue arrow points from the 'Select general' dropdown in the expanded view to a detailed view of the 'Select general' dropdown menu, which lists the following options:

- Select general
- Abortion
- Access to lawyers or judicial system
- Access to public accommodations - governmental
- Access to public accommodations - privately owned
- Administrative segregation

And finally you can search for cases that include *documents* that meet particular criteria:

The image shows a vertical search form with two main sections: 'Document Details' and 'Document Citations'. The 'Document Details' section includes five input fields: 'Search document title', 'Search document text', 'Select document type', 'ECF Number', and 'Document ID'. Below these is a 'MORE •' link. The 'Document Citations' section is divided into three parts: 'Citation 1', 'Citation 2', and 'Citation 3'. Each part has three input fields: 'Citation X volume number', 'Citation X reporter' (with a dropdown arrow), and 'Citation X page number'.

- Use **Document Citations** searches to find cases that include opinions, by standard cite form. (E.g. 475 U.S. 1234, to search for a Supreme Court opinion)
- **Citation 1** searches use nearly all the standard court reporters format.
- **Citation 2** searches use S.Ct. and WL
- **Citation 3** searches use L.Ed. and LEXIS