

# Gibbons v. Ogden:



## Legal Questions this case helped answer:

*Does the federal government have the power to regulate commerce (trade)?*

## Background/Summary of Court Case:

The New York Legislature had passed a law giving a monopoly (total control) on steamship travel in New York state to a group of investors, including Robert Fulton, the inventor of the steamship. Among the people who had permission to do business under this monopoly was Aaron Ogden.

Thomas Gibbons, another steamship trader, wanted to use the New York waterways for his business, too. He had been given federal permission to do so. He was denied access to these waterways by the State of New York, which cited its law as enforcement. Gibbons sued Ogden, and the Supreme Court agreed to decide the case.

The majority opinion, written by Marshall, said that the U.S. Constitution had a commerce(trade) clause that allowed the federal government to regulate interstate commerce(control trade between the states)

## Importance of the Case/ Big Ideas:

This court case dealt with interstate commerce (trade between the states). The Supreme Court ruled that Congress had the power to regulate interstate commerce.



### Vocabulary

**Interstate:** Between States

**Commerce:** Trade

**Regulate:** Control