

Engel v. Vitale / Diagram of How the Case Moved Through the Court System

Supreme Court of the United States

In a 6–1 decision, the Court overruled the New York court decisions and ruled that it is unconstitutional for the state to compose an official prayer and encourage its recitation in schools. One justice concurred, one dissented, and two did not participate.

Engel v. Vitale (1962)



The New York Court of Appeals

The New York Court of Appeals affirmed the decision of the lower court, saying “there was a sufficient separation of church and state and, therefore, the First Amendment was not infringed.”

Engel v. Vitale (1961)



The New York State Trial Court

The state-level trial court upheld the practice of saying the prayer, citing the voluntary nature of the prayer and saying, “The state is not imposing a religious belief by using this prayer.”

Engel v. Vitale (1959)