

Toyota v. Williams

122 S. Ct. 681 (January 8, 2002)

The Supreme Court reversed the Sixth Circuit Court by underscoring the importance of a case-by-case determination of a disability that substantially limits major life activities. In this case, the manual tasks associated with a particular job were not deemed to be “major life activities.”

Williams claimed to be disabled from performing her automobile assembly line job by carpal tunnel syndrome and related impairments. She claimed her ailments prevented her from doing the tasks associated with certain types of manual jobs that require the gripping of tools and repetitive work with hands and arms extended at or above shoulder level for extended periods of time.

The Supreme Court pointed out that repetitive work with hands and arms extended at or above shoulder level for extended periods is not an important part of most people’s daily lives. Rather, household chores, bathing, and brushing one’s teeth, which Williams could perform, are among the types of manual tasks of central importance to people’s daily lives.