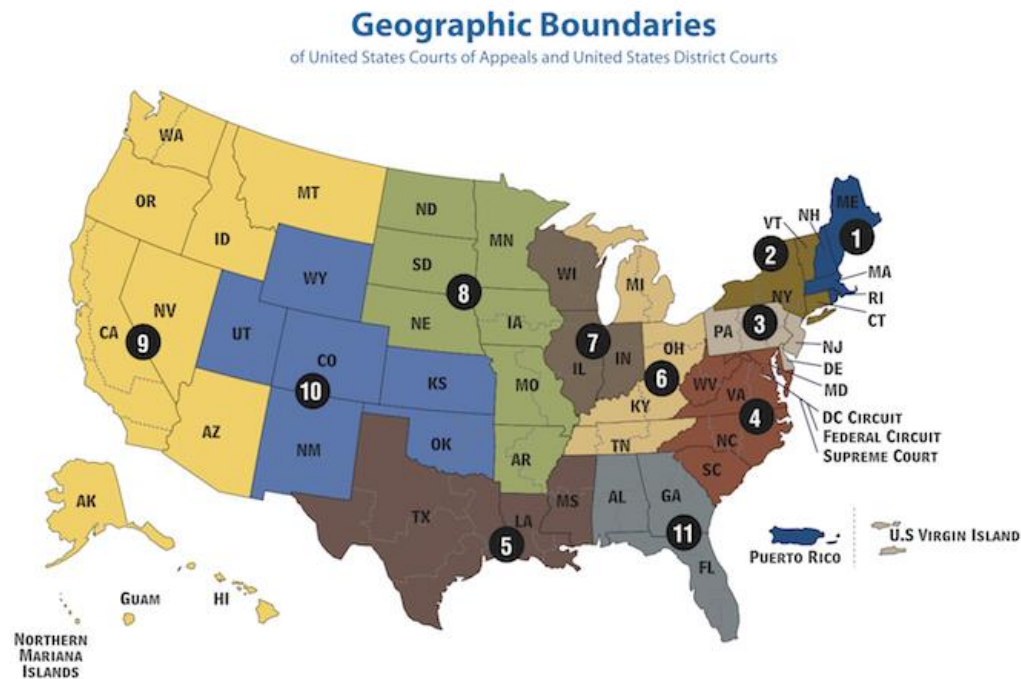


Circuit Court Map

The Circuit Court System

The United States is divided into 12 regional circuits, each of which has its own federal appeals court (also known as the circuit court of appeals). In addition, the Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit has nationwide jurisdiction to hear appeals in specialized cases, such as those involving patent laws and cases decided by the Court of International Trade and the Court of Federal Claims.

Decisions made by judges on these courts apply to all of the states contained in their respective circuits. Because so few cases are accepted for further review by the Supreme Court, most appeals court rulings are the last word, at least for the states covered by the circuit court making the decision.



The Supreme Court

The US Supreme Court is the highest of the federal courts and has the final word on appeals from the federal circuit courts.