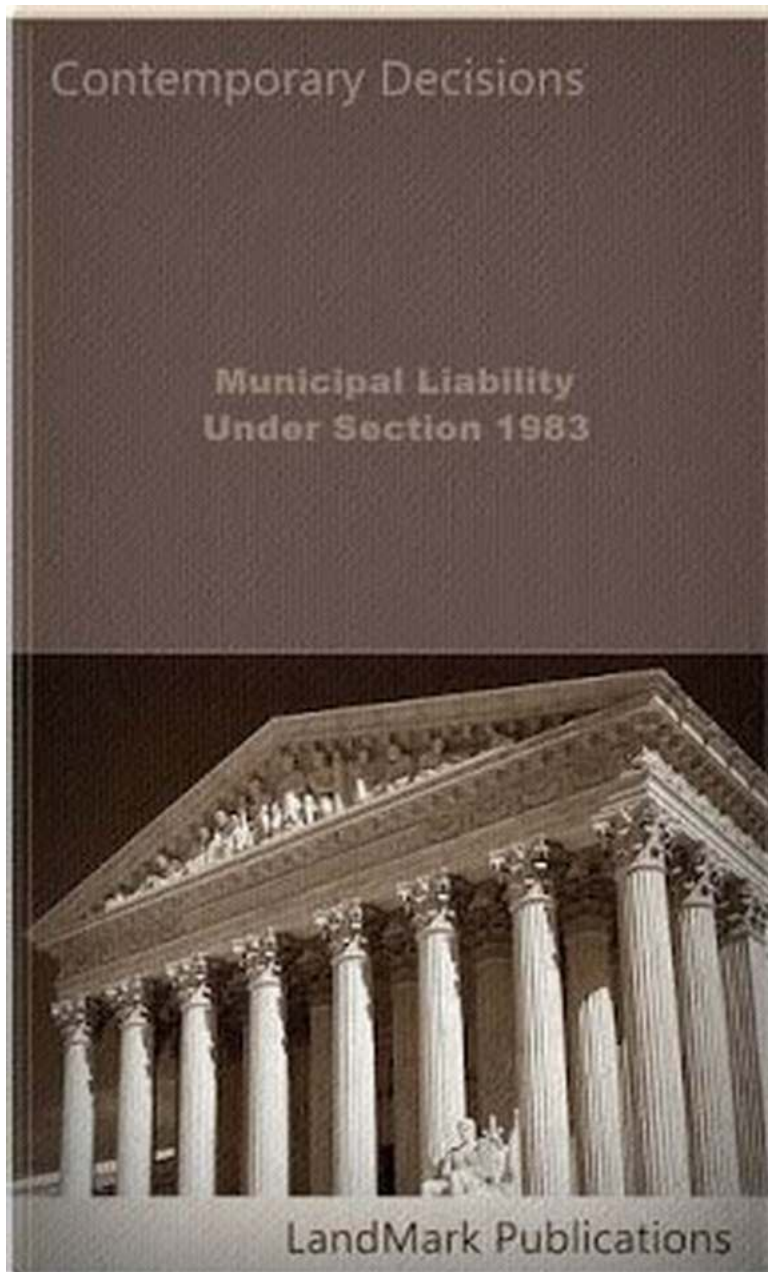


Municipal Liability Under Section 1983 Litigator: Understanding the Complexities and Implications

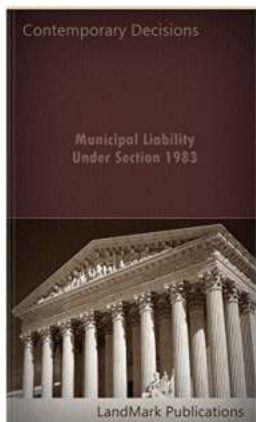


Section 1983 of the United States Code is a powerful tool in allowing individuals to seek redress for violations of their constitutional rights. It provides a legal

remedy against state actors, including municipalities, when they act in violation of those rights. However, understanding the complexities and implications of municipal liability under Section 1983 requires a careful examination of the law and its application in various court cases.

What is Section 1983 and Municipal Liability?

Section 1983, enacted as part of the Civil Rights Act of 1871, states: "Every person who, under color of any statute, ordinance, regulation, custom, or usage, of any State or Territory or the District of Columbia, subjects, or causes to be subjected, any citizen of the United States or other person within the jurisdiction thereof to the deprivation of any rights, privileges, or immunities secured by the Constitution and laws, shall be liable to the party injured in an action at law, suit in equity, or other proper proceeding for redress."



Municipal Liability Under Section 1983 (Litigator Series) by LandMark Publications (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 5623 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 6413 pages
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This statute allows individuals to sue state actors, including municipalities, for violations of their constitutional rights. Municipalities, as local government entities, can be held liable if they have policies, customs, or practices that directly result in

a violation of an individual's constitutional rights. For example, if a police department has a policy of using excessive force during arrests, and an individual is injured as a result, the municipality can be held liable under Section 1983.

Understanding Monell Liability

The landmark Supreme Court case *Monell v. Department of Social Services of the City of New York* (1978) established the doctrine of municipal liability. In this case, the Court held that municipal liability under Section 1983 can only be imposed if the violation of constitutional rights was the result of an official policy, custom, or practice.

This means that, in order to hold a municipality liable, the plaintiff must prove that the violation occurred as a direct result of an official policy or a widespread custom or practice within the municipality. It is not enough to show that an individual employee acted unlawfully; there must be sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the municipality itself played a role in causing the violation.

Proving Municipal Liability

Proving municipal liability is a challenging task for plaintiffs. Courts have set high standards for establishing a municipal policy or custom and require evidence to support such claims. Some factors that may be considered when determining if a municipality can be held liable include:

- Evidence of a formal policy or written directive.
- Recurrent patterns of conduct indicating a custom or practice.
- Deliberate indifference by municipal policymakers to constitutional violations.
- Prior similar incidents that should have put the municipality on notice of the need to address the issue.

Implications of Municipal Liability

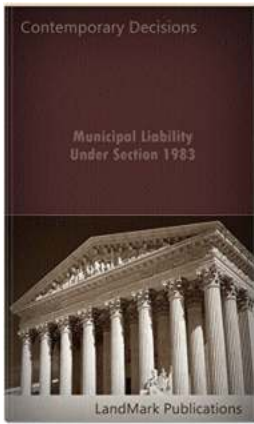
Municipal liability under Section 1983 has significant implications for both municipalities and individuals. For municipalities, it means they must take proactive steps to ensure that their policies and practices do not lead to constitutional violations by their employees. Failure to do so can result in costly litigation and damages.

For individuals, the availability of municipal liability provides a means to hold local governments accountable for their actions. It allows individuals to seek compensation for the violation of their rights and can serve as a deterrent for future misconduct. Section 1983 has been instrumental in addressing issues such as police misconduct, violations of due process, and freedom of speech.

The Role of Attorneys in Municipal Liability Cases

Municipal liability cases require a thorough understanding of constitutional law, civil rights, and complex legal procedures. Attorneys specializing in Section 1983 litigation play a crucial role in representing individuals seeking justice against municipalities. They investigate claims, gather evidence, build strong cases, and navigate the intricacies of the legal system to ensure their clients' rights are protected.

Municipal liability under Section 1983 is a vital aspect of the civil rights legal framework in the United States. It holds municipalities accountable for their actions and ensures that individuals have a legal remedy when their constitutional rights are violated. Understanding the complexities and implications of municipal liability is essential for both attorneys and individuals seeking justice in cases involving state actors. By continuing to evolve and adapt to the changing legal landscape, Section 1983 litigation will continue to play a pivotal role in preserving and advancing civil rights.



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THIS CASEBOOK contains a selection of 199 U. S. Court of Appeals decisions that analyze and discuss municipal liability under 42 USC Section 1983 pursuant to *Monell v. Department of Social Services*. The selection of decisions spans from 2004 to the date of publication.

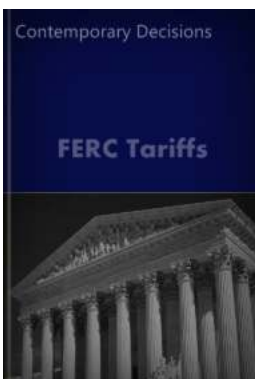
Generally, a government entity is not liable for its employee's actions under § 1983. *Brockinton v. City of Sherwood, Ark.*, 503 F.3d 667, 674 (8th Cir.2007). But a plaintiff can pursue a *Monell* claim under § 1983 by identifying a government entity's policy or custom that caused the plaintiff's injury. *Id.* *Keefe v. City of Minneapolis*, 785 F. 3d 1216 (8th Cir. 2015).

The "touchstone of [a] § 1983 action against a government body is an allegation that official policy is responsible for a deprivation of civil rights protected by the Constitution." *Monell*, 436 U.S. at 690. *Hoefling v. City of Miami*, (11th Cir. 2016).

Holding [a county liable] "requires proof of three elements: a policymaker; an official policy; and a violation of constitutional rights whose 'moving force' is the policy or custom." *Piotrowski v. City of Houston*, 237 F.3d 567, 578 (5th Cir. 2001)

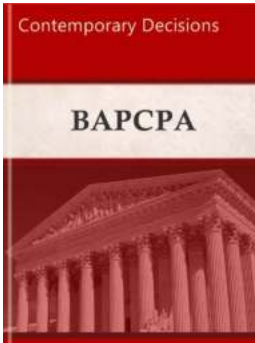
(quoting *Monell v. Dep't of Social Servs.*, 436 U.S. 658, 694 (1978)). This type of municipal liability— known as Monell liability after the case that first recognized it —is difficult to prove. This difficulty arises because, unlike private companies, municipalities are not liable for negligent actions their employees take. Instead, they are liable only if the policymakers themselves were involved in the unconstitutional acts. This difficulty reflects an intentional congressional choice to limit the scope of municipal liability. *Anderson v. Marshall County*, (5th Cir. 2016).

"The 'official policy' requirement was intended to distinguish acts of the municipality from acts of employees of the municipality, and thereby make clear that municipal liability is limited to action for which the municipality is actually responsible." *Pembaur v. City of Cincinnati*, 475 U.S. 469, 478, 106 S.Ct. 1292, 89 L.Ed.2d 452 (1986) (emphasis in original). A plaintiff may show that the municipality was responsible in four ways: "(1) the existence of an illegal official policy or legislative enactment; (2) that an official with final decision making authority ratified illegal actions; (3) the existence of a policy of inadequate training or supervision; or (4) the existence of a custom of tolerance or acquiescence of federal rights violations." *Burgess v. Fischer*, 735 F.3d 462, 478 (6th Cir.2013). *Boulton v. Swanson*, 795 F. 3d 526 (6th Cir. 2015).



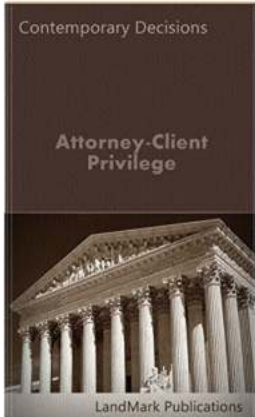
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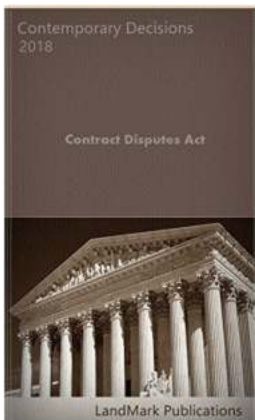
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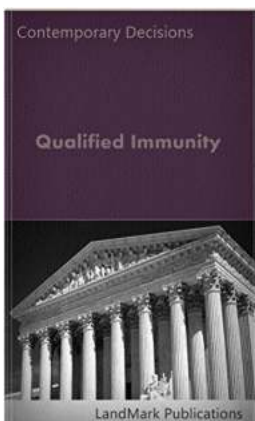
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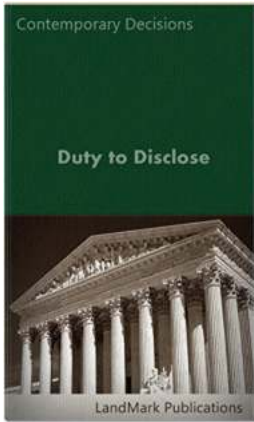
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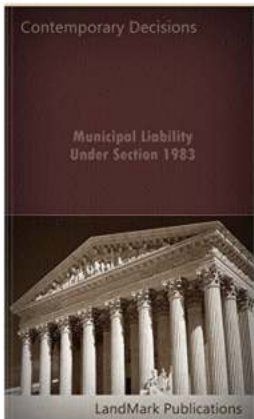
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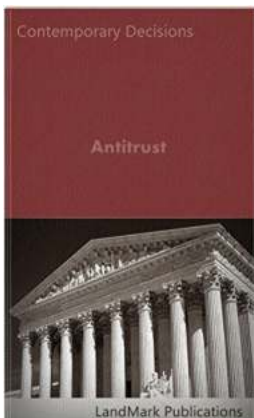
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