



The U.S. Supreme Court ruled Wednesday that defendants are entitled to know that the potential consequences of a guilty plea include deportation for noncitizens, a decision that could have broader significance for the more than 12.8 million legal immigrants who live in the U.S.

The case, *Padilla v. Kentucky*, focused on Jose Padilla, a Honduran-born immigrant who faces deportation after pleading guilty to felony marijuana trafficking. He isn't the U.S. citizen of the same name who was convicted in 2007 of conspiring to aid terrorists.

"It is our responsibility under the Constitution to ensure that no criminal defendant — whether a citizen or not — is left to the 'mercies of incompetent counsel,' " Justice John Paul Stevens wrote in the majority opinion. "To satisfy this responsibility, we now hold that counsel must inform her client whether his plea carries a risk of deportation."

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