The imposition and collection of criminal justice debt often raise complex questions of local, state, and federal law. Undergirding many of these questions, however, are a set of underlying constitutional principles, laid out by the U.S. Supreme Court beginning in the 1970s, addressing limits on the government’s extraordinary power to collect debts through mechanisms unavailable to private creditors. These principles are discussed below. Application of these and other constitutional principles to specific defenses to collection of debts, as well as affirmative constitutional claims that may be asserted on behalf of clients, are discussed throughout this chapter, particularly in §§ 11.4.4[1], 11.4.6[2], and 11.7.1[3], infra.