



UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE
Joel W. Solomon United States Courthouse
900 Georgia Avenue
Chattanooga, Tennessee 37402

**JUNE: MORE THAN THE START OF SUMMER — END OF TERM
FOR THE SUPREME COURT**

June 2025

In the past few weeks and over the next several weeks, we will experience a large number of decisions issued by the United States Supreme Court. This annual flood of Supreme Court opinions means that we are in June. June is more than just the beginning of summer; it also marks the traditional end-of-term for the United States Supreme Court. The decisions issued by the Supreme Court are typically very consequential and often address critical matters in our democratic republican form of government involving the balance of power, religious freedom, governmental accountability, the scope of freedom, and even the meaning of justice in our modern society. This is a time when the third branch of our national government, the Supreme Court, occupies a major role on the national scene.

THE SUPREME COURT HEARS THE MOST DIFFICULT CASES AND IS BUSY ALL YEAR.

During its yearly term, the Supreme Court receives and reviews a large number of petitions, motions, and briefs from lower-court cases seeking high-court review. From the large number of petitions, the Court grants oral argument in just a select number of those cases. Those select cases are then set for oral argument before the Court throughout the year.

The nine Justices are called on to devote their experience, training, legal thought, and constitutional interpretation to these cases. The Justices must weigh the social impact of their decisions, as the cases present some of the most difficult legal issues facing the country. Generally, these cases involve questions and issues which have resulted in conflicting decisions from lower federal courts and state supreme courts throughout the country. Because of the complexity and difficulty of the cases, the Supreme Court accepts them for consideration and decision to help resolve legal uncertainty and provide uniform guidance to the entire country. Each year it issues fewer than 100 decisions.

Although there is a federal statute that sets the start of a Supreme Court term as the first Monday in October of each year, 28 U.S.C. § 2, there is no corresponding law setting the end of the Court's term. By tradition, the Court attempts to conclude its business by late June or early

July. During the summer recess, the Justices often pursue other personal and professional interests. Importantly though, the Court stays busy throughout the summer by preparing for the next term and considering other necessary business of the Court.

THE CRAFTING OF AN OPINION.

Although oral argument commands the most public attention, the Court speaks through its opinions. Opinion writing itself and persuading other justices to sign on to an opinion consumes a considerable amount of time.

Following oral argument, the Justices retire to a deliberation room where they discuss the case, the arguments, and their views on the case. The most junior Justice voices their opinion first and the most senior Justice voices their opinion last. They also tentatively indicate how they will vote on the case. It takes a majority, five of the nine Justices, for there to be a binding decision. If all nine Justices agree, the opinion is unanimous. If there is disagreement, there will be a dissenting opinion. In some cases, Justices will agree with the outcome but disagree with the reasoning, which leads to a concurring opinion.

Once the tentative votes have been tallied, chosen Justices are called upon to write the opinions. The Chief Justice, if in the majority, will assign a Justice in the majority to write the opinion of the Court. The senior-most Justice in the dissent will then assign one of the dissenting Justices to write the dissenting opinion. The assigned Justices each prepare a draft opinion and circulate it among the other Justices for comment, suggestions, and criticism. During this stage, the Justices will attempt to persuade each other to their points of view. The other Justices can sign on to the opinion that reflects their original vote, change their minds, or decide they would rather write a concurring opinion.

After consideration, circulation, dialogue, and negotiation, the majority draft is accepted and is ready for final approval and issuance. Once the Supreme Court issues a decision, it becomes the final legal word on the issue, unless it involves a matter where Congress can change the law. The Supreme Court is the highest court in the land and its interpretation on the law is final and definitive.

As can be expected, because of the complexity and significance of the legal issues involved in these cases, there will be great differences of opinion across the country as to the correct outcome. Some of the opinions will even be controversial, sparking heated opposition to the decision.

CONCLUSION.

As citizens of this great country, we should care deeply about it, its future, and the direction of our democracy. It behooves all of us to pay careful attention to important decisions, whether we agree or disagree with the outcomes.

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