

## The Judiciary

The duty of the interpretation of the law rests in the Judiciary. The highest court in the United States, above all others, with the final say in what laws are Constitutional and which aren't, is the Supreme Court.

There is actually very little said in the Constitution about the Supreme Court or any of the courts. Article 3 is the shortest of the first three articles, and only the first two of the three sections have anything to do with the structure of the Judiciary. The Chief Justice is only mentioned in Article 2, concerning presidential impeachment. Judges have no Constitutionally mandated age, residency, or citizenship requirements.

Judges appointed to the bench under Article 3 courts serve their terms for as long as they wish, while in "good Behavior." Judges can be impeached by the Legislative branch.

Currently, there are nine justices of the Supreme Court. Since the Constitution does not specify the number, it has fluctuated, from as few as five to as many as ten. The Supreme Court is the highest appellate court, meaning that cases normally only come to the Court by way of appeal after appeal of the losing party. The Supreme Court does have original jurisdiction of a few types of cases, spelled out in Section 2.

The Constitution also specifies that there will be courts inferior to the Supreme Court. These courts are federal in scope and are separate from similar court setups in each state. This dual-scope judicial system is quite uncommon through other governments in the world, but reflects the historical power of the states.

In addition the Article 3 courts, there are special Article 1 courts which help carry out the duties of the Legislative branch, such as bankruptcy courts and military courts of appeal. Judges serving in Article 1 courts do not serve for life, but have set terms (such as 14 years for bankruptcy court, and 15 for military appeals court).

The current members of the Supreme Court are as follows, along with their year of appointment and president who appointed them:

- John Roberts (chief) (2005, Bush)
- Antonin Scalia (1986, Reagan)
- Anthony Kennedy (1988, Reagan)
- David Souter (1990, Bush)
- Clarence Thomas (1991, Bush)
- Ruth Bader Ginsburg (1993, Clinton)
- Stephen Breyer (1994, Clinton)
- Samuel Alito (2006, Bush)
- Sonia Sotomayor (2009, Obama)
- Elena Kagan (2010, Obama)