

Frequently Asked Questions...and the Answers!

JUSTICES

How is the Chief Justice different from the other eight Justices?

The Chief Justice is considered “first among equals.” His vote does not weigh more than that of any other Justice, but he does preside over oral arguments and over the conference which the Justices discuss the cases. Also, he has additional administrative duties as head of the Judicial Branch of the Federal Government.

How is the Chief Justice appointed? Does the most senior Justice become the Chief?

All of the Justices, including the Chief Justice, are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. One does not have to serve on the Bench prior to being appointed Chief Justice.

Where are the Justices’ Chambers?

The Justices’ Chambers are located throughout the building.

Do all of the Justices have to be present in order to hear a case?

Not all of the Justices need to be present to hear a case. It takes a quorum – six of the nine Justices – to hear a case.

What is the salary of the Justices?

The Chief Justice makes \$202,900 a year.
The Associate Justices make \$194,200 a year.

What are the qualifications of the Justices?

The Constitution does not specify qualifications, i.e., age, profession, education, etc., for a Justice. Although every Justice has been a lawyer, not all have graduated from law school (i.e.-early years).

What is the size of a Justices' staff?

A Justices' staff is fairly small. Each is allowed 4 law clerks. In addition, each has a secretary, an assistant secretary and an aide.

Do all of the Justices read all of the petitions?

The Justices review all of the 7,000 petitions, or summaries of the petitions, that are filed at the Court.

Have there always been nine Justices?

Congress has the power to determine the number of Justices. Originally, the Federal Judiciary Act of 1789 set up the Supreme Court with six Justices: five Associate Justices and the Chief Justice. The number of Justices was increased to seven in 1807, and seats eight and nine were added in 1837. A tenth seat was added to the Bench in 1863; however, two seats were removed in 1866, leaving the number of Justices at eight. The current number of nine Justices was restored in 1869.

Do the Justices' friends and family come very often?

Guests of the Justices visit the Supreme Court occasionally, but the frequency of these visits depends on the individuals.

Do the Justices have secret service agents watching over them or any other sort of protection?

In this building our police force provide security for the building and all within. If necessary, when a Justice is out of the building, they do have assistance from our police officers.

How long do the law clerks serve and what do they do?

The law clerks serve the Justices for one year. They help the Justices with research, and in such manner as his/her Justice requests assistance.

What is behind the curtain in the Courtroom?

Behind the curtain are volumes of the United States Reports.

Do the people involved with the case have reserved seating?

Each attorney can reserve seats for his/her guests. The attorneys arguing the case before the Court are seated at a table directly in front of the Bench. Reserved seating may be arranged for other persons involved.

PUBLIC

What do you have to do to hear a case argued? How early do you have to line up and where?

To hear oral arguments, the public is seated in the Courtroom on a first-come first-served basis. The number of people waiting in line varies depending on the publicity of the case. Lines form early in the morning of argument days on the front plaza along First Street.

How do you become an intern for the Supreme Court?

The selection process for becoming an intern at the Supreme Court involves applying for a position, completing an interview and being selected by the office which offers the internship. Intern programs are offered by the major offices of The Supreme Court, including the Curator's Office and the Clerk's Office. Contact the appropriate office to get more information.