

Fascinating Facts About The Supreme Court

When the first session of the Court convened in 1790, the tradition of justices wearing wigs still lingered. Justice William Cushing was the only justice to arrive at the court wearing the white wig he had worn on the Massachusetts bench. The ribbing he took from boys outside the court apparently turned the tide against the headgear, and he took the advice of Thomas Jefferson: "For heaven's sake, discard the monstrous wig which makes the English judges look like rats peeping through bunches of oakum."

During the Supreme Court's first term (1790) it had no docket & made no decisions. When the nation's capitol moved to Washington D.C., in 1800 it did not even have a courtroom. Congress provided a small committee room in the basement of the Capitol, where the Court remained until the Civil War.

In 1789, the Chief Justice's salary was \$4,000, while associate justices made \$3,500. By 2010, the Chief Justice's salary had risen to \$223,500, with associate justices receiving \$213,900.

The tradition of the "conference handshake" began with Chief justice Melville W. Fuller in the late 1800s. Before they take their seats at the bench, each justice shakes hands with the others. Chief justice Fuller cited the practice as a way to remind justices that, although they may have differences of opinion, they share a common purpose.

The longest serving justice was William O. Douglas, who retired in November, 1975, after 36 years and six months on the bench. John Rutledge had the briefest Court tenure. He was appointed chief justice and served for four months, at which point the Senate rejected his nomination.

Samuel Chase was the only Supreme Court justice to be impeached. The politically motivated charges failed in the Senate, however, in 1805.

A supreme Court term begins on the first Monday in October, and runs through late June or early July. The term is divided between "sittings" for the hearing of cases and delivering of opinions, and intervening "recesses" for the consideration of the business before the Court and writing of opinions. Sittings and recesses alternate every two weeks or so.

George Washington appointed the most Supreme Court justices (11). Only Franklin D. Roosevelt came close, with 9 appointments.

Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase was the only justice to appear on U.S. currency. He was on the \$10,000 bill, which is no longer printed.

William H. Taft was the only president to also serve as a Supreme Court justice.

The Supreme Court: Fascinating Facts *(Continued)*

Justice Byron (“Whizzer”) White is the only justice in the College Football Hall of Fame.

The youngest Supreme Court appointee was Joseph Story (32). The oldest sitting justice was Oliver Wendell Holmes, who served until he was 90.

Jimmy Carter is the only president to serve a full term without nominating a Supreme Court justice.

Of all one-term presidents, Taft appointed the most Supreme Court justices (6).



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