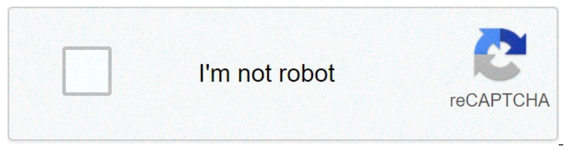

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What is the official supreme court opinion called following the argument of a supreme court case

Roe v. Wade. Brown v. Board of Education. Citizens United. These Supreme Court cases are cited often by name in news articles and everyday speech but do you know what these (and other) landmark cases were really all about? Here are seven that reshaped America's understanding of the Constitution and became household names.1. Dred Scott v. Sandford, 1857Denied citizenship to all African AmericansOn the eve of the Civil War, the Dred Scott decision dealt a painful blow to both free and enslaved African Americans. Dred Scott was born a slave in Missouri. Later, he was sold to a U.S. Army surgeon, who moved Scott and his family around to several free states and territories. After the surgeon died, Scott asked the man's second wife, Eliza Irene Sanford (whose name was misspelled in court documents as Sandford), to let Scott buy his freedom, but she refused. Scott sued in Missouri court and lost, since Missouri considered him a slave, never mind that he had resided in free territories.Scott appealed his case all the way to the Supreme Court, which ruled 7-2 to deny Scott his freedom. In the landmark decision, Chief Justice Roger Taney said that first of all, Scott had no right to sue in federal court because he was black, and therefore not a citizen. Second, individual states didn't have the power to make black people free, because slaves weren't part of the original "political community" at the writing of the Constitution. Lastly, the Court ruled that Scott was Sanford's property, and could not be deprived by the government under the Fifth Amendment.The Dred Scott decision emboldened slave-owning states to spread the practice into more U.S. territories and angered the opposition, strengthening support for the Republican Party. After the Civil War, the Dred Scott decision was overturned by the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments. Scott was formally freed just a few months after the Supreme Court decision but he died a year later in 1858 of tuberculosis.2. Plessy v. Ferguson, 1896Upheld the "separate but equal" doctrine justifying racial segregationIn 1890, Louisiana passed the Separate Car Act requiring all passenger trains to provide separate and equal accommodations for black and white passengers, and forbidding people from sitting in the rail car of the opposite race. A civil rights group in Louisiana decided to challenge the constitutionality of the law under the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment and recruited Homer Plessy, who was 7/8ths white (and therefore still considered a "negro" in Louisiana) to take a seat in a whites-only car. He was arrested and the case made it all the way up to the U.S. Supreme Court. (John H. Ferguson was the judge who ruled against Plessy in the Louisiana Supreme Court.)The Court ruled 7-1 against Plessy, arguing that the separate but equal accommodations were acceptable under the 14th Amendment and did not imply that blacks were an inferior race. Justice John Marshall Harlan, the lone dissenter, believed that segregated public facilities effectively created a racial caste system, writing that "Our Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens."With the Plessy decision, Southern states had a powerful legal precedent for doubling down on racial segregation, which remained separate and far from equal for another half-century. The decision was overturned by the next case on our list.3. Brown v. Board of Education, 1954Ruled that racial segregation in public schools is unconstitutionalBrown v. Board of Education is one of the best-known cases in Supreme Court history and deservedly so. The case, brilliantly argued by Thurgood Marshall, who later became the first African American Supreme Court justice, was one of the first major legal breakthroughs of the Civil Rights era, and paved the way for full integration of all public facilities.Oliver Brown filed a class action suit against the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, after his daughter Linda was denied entrance to any of Topeka's all-white elementary schools. Brown's lawsuit stated that the schools for black children were not equal to the schools for white children, which violated the "equal protection clause" of the 14th Amendment.In a unanimous 9-0 decision authored by Chief Justice Earl Warren, the Court rejected the separate but equal doctrine as it applied to public schools. Even if the segregated facilities for black and white students were "substantially" equal, as the lower courts had ruled, the institution of segregation effectively branded young black students as inferior and denied them full participation and success in American civic life.Even after this landmark decision, some states were slow to desegregate, with full integration not achieved until the early 1970s. But the Brown decision marked a paradigm shift in the Court's interpretation of the 14th Amendment and set a precedent that would be used to protect other groups against discrimination.4. Miranda v. Arizona, 1966Guaranteed basic rights to people who are arrested by the police"You have the right to remain silent." Those seven words, now a staple of TV cop dramas, weren't part of standard police procedure until this groundbreaking Supreme Court decision. In Miranda v. Arizona, the Court had to decide whether the Constitution's Fifth Amendment protected criminal suspects from self-incrimination during police interrogations.For Miranda, the Court addressed four separate cases in which suspects were arrested, interrogated for hours by police, and ultimately confessed to crimes without the presence of an attorney. The lead plaintiff was Ernesto Miranda who was arrested and charged with rape, robbery and kidnapping. He was not read his rights and confessed to the crimes during a police interrogation. Miranda had no lawyer present and a history of mental illness. Based on his confession, a judge sentenced him to 20-30 years. While he was in prison in Arizona, the American Civil Liberties Union took up his appeal.In a tight 5-4 decision, the justices ruled that people in police custody have the same Fifth-Amendment right against self-incrimination as witnesses called to testify in court, and they also have a Sixth Amendment right to legal counsel.In its ruling, the majority wrote that prior to any questioning, "the person must be warned that he has a right to remain silent, that any statement he does make may be used as evidence against him, and that he has a right to the presence of an attorney, either retained or appointed."Those words, now repeated during every arrest, became known as the "Miranda Warning" or "Miranda Rights."As for Ernesto Miranda, he was retried and sentenced to prison anyway in 1966. He was released in 1972 but died in 1976 after a stabbing in a barroom fight. Ironically, his suspected killer was read his "Miranda Rights" and so never answered police questions. There was no conviction in Miranda's death.5. Roe v. Wade, 1973Legalized some types of abortion in the U.S.Jane Roe was a pseudonym for Norma McCorvey, a pregnant woman in Texas who was unable to get an abortion because state law barred all abortions except when the mother's life was at risk. McCorvey's life was not in danger but she could not afford to travel outside of Texas to have an abortion. She claimed that the Texas law violated her constitutional right to privacy. ("Wade" referred to Henry Wade, Dallas County district attorney.)The Court reviewed the case for two full years, weighing biological, ethical and religious arguments in addition to constitutional issues. Ultimately, the justices ruled 7-2 in favor of Roe, arguing that the Constitution's first, fourth, fifth, ninth and 14th Amendments combined to create a "zone of privacy" around certain personal decisions like marriage and contraception, and that banning all abortions violated that right to make a personal and private decision about whether or not to have a child.Perhaps most controversially, the Court ruled that fetuses before the third trimester had no rights as "persons" under the Constitution or the law. The ruling allowed states, if they wished, to ban third-trimester abortions (because a fetus was "viable" at this point, based on medical advances) and to consider cases in which they could be outlawed in the second trimester, as long as exceptions were carved out to save the life or health of the mother. But the Court barred states from revoking a woman's right to terminate a pregnancy in the first trimester for any reason.Before the case was decided, McCorvey gave birth and put her child up for adoption. She later changed her views on abortion and joined the "pro-life" side (though in a documentary released in 2020, McCorvey says she only did that for the money). This Supreme Court case remains one of the most culturally divisive ones in the U.S.6. Lawrence v. Texas, 2003Decriminalized homosexuality and expanded the constitutional right to privacyIn 2003, there were still 12 states in which it was a crime for men to engage in homosexual sex, and Texas was one of them. When police arrived at the apartment of John Geddes Lawrence in response to a weapons disturbance, they found him having sex with another man, Tyron Garner. They were arrested for "deviate sexual intercourse" under the Texas "homosexual conduct" law.Lawrence appealed and the case landed before the Supreme Court, which had ruled in 1986 that the Constitution doesn't protect a homosexual individual's right to privacy because sodomy doesn't fall into the "zone of privacy" surrounding marriage and family decisions. In a 7-2 decision, the justices reversed that earlier ruling, arguing that the "due process" clause of the 14th Amendment extends to privacy in the home.In his dissenting opinion, Justice Antonin Scalia angrily warned that striking down sodomy laws would lead to the legalization of same-sex marriage. He was absolutely right. In 2015, the court ruled in Obergefell v. Hodges that state laws barring same-sex marriages violated both the equal protection clause and the due process clause of the 14th Amendment.7. Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission, 2010Allowed corporations and other organizations to pay unlimited amounts of money for political adsCitizens United is a conservative activist group that produced a documentary called "Hillary: The Movie," which was critical of Hillary Clinton during her run for president. The company was barred from receiving corporate funding for the movie by the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA), which aimed to stop the flow of "big money" into "electioneering communications," aka political ads. For a variety of reasons, including the First Amendment protection of free speech, Citizens United argued that the BCRA was unconstitutional.In a 5-4 decision, the Supreme Court agreed. The landmark ruling recognized corporations, labor unions and other for-profit and nonprofit entities as having the same free speech rights as individuals to fund "independent political broadcasts" during elections. While Citizens United allowed unlimited corporate funding of independently produced political ads, it upheld the ban on direct corporate contributions to political candidates or their campaigns.The Citizens United ruling ushered in the era of super PACs (political action committees) in American elections. Super PACs can raise and spend unlimited sums of money to advocate for or against political candidates, but they can't donate money directly to those candidates. Super PACs do have to report their donors to the Federal Election Commission. Critics contend that Super PACs are usually made up of a small group of wealthy individuals and corporations who can have an outsized influence on general elections.Now That's CoolSupreme Court cases make great fodder for Hollywood movies. "Gideon v. Wainright," which enshrined the right of a criminal defendant to have an attorney for free if he could not afford one, became the basis of the 1980 TV movie "Gideon's Trumpet." "Loving v. Virginia," the 1967 Supreme Court case decriminalizing interracial marriage, was dramatized in the 2016 film "Loving." Pictured: On October 18, 2019, protestors gathered in front of the Supreme Court, which heard arguments on gender identity and workplace discrimination. Credit: Tasos Katopodis/Getty Images When Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg passed away on September 18, 2020, many Americans didn't take the proper time to grieve — instead, they panicked about what her passing meant for the future of the country. Holding the balance of an entire democracy is too great a burden for anyone's shoulders, and Justice Ginsburg had been carrying that weight for a long, long time. Instead of holding space for her passing, Republican politicians wasted no time in queuing up a nominee for the empty Supreme Court seat, eventually landing on Amy Coney Barrett — a longtime Notre Dame Law School professor who served fewer than three years on the Seventh Circuit before her nomination to the highest court in the American judicial system. In 2016, then-Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell infamously vowed to block President Obama's outgoing Supreme Court nomination of Merrick Garland on the grounds that the American people should have a "voice" and that to rush a nomination (and confirmation) would be to overly politicize the issue. In 2020, however, McConnell didn't hold to those principles he outlined four years earlier, leading to Barrett's confirmation hearings and equally rushed swearing in ceremony, which took place about a week before Election Day on October 26, 2020. This move led many to criticize McConnell, including New York Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (@AOC), who simply tweeted, "Expand the court." Additionally, Massachusetts Senator Ed Markey (@EdMarkey), who is Ocasio-Cortez's Green New Deal co-author, tweeted, "Mitch McConnell set the precedent. No Supreme Court vacancies filled in an election year. If he violates it, when Democrats control the Senate in the next Congress, we must abolish the filibuster and expand the Supreme Court." This call for a SCOTUS expansion has led many to wonder: Is such a move even possible? The short answer: yes. Congress could easily change the number of seats on the Supreme Court bench. According to the Supreme Court's website, "The Constitution places the power to determine the number of Justices in the hands of Congress" — just another example of those supposed checks and balances that guide a constitutional government. In fact, the number of Justices has shifted several times throughout the Court's history. In 1789, the first Judiciary Act set the number of Justices at six; during the Civil War, the number of seats went up to nine and then briefly 10; and, once President Andrew Johnson took office, Congress passed the Judicial Circuits Act in 1866, cutting the number of Justices to seven so that Johnson couldn't stack the court in favor of Southern states. Pictured: Clarence Thomas, Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, right, administers the judicial oath to Amy Coney Barrett, Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, on the South Lawn of the White House. Credit: Al Drago/Bloomberg/Getty Images Since 1869, however, the Supreme Court has been composed of nine Justices. In semi-recent history, there's been one notable attempt to expand the Court — one that will live in infamy, so to speak. Back in 1937, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt aimed to expand the Court, which kept shooting down some of his New Deal legislation. More specifically, FDR felt that many of the older Justices were out of touch with the times, so much so that they were colloquially dubbed the "nine old men." FDR's proposal? Add one Justice to the Supreme Court for every 70-year-old Justice residing on the bench. That would've resulted in 15 Supreme Court Justices, but even the Democrat-controlled Congress — and FDR's own Vice President — were against the idea. Since FDR's infamous defeat, no attempt to expand or reduce the Supreme Court has gathered much steam — until now. Interestingly enough, Politico points out that President Biden has been outspoken about not expanding the court. In 2019, President Biden even went as far as saying "we'll live to rue that day [we expand the Court]," arguing that an expansion would lead to constant changes — more expansions, more reductions. In short, it would shake the American people's faith in the legitimacy of the Supreme Court (and potentially the Democratic party). Of course, that's just one scenario — and one that hasn't happened in the past. But, in the past, Vice President Kamala Harris has shown some support for the idea, saying she'd be "open" to it. However, both Vice President Harris and President Biden have also dodged questions surrounding court-packing and Supreme Court expansion. Pictured: Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) speaks during a House Oversight and Government Reform Committee hearing in Washington, D.C., on August 24, 2020. Credit: Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call/Bloomberg/Getty Images On the other hand, more outspoken proponents have tried to gather momentum for the idea. Representative Ocasio-Cortez expanded upon her initial "Expand the Court" tweet, calling out Republicans' hypocrisy toward appointing new Justices during presidential election years. "Republicans do this because they don't believe Dems have the stones to play hardball like they do. And for a long time they've been correct," Ocasio-Cortez tweeted. "But do not let them bully the public into thinking their bulldozing is normal but a response isn't. There is a legal process for expansion." In the face of a 6–3 Conservative majority, folks like Representative Ocasio-Cortez argue that the Supreme Court is out of balance — and, more than that, it isn't quite reflective of the American people's concerns and values. So much lies in the hands of the court: the fate of the Affordable Care Act, Roe v. Wade and marriage equality, just to name a few. Now, we'll just have to see if this imbalance — and Barrett's speedy appointment — are enough to convince President Biden and members of Congress to seriously consider a Supreme Court expansion.

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