
HOW DOES A CASE
GET TO THE
SUPREME COURT?

Appellant files appeal after District
Court judgment



Three-judge Court of Appeals
panel hears oral arguments



Court of Appeals issues opinion



Parties petition Supreme Court for
further review



At least three justices agree to
accept the appeal



Supreme Court arguments are
scheduled

M i n n e s o t a
S u p r e m e C o u r t

Minnesota Judicial Center
25 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Phone: 651-297-7650
Hours 8 a.m.—5 p.m. Monday—Friday
www.mncourts.gov

V i s i t o r ' s
G u i d e t o O r a l
A r g u m e n t s

M i n n e s o t a
S u p r e m e
C o u r t



Welcome to the
Minnesota Supreme Court,
the state's highest court.
You will see oral arguments
of a case selected for
hearing by at least three
Supreme Court Justices
because of its significance
to Minnesota law and the
citizens of the state. This
guide will prepare you for
your visit.

W H E N D O O R A L
A R G U M E N T S O C C U R ?

The Supreme Court hears oral arguments during the first two weeks of each month from September through June. Week one oral arguments occur in the courtroom on the 2nd floor of the State Capitol. Week two arguments occur in Courtroom 300 of the Minnesota Judicial Center. When the justices are not hearing oral arguments, they are busy writing opinions, reviewing petitions for review, reading case briefs for upcoming cases, and managing the administration of justice in the state. Each justice serves as a judicial district liaison and leads various task forces, boards and committees devoted to the delivery of justice in the state.

H O W M A N Y C A S E S
D O E S T H E S U P R E M E
C O U R T H E A R ?

The Supreme Court grants review of approximately 12 percent of the 600-700 petitions it receives each year. The Court hears appeals from the Minnesota Court of Appeals, the Workers' Compensation Court of Appeals, the Tax Court, as well as election matters. The Court also automatically hears all first-degree murder appeals from the district courts.



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What happens during oral arguments?

- **Marshal calls court to order; audience stands.** During oral arguments, the marshal maintains courtroom decorum and ensures that attorneys adhere to time limitations.
- **Justices enter the courtroom.** Prior to oral arguments the justices prepare by reading “briefs,” which are documents submitted to the Court by the parties involved. Briefs explain the legal questions and points of view that the attorneys will argue. The justices are seated in order of seniority, with the Chief Justice in the middle of the bench.
- **Appellant’s attorney argues the case.** The attorney representing the appealing party answers justices’ questions about his/her legal argument. Thirty-five minutes are allotted.
- **Respondent’s attorney argues and answers justices’ questions.** Twenty-five minutes are allotted.

- **Rebuttal by appellant’s attorney.** Typically, the appellant’s attorney reserves five minutes of his/her total time to respond to the opposing party’s arguments.
- **Justices conference the case.** One justice is randomly assigned to draft the Court’s “opinion” or decision, which is discussed during the conference.
- **Justices draft and revise the Court’s opinion.** The draft is circulated among all seven justices to review and revise. They may also write a “concurring opinion” – agreeing with the decision but for different reasons – or a “dissenting opinion” – disagreeing with the majority opinion.
- **Opinion filed with Clerk of Appellate Courts, released to the parties and the public via the Judicial Branch web site, www.mncourts.gov.** Though no one knows exactly when the Court will hand down its decision, opinions are generally released about 3-5 months following oral arguments.



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Courtroom decorum

Please help us maintain decorum.

Issues of statewide importance are decided based on oral arguments. Therefore, it is critical that the justices and attorneys work without distraction. Please consider the following guidelines while in court:

- Sit in the audience area of the courtroom. Standing is prohibited during oral arguments.
- Remain silent during the proceedings.
- You may not eat, drink, chew gum or use tobacco in the courtroom.
- Remove hats before entering the courtroom.
- No demonstrations are allowed, including signs, banners or displays of symbols.
- Electronic recording devices are prohibited, except when permission is given to the media.
- Turn off all cell phones before entering the courtroom.

Minnesota Supreme Court



Chief Justice Lorie Skjerven Gildea
Appointed Chief 2010



Justice G. Barry Anderson
Appointed 2004



Justice David L. Lillehaug
Appointed 2013



Justice Natalie E. Hudson
Appointed 2015



Justice Margaret H. Chutich
Appointed 2016



Justice Anne K. McKeig
Appointed 2016



Justice Paul C. Thissen
Appointed 2018