


[ABOUT THE COMMITTEE](#)
[COMMITTEE RESOURCES](#)
[HEARINGS & MEETINGS](#)
[LEGISLATION](#)
[NOMINATIONS](#)
[PRESS](#)


This Week

No hearings scheduled

No business meetings
scheduled

Committee Overview

[Print Page](#) | [Email Page](#) | [AAA](#)

**NOTE: The Senate is in recess until 2:00 p.m. on Monday, May 2, 2011.*

Recess Reading: An Occasional Feature From The Judiciary Committee

The Senate Judiciary Committee: Function and Roles from Past to Present

On September 24, 1789, the First Session of the First United States Congress passed the Judiciary Act of 1789, which authorized the structure of the Federal judiciary. Article III, section I of the Constitution establishes that "the judicial power of the United States shall be vested in on Supreme Court." It further provided for a system of inferior courts to be created as Congress saw fit. Eight Senators were appointed to the select committee charged with drafting the Judiciary Act. The resulting legislative proposal called for a six-justice Supreme Court. The court was given original jurisdiction, or the right to hear a case for the first time, to settle disputes between states or between a state and the United States government. The Act also created 13 lower district courts, and the Office of the Attorney General.

As the nation grew, so, too, did the complexity of the government. On December 10, 1816, the Senate adopted a resolution to create the original 11 standing committees of the Senate, including the Committee on the Judiciary. The Committee's original jurisdiction closely tracks the jurisdiction of the current Committee: the courts, law enforcement, and judicial administration. Over the years, the Committee's jurisdiction has come to encompass a variety of issues ranging from patents and copyrights to immigration and naturalization. The Judiciary Committee also became the first stop for statehood petitions. It was the Judiciary Committee that first debutante the Missouri Compromise of 1820. And following the Civil War, the Committee played a major role in the consideration of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments.

It was not until 1868 that the Senate began referring all judicial nominations to the Judiciary Committee. The Committee's consideration and review of the nominees to fill lifetime appointments on the Federal judiciary is among the Senate's most important functions.

News and Press Releases from Committee Members

Looking for news and press releases from members of the Senate Judiciary Committee? Visit the [press contacts](#) page for links to Committee members' newsrooms.



News and Press
Releases
from
Chairman
[Patrick Leahy](#)
(D-Vermont)

News and Press
Releases
from
Ranking Member
[Chuck Grassley](#)
(R-Iowa)



Judiciary Committee Website Awarded 2010 "Gold Mouse"



Noteworthy

Did You Know? In 1925, Harlan Stone became the [first Supreme Court nominee](#) to testify before the Committee. He was nominated by [President Coolidge](#), and agreed to testify before the Committee about his role in the indictment of Senator [Burton Wheeler](#) (D-Mont.) for his involvement in the Teapot Dome Scandal. Stone was confirmed by the Senate, 71-6.



Webcasts

04/14/2011 10:00 AM
[Executive Business Meeting](#)

04/13/2011 03:00 PM
[Judicial and Executive Nominations](#)

04/13/2011 10:00 AM
[Fulfilling Our Commitment to Support Victims of Crime](#)

[Webcast Archive](#)

The Senate Judiciary Committee was recognized by the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) for having one of the best websites in Congress. The Committee's website was awarded a 2010 Gold Mouse Award. To learn more about the Congressional Management Foundation and the Congressional Mouse Awards, [click here](#).



NOTE: **Historical Judiciary Committee Photographs: You can find information about the historical photographs featured at the top of this page by visiting the Committee's [photo gallery](#).*

[Privacy and Security Information](#)