



Presidential Involvement with Supreme Court Oath Ceremonies

INFORMATION SHEET

For almost 150 years, there was little presidential involvement with the oath ceremonies of Supreme Court Justices and no President has ever administered an oath to a Justice. On January 18, 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt became the first president to participate in an oath ceremony when he invited Frank Murphy to take his Constitutional Oath at the White House. Associate Justice Stanley F. Reed, another Roosevelt appointee, administered the oath to Murphy in the Oval Office while the President looked on. Subsequently, most presidents have attended at least one oath ceremony, either at the White House or at the Supreme Court.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

In addition to **Frank Murphy**, Roosevelt hosted ceremonies at the White House for **James F. Byrnes** (July 8, 1941) and **Robert H. Jackson** (July 11, 1941), during which each took both oaths of office.

Harry S Truman

Truman attended the investiture of his first appointee, **Harold H. Burton**, at the Supreme Court on October 1, 1945, becoming the first President to do so. He hosted a White House ceremony for **Fred M. Vinson**, on June 24, 1946. D. Lawrence Groner, Chief Justice of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia administered both oaths to the incoming Chief Justice. Truman also held White House ceremonies for **Tom C. Clark** (August 24, 1949) and **Sherman Minton** (October 12, 1949).

Dwight D. Eisenhower

President and Mrs. Dwight D. Eisenhower were present at the Supreme Court as **Earl Warren** took the Judicial Oath as Chief Justice in open court on October 5, 1953.

John F. Kennedy

President Kennedy attended the ceremonies at the Supreme Court for both of his appointees, **Byron R. White** (April 16, 1962) and **Arthur Goldberg** (October 1, 1962).

Lyndon B. Johnson

Johnson attended the Courtroom investiture ceremony of **Thurgood Marshall** on October 2, 1967.

Richard M. Nixon

President Nixon was the first President to actively participate in an oath ceremony. On June 23, 1969, during the investiture of **Warren E. Burger** as Chief Justice, Nixon appeared before the Court as a member of the Supreme Court Bar and read a tribute to the retiring Chief Justice, Earl Warren.

Gerald R. Ford

Ford attended the investiture of **John Paul Stevens** on December 19, 1975, at the Supreme Court and participated as a member of the Supreme Court Bar, asking the Attorney General to read the commission appointing Stevens to the Court.

Ronald W. Reagan

President and Mrs. Reagan were present at the Supreme Court on September 25, 1981, when Chief Justice Warren E. Burger administered the oaths to **Sandra Day O'Connor**. They attended both the private ceremony in the Justices' Conference Room and the public ceremony in the Courtroom. On September 26, 1986, Reagan hosted the ceremonies for **William H. Rehnquist** and **Antonin Scalia** in the East Room of the White House, but did not attend the afternoon ceremonies at the Supreme Court. On February 18, 1988, Justice **Anthony M. Kennedy**, who had already taken both oaths at the Supreme Court, took the Constitutional Oath a second time in the East Room of the White House. Chief Justice Rehnquist administered the oath before Reagan and other invited guests.

George H. W. Bush

President Bush hosted a ceremony in the East Room of the White House for **David H. Souter** on October 8, 1990 (Columbus Day). Chief Justice Rehnquist administered the Constitutional Oath on national television. The following day, Rehnquist administered the Judicial Oath to Souter in the Courtroom during a special sitting of the Court that preceded the day's scheduled arguments. President Bush did not attend. President Bush's second nominee, **Clarence Thomas**, took his Constitutional Oath in the Rose Garden at the White House on October 18, 1991, administered by Associate Justice Byron R. White. President Bush did not attend the ceremony at the Supreme Court.

William J. Clinton

On August 10, 1993, Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist administered the Judicial Oath to **Ruth Bader Ginsburg** during a private ceremony in the Justices' Conference Room. Later that day, President Clinton hosted a White House ceremony where Rehnquist administered the Constitutional Oath to Ginsburg. On October 1, 1993, President Clinton attended a special sitting of the Court for Justice Ginsburg's investiture ceremony. **Stephen G. Breyer** took both oaths in Greensboro, Vermont, before Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist on August 3, 1994. Later, a nationally televised ceremony was held for him in the East Room of the White House on August 12, 1994, where Justice Antonin Scalia administered the Constitutional Oath to Breyer again. On September 30, 1994, a formal investiture ceremony attended by President Clinton took place at the Supreme Court where Rehnquist administered the Judicial Oath in the Courtroom.

George W. Bush

After hosting a ceremony where **John G. Roberts, Jr.**, took both oaths at the White House on September 29, 2005, President Bush also attended a special sitting of the Court for the investiture of the Chief Justice on October 3, 2005. This ceremony marked the opening of the Court's Term and preceded the scheduled arguments that day. On February 1, 2006, Bush hosted a ceremony for Justice **Samuel A. Alito, Jr.**, who had taken both oaths the previous day in the Justices' Conference Room before Chief Justice John G. Roberts, Jr. The televised White House ceremony was attended by members of the Court, the Cabinet, and others.

Barack H. Obama

Several days after Justice **Sonia Sotomayor** took her oaths of office, President Obama hosted a reception for her at the White House on August 12, 2009. On September 8, 2009, President Obama and Vice President Joseph Biden attended the investiture ceremony for Justice Sotomayor held during a special sitting of the Court. The following year, President Obama hosted a reception at the White House on August 6, 2010, to mark the Senate confirmation of **Elena Kagan's** nomination to the Supreme Court. President Obama also attended her formal investiture ceremony at the Court on October 1, 2010.