



PRESIDENT BUSH NOMINATES SECOND SUPREME COURT JUSTICE

President Bush has nominated White House counsel Harriet Miers, a former Dallas lawyer, to take the place of retiring Supreme Court Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor.

The announcement came on Oct. 3, 2005, the start of the Supreme Court term in which another of the president's selections, John Roberts, took the helm as the court's newly confirmed chief justice.

Who is Harriet Miers?

Harriet Miers, age 60, is a long-time Texas friend of President Bush.

She came with him to the White House in 2001 as staff secretary, the person who screens the documents that reach his desk, according to the Washington Post.

The president, who calls her career "trailblazing," named her the official White House lawyer in November 2004.

Born and raised in Dallas, Miers, graduated from Southern Methodist University with a major in mathematics. She also went to law school at SMU.

Miers was the first woman hired by Dallas law firm Locke Purnell Boren Laney & Neely. There, she represented clients such as Microsoft and Walt Disney Co.

She is unmarried and has no children.

She also has no judicial record, which means senators will pursue more detailed answers about her legal opinions at her confirmation hearings.

If confirmed, Miers would join Ruth Bader Ginsburg as the two women on the Supreme Court and only the third to ever serve on the high court.

The year ahead for the Supreme Court

In the coming months, the Supreme Court will hear several controversial cases on topics including abortion, assisted suicide, the death penalty and military recruiting in colleges.

As the highest court in the country, the Supreme Court receives thousands of potential cases each year, but only decides to review a select few.

These cases are chosen because they challenge federal authority or the Constitution.

Cases come before the court because one of the sides files a "writ of certiorari," or an appeal, of a decision made by either the U.S. Court of Appeals or a state supreme court.

The U.S. Supreme Court has chosen to review 48 cases this term. This will fill the court's docket, or schedule, until February.

The controversial issues raised by these cases will likely help define the future direction of the new Roberts Court.

Upcoming cases

The first test for the court will come this week with *Gonzales v. Oregon*, a case that questions the legality of doctor-assisted suicide. Oregon voters have twice supported the Death with Dignity Act that allows physicians to provide lethal doses of prescription drugs to patients with fatal diseases.

The attorney general of the United States declared that this was illegal because of the Federal Controlled Substances Act.

In November, the court will hear arguments over a New Hampshire law that requires parental notification for girls under the age of 18 to receive an abortion. The lower appeals court nullified the law because it lacked an exception for "emergencies."

Another case on the docket deals simultaneously with free speech and gay rights. Some law schools are arguing that the Department of Defense's "don't ask, don't tell" policy, which bans gays from military service, is discriminatory.

The 1996 Solomon Amendment stated that the federal government can withhold federal funding from colleges and universities which ban military recruiters from campus. The schools believe that by forcing them to provide space for military recruitment, the federal government is violating their First Amendment rights to oppose the "don't ask, don't tell" policy.

One case chosen for review has many legal scholars scratching their heads in confusion. The Supreme Court will finally resolve the inheritance dispute over a \$1.6 billion estate between former Playboy model and 37-year-old actress Anna Nicole Smith and her deceased husband's family.

--Compiled from wire reports and other media sources

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