

Live From D.C.: The Supreme Court

Over the weekend, *Saturday Night Live* made its return to television to begin its 47th season. However, the cast of the long-running sketch comedy show was not the only well-known group returning to American audiences this week. On Monday, October 4th, the members of the Supreme Court convened to begin hearing cases. The arrival of Justices at the Marble Palace marked the end of a nearly 19-month absence due to the coronavirus pandemic.¹

While the Court's return to in-person sessions breathes a sense of normalcy and tradition back into the American legal system after a long, pandemic-ridden hiatus, in the true spirit of 2020 aftermath, it comes with an unexpected twist. During telephonic arguments in 2020 and earlier this year, the Court provided a live feed of oral arguments to certain media outlets. This was the first time it had done so in its 230-year history.² Instead of rolling back this change as the Justices returned to the courtroom, the Supreme Court expanded access to live oral arguments. In a press release on September 29th, the Supreme Court announced on its homepage that it would provide a live audio feed of all oral arguments for the October, November, and December sessions.³ Now, anyone with access to the internet can tune in live to hear oral arguments presented before the Supreme Court.

While the Court seems to have embraced a technological update that allows the American public into the courtroom like never before, it remains to be seen whether this change is here to stay. In its press release, the Supreme Court promised access to live oral arguments online only through December, implying that this access may be curtailed once other coronavirus-related constraints on the Court's usual procedures are no longer in place. Breaking with tradition, the Courtroom is not currently open to the public and online live audio access may be eliminated completely once in-person access for the public returns. However, now that the public has been given instant access to Supreme Court oral arguments at the touch of their fingers, it may be difficult for the Court to roll back the live audio feed.

Post Summary: This article explains how the Supreme Court is allowing heightened access to oral arguments through live streams on the Supreme Court website's homepage. Representing a significant change to the public's access to the Supreme Court, it remains to be seen whether this access is here to stay.

Personal Summary: I am a 2L from San Diego, California interested in transactional law. I plan to begin my legal career in Houston, Texas.

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/04/us/politics/supreme-court-returns.html>

² <https://www.cNBC.com/2020/05/04/listen-live-supreme-court-broadcasts-oral-arguments-for-first-time.html>

³ https://www.supremecourt.gov/publicinfo/press/pressreleases/pr_09-29-21