

et online

Supreme Court is Important Issue in Upcoming Election

Wesley Harris

October 31, 2016

When voters head to the polls on Nov. 8 to cast their vote for president, there will be a lot of issues on their minds.

Some big issues this election season have been gun control, abortion rights and campaign finance just to name a few. There is one more issue that should be on everyone's mind, though, and that is the Supreme Court.

For those who have forgotten their civics class from back in high school, the Supreme Court is the highest court in the United States. Made up of nine justices, who serve lifetime appointments, the court is the final interpreter of the U.S. Constitution and all of the laws that flow from it. The justices on the Supreme Court are nominated by the president and are then confirmed by the Senate.

After the death of Justice Antonin Scalia in February the court has been down to eight members. Four members are more liberal, and the other four are more conservative, making the possibility of a split court decision more likely.

After Scalia's death, President Obama appointed Judge Merrick Garland to fill the vacancy. According to [NPR](#), Senate Republicans have refused to hold a confirmation hearing, saying that the next president should choose the next justice.

So why should we care who chooses the next Supreme Court Justice? [Ilya Shapiro, senior fellow in constitutional studies at the Cato Institute](#), says, "The Supreme Court should always be more of an election issue, because the appointment of federal justices is the most lasting legacy of any president."

In the same conversation, Lena Zwarenstejn, director of strategic engagement at the American Constitution Society expands on the point by saying, "The Supreme Court ultimately decides profound questions that deeply impact our lives. The federal courts decide critical issues regarding elections, the environment, money in politics, healthcare, voting rights, marriage equality, immigration, and reproductive rights."

For the voters, this means that the candidate you choose in the voting booth will nominate someone who represents their ideas to the Supreme Court. According to Emma Ellis in [Wired](#), Hillary Clinton would appoint justices who would critically look at gun laws, support abortion rights and reconsider current campaign finance laws. On the other hand, Donald Trump

would appoint justices that would reinforce gun rights, overturn Roe v. Wade and increase religious freedom.

However, getting the Supreme Court Justice that they want to put on the bench also depends on Senate confirmation. A simple majority is all that is needed to confirm a nominee, but a filibuster could stop the vote from going through. What this means is that, to guarantee a nominee receiving confirmation, a party must hold 60 seats in the Senate, giving them a filibuster-proof majority.

As the Senate election stands today, there is a 70 percent chance that the Democrats will carry the Senate, according to Nate Silver. However, it is a near impossibility for them to gain the 60 seat super-majority.

Remember, it is your civic duty to vote and to have your voice heard. Vote on the issues that are most important to you, the ones that you care about and the ones that affect your future. On election day, you are not just voting for a presidential candidate, but also their ideas and their future nominations to important positions.