



# **ACTION ALERT**

## **Supreme Court Begins New Term**

On October 5, 2009, the new Supreme Court term began. The Court welcomed Justice Sonia Sotomayor to the bench, as the first Hispanic Justice. Key cases this term will confront gun rights, animal cruelty, and life in prison for juvenile offenders. As the Court takes on critical cases, many wonder what Sotomayor's impact will be on the Court.

Sotomayor becomes the second woman to serve on the current bench, joining Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Succeeding Justice David Souter, Sotomayor should not drastically change the ideological makeup of the Court. Her votes in past rulings indicate that she would have a similar liberal leaning. There could be more changes to the Court soon. Justice John Paul Stevens, the eldest and longest-serving of the nine justices turns 90 in April. He has not hired the typical number of law clerks, which indicates that he is planning to retire. Not only is Justice Stevens' vote important, but he has tremendous influence over Justice Anthony Kennedy, who is often viewed as the swing vote on the Court.

### **Highlighted cases of the 2009-2010 term**

- ***Salazar v. Buono***: a dispute over the separation of church and state involving a cross on federal land in California's Mojave National Preserve. The cross is a World War I Memorial.
- ***Graham v. Florida, Sullivan v. Florida***: Testing whether imprisoning juveniles for life without parole for crimes other than murder violates the ban on cruel and unusual punishment.
- ***McDonald v. City of Chicago***: Can Second Amendment rights to own guns be used to challenge state firearm regulations? Or used only against federal restrictions?
- ***Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission***: Regarding the Federal Election Commission's limits on Citizens United's 2008 movie attacking Hillary Rodham Clinton during the primary. The FEC determined that the movie was a corporate-financed advertisement subject to campaign-finance law.

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## **UNITED METHODIST WOMEN'S ACTION NETWORK**

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