

Answering the Call



It's not every day that a state judge is called by the chief **justice** of the United States Supreme Court. On a hot day in July 1981, Arizona judge Sandra Day O'Connor answered a phone call from Chief Justice Warren Burger. Then she put him on hold. She had another call.

The second caller was President Ronald Reagan. He offered her a job as a justice on the Supreme Court. Never before had a woman been asked to serve on the court. Her answer was yes.

A color photograph of President Ronald Reagan and Sandra Day O'Connor sitting on a bench in the White House Rose Garden. President Reagan is on the left, wearing a light-colored suit and tie, looking towards Sandra Day O'Connor. Sandra Day O'Connor is on the right, wearing a light-colored jacket, looking back at him. They are both smiling. The background shows green foliage and a dark sky.

President Reagan chats with Sandra Day O'Connor in the White House Rose Garden.

The committee recommended that Sandra be made a Supreme Court justice. On September 25, 1981, Sandra Day O'Connor took the oath of office in her black robe. She then walked to the last seat on the right side of the judges' bench. That is the seat for the newest justice. For the first time in the 191-year history of the Supreme Court, a woman sat behind the bench.



After she is sworn in, O'Connor (right) stands with Chief Justice Warren Burger (center) and Ronald Reagan (left).

In Their Own Words



“(Presidents) Thomas Jefferson and James Madison would be turning over in their graves right now, but let’s hope Abigail Adams (wife of President John Adams and early champion of women’s rights) would be pleased.”

~Sandra Day O'Connor at a banquet after her swearing in ceremony