

The Supreme Court Update - March 25, 2026

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by Andrew Brantingham, Ian Blodger, Jessica M. Leano, and Brock Huebner

On March 25, 2026, the Supreme Court of the United States issued two decisions:

Cox Communications, Inc. v. Sony Music Entertainment, No. 24-171: This case addresses whether internet service providers are liable for copyright infringement by their users. Here, Sony Music Entertainment (“Sony”) sued Cox Communications, Inc. (“Cox”), an internet service provider, claiming that Cox contributed to its users’ copyright infringement by continuing to provide internet service to subscribers whose IP addresses Cox knew were associated with infringement. After a trial, the jury found in favor of Sony and awarded \$1 billion in statutory damages. The Fourth Circuit affirmed the award, concluding that supplying a product with knowledge that the recipient will use it to infringe copyrights constitutes contributory infringement. In a decision authored by Justice Thomas, the Supreme Court held the provider of a service is contributorily liable for a user’s infringement only if it intended that the provided service be used for infringement, which can be shown only if the party induced the infringement or the provided service is tailored to that infringement. The Court concluded that Cox was not contributorily liable for the infringement of Sony’s copyrights because it neither induced its users’ infringement nor provided a service tailored to infringement. The Court reasoned that Cox’s internet service could be used for non-infringing purposes and that Cox took steps to actively discourage copyright infringement by sending warnings, suspending services, and terminating accounts. Justice Sotomayor concurred in the judgment of the Court, joined by Justice Jackson. Justice Sotomayor wrote separately because she did not believe Sony had established the requisite intent required to prove contributory liability.

View the Court’s [decision](#).

Rico v. United States, No. 24-1056: This case interprets provisions of the Sentencing Reform Act of 1984 (the “Act”) governing supervised release periods, which apply after criminal defendants complete their time in federal prison. During the supervised release period, individuals must comply with mandatory conditions defined in the Act along with

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additional conditions that may be imposed at the sentencing judge's discretion. Violation of those conditions can result in the individual being re-imprisoned or having to serve an additional period of supervised release. In this case, Isabel Rico violated the terms of her supervised release by failing to report to her probation officer. An arrest warrant was issued, but Rico was not located until after her period of supervised release had expired. In that time, she committed a state law drug offense. The federal court ruled that the abscondment tolled her supervised release period, thus turning her state drug crime into a federal offense. The Ninth Circuit affirmed. In an 8-1 decision authored by Justice Gorsuch, the Supreme Court reversed the Ninth Circuit and determined that the text of the Act does not allow a federal court to use a defendant's abscondment to automatically extend or toll a supervised release period beyond the end date imposed at sentencing. Justice Alito dissented.

View the Court's [decision](#).