US Supreme Court associate justice 1972–86, and chief justice from 1986. Under his leadership the court established a reputation for conservative rulings on such issues as abortion and capital punishment. This has been possible because a majority of its members have been nominated by Republican presidents; Rehnquist was nominated associate justice in 1972 by President Richard Nixon and chief justice in 1986 by President Ronald Reagan.

As chief justice, he wrote the majority opinion for such cases as *Morrison v. Olson* (1988), in which the court ruled that a special court can appoint special prosecutors to investigate crimes by high-ranking officials, and *Hustler v. Falwell* (1988), in which the court ruled that public figures cannot be compensated for stress caused by a parody that cannot possibly be taken seriously. Rehnquist dissented in *Texas v. Johnson* (1989), in which the court ruled that the burning of the US flag in protest is protected by individual rights set forth in the First Amendment. In 1990 he dissented on the court’s ruling that it is unconstitutional for states to require a teenager to notify her parents before having an abortion.

Born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Rehnquist served in the US Air Force 1943–46 and later graduated from Stanford University and Stanford Law School. He served as clerk to US Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson 1951–52 before entering private practice in Phoenix, Arizona 1953–69. Active within the Republican Party, Rehnquist was appointed head of the office of legal counsel by President Richard Nixon in 1969 and controversially defended such measures as pre-trial detention and wiretapping.

As an associate justice, he argued in dissent for the death penalty in *Furman v. Georgia* (1972), and again in dissent against the right to abortion in *Roe v. Wade* (1973). Writing for the majority, Rehnquist held in *Rostken v. Goldberg* (1981) that it is constitutional to exclude women for registering for the draft.

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