Supreme Court Shadow Docket Database, 1993-2025

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Introduction

This codebook provides information on the variables collected in the Supreme Court Shadow Docket Database, 1993-2025. For more information on the database, please see www.shadowdocketdata.com, where, in addition to this codebook, you can find:

- The Shadow Docket Database (in either .csv, .xlsx, or .dta format).
- Our paper, "A Database of the United States Supreme Court's Shadow Docket, 1993-2025," which generally describe the database.
- The coding protocols we used to collect the data, including a summary of the scripts and data used.

This database is a work-in-progress. If you spot any errors, or there are additional variables you would like us to attempt to collect, please email us at jkastell@princeton.edu or anthony.taboni@austin.utexas.edu.

Citation

To cite the Supreme Court Shadow Docket Database, please use the following:

Jonathan P. Kastellec and Anthony R. Taboni. "Supreme Court Shadow Docket Database, Version 2.0 (November 2025)." (available at www.shadowdocketdata.com).

Please include the date and version number so it's clear to readers what version you are using.

Variables

For each variable, we provide a general description of its purpose, its name in the database, the type of variable, and a description of its values.

1. **Docket number (docket_number); string**

A cleaned up version of the order's docket number. The Court generally uses the format YY—XXXX, where YY describes the term in which the order was made, based on the last two digits of the year in which the term begins. (For example, 01 means an order handed down during the 2001 term.) The digits after the term generally refer to the numerical order in which a petition was filed within a given term. If the latter portion of the docket number is greater than or equal to 5000, this indicates that the docket corresponds to a petition filed *in forma pauperis*.

For some applications and motions, the court replaces the dash with A and M respectively. Before the 1999 term, motions and applications are of the form A—XXX or M—XXX. ("A" generally refers to emergency motions, while "M" generally refers to more idiosyncratic petitions, such as a request to file under seal.)

Attorney discipline actions are of the form D—XXXX. Admissions to the Bar do not have a unique docket number and are denoted by "AttB".

Note this format for the docket number is the same as used in the docket-based version of the Supreme Court Database [i.e. the "Spaeth Database"], so it should be straightforward to merge any dockets from our database that become merits cases with the docket-based version of the Supreme Court database, if desired.

2. **Term (term); numeric**

The term in which the order was handed down, in yyyy format. For the purposes of the shadow docket, a Supreme Court term begins the first Monday in October and ends the day before that Monday. (Merits opinions, by contrast, are almost never handed down between July and September.) For example, an order handed down in September 2023 is part of the 2022 term.

3. **Date (date); string.**

The date the order was handed down (in most instances, this means publication in the Supreme Court journal), in yyyy-mm-dd format, as a text variable.

4. **Date as unix (date_unix); numeric**

Same as **date**, but in unix format (i.e the number of seconds since 1970-01-01 00:00:00 UTC).

5. **Year (year); numeric**

The calendar year in which an order was handed down.

6. **Text (text); string**

The full text of the order. (We minimally pre-process the text; mainly, we fix typos in spacing.)

7. **Action Text (action_text); string**

If an order involves only a single docket, **action_text** is the same as **text**. If an order implicates multiple dockets, we assign the **text** from the last docket in the group, which describes the action, to the **action_text** for all dockets addressed by the order.

8. **Action Class (action_class); string**

The class or type of an order. We code each order into the following mutually exclusive categories:

Action	*Description*
Abeyance	Motion to request abeyance or decision to hold action in abeyance
Admission	Admission to the bar
Affirmed	Judgment affirmed
Affirmed in Part	Judgment affirmed for some claims and reversed for others
Amend	Request to amend petition or briefing schedule
Amicus	Requests to participate as amicus curiae, including, invitations to third-parties other than the Solicitor General participate as amicus curiae
Appointment of Counsel	Request for appointment of counsel
Attorney Discipline	Deals with the suspension or disbarment of an attorney or other attorney discipline
Bail	Application for bail
Bill of Complaint	Motion for leave to file Bill of Complaint
Briefing	Decisions involving the briefing schedule

Certificate of Appealability	Request for a certificate of appealability
Certiorari	Grants, denies, or dismisses a petition for certiorari. Includes the grant part of a GVR.
Consolidate	Request to consolidate by petitioners or the court deciding to consolidate cases
Costs and Fees	Requests for costs and fees
Damages	Requests for damages
Defer action	Request by one or both of the parties to defer an action
DIG	Court dismisses certiorari as improvidently granted
Directed to Brief	Direction by the court to brief an argument or question
Directed to File	Direction by the court to file briefs
Dismiss	Request to dismiss appeal parties or dismissal of appeal by court
Enlarge Record	Request to add materials to the record
Expedite Action	Request to expedite action
File Under Seal	Request to submit (or resubmit) a filing under seal
GVR	Grants, vacates, and remands a case to the lower court in light of a related opinion of the court. The grant is coded separately as Certiorari.
Habeas Corpus	Petition for writ of habeas corpus
In forma pauperis	Petition to proceed in forma pauperis
Injunction	Request for injunctive relief
Jurisdiction Postponed	Court postpones discussing questions of jurisdiction until deciding case on the merits
Lack of Quorum	Judgment is affirmed due to lack of quorum by the court
Leave to File	Request leave to file a petition not captured by other categories
Leave to Intervene	Petitioner asks for leave to intervene in a case
Mandamus	Petition for writ of mandamus
Misc	Miscellaneous actions not fitting into another category
Oral Argument	Asks for divided argument, sets schedule for oral argument, adds or removes case to argument calendar, sets report from special master for oral argument
Out of time	Request to file out of time
Printing	Request involving printing requirements
Pro Hac Vice	Request to proceed pro hac vice
Probable Jurisdiction	Court announces it has probable jurisdiction for a case
Prohibition	Request for writ of prohibition
Reconsider IFP	Request to reconsider a ruling on filing IFP
Rehearings	Asks the court for a rehearing
Release	Requests the court for release pending appeal
Remand	Motion to remand the case
Request to File	Request by the court to file briefs
Retax	Motion to retax costs
Reversal	Reversal of decision by lower court
River Master	Motions of or concerning the River Master
Sanctions	Motion for sanctions
Seaman	Request to proceed as seaman
Solicitor General	Actions involving the Solicitor General participating as amicus and/or in oral argument
Special Master	Actions relating to report or actions of a special master, not including oral argument

Stay	Request of the court to stay an action
Strike	Motion to strike filing from record
Substitution	Motion for substitution
Vacate	Motion to vacate or decision by the court to vacate order
Vacate and Remand	Motion to vacate and remand or decision to vacate and remand
Vacate Stay	Request to vacate a stay
Veteran	Request to proceed as a veteran

9. Action Class numeric (action_class_numeric); numeric

A numeric version of the **action_class** variable. Numbers are assigned to classes based on alphabetical order.

Number	*Action*
1	Abeyance
2	Admission
3	Affirmed
4	Affirmed in Part
5	Amend
6	Amicus
7	Appointment of Counsel
8	Attorney Discipline
9	Bail
10	Bill of Complaint
11	Briefing
12	Certificate of Appealability
13	Certiorari
14	Consolidate
15	Costs and Fees
16	Damages
17	Defer action
18	DIG
19	Directed to Brief
20	Directed to File
21	Dismiss
22	Enlarge Record
23	Expedite Action
24	File Under Seal
25	GVR
26	Habeas Corpus
27	In forma pauperis
28	Injunction
29	Jurisdiction Postponed
30	Lack of Quorum
31	Leave to File
32	Leave to Intervene
33	Mandamus

34	Misc
35	Oral Argument
36	Out of time
37	Printing
38	Pro Hac Vice
39	Probable Jurisdiction
40	Prohibition
41	Reconsider IFP
42	Rehearings
43	Release
44	Remand
45	Request to File
46	Retax
47	Reversal
48	River Master
49	Sanctions
50	Seaman
51	Solicitor General
52	Special Master
53	Stay
54	Strike
55	Substitution
56	Vacate
57	Vacate and Remand
58	Vacate Stay
59	Veteran

10. **Type of relief (relief); string**

Where applicable, this variable codes the type of relief the Court grants or not. (In many orders, such as GVRs, relief is not applicable.)

Relief Type	*Description*
Denied	Relief denied
Dismissed	Motion or application dismissed
Granted	Relief granted
Granted/Denied	Relief granted in part and denied in part
Missing	Decision on relief is not specified

Note: The "Missing" category here refers to a handful of observations in which we should be able to classify relief, but the Court for whatever reason does not specify whether relief was granted or denied. Observations code NA mean that relief is not applicable at all.

11. **Type of Relief, numeric (relief_numeric); numeric**

Numeric version of the relief variable. Numbers are assigned to relief type based on alphabetical order. If relief is coded as NA, this variable is also coded as NA.

Number	*Relief Type*
1	Denied
2	Dismissed
3	Granted
4	Granted/Denied
5	Missing

12. **Relief granted or denied (relief_granted); numeric**

This variable is a subset of **`relief`** . If relief = "Granted", **`relief_granted`** equals 1; if relief = "Denied", **`relief_granted`** equals 0; otherwise **`relief_granted`** is coded NA.

13. **Emergency Application (emergency_application); numeric**

This variable specifies whether the order is in response to an emergency application. 1 if the application is an emergency application and 0 if it is not. (For orders before the 2003 term and for non-cases this variable is NA.)

We classify emergency applications as those whose **`docket_number`** contains the letter "A" and whose **`action_class`** is one of the following: Stay, Injunction, Vacate Stay, or Vacate.

14. **Cert granted or denied (cert_granted); numeric**

For cert petitions, this variable is coded 1 if cert was granted, and 0 if denied. (This variable is NA for all orders that are not cert petitions.)

15. **Type of cert petition (cert_type); string**

For cert petitions, this variable is coded "IFP" for *in forma pauperis petitions* and "Paid" for paid petitions. (This variable is NA for all orders that are not cert petitions.)

16. **Death Penalty (death_penalty); numeric**

This variable is coded 1 if the order involves a death penalty-related petition, and 0 otherwise. It is coded NA if **non_case** equals 1.

17. **Dissent (dissent); numeric**

This variable is coded 1 if the docket-day is accompanied by a written dissent, and 0 otherwise. (**dissent** is pegged to "docket-day" because our automated process cannot match a dissent to a specific action.)

18. **Disagreement (disagreement); numeric**

This variable is coded 1 if the docket-day is accompanied by a dissent or disagreement about the action is noted, and 0 otherwise. (**disagreement** is pegged to "docket-day" because our automated process cannot match a dissent to a specific action.) Specifically, we search for the text of "dissent," "would grant," or "would deny." The latter two phrases capture implicit disagreement; e.g. a justice "would grant" the request for an injunction. (Because of the inclusion of "dissent" in creating **disagreement,** the variable **dissent** is a subset of **disagreement**.)

19. **An order not involving a particular case (non_case); numeric**

This variable is coded 1 if an order does not involve a particular case. The **`action_class`** categories for which this applies include: Admissions to the Bar and Attorney Discipline.

20. **Disciplinary action (discipline_action); string**

When the **`action_class`** is Attorney Discipline, this variable specifies the type of disciplinary action.

Discipline Action	*Description*
Challenge	Challenge of a disbarment proceeding
Disbarred	Attorney is disbarred
Misc	Miscellaneous action or death
Resigned	Attorney resigned
Suspended	Attorney suspended

21. **Disciplinary action, numeric (discipline_action_numeric); numeric**

Numeric version of the discipline action variable. Numbers are assigned to action type based on alphabetical order. If discipline action is coded as NA, this variable is also coded as NA.

Number	*Discipline Action*
1	Challenge
2	Disbarred
3	Misc
4	Resigned
5	Suspended

22. **Petitioner (petitioner); string**

Petitioner in the case. If the entry is a non-case or we are unable to identify a petitioner, this variable is coded as NA.

23. **Respondent (respondent); string**

Respondent in the case. If the entry is a non-case or we are unable to identify a respondent, this variable is coded as NA.

24. **Lower Court (lower_court); string**

The last lower court to hear the case before it reached the Supreme Court. Complete coverage begins in the 1997 term. If the entry is a non-case or we were unable to match an associated lower court docket, the variable is coded as NA.

25. **Lower Court Docket Number (lower_docket_no); string**

Docket number(s) of the corresponding to the lower court decision(s). Complete coverage begins in the 1997 term. If the entry is a non-case or we were unable to match an associated lower court docket, the variable is coded as NA. (Orders involving cases in which the Supreme Court has original jurisdiction are also NA.)

26. **Petitioner Counsel (petitioner_counsel); string**

Information about petitioner's counsel in the case. Coverage begins in 1997.

27. **Government Petitioner (gov_petitioner); numeric**

This variable is coded as 1 if the government is the petitioner in a case. The government is identified using the phrase “United States Department of Justice.” It is equal to 0 if the phrase is not present. It is coded as NA if there is no information about petitioner counsel.

28. **Respondent Counsel (respondent_counsel); string**

Information about respondent’s counsel in the case. Coverage begins in 1997.

29. **Government Respondent (gov_respondent); numeric**

This variable is coded as 1 if the government is the respondent in a case. The government is identified using the phrase “United States Department of Justice.” It is equal to 0 if the phrase is not present. It is coded as NA if there is no information about respondent counsel.

30. **Other Parties (other_parties); string**

Information about other parties and counsel involved in the case. Coverage begins in 1997.