

This Day in History... March 19, 1891

Birth of Earl Warren

US Chief Justice Earl Warren was born on March 19, 1891, in Los Angeles, California. He's considered one of the nation's most influential Supreme Court justices, with his time on the court referred to as a "Constitutional Revolution."

Warren's family moved to Bakersfield in 1896 where he spent the rest of his formative years. He then went to the University of California, Berkeley to study law, graduating in 1914. After college he briefly worked for an oil company but was unhappy with the corruption there and left to work at a law firm in Oakland. When the US entered World War I, Warren joined the Army, eventually reaching the rank of first lieutenant. He remained in the reserves until 1934, by which time he was a captain.

After the war Warren worked as a legislative assistant in the California State Assembly and eventually became the district attorney for Alameda County in 1925. In that role Warren became known across the state as a nonpartisan no-nonsense district attorney fighting government corruption. His integrity soon earned him national attention, and a nationwide poll of law enforcement officials stated that he was "the most intelligent and politically independent district attorney in the United States."

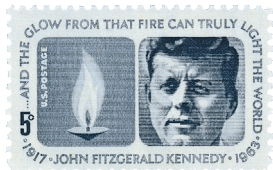
In 1938, Warren was resoundingly elected attorney general of California. In that role, he reorganized the state's law enforcement into regions and launched a major anti-crime campaign. However, he also continued many of his predecessor's policies, including the confiscation of land from Japanese owners. When World War II began, he supported the internment of Japanese Americans. Though later in the war he deeply regretted his role in this, "because it was not in keeping with our American concept of freedom and the rights of citizens."



Warren delivered the court's opinion on the case of Brown vs. Board of Education.

Warren ran for governor of California in 1942 without a party affiliation – and his non-partisanship appealed to many voters. As governor he spearheaded major postwar economic planning and established several public works projects similar to Roosevelt's New Deal. Warren also improved the state's highways, colleges, hospitals, and prisons. He went on to become the first California governor to serve three consecutive terms.

Following the death of Chief Justice Fred Vinson in 1953, President Eisenhower nominated Warren to replace him, citing his record of "remarkable accomplishment and success." As the 14th chief justice of the United States, Warren, was viewed as a courageous leader who sought to adapt accepted legal principles to modern social conditions. In 1954, he spoke for an unanimous court in the *Brown vs. Board of Education* case, one of the most important cases in Supreme Court history. He stated, "In the field of public education, the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."



The Warren Commission investigated President Kennedy's assassination.

During his tenure, rights for accused criminals also increased. As a result of rulings, defendants now have a right to publicly paid counsel, and people are read their Miranda rights when arrested. The Warren Court also worked to incorporate the Bill of Rights to the states, as it had initially only applied to the federal government. In addition to being chief justice, Warren also served as chair of the Warren Commission, which investigated the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

Warren retired from the court in 1968 and spent his time writing memoirs and giving speeches. He died on July 9, 1974. He was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom and several schools and buildings have been named in his honor.



From the Great Americans Series



Warren's court made many decisions that incorporated the protections of the Bill of Rights in the state and local governments.

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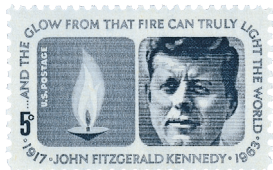
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