

Supreme Court: Google class-action case should be revisited

March 20 2019



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The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed a lower court to take another look at a lawsuit that involved Google and privacy concerns and ended in a class-action settlement.

The high court said in an unsigned opinion that a lower court should address whether those who sued had the right to do so. The Google users who sued argued that the [search engine](#) sends website operators potentially identifying information when someone clicks on a link produced by a search. They said the practice violates users' privacy under [federal law](#).

Google eventually agreed to include certain disclosures about its practices on three webpages and settle the class action for \$8.5 million. Of that amount, \$2.1 million went to lawyers, \$1 million paid [administrative costs](#) and \$5.3 million was set aside for six organizations that deal with internet privacy issues. The individuals who initially sued received \$5,000 each, but the millions of Google users they represented received nothing. If all 129 million people had been paid, they would have gotten 4 cents each.

The justices had taken the case because it raised issues of fairness in the rare instances in which courts approve a "cy-pres" settlement, roughly translated as near as possible, and find it's impractical to send money to the very large class of affected people.

But the court's opinion Wednesday didn't deal with that issue. The justices said a lower court needed to address whether the individuals who sued were entitled to do so. The justices said a federal trial court or the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals should resolve that issue.

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Citation: Supreme Court: Google class-action case should be revisited (2019, March 20)
retrieved 24 April 2024 from
<https://phys.org/news/2019-03-supreme-court-google-class-action-case.html>

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