

Syllabus

NOTE: Where it is feasible, a syllabus (headnote) will be released, as is being done in connection with this case, at the time the opinion is issued. The syllabus constitutes no part of the opinion of the Court but has been prepared by the Reporter of Decisions for the convenience of the reader. See *United States v. Detroit Timber & Lumber Co.*, 200 U. S. 321, 337.

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

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UNITED STATES *v.* JOHNSONCERTIORARI TO THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR
THE SIXTH CIRCUIT

No. 98–1696. Argued December 8, 1999– Decided March 1, 2000

Respondent had been serving time in federal prison for multiple drug and firearms felonies when two of his convictions were declared invalid. As a result, he had served 2.5 years' too much prison time and was at once set free, but a 3-year term of supervised release was yet to be served on the remaining convictions. He filed a motion to reduce his supervised release term by the amount of extra prison time he served. The District Court denied relief, explaining that the supervised release commenced upon respondent's actual release from incarceration, not before. The Sixth Circuit reversed, accepting respondent's argument that his supervised release term commenced not on the day he left prison, but when his lawful term of imprisonment expired.

Held: This Court is bound by the controlling statute, 18 U. S. C. §3624(e), which, by its necessary operation, does not reduce the length of a supervised release term by reason of excess time served in prison. Under §3624(e), a supervised release term does not commence until an individual "is released from imprisonment." The ordinary, commonsense meaning of "release" is to be freed from confinement. To say respondent was released while still imprisoned diminishes the concept the word intends to convey. Section 3624(e) also provides that a supervised release term comes "after imprisonment," once the prisoner is "released by the Bureau of Prisons to the supervision of a probation officer." Thus, supervised release does not run while an individual remains in the Bureau of Prisons' custody. The phrase "on the day the person is released" in §3624(e) suggests a strict temporal interpretation, not some fictitious or constructive earlier time. Indeed, the section admonishes that "supervised release does not run during any period in which the person is imprisoned."

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The statute does provide for concurrent running of supervised release in specific, identified cases, but the Court infers that Congress limited §3624(e) to the exceptions set forth. Finally, §3583(e)(3) does not have a substantial bearing on the interpretive issue, for this directive addresses instances where conditions of supervised release have been violated, and the court orders a revocation. While the text of §3624(e) resolves the case, the Court's conclusion accords with the objectives of supervised release, which include assisting individuals in their transition to community life. Supervised release fulfills rehabilitative ends, distinct from those served by incarceration. The Court also observes that the statutory structure provides a means to address the equitable concerns that exist when an individual is incarcerated beyond the proper expiration of his prison term. The trial court, as it sees fit, may modify the individual's supervised release conditions, §3583(e)(2), or it may terminate his supervised release obligations after one year of completed service, §3583(e)(1). Pp. 3–7.

154 F. 3d 569, reversed and remanded.

KENNEDY, J., delivered the opinion for a unanimous Court.