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Where the case goes from here

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By ANNMARIE TIMMINS

Yesterday's Supreme Court ruling gave the job of sorting out the flaws in New Hampshire's parental notification law to the lower federal courts.

The case has been remanded to the First Circuit Court of Appeals. That court will likely remand it back to the federal District Court in Concord, according to **Ovide Lamontagne, a Manchester lawyer** familiar with the case. There, a judge will consider whether to throw out the law or let it stand, with limited reach.

It's a reverse of the route the case traveled to get to the Supreme Court. **Lamontagne** said court practice requires the Supreme Court to hand the case down to the next highest court, rather than to the court that will ultimately decide the issues.

In asking the lower courts to resolve the law's flaws, the justices found a way to avoid a sweeping decision with national implications.

That didn't surprise court-watchers and others who've followed this case.

"I think this is a court that didn't want to tackle this at this moment," said David Masci, a senior fellow at the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, a non-partisan think-tank in Washington, D.C. "You have a new chief justice and a retiring justice who is sitting on the bench waiting for someone to come on. I think they said, 'Let's find something that everyone can live with.'"