

# The Supreme Court's New Rulings: Three Big Takeaways for Rural America

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## Overview

This week, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down a trio of landmark decisions that offer an instructive, mixed baseline for defenders of private property rights, the separation of powers, and the rule of law. Across these three major rulings - *Pung v. Isabella County*,<sup>1</sup> *Cisco Systems, Inc. v. Doe*,<sup>2</sup> and *Monsanto Co. v. Durnell*<sup>3</sup> - the High Court wrestled with the fundamental boundaries of government overreach.

For farmers, ranchers, and rural landowners, these cases serve as a critical reminder of the need to aggressively ground legal authority strictly in written statutory text to keep government power in check. While two of the rulings represent structural victories for domestic commerce and agriculture, one serves as a stark warning about the fragility of our property rights when dealing with local bureaucratic machinery.

### ***Pung v. Isabella County*: A Warning for Property Owners**

The most troubling decision for private property owners came in *Pung v. Isabella County*, which stands as a deeply unsettling testament to the power of the local administrative state. Following a protracted dispute over a property tax exemption, a Michigan county foreclosed on a family's home over a minor tax debt of just \$2,241.93. The family believed they were legally entitled to the exemption, but the county moved forward anyway, seizing the home - which carried a tax assessment of \$194,400 - and liquidating it at auction for \$76,008. Rather than returning the difference to the property owners after satisfying the underlying debt, the local government kept every single penny of the profit.

The Supreme Court ruled that under the Fifth Amendment's Takings Clause, the government only owes the "forced auction price" as just compensation, not the fair market value. Writing for the majority, Justice Samuel Alito defended this standard by pointing to historical tax sale traditions, arguing that requiring fair market value would make tax sales unfeasible as debt-collection tools.

As Justice Clarence Thomas noted in his powerful critique, the county completely ignored traditional common-law protections rooted in the Magna Carta, such as the requirement to exhaust personal property before executing a seizure of real estate. While the case has been sent back to the Sixth Circuit to review procedural fairness, the ruling currently leaves citizens facing tax foreclosures with weaker constitutional protections than those facing other government land grabs.

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<sup>1</sup> No. 25-95, 2026 U.S. LEXIS 2715 (U.S. Sup. Ct. Jun. 23, 2026)

<sup>2</sup> No. 24-856, 2026 U.S. LEXIS 2714 (U.S. Sup. Ct. Jun. 23, 2026).

<sup>3</sup> No. 24-1068, 2026 U.S. LEXIS 2721 (U.S. Sup. Ct. Jun 25, 2026).



### ***Cisco Systems v. Doe: A Shield Against Global ESG Mandates***

In a massive structural victory for constitutional originalism, *Cisco Systems, Inc. v. Doe* shut the door on activists attempting to use domestic federal courts to police global human rights grievances. Writing for the majority, Justice Amy Coney Barrett emphasized that foreign policy textually belongs to the political branches under the Constitution, and federal judges have no business inventing private liabilities that disrupt statecraft.

This decision establishes a powerful structural precedent that fundamentally benefits the American agricultural community. Progressive activists frequently try to import vague, non-binding global environmental standards and international climate accords into domestic governance to impose strict ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) mandates on corporate supply chains. *Cisco* holds that federal courts cannot use these amorphous global "norms" to invent legal liabilities. Furthermore, it reinforces a vital rule: if Congress is silent on an issue, federal agencies like the EPA lack the authority to regulate it, protecting private lands from regulatory overreach.

### ***Monsanto Co. v. Durnell: Defeating State Lawsuit Aggressions***

In *Monsanto Co. v. Durnell*, the Court protected the agricultural supply chain from an unpredictable, chaotic patchwork of state jury verdicts. The litigation arose when a Missouri plaintiff sued Monsanto, claiming his long-term use of the glyphosate-based herbicide Roundup caused his cancer, winning a multi-million dollar verdict on a common-law failure-to-warn theory.

However, the Supreme Court ruled 7-2 that the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) explicitly preempts these state-level lawsuits. The Court's holding begins and ends with the text of 7 U.S.C. §136v(b), which commands that a state shall not impose labeling requirements that are "in addition to" or "different from" federal benchmarks. Because the EPA has evaluated glyphosate for three decades and consistently concluded it is not carcinogenic, its official registration of the label carries the full force of federal law. State juries cannot legally penalize a company for using an EPA-approved label.

### **Conclusion**

These decisions establish that strict adherence to the written law is the ultimate shield for the rural way of life. Originalism and textualism are what keep federal agencies confined to their strict limits, protect our supply chains from aggressive tort juries, and ensure the laws governing American agriculture are written exclusively by elected representatives, not unelected bureaucrats or global elites.

**Note:** A more comprehensive, technical look at these cases is posted at [mceowenaglawandtax.substack.com](https://mceowenaglawandtax.substack.com)

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