Google is appealing a judge’s search monopoly ruling

Google is appealing a federal court’s decision ruling it an illegal online search monopolist. The company filed a notice to appeal on Friday, requesting a pause on the court-ordered remedies meant to restore competition to the online search market.

“As we have long said, the Court’s August 2024 ruling ignored the reality that people use Google because they want to, not because they’re forced to,” Google’s vice president of regulatory affairs, Lee-Anne Mulholland, said in a blog post. “The decision failed to account for the rapid pace of innovation and intense competition we face from established players and well-funded start-ups. And it discounted compelling testimony from browser makers like Apple and Mozilla who said they choose to feature Google because it provides the highest quality search experience for their consumers.”

Google is asking that remedies that would require it to share search data and syndicate services to rivals be put on hold, arguing that the measures “would risk Americans’ privacy and discourage competitors from building their own products — ultimately stifling the innovation that keeps the U.S. at the forefront of global technology.” A pause would further delay any action required by Google in a lawsuit first filed by the Department of Justice in October 2020. The DOJ did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

“These are Fortune 500 companies, and they have nowhere else to turn other than Google.”

DC-based federal Judge Amit Mehta ruled in 2024 that Google maintained an illegal monopoly over “general search services” and “general search text advertising.” Mehta found that Google had anticompetitively deprived rivals of fair competition by entering exclusionary contracts with phone manufacturers and browsers to make its search products the default. The result was a durable monopoly whose “partners have concluded that it is financially infeasible to switch” default search providers for fear of sacrificing hundreds of millions or billions of dollars in Google-paid revenue share, Mehta wrote. “These are Fortune 500 companies, and they have nowhere else to turn other than Google.”

But Mehta ultimately did not go as far as the DOJ hoped in his remedies decision, declining to break up the company by requiring a sale of its Chrome browser, which the government argued was a key distribution point for search services. He instead ordered the company to share search information with competitors that could help them gain a foothold in the market in an effort to restore competition for search services.

Google had to wait until Mehta issued his remedies ruling in September before appealing the underlying monopoly finding. The case could ultimately stretch at least a couple more years, especially if it goes all the way up to the Supreme Court.

https://www.theverge.com/news/863710/google-search-antitrust-monopoly-appeal