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## Justices to hear gas pedal suit

Supreme Court case may alter how patents are issued, make it easier to challenge them.

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**WASHINGTON** -- The U.S. Supreme Court will use a patent-infringement dispute over automotive gas pedals to decide when some inventions are too obvious to qualify for a patent.

The justices Monday agreed to hear KSR International Co.'s bid to stop a suit over adjustable gas pedals originally filed against it by Teleflex Inc., which has since sold its auto-pedal business. KSR says the Teleflex patent isn't valid because the technology was merely a combination of existing inventions. The Bush administration urged the court to grant review.

The case may alter how patents are issued and make it easier to challenge them in courts. Monday's court action follows a May 15 ruling that made it harder to block sales of infringing products. Companies such as software maker Microsoft Corp. have been pushing the high court to scale back patent rights, saying they have been inundated with lawsuits.

"There is broad sentiment right now that the entire patent system, both in the patent office and in the courts, is highly favorable to patent owners," said Gene Lee, a patent lawyer with the Fish & Neave Group of New York-based Ropes & Gray. "It's an attempt to address this concern and make patent litigation potentially less attractive to patent owners."

The patent covers an electronic sensor combined with gas, brake or clutch pedals that adjust to the height of the driver. KSR makes the pedals for General Motors Corp.'s Chevrolet and GMC trucks and sport utility vehicles.