UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TREASURY,

et al.,

No. 12-100

Petitioner,

May 16, 2017

v.

DENNIS BLACK,

Respondent.

Washington, D.C.

TRANSCRIPT OF MOTION HEARING PROCEEDINGS BEFORE THE HONORABLE EMMET G. SULLIVAN, UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT JUDGE

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Proceedings reported by machine shorthand, transcript produced by computer-aided transcription.

1 AFTERNOON SESSION, MAY 16, 2017 2 (1:05 p.m.).3 THE COURTROOM CLERK: Your Honor, this is Miscellaneous Case 12-100, U.S. Department of Treasury versus Dennis Black, et 4 5 al. Will all parties please come forward to this lectern and 6 introduce yourselves for the record. 7 MR. GLASS: Good afternoon, Your Honor. I'm David Glass 8 from the civil division of the Justice Department, and with me at 9 10 counsel table is Jacqueline Snead, who is an Assistant Branch 11 Director in our branch, and Alexander Haas, who is the Chief of 12 Staff to the Acting Assistant Attorney General for civil and the 13 Acting Deputy Assistant Attorney General. THE COURT: All right. Good afternoon to everyone. 14 15 Welcome. MR. KHALIL: Good afternoon, Your Honor. Michael Khalil 16 with respondent, and with me is Michael Shelley and Tim O'Toole. 17 18 THE COURT: All right. Good afternoon, Counsel. Let me 19 say this. I think in my haste to what I thought would finally 20 conclude this matter after three substantive opinions, I probably 21 overreacted when I said produce the documents forthwith. I think in fairness, the government should have its $\operatorname{--}$ I 22 23 think any party should have the full allotment of time to 24 consider any -- to consider seeking any appellate review, so --25 and I can't think of a compelling reason to deprive the

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government of that 60 days. I mean, I know that the respondent, Mr. Black, has said, well, they haven't really said they want to appeal, but so what. Why shouldn't a litigant have the full complement of 60 days in which to determine whether or not they want to file an appeal or not? Let me just pose that question to counsel.

MR. KHALIL: Thank you, Your Honor. We are -
THE COURT: I would like to bring some finality to this

case. This case has drained this Court's time and resources, and

the Court has had some very serious concerns about whether the

government's proceeding in good faith or not, and I've

articulated those concerns, actually warned the government to be

very careful, but in fairness, even though they wasted the

Court's time on three prior occasions, why shouldn't they be

entitled to their 60-day allotment of time under the rules? Why

should I treat them unfairly?

MR. KHALIL: Well, Your Honor, respectfully, we don't think that the immediate production of the documents would be unfair. There are protective orders that can be issued. There's already a protective order in this case in place that could be modified very easily to allow the petitioner a chance to protect whatever confidentiality concerns either the Treasury has or the Office of the President has in these documents. Mohawk, we think, made pretty clear that those sorts of protective orders are appropriate and sufficient to eliminate any confidentiality

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     concerns referred to the Court, referred to as spillover
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     concerns.
           THE COURT: Wouldn't the government have to consent to
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     that order?
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           MR. KHALIL: I don't know that it would. I don't see why
     it would have to consent to the order at all.
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           It seems to me this Court has full authority to govern the
     production of the documents and respondent's use of those
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     documents. The protective order that's in place currently with
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     the other documents that the Treasury has produced allow only for
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     counsel to view the documents and one of the respondents, who has
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     also been given permission in the underlying litigation to view
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     documents under the protective order. He's completely
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     trustworthy.
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           THE COURT: You know what, I just don't recall whether the
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     government consented to the other protective order or not. I
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     just don't recall. Did they?
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           MR. KHALIL: They did.
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           THE COURT:
                       The government indicated in this case they
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     have no interest in consenting to the protective order, which I
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     don't really understand, but --
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           MR. KHALIL: To be -- and I'll let Mr. Glass speak --
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           THE COURT: Can I throw out a suggestion? The reason
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     why -- you're probably wondering, why did the Court say "people
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     with decision-making authority." I have a suggestion, and I
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don't know whether it's going to be persuasive to anyone right now, but I want to raise it right now, a time out for a second.

Here's my suggestion. Would the government consent to, either today or some other day, in this court showing the documents to opposing counsel; not giving them, just showing the documents to them? It's not a trick question. I'm just trying -- you know what, once they see the documents, arguments may change. I don't know.

MR. GLASS: Well, we have represented to the Court, and I'll repeat that representation today, that there is nothing in these documents.

THE COURT: All right. Let me stop you. I know that, and I haven't lost sight of that, but here's the problem the Court has, and I may be wrong, and maybe, you know, maybe counsel -- maybe opposing counsel will tell me I'm wrong in thinking about this, but I have a limited view about issues in this case. I don't know what other information they have. I query whether -- and what concerns me is -- I query whether the other information that opposing counsel may have, coupled with these documents, may shine a different light on relevance. Do you follow me?

MR. GLASS: I do follow you.

THE COURT: And that's what's troubling to the Court, because I don't know the full universe because this case has gone on before two courts for years, and it has required a lot of time and attention, and that's fine. You know, that's what we're here

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for, but three opinions in one case. And I was trying to think, is there some way I can bring about finality in this case, because the other thing that concerns me is this: The government says, well, we can file for expedited appeal. That happened in the Cheney case that was before me some years ago. On October 21st, 2002, the defendants moved for a stay pending appeal of my October 17th, 2002 order, and the case -- the issue was decided July 8th, 2003, and that case took on a life of its own and ended up before the Supreme Court, and to this day I still don't recognize what the issues were that brought it before the Supreme Court, but the case took on a life of its own. And it was expedited consideration. So, with all due respect to the circuit, I'm not taking a shot at the circuit, but, you know, I was on the D.C. Court of Appeals for a couple of years, and it used to drive me nuts when we would grant expedited consideration in cases that warranted it, like termination of parental rights and other cases, and essentially just dropped the ball. So, I said, what can I do -- I said, maybe, maybe, maybe

everyone would just be curious about what the documents say.

They could conceivably look at the documents and say. You know what, we want to move on to Michigan, Judge. That's the other thing, because they can't move on to Michigan until there's a final decision with respect to discovery here, which may be in another year or so, which is so unfair.

MR. GLASS: They could, Your Honor.

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           THE COURT: They could?
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           MR. GLASS: Sure.
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           THE COURT: I thought the judge there said you have to
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     exhaust discovery here.
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           MR. GLASS: Oh, they could go back to Judge Turnaugh in
     Detroit at any time. They have a million --
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           THE COURT: Oh really?
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           MR. GLASS: They have a million pages of documents from
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     the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation.
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           THE COURT: So, in other words, there's no harm in asking
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     the Court to proceed, but I think the judge made pretty clear,
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     finish what you're doing in D.C. here first before we start that
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     million mile journey?
           MR. GLASS: Yeah. I'm not going to cast aspersions on any
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     federal district judge.
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           THE COURT: I'm not casting aspersions. I want to be
     clear. I'm not casting aspersions. I thought it was clear that
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     he said we have to finish here. If I'm wrong, then I'm wrong.
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           MR. GLASS: That's a way of not addressing the underlying
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     case, frankly.
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           THE COURT: Okay.
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           MR. GLASS: The position that we're in here is that this
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     is a --
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           THE COURT: I want to be clear. I wasn't taking a whack
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     at the judge there at all.
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           MR. GLASS: No, I would not think that.
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           THE COURT:
                       Okay.
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           MR. GLASS: No. The position we're in here is that this
     is a special privilege. This is a Constitutional privilege. And
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     as I told Mr. Khalil back before we submitted our last
     submission, you know, it is my experience with different
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     administrations, republicans and democrats, that they all take
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     the presidential communications privilege very seriously, and
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     that's why we couldn't show these documents to plaintiffs and --
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           THE COURT: But essentially your position here is under no
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     circumstances should these documents ever see the light of day to
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     opposing counsel.
                        That --
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           MR. GLASS: We disagree that they have established a
     showing of need that justified -- it's a qualified privilege, but
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     our position is that they haven't --
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           THE COURT: Is there something else the Court should have
     addressed in its opinion to demonstrate need? The judge said
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     it's a privilege here, but under, I think it was Dellums {sp},
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     I'm, you know, persuaded that you can't get these documents, this
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     information from any other source. And basically you're saying,
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     well, the information they get, Judge, doesn't really shed any
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     light on the issue. And I guess the bottom line is, if it
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     doesn't shed any light, then what's the harm?
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           MR. GLASS: Well, there's that. I mean, it's our position
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     that there wouldn't be any need anyway because if the -- even if
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there had been all kinds of pressure put on the Pension Benefit
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     Guaranty Corporation to terminate this pension plan, that would
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     not invalidate the termination. But putting that all to one
     side, nothing goes out -- nothing is supposed to go out under the
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     presidential communications privilege anyway unless it's
     determined to be relevant to that particular case, and so,
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     frankly, what we should have asked for was reconsideration so
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     Your Honor could have gone through the documents.
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           THE COURT: I was wondering the same thing. Do you want
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     to file a motion? I'll give you time to do that?
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           MR. GLASS: Sure. We could do that.
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           THE COURT: Because I think, in fairness, you're entitled.
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     I'm not going to squeeze you out of 60 days. I think, in
     fairness, I think it was my exuberance seeing a light at the end
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     of the tunnel, give up those documents, and I probably shouldn't
     have done that. In fairness, I probably shouldn't have. In all
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     these other cases there are interlocutory -- I don't know if you
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     made a final decision, and I'm not going to inquire about that.
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     That's within the, you know -- that's your prerogative.
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     understand it has to go up the ladder, if you're seeking that
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     consideration, and I can't really quarrel with that. Sure, I
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     want finality, but it doesn't seem like I'm going to get finality
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     here. I think it's fair. I want to hear from the other side,
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     but I think it's fair on a quick basis to give you a chance to
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     persuade me to reconsider. I mean, if there's something else I
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     should have done -- they can't argue, they can't argue, so it's
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     me and you here.
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           MR. GLASS: Sure. Exactly.
           THE COURT: I think my analysis is correct. I think my
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     conclusion is correct, but if I'm missing something there, then I
     want you to tell me what I'm missing.
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           MR. GLASS: Okay. Well, the only thing that's missing is
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     the fact that there isn't anything in these documents that shows
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     any kind of improper pressure, putting aside the fact that we
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     don't think it makes any difference if there is, but there simply
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     isn't anything in there.
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           THE COURT: In those documents, but what about in those
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     documents viewed in connection with whatever other discoverable
     material they have, which -- and that leaves me at a disadvantage
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     because I don't know what else is out there in the universe.
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           MR. GLASS: Sure, but they've got the universe and they
     have never come in with a single piece of paper -- In view of the
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     fact that they have a million pages from the Pension Benefit
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     Guaranty Corporation dealing with the Delphi Corporation, they
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     have never come in with a single piece of paper indicating that
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     there was any kind of improper pressure put on PBGC.
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            I mean, there was an earlier claim in the underlying
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     lawsuit against the Treasury --
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           THE COURT: -- right --
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           MR. GLASS: -- and that claim was that, for political
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1 reasons, certain decisions were made. Those were dismissed for 2 failure to state a claim because they couldn't make the IQBAL .3 threshold. They were simply saying, Well, you know, there has to have been all kinds of pressure. They have no evidence of any 4 5 kind that they've shown us that there was any kind of pressure, and, as I say, they have a million pages from PBGC. They have 6 7 documents from us. There have been no fewer than seven 8 congressional hearings on the termination of this pension plan. 9 They've got the transcripts of those. 10 One of the fellows who was on the group at Treasury that 11 worked on the restructuring of GM wrote a book about it. There's 12 nothing in there. There's nothing that they have cited that 13 there was any kind of improper pressure, and if Your Honor looks at these 63 documents --14 15 THE COURT: Wait a minute. He worked at Treasury and he 16 wrote a book on it? 17 MR. GLASS: His name was Rafner {sp}. What happened was 18 when the decision was made to rescue General Motors in 2009, 19 Treasury put together a team of about 14 or 15 people who 20 basically over a 60-day period came up with the restructuring. 21 What happened in the restructuring was that the assets of what 22 was then GM was sold to a new company called GM. Delphi, the 23 pension -- the pension sponsor here, started out as a division of 24 the old GM. It was called Delco. Your Honor may remember 25 genuine Delco parts.

1 THE COURT: Absolutely. Sure.
2 MR. GLASS: It was spun off as

MR. GLASS: It was spun off as a separate company in 2009 -- I'm sorry, 1999. The new GM thought that it would need Delphi parts, so the resolution of the Delphi bankruptcy in the minds of General Motors was necessary to its continued success. It was not Treasury's view.

Treasury didn't think that the new GM would need Delphi parts.

As part of the Delphi bankruptcy, the new GM bought four Delphi factories -- I think they made axles -- and shortly thereafter sold them, so they didn't need them. So, this is kind of marginally tied in with the General Motors bankruptcy, but the fact of the matter is, -- and, you know, the million pages that have been produced will show that, that the team at Treasury that worked on the restructuring were aware of the Delphi pensioners. They talked to lots and lots of people, but they were, you know, just a very minor player when it came to the considerations of restructuring General Motors so that it could be a functioning company. But we would be happy to move for reconsideration and asking for Your Honor to take a look at the documents and confirm that there is no --

THE COURT: No, I have the documents, and I've gone back and looked at them again, and I'm just troubled. Thank you, Counsel. Let me hear from opposing counsel. I think it was probably -- I misspoke when I said "forthwith." They're entitled

1 to their 60 days. And actually, I'm not sure what merit there 2 would be for a motion for reconsideration, but after all this .3 time, effort and work, I'm not going to shortchange myself either. So, I think I'll probably give them an opportunity to 4 5 persuade me that -- within a very short period of time -- that there's a basis for reconsideration. 6 But what about the Michigan litigation? I thought it was 7 8 clear that you couldn't do anything with respect to further 9 discovery until you had concluded discovery here. Am I wrong in 10 that regard? 11 MR. KHALIL: You're not wrong, Your Honor. That's the way 12 the current discovery order --13 THE COURT: Right, and I'm very sensitive to that, and I understand what the government said about seeking an expedited 14 15 appeal. But I know what happened in Cheney, and I know what 16 happens to these big cases, with all due respect to the circuit. 17 They have a lot on their plate, too. So, you know, another year? 18 That doesn't have a lot of appeal to me. 19 I don't know. I guess that was a no to my question, can 20 you just see the documents in the courtroom, I guess, and that's 21 fine. Is that a no, a resounding no? One, two, three. 22 MR. GLASS: Yes. 23 THE COURT: Okay. That's fine. I understand. There's no 24 harm in asking, as my mom used to tell me. That's fine. I'm 25 sorry. Go ahead. It is frustrating, because I would like to get

1 done with this case and get on to some other FOIA cases. 2 MR. KHALIL: Your Honor, I would just like to address a 3 couple of points. THE COURT: Sure. 4 5 MR. KHALIL: And I should express, on behalf of respondents, we appreciate that you have invested -- this Court 6 has invested a great deal of time and issued three opinions. 7 respondents do not believe or understand -- my clients are 8 retirees. They're not sophisticated business people. They have 9 10 a little bit of trouble understanding how a subpoena could take 11 this long to negotiate. 12 THE COURT: Well, they should understand that it's unusual 13 for three substantive opinions to be issued in one case, too. I know that's difficult for litigants to understand. They think we 14 15 don't do anything, and I understand that. It's difficult -- good luck there. It's difficult. 16 MR. KHALIL: I don't think their frustration is with the 17 Court, Your Honor, I think the frustration is with the -- we 18 19 cited in our brief that there have been -- you know, it would be 20 asserting deliberative process privilege over nearly 900 21 documents, and then when calling for an in-camera review, 22 withdrawing those assertions at the last minute for 75 percent of 23 them. 24 THE COURT: That didn't please me either when I saw that. 25 No explanation given.

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MR. KHALIL: None. None, Your Honor. So, behavior like that, we think, my clients think has extended these proceedings. And, you know, again, sure, every litigant should have an opportunity to pursue it's appeal rights, and we're not saying that -- we're not suggesting that denying a stay would deny the Treasury those appeal rights. We think that that's exactly what the Supreme Court made clear in Mohawk, that post-appeal review would be more than sufficient to validate those. And, of course, if you feel like you want to -- if this Court feels like it wants to reconsider and give the Treasury an opportunity to present reconsideration arguments --THE COURT: I was actually surprised they didn't file a motion, but they -- I'm not going to reach out and tell people to file a motion, why don't you file a motion for reconsideration? They didn't raise it. But I think it was an error, probably, for me to say "forthwith." You know, again, it was probably my exuberance because I could see the light at the end of the tunnel, but --MR. KHALIL: I would note that it sounds to me like the basis of that reconsideration motion is a relevance determination, and that relevance determination basically is the one that this Court made in 2014. THE COURT: Right, in the first opinion. MR. KHALIL: So we're going to ask -- it just seems odd that we would in 2017 be litigating a reconsideration motion of a

determination made in 2014, but with that said --

THE COURT: That was before the Court had an opportunity to review the documents in question.

MR. KHALIL: That is true.

THE COURT: So the relevance determination would be, Here it is, Judge? How do I -- is it farfetched for the Court to be concerned about reviewing these documents on the one hand and just wondering how they fit in with everything else with the universe with everything else? Is that farfetched for the Court to be -- because it's very difficult sometimes. So how does the Court do that?

MR. KHALIL: I don't think the case law requires the Court to do that. I think that the case law says that it's the Court's determination -- responsibility in the initial decision when determining whether to have an in-camera review to undertake a stringent relevance determination like the one this Court undertook. Then the in-camera review is just supposed to weed out purely irrelevant documents that might embarrass the executive or are plainly irrelevant, but it's not the stringent determination -- that's supposed to occur before the in-camera review occurs. And once you determine that, well, okay, I've done the in-camera review and now I can go forth and award or disclose documents that are on the basis of need. That is purely within the Court's discretion and I do not believe is subject to a heightened review.

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           THE COURT: Right.
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           MR. KHALIL: Any other questions?
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           THE COURT: But then you're at a loss, though, too.
     Because they filed a motion for reconsideration, there's not a
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     lot you can say, really, is there, other than what you just very
     eloquently just told me?
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           MR. KHALIL: That is true.
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           THE COURT: Through no fault of yours. That's the way the
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     system is. So thank you, Counsel.
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           Let me do this. Let me take a five-minute recess. Do you
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     want to say anything else, Mr. Glass?
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           MR. GLASS: No, Your Honor. What we are here for is
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     simply to get a stay of this order so that we can -- pending any
     appeal that we may take.
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           THE COURT: No, I understand. I think you're entitled to
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     that. You're entitled to the 60 days. Believe me, it was not
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     the Court's -- I wasn't focused on that aspect. Again, I could
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     see the light and I was focusing on this case being over, and I
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     wasn't trying to deprive the government of a meaningful
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     opportunity to consider an appeal. I wasn't trying to do that.
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     Look, after all these years, I recognize how arduous that process
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     is for the government to get approval to appeal. So, at the very
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     least, you walk out of here with that. I'll grant you that. And
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     I think there may be some merit to a motion for reconsideration
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     on a fast track, I think, although that's the reason why I'm
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1 going to take a very short recess, about a ten-minute recess. No 2 need to stand. Thank you. (Thereupon, a recess in the proceedings occurred from .3 1:29 p.m. until 1:47 p.m.) 4 5 THE COURT: All right, Counsel. I'm going to let you file a motion for reconsideration. I'm not going to talk about the 6 7 parameters and what I need in that motion now, and we'll issue it 8 today or tomorrow. I don't want to put it on the fast track. don't want to get into -- I don't want to have to resolve another 9 10 issue about when the notices of appeal divest the Court. I don't 11 want to do that. So I recognize that the filing of a motion will probably 12 13 impact the date, the drop dead date for the filing of a notice of appeal, but I don't even want to get into that. But I'm going to 14 15 put things on a fast track. Today is the -- what is today, the 16 18th? 17 MR. GLASS: 16th, Your Honor. THE COURT: 16th. So, a week from today will be the 23rd. 18 19 The week of the 22nd. Memorial Day is the following Monday. 20 don't want to interfere with that. Is that the following Monday, 21 the 29th? So, the 22nd for the filing of any motion for 22 reconsideration. The 31st is two days after the Memorial Day for 23 the filing of a response. I'm not going to rule out the 24 possibility of bringing in counsel for the government ex parte in 25 the event I have other questions. I haven't finally concluded

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just what I'm going to put in the order providing for the filing of a motion for reconsideration, but I need more information that addresses the issue of need and relevance. And believe me, I'm going to decide these issues as soon as I possibly can. I may not write another opinion, but at least I want to be in a position to say I've reconsidered what I did, the reasons why I did it, and then finally conclude, whatever the decision is. But I just want to be clear, though. Again, and I think you've said this earlier, Mr. Glass, but essentially, even if the documents showed themselves an independent basis for need by the movant, by opposing counsel, your argument would be that in view of the presidential privilege, they still should not be produced, right? MR. GLASS: Right. That's correct, Your Honor. THE COURT: So, under no circumstances should they ever be produced because it's the presidential privilege? MR. GLASS: Well, what the cases hold is that the privilege can be overcome by a showing of need, and Your Honor has held that they have made a showing of need. Once that is made, what the cases say is that the District Court should go through the documents and excise anything that is not pertinent to that showing of need, and so that's what we would be moving to reconsider. THE COURT: Fair enough. Fair enough. And I think, in fairness -- I don't think this -- I don't think I'm precluded

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     from saying this, but indeed I doubt if we're even talking about
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     63 documents. There's some duplication, so I think that's a fair
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     statement.
           MR. GLASS: I'm starting to forget. I think there is.
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     think there is.
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           THE COURT: There's some duplication.
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           MR. GLASS: Copies.
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           THE COURT:
                       Sure. So we'll post a minute order later
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     today or tomorrow. Tell me what's in store -- once these issues
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     are resolved here, you receive documents pursuant to the other
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     court orders, correct, Counsel?
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           MR. KHALIL: (Nodded head affirmatively.)
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           THE COURT: What awaits you in Michigan?
           MR. KHALIL: Me?
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           THE COURT: Yes, please. What's the next journey?
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           MR. KHALIL: Once we get the documents from the Treasury
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     or the Court of Appeals tells us we are not entitled to any
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     documents or you tell us we're not entitled to anymore documents,
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     we have a 30 day clock with the PBGC in which we need to resolve
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     expert discovery. Then we have a 60-day clock subject to
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     everyone's best efforts to try to depose the two Treasury --
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     former Treasury officials, Mr. Feldman and Mr. Wilson. And then
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     a 90-day clock to resolve summary judgment, and those are the
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     highlights.
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           THE COURT: So if this case goes to trial, how long a
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     trial are you looking at?
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           MR. KHALIL: A week.
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           THE COURT: Is that all? Okay. All right. Thank you.
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     Good to see everyone. Thank you.
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            (Proceedings adjourned at 1:53 p.m.)
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                         CERTIFICATE
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                             I, Scott L. Wallace, RDR-CRR, certify that
 9
             the foregoing is a correct transcript from the record of
             proceedings in the above-entitled matter.
10
11
              /s/ Scott L. Wallace
                                                   5/24/17
12
               Scott L. Wallace, RDR, CRR
                                                     Date
                 Official Court Reporter
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