SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE	UNI	TED	STATES
NATIONAL FEDERATION OF INDEPENDENT)		
BUSINESS, ET AL.,)		
Applicants,)		
v.)	No.	21A244
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, OCCUPATIONAL)		
SAFETY AND HEALTH ADMINISTRATION,)		
ET AL.,)		
Respondents.)		
and)		
OHIO, ET AL.,)		
Applicants,)		
v.)	No.	21A247
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, OCCUPATIONAL)		
SAFETY AND HEALTH ADMINISTRATION,)		
ET AL.,)		
Respondents.)		
Pages: 1 through 139			
Place: Washington, D.C.			
Date: January 7, 2022			

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20	Washington, D.C.				
21	Friday, January 7, 2022				
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23	The above-entitled matter ca	ım∈	e on	for or	a]
24	argument before the Supreme Court of	of	the	United	
25	States at 10.00 a m				

1	APPEARANCES:
2	SCOTT A. KELLER, ESQUIRE, Washington, D.C.; on behalf
3	of the Applicants in No. 21A244.
4	BENJAMIN M. FLOWERS, Solicitor General, Columbus,
5	Ohio; on behalf of the Applicants in No. 21A247.
6	GEN. ELIZABETH B. PRELOGAR, Solicitor General,
7	Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.; on behalf
8	of the Respondents.
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1	PROCEEDINGS
2	(10:00 a.m.)
3	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
4	Sotomayor is participating remotely this
5	morning, as, in this application, Mr. Flowers
6	from Ohio will also be participating remotely.
7	And we will hear argument first this
8	morning in Application 21A244, National
9	Federation of Independent Business versus the
10	Department of Labor, and the consolidated case.
11	Mr. Keller.
12	ORAL ARGUMENT OF SCOTT A. KELLER
13	ON BEHALF OF THE APPLICANTS IN NO. 21A24
14	MR. KELLER: Mr. Chief Justice, and
15	may it please the Court:
16	OSHA's economy-wide one-size-fits-all
17	mandate covering 84 million Americans is not a
18	necessary, indispensable use of OSHA's
19	extraordinary emergency power which this Court
20	has recognized is narrowly circumscribed.
21	Just three days ago, the. U.S. Postal
22	Service told OSHA that this ETS's requirements
23	are so burdensome for employers that the
24	federal government is now seeking an exemption
2.5	from its own mandate for the Postal Service.

- 1 That's because OSHA's economy-wide mandate
- 2 would cause permanent worker displacement
- 3 rippling through our national economy, which is
- 4 already experiencing labor shortages and
- 5 fragile supply lines.
- 6 OSHA has never before mandated
- 7 vaccines or widespread testing, much less
- 8 across all industries. In fact, the June
- 9 healthcare COVID ETS and the 1991 bloodborne
- 10 pathogen rule both rejected vaccine mandates
- and widespread testing, and those were even
- 12 just for targeting healthcare workers.
- And, here, OSHA's vaccine-and-testing
- 14 mandate treats virtually all industries'
- workplaces and workers the same. But even
- 16 Congress's rescue plan identified high-risk
- workplaces, and OSHA itself here recited state
- data confirming that certain industries, like
- 19 healthcare and correction facilities, are
- 20 higher risk.
- 21 Our nation's businesses have
- 22 distributed and administered hundreds of
- 23 millions of COVID vaccines to Americans.
- 24 Businesses have encouraged and incentivized
- 25 their employees to get vaccines. But a single

- 1 federal agency tasked with occupational
- 2 standards cannot commandeer businesses
- 3 economy-wide into becoming de facto public
- 4 health agencies.
- 5 So this Court should immediately stay
- 6 OSHA's unprecedented ETS before Monday, when
- 7 OSHA begins enforcement.
- 8 I welcome the Court's questions.
- 9 JUSTICE THOMAS: Mr. Keller, how are
- we to decide when an Emergency Temporary
- 11 Standard or Emergency Temporary Standards are
- 12 necessary? What factors do you think we should
- 13 use?
- 14 MR. KELLER: Justice Thomas, I think
- 15 the first factor that you would have to look at
- is, is this an indispensable or essential
- 17 measure that necessarily would require looking
- 18 at what are the alternatives available. You
- 19 would have to also look at, necessary to what
- 20 end? And it's to abate a grave danger. And
- 21 it's for an emergency. It's in a temporary
- 22 setting. So the factors you'd want to consider
- are, what are the risks, and not only what are
- 24 the risks for any isolated situation but
- compared to an everyday risk?

Τ	And, here, when USHA itself has never
2	mandated vaccines or widespread testing before,
3	that itself, even in its 10 prior ETSs, which
4	courts blocked almost all of the challenges to
5	these prior ETSs, all of those are factors that
6	would absolutely determine the scope of what
7	OSHA could do here.
8	In fact, in the June ETS, what OSHA
9	said was: "OSHA recognizes that many states
LO	have taken action to protect employees with
L1	mandatory requirements that may not be
L2	appropriate for an ETS on a national level."
L3	JUSTICE THOMAS: The the you
L 4	know, when in in McCulloch versus
L5	Maryland, Chief Justice Marshall, in looking at
L 6	necessary and proper, saw "necessary" as more
L7	expansive than that as certainly modified by
L8	"proper" or in the context of "proper." So it
L9	just suggests that "necessary" can be really
20	necessary or not necessarily really necessary.
21	MR. KELLER: And and
22	JUSTICE THOMAS: The and and I
23	just think that, you know, the you need more
24	than to say, oh, a lot of bad things could
>5	hannen to interpret what that means Is it

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1 restrictive? Is it very firm? Is it
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- 2 super-necessary? And if it is, why?
- 3 MR. KELLER: Justice Thomas, the --
- 4 the reason why it would be something
- 5 approaching the indispensable or essential
- 6 definition of "necessary" here is there's a
- 7 very key intrastatutory textual clue. The
- 8 emergency power must be necessary. The regular
- 9 power that OSHA wields has to be reasonably
- 10 necessary or appropriate.
- 11 JUSTICE THOMAS: So when do we
- 12 determine that? Suppose -- you argue also this
- is -- the vaccine's been around quite some
- 14 time. COVID has been around even longer. So
- 15 the -- the government could have had a -- a
- 16 notice and comment. So, if it's been -- if you
- 17 have -- if it's susceptible to notice and
- 18 comment, then how do you analyze it in that
- 19 context? You can't just say, well, it's
- 20 emergency; therefore, it has to be absolutely
- 21 necessary. It would seem that that would
- 22 undermine your definition or your notion of
- "necessary."
- 24 MR. KELLER: Well, I think Judge
- 25 Larsen for the Sixth Circuit was absolutely

- 1 correct in saying that just because something's
- 2 temporary doesn't mean that there could somehow
- 3 be more power. And what this Court has said is
- 4 this emergency power is narrowly circumscribed.
- 5 And regardless of wherever the line would be
- 6 drawn, I think this ETS is far past it.
- 7 And I think the federal government has
- 8 some serious line-drawing problems of its own.
- 9 I believe OSHA, under the theory that's been
- 10 advanced, could have shut down and had a
- 11 national work lockdown at the beginning of the
- 12 pandemic. I would submit that this Court in
- 13 Industrial Union, in saying that OSHA had no
- 14 clear mandate in the Act to have that wide a
- power over the American industry, is also a
- 16 factor that would go into this Court construing
- 17 what "necessary" means in light of that.
- 18 JUSTICE THOMAS: So the fact that it
- is temp -- that it's emergency sort of ups the
- 20 ante, that "necessary" has to be more
- 21 restrictive?
- MR. KELLER: Yes, because of plain
- 23 text, the comparison within the OSH Act, also
- 24 statutory context --
- 25 JUSTICE KAGAN: I --

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1
               MR. KELLER: -- and the major
 2
      questions doctrine.
 3
               JUSTICE KAGAN: -- I guess, Mr.
 4
      Keller, I -- I don't understand the point.
 5
      Whatever "necessary" means, whether it's
 6
      necessary and proper or whether it's something
7
     more than that, why isn't this necessary to
      abate a grave risk?
8
9
               This is a pandemic in which nearly a
10
     million people have died. It is by far the
11
     greatest public health danger that this country
12
     has faced in the last century. More and more
13
     people are dying every day. More and more
14
     people are getting sick every day. I don't
15
     mean to be dramatic here. I'm just sort of
16
      stating facts.
17
              And this is the policy that is most
18
      geared to stopping all this. There's nothing
19
     else that will perform that function better
      than incentivizing people strongly to vaccinate
20
21
     themselves.
               So, you know, whatever "necessary"
2.2
23
     means, whatever "grave" means, why isn't this
24
     necessary and grave?
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MR. KELLER: Because, Justice Kagan,

- 1 the standard for what would be necessary for
- 2 this extraordinary use of emergency power is
- 3 not what is the best way of accomplishing it.
- 4 JUSTICE KAGAN: It's an extraordinary
- 5 use of emergency power occurring in an
- 6 extraordinary circumstance, a circumstance that
- 7 this country has never faced before.
- 8 MR. KELLER: What OSHA needed to do
- 9 here, though -- and we do not contest that
- 10 COVID is a grave danger, but when -- a power
- for it to be necessary, for instance, the Third
- 12 Circuit said in wielding what is supposed to be
- a delicately exercised extraordinary power, the
- 14 agency has to consider and explain
- 15 alternatives.
- The agency here complained that its
- 17 non-mandatory guidance wasn't being followed
- and then, instead of saying that maybe some of
- 19 those mandatory guidance -- some of those
- 20 guidances could have been made mandatory, it
- 21 jumped immediately to a vaccine-or-testing
- 22 mandate.
- 23 Moreover, OSHA typically --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Keller, I -- I
- 25 quess I -- I just don't see this as a

- 1 situation, you know, a typical arbitrary,
- 2 capricious situation where we say, oh, you
- 3 didn't consider an alternative carefully
- 4 enough.
- 5 We all know what the best policy is.
- 6 I mean, by this point, two years later, we know
- 7 that the best way to prevent spread is for
- 8 people to get vaccinated and to prevent
- 9 dangerous illness and death is for people to
- 10 get vaccinated. That is by far the best.
- The second best is to wear masks. So
- this is a policy that basically says, we are
- 13 still confronting thousands of people dying
- every time we look around, and so we're going
- to put into place the policy that we know works
- 16 best, which is to strongly incentivize
- 17 vaccination and to insist that unvaccinated
- 18 people will wear masks and test.
- I mean, that's just -- like, why isn't
- that necessary? What else should be done?
- 21 It's -- it's obviously the policy that's --
- that's geared to preventing most sickness and
- death, and the agency has done everything but
- stand on its head to show quite clearly that no
- other policy will prevent sickness and death to

- 1 anywhere like the degree this one will.
- 2 MR. KELLER: Justice Kagan, first of
- 3 all, states could have policies like this.
- 4 Private businesses could have policies like
- 5 this. And even OSHA in its June healthcare
- 6 COVID ETS -- and that was only for healthcare
- 7 workers -- did not mandate vaccines.
- 8 Instead, what it did there, similarly
- 9 to how OSHA proceeds in many contexts, is it
- 10 says, employers, give us a plan, and then, if
- 11 there are heightened needs in particular
- workplaces, then additional measures can be put
- into place. But this is covering economy-wide,
- 14 all industries, 84 million Americans --
- 15 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, that's if that
- 16 rule --
- 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: That's one of
- 18 your main -- that -- that's one of your main
- 19 objections, that this is not a workplace issue,
- it's -- it's an out-in-the-world issue, is that
- 21 right?
- MR. KELLER: That's right, Mr. Chief
- 23 Justice.
- 24 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, but how
- focused on the workplace does something have to

- 1 be before you will say that OSHA can regulate
- 2 it?
- 3 Think, for example, of an assembly
- 4 line, you know, workers sitting next to each
- 5 other for a significant length of time, working
- 6 together in close -- close contact. That
- 7 presents a different kind of risk than is
- 8 typical in the outside world.
- 9 So could OSHA say that for businesses
- 10 with assembly lines, the workers must be
- 11 vaccinated?
- MR. KELLER: No, not vaccinated.
- OSHA, though, could potentially, going by
- industry by industry or workplace by workplace,
- 15 have measures such as what some of their
- 16 guidance have suggested, like, you know,
- 17 potentially barriers. But I think all of this
- 18 would be kind of --
- 19 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, but
- 20 those are sort of -- as Justice Kagan has been
- 21 -- been discussing, those are sort of, you
- 22 know, not as good. And why wouldn't OSHA have
- 23 the authority to do the best approach possible
- 24 to address what I guess you agree is a special
- workplace problem?

MR. KELLER: Well, Mr. Chief Justice, 1 2 I don't think the standard here can be the best 3 because, if it was the best, then that would mean that OSHA could ban all people from coming 4 into the workplace. I think that is a power 5 6 that Congress, when it created OSHA, was --7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, so the -- so the agency is acting, you know, less 8 9 aggressively than it might otherwise do but in 10 an effective way to address the problem. 11 MR. KELLER: But, as soon as we get to 12 the point where we're talking about a less 13 aggressive way, there are other alternatives. 14 There could have been plans. There could have 15 been the man -- the non-mandatory guidance that 16 was then put into place. Jumping to a 17 vaccine-or-testing mandate when OSHA has never exercised that power is --18 19 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, it is a 20 pressing -- there is some pressing urgency to 21 addressing the problem and to have them sit 2.2 down and say, okay, what else could we do? We 23 have to have notice -- well, notice and 24 comment, which I guess -- are you insisting 2.5 that that be part of the process?

1 MR. KELLER: In this situation, yes. I mean, you have the Postal Service and Amtrak 2 3 saying many employees will be -- will quit. Here, there are reports --4 5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, just 6 because --7 MR. KELLER: -- and we have --CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: -- the post 8 office can't do it efficiently doesn't mean 9 10 that private industry can't. 11 MR. KELLER: But I think what this 12 shows is workplaces are different. And instead 13 of doing an economy-wide vaccine-or-testing 14 mandate for all purposes, OSHA needed to at 15 least consider, as it identified, there are 16 certain instances where healthcare workers and 17 otherwise -- in those industries where there is a heightened risk, that's where there's a 18 19 workplace occupational problem. JUSTICE BREYER: Well, it is -- it's 20 -- well, okay, I -- I want to ask a provisional 21 22 question. Are -- are you still really asking 23 this Court now today -- I mean, I assume your 24 arguments are -- you have good arguments in

your brief, and so does the government.

_	50 I II assume for the sake of
2	argument that they're both fairly good
3	arguments, okay?
4	MR. KELLER: Thank you.
5	JUSTICE BREYER: All right. Now
6	that's an assumption, right, but make that
7	assumption with me. Are you still asking us to
8	issue a stay and stop this from taking effect,
9	like issue a stay today or tomorrow or Sunday
LO	or Monday or Tuesday?
L1	I mean, the reason I ask that is there
L2	are several elements, we have some discretion
L3	there, and and you know it was brought up.
L 4	I mean, there there were
L5	three-quarters of a million new cases
L 6	yesterday. New cases. Nearly three-quarters,
L7	700-and-some-odd thousand, okay? That's 10
L8	times as many as when OSHA put this rule in.
L 9	The hospitals are today, yesterday,
20	full, almost to the point of the maximum
21	they've ever been in this disease, okay?
22	And you heard references, studies, I
23	mean, they they vary, but some of them say
24	that the hospitalization is 90 percent or maybe
2.5	60 percent or maybe 80 percent, but a big

- 1 percent, filled up yesterday or the day before
- with people who are not vaccinated, okay?
- 3 So that's -- we're talking about now.
- 4 And think of the stay requirements. It's both
- 5 the balance of harms. It's also public
- 6 interest. Can you ask us -- is that what
- 7 you're doing now, to say it's in the public
- 8 interest in this situation to stop this
- 9 vaccination rule with nearly a million people
- 10 -- let me not exaggerate -- nearly
- 11 three-quarters of a million people, new cases
- 12 every day? I mean, to me, I would find that
- 13 unbelievable.
- MR. KELLER: Justice Breyer, we are
- asking for a stay before enforcement takes
- 16 effect Monday, and the reason for that is this
- is an unprecedented agency action.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Yeah, yeah --
- 19 MR. KELLER: We do not --
- 20 JUSTICE BREYER: -- I know you have
- 21 all good arguments that it isn't good. They
- 22 have arguments that it is good.
- Okay. I'm asking you a different
- 24 question, and the question is: How can it
- 25 conceivably be in the public interest with

- 1 three-quarters of a million people yesterday,
- 2 goodness knows how many today -- I don't want
- 3 to repeat myself, but you have the
- 4 hospitalization figures growing by factors of
- 5 -- of 10, 10 times what it was.
- 6 You have hospitalization at the
- 7 record, near the record. You have -- you have
- 8 -- I mean, you understand the thing -- things
- 9 as well as I. And so I repeat my question, to
- 10 me, it's unbelievable, but I want to hear what
- 11 you say.
- 12 How can it be in the public interest,
- which is a requirement, how can it be a balance
- of harms in this case, assuming the arguments
- aren't off the wall on the government's side,
- and believe me, they're not. Okay, that's what
- 17 I want to hear the answer to.
- 18 MR. KELLER: Justice Breyer, states
- 19 can act, private businesses have acted on
- 20 historic levels. This is going to cause a
- 21 massive economic shift in the country, billions
- 22 upon billions of non-recoverable costs.
- 23 Testing also is not frequently available. This
- is in our appendix at page 374.
- 25 Among those employers who have

- 1 attempted to do so, only 28 percent are able to
- 2 find adequate providers to ensure that weekly
- 3 testing is available for the employees.
- 4 If Congress intended to give an
- 5 occupational health agency the power to mandate
- 6 vaccines across the country, it needed to do so
- 7 clearly. States can do it. Businesses have
- 8 done it and are able to do it.
- 9 The question is not what is this
- 10 country going to do about COVID. It's who gets
- 11 to decide that.
- 12 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, who does get --
- 13 JUSTICE ALITO: And, Mr. Keller --
- 14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Maybe, at this
- point, we can go justice by justice.
- Justice Thomas, anything further?
- 17 JUSTICE THOMAS: Not for me.
- 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 19 Gorsuch?
- 20 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Oh. I do have a
- 21 couple of questions, Mr. Keller.
- 22 First, the government says that the
- 23 major questions doctrine and the federalism
- 24 canon, for example, don't apply to this Court's
- 25 consideration of this case or any other unless

1 the statute before us is first found to be 2 ambiguous. What's your understanding? 3 MR. KELLER: Well, two points. 4 If you need to even reach the question 5 6 of whether there's ambiguity -- and we think 7 the term "necessary" is clear in context, it has to mean indispensable or essential -- that 8 9 would be a term where potentially the government in their interpretation would reach 10 11 ambiguity. 12 But, regardless, the major questions 13 doctrine is also in service of avoiding 14 non-delegation concerns, and the non-delegation 15 concerns that this Court recognized in 16 Industrial Union and citing Sharepoint --17 JUSTICE GORSUCH: I -- I -- I'm -- I'm 18 sorry to interrupt you, but that might -- that 19 wasn't quite my question. I apologize if I didn't make it clear enough. 20 21 But the government says that we only 2.2 consult those doctrines, the federalism canon 23 and the major questions doctrine -- I think the 24 Court understands what they are but only 2.5 consults them after finding a statutory

- 1 ambiguity. Do you disagree?
- 2 MR. KELLER: I disagree in that the
- 3 major questions doctrine is also a -- a -- a
- 4 doctrine that would avoid non-delegation
- 5 concerns. So even if there were a clear
- 6 statutory term, non-delegation concerns and how
- 7 to interpret that statute would factor in.
- 8 Regardless, I think the term "necessary" here,
- 9 there's plenty of room to implement the major
- 10 questions doctrine there, in addition to all of
- 11 the workplace-tethered languages in the plain
- 12 text and statutory context.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: And then, secondly,
- 14 I would like to understand your argument and
- your colleague's argument from Ohio, I believe
- it is, why the Court should enter a stay
- immediately. I -- you've asked for immediate
- 18 relief. Why should the Court grant immediate
- 19 relief?
- 20 MR. KELLER: The short version is, as
- 21 soon as businesses have to put out their plans
- 22 and this takes effect, workers will guit. That
- 23 itself will be a permanent worker displacement
- that will ripple through the national economy.
- 25 So we can talk about the billions in

- 1 non-recoverable costs that the government even
- 2 concedes, and we can talk about the lost
- 3 profits and lost goodwill and lost business
- 4 reputation, and we can talk about the
- 5 businesses that are going to be put out of
- 6 business. Our appendix at pages 375 to 80
- 7 quotes many businesses saying this would be
- 8 catastrophic, it would bankrupt our -- our
- 9 company, it would be the most devastating event
- 10 our company has ever experienced.
- 11 That's why we're here. We're asking
- for an extraordinary stay. We understand the
- gravity of the situation. But, in balancing
- the sheer size and scope of this emergency
- power that is supposed to be exercised
- delicately and the national economic
- 17 implications of this when states and businesses
- 18 can and have acted, we are entitled to a stay
- in this posture.
- 20 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice Alito?
- 21 Sorry to have gone out of order there.
- JUSTICE ALITO: No, no, fine.
- Mr. Keller, I just want to make sure I
- 24 understand what we should focus on here. Is
- 25 the question whether this ETS is necessary to

- 1 protect the health of the general public, or is
- 2 it whether it is necessary to protect just
- 3 employees and not even all employees but only
- 4 unvaccinated employees, people who have chosen
- 5 independently not to be vaccinated and do not
- 6 want to be vaccinated? Is that the proper
- 7 focus?
- 8 MR. KELLER: Correct, the latter,
- 9 Justice Alito. As OSHA has said, the grave
- danger here is to the unvaccinated worker who
- is exposed to COVID.
- 12 JUSTICE ALITO: Thank you.
- 13 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 14 Sotomayor.
- 15 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Yes, counsel. I
- 16 -- I quibble with that in part. The
- 17 unvaccinated worker affects other unvaccinated
- 18 workers but affects vaccinated workers. We
- 19 have proof of that with Omicron. And it's not
- just death, but there is illness, and for many
- 21 with preexisting conditions or immunological
- 22 problems, there are severe consequences even
- when vaccinated. So I think the grave danger
- 24 is to both.
- But, Mr. Fletcher, are you -- you seem

- 1 to be importing into "necessary" a concept of
- 2 strict scrutiny. Am I correct?
- 3 MR. KELLER: No, Justice Sotomayor.
- 4 The "necessary" analysis does have to account
- 5 for alternatives, but we're not asking anything
- 6 close to a least restrictive means analysis.
- 7 What we're saying is the agency --
- 8 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: All right. So, if
- 9 you're not, I know that your experts are
- 10 predicting catastrophes, but they've done --
- 11 experts opposed to OSHA regulations have done
- 12 the same for decades, and the catastrophes have
- failed to happen. And there are exemptions.
- 14 The Post Office -- the -- the Postal Service is
- 15 looking for them -- is looking at one of them.
- 16 I'm sorry, OSHA is looking at one from -- from
- 17 the Postal Service, and there are probably
- other private and public entities who can seek
- 19 exemptions as well.
- But putting all of that aside, who
- 21 makes that judgment about the seriousness of
- 22 the effect? I always thought it was the
- 23 agency. It's not judges. And it's not experts
- 24 because experts have conflicting opinions.
- I always thought that all we had to

- 1 look at was whether an agency had substantial
- 2 evidence before it to conclude that all of the
- 3 economic ramifications that you're speaking
- 4 about -- and this is what I think they found in
- 5 Earl Rebone. Where am I wrong that that's an
- 6 agency judgment? There is certainly
- 7 substantial evidence to -- to support their
- 8 judgment. It's a very huge record they
- 9 compiled. They looked at a massive amount of
- 10 data across many, many industries and in many,
- 11 many different states. Please tell me why, if
- 12 we're going to issue a temporary stay -- and I
- 13 think this was Justice Breyer's question -- we
- would have to accept your version of the facts
- as opposed to the agency's? Aren't we supposed
- 16 to accept the agency's?
- 17 MR. KELLER: I think even if you
- 18 accept the agency's facts, there are now, as
- 19 Your Honor just mentioned, CDC guidance
- 20 contradicting foundational assumptions of this
- 21 ETS. That's in our reply brief at page 7, and
- 22 Your Honor just mentioned that.
- But, regard -- regardless, even OSHA
- 24 has said that 1 to 3 percent of employees will
- 25 quit. That is significant. Our declarations

- 1 at Appendix 308, 316, 320 --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Counsel, yes, that
- 3 may be true. But we are now having deaths at
- 4 an unprecedented amount. Catching COVID keeps
- 5 people out of the workplace for extraordinary
- 6 periods of time. And there have been proof in
- 7 certain industries, like the medical industry,
- 8 that when vaccine's mandated -- and there's no
- 9 mandate here for a vaccine. There is a masking
- 10 mandate, no different than there is when we
- 11 tell people that if there are sparks flying in
- 12 the workplace, wear -- you have -- workers have
- 13 to be provided -- have to wear a mask. So
- 14 that's no different in my mind than this.
- 15 So this is not a vaccine mandate.
- 16 There are costs and deaths and other things
- 17 countervailing to the fact that there might be
- 18 1 to 3 percent of workers who leave.
- MR. KELLER: And, here, vaccines have
- 20 been made available. I also think there's a
- 21 textual clue within the OSH Act at 29 U.S.C.
- 22 655 that --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: You forget that
- there are certain states now that are stopping
- 25 employers from requiring vaccines. There are

- 1 certain states stopping employers from
- 2 requiring masks. Why shouldn't the federal
- 3 government, which it has already decided in
- 4 OSHA, to give -- Congress has decided to give
- 5 OSHA the power to regulate workplace safety,
- 6 have a national rule that will protect workers?
- 7 MR. KELLER: Congress would have to
- 8 clearly state in a statute if it wanted to give
- 9 an occupational health agency the power to
- 10 require employees to get certain medical
- 11 treatment. It's one thing to say --
- 12 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: There's no
- 13 requirement here. It's not a vaccine mandate.
- MR. KELLER: Well --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: It's something
- 16 totally different.
- 17 MR. KELLER: -- it --
- 18 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: And I don't know
- 19 how much clearer than 651 Congress -- Congress
- 20 could have been. It charges OSHA with
- 21 developing innovative methods, techniques, and
- 22 approaches to dealing with occupational safety
- 23 -- occupational safety and health issues.
- I don't know how much clearer you can
- be, if you're Congress, to tell an agency in an

- 1 emergency do what's necessary. I don't think 2 Congress can do it. Do you? 3 MR. KELLER: If Congress was going to give an occupational health agency this type of 4 power to essentially regulate directly the 5 6 employee, rather than telling employers these 7 are the types of things that you would want to 8 do within your workplace, it would have had to 9 provide that clearly. And that --10 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So what's the 11 difference between this and telling employers, 12 where sparks are flying in the workplace, your 13 workers have to be -- wear a mask? 14 MR. KELLER: When sparks are flying in 15 the workplace, that's presumably because
- workplace. That is the -
 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Why is the human

 being not like a machine if it's spewing a

 virus, bloodborne viruses? Are you questioning

there's a machine that's unique to that

- 21 Congress's power or desire that OSHA do this?
- 22 It already in 1991 told OSHA to issue

- 23 regulations with respect to Hep C and B.
- MR. KELLER: Justice Sotomayor, I
- 25 think that exactly proves our point, that

- 1 Congress knows how to enact a statute when it
- 2 wants to give OSHA power --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: It didn't enact a
- 4 statute. OSHA proposed regulations, it didn't
- 5 act fast enough, and Congress told it to act
- 6 faster.
- 7 MR. KELLER: And --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So it wasn't
- 9 Congress who proposed it. It wasn't Congress
- 10 who devised it. Congress gave OSHA the
- 11 responsibility to do these things, and Congress
- 12 was saying get to it.
- MR. KELLER: And what Congress said in
- there was not you now have statutory authority
- 15 to regulate all communicable diseases. It was
- 16 bloodborne pathogens, and even that rule did
- 17 not mandate vaccines or widespread testing.
- 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice Kagan?
- 19 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Keller, your --
- your very last comment in your first part of
- 21 your argument I want to come back to because
- your very last sentence, you said the question
- is, who decides? And I think that that's
- 24 right. I think that that is the question.
- 25 Respectfully, I -- I think it has a

- 1 different answer than the one that you give, so
- 2 I'll just sort of put a different version of it
- 3 to you, which is, you know, you're -- I'm sure
- 4 you're right that there are all kinds of public
- 5 health and economic tradeoffs that have to be
- 6 made in a policy like this, all kinds of
- 7 judgments on the public health side, on the
- 8 economic side, how those two things ought to be
- 9 balanced against each other.
- 10 So who decides? Should it be the
- 11 agency full of expert policymakers and
- 12 completely politically accountable through the
- 13 President? This is not the kind of policy in
- which there's no political accountability. If
- people like this policy, they'll go to the
- 16 polls and vote it that way. If people don't
- 17 like it, they'll vote that way.
- 18 This is a publicly -- a politically
- 19 accountable policy. It also has the virtue of
- 20 expertise. So, on the one hand, the agency
- 21 with their political leadership can decide.
- 22 Or, on the other hand, courts can decide.
- 23 Courts are not politically accountable. Courts
- 24 have not been elected. Courts have no
- 25 epidemiological expertise.

1 Why in the world would courts decide 2 this question? 3 MR. KELLER: Congress and states and governors wielding emergency power are the ones 4 that have the power -- and we acknowledge that 5 -- over vaccines. The idea that OSHA would be 6 7 the agency in the federal government that's not even under the Department of Health and Human 8 9 Services, that does not have expertise over communicable diseases like the FDA or CDC 10 11 maybe, that would just be a very odd place for 12 Congress to large -- to lodge such a sweeping 13 power over the American people. 14 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, OSHA has a lot 15 of expertise about workforces and about the 16 dangers that workforces can confront individual 17 employees with. And I'm sure OSHA also talked 18 to other agencies within the federal government 19 to consider public health issues and brought 20 that knowledge to bear as well with its 21 knowledge of -- of how workplaces function and 2.2 -- and, again, came out with a -- a 23 well-supported policy that has political 24 leadership behind it and all the political 2.5 accountability that one could wish for.

1	And why is it that courts would
2	displace that judgment and say it is up to us
3	to decide about vaccination policy in the
4	employment settings of this country?
5	MR. KELLER: Well, first of all, what
6	OSHA did here was not an industry-by-industry
7	analysis. I mean, the line it drew, for
8	instance, with the hundred-or-more employee
9	lines, they said they were doing that because
LO	they thought the larger companies were the ones
L1	that had the administrative capacity to do it.
L2	It wasn't because they were denser working
L3	environments. You could have a company with a
L 4	hundred employees and every single person is
L5	working somewhere else.
L 6	Even the narrow exception that they
L7	have raised, even they say that 9 percent of
L8	landscapers and 5 percent of highway workers
L9	are the only ones that would qualify for their
20	exclusively working outside exemption. So ever
21	occupations in which you would think someone is
22	almost exclusively working outside, they are
23	still covered by this ETS.
24	It's those types of internally
2.5	inconsistent positions that aren't taking

1 account of the full problem that could have 2 been explained and should have been explained. 3 JUSTICE KAGAN: Thank you, Mr. Keller. CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice 5 Kavanaugh? 6 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: I want to follow 7 up on Justice Kagan's who decides question because I do think that gets to the -- the 8 heart of this. 9 10 You're relying on the major questions 11 canon in saying that when an agency wants to 12 issue a major rule that resolves a major 13 question, it can't rely on statutory language 14 that is cryptic, vaque, oblique, ambiguous. 15 But the critique of -- of that canon 16 and the difficulty in applying it is figuring 17 out when something is major enough. We've 18 applied it five or six times in the last 40 years, and you know the cases, and they're 19 20 important, and we'll talk about them, I'm sure, 21 as the argument goes on. 2.2 But how -- how -- what should we look 23 at to say this one is the kind of rule that rises to the level of the benzene rule or the 24

tobacco rule that we found to be major?

- 1 What -- what should we look at?
- 2 MR. KELLER: So Alabama Realtors just
- 3 said the sheer size and scope. Size would
- 4 account for the overall economic impact. This
- 5 covers 1.8 million establishments. The number
- of people affected would be another factor.
- 7 This covers 84 million or two-thirds of the
- 8 private workforce. The amount of money, King
- 9 versus Burwell said billions in cost, and,
- 10 here, we have that even conceded by OSHA.
- 11 The scope also. All of the 10 prior
- 12 ETSs that OSHA has done, none of them have
- 13 mandated vaccines. None of them have mandated
- 14 widespread testing. Only one in June even
- dealt with COVID. The rest were all workplace
- 16 toxins, and most of those challenges were
- 17 upheld -- or, sorry, most of those challenges
- 18 were vindicated by the courts.
- 19 And so the scope of what the agency
- 20 has done before, in addition to the widespread
- 21 effects, those would be the factors that you'd
- 22 analyze.
- 23 Also, is this a profound and earnest
- 24 debate over a question of vast politically --
- vast political and economic significance? I

- don't at this point believe that the federal
- 2 government is contesting that this absolutely
- 3 satisfies that.
- 4 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: And one follow-up
- 5 question. Suppose it is major enough, so
- 6 accept that position for the sake of this
- 7 question. Suppose the statutory language is
- 8 general, broad, but doesn't speak specifically
- 9 to the issue in question, but it is general and
- 10 broad language.
- 11 How do we sort out -- so you don't
- 12 necessarily say the language is ambiguous. But
- 13 it also doesn't speak specifically to the
- 14 issue. How -- how would you suggest we sort
- out that kind of question? I realize you're
- 16 going to say this language is different, but
- 17 how would you sort out that kind of question?
- 18 MR. KELLER: You look at the plain
- 19 text. From Brown & Williamson, we know you'd
- 20 also look at the statutory context, and I also
- 21 think the statutory context here is incredibly
- 22 important.
- When you have the distinction between
- 24 the emergency power and the regular power --
- 25 this was the dialogue earlier with Justice

- 1 Thomas about necessary versus reasonably
- 2 necessary or appropriate -- all of those
- 3 textual clues, where powers have been lodged
- 4 within the federal government, the fact that
- 5 this is within the Department of Labor rather
- 6 than Department of Human and Health -- Health
- 7 and Human Services, also King versus Burwell
- 8 too on, is this the agency that has expertise
- 9 over communicable diseases? No, it's not.
- 10 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Do you think the
- 11 agency could do this under its general power
- 12 then?
- MR. KELLER: No, I do not think that
- 14 the agency could do an economy-wide
- 15 vaccine-or-testing mandate across the entire
- 16 economy. It has never done that even through
- its regular power. It didn't do that in June
- in an ETS targeting healthcare workers,
- 19 arguably the most heightened high-risk
- 20 workplace.
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Thank you.
- 22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 23 Barrett?
- JUSTICE BARRETT: Mr. Keller, I want
- 25 to return to the discussion you were having

- with both the Chief Justice and Justice Kagan
 earlier about whether the vaccine-or-test
 requirement addresses -- is necessary to
- 4 address a grave danger in the workplace.
- I think you would be hard pressed to contest the Chief's point that there are some
- 7 workplaces in which the danger to employees is
- 8 different than that that they face out in the
- 9 world. A meat-packing plant or a healthcare --
- 10 the dentist.
- 11 And I think what you're saying --
- 12 well, I think this is what you're saying, and I
- want to be sure that I understand it, that I'm
- 14 correct. I think what you're saying is that
- 15 even if there are some industries or some
- 16 people who would face a great risk and this
- might be necessary to address that risk, so, in
- 18 other words, if OSHA had adopted a more
- 19 targeted rule, you might not be contesting that
- or you would not be contesting that, that the
- 21 problem here is its scope and that there's no
- 22 differentiation between the risk faced by
- 23 unvaccinated 22-year-olds and unvaccinated
- 24 60-year-olds or industries, you were just
- 25 talking about landscapers and people who work

- 1 primarily outdoors, those, and workers who work
- 2 in an inside environment all day long.
- 3 So is that the distinction that you're
- 4 making? You're not disputing what Justice
- 5 Kagan said, that, you know, this is a grave
- 6 danger and that in some circumstances this rule
- 7 might be necessary, but just the scope of it
- 8 makes it different?
- 9 MR. KELLER: That's right, Justice
- 10 Barrett. But -- but I just want to be very
- 11 clear about this. Wherever that line is, this
- 12 ETS is so far beyond that line. Congress
- identified and even OSHA identified, for
- 14 instance, certain healthcare scenarios. For
- instance, you know, if you're treating COVID
- patients or you're a scientist in a laboratory
- handling COVID samples and researching them, of
- 18 course, that's going to be a very different
- 19 case.
- But, here, what OSHA did was
- 21 economy-wide. It said it --
- JUSTICE BARRETT: Well, I understand
- 23 that. And you're saying that that's the
- 24 problem. You're not contesting that if we were
- 25 talking about healthcare workers or a

- 1 meat-packing plant, you're not contesting that
- OSHA could rely on its emergency power to
- 3 impose this kind of requirement in that
- 4 context.
- 5 MR. KELLER: That's right. I would
- 6 still want to know what their explanation was
- 7 --
- 8 JUSTICE BARRETT: Sure.
- 9 MR. KELLER: -- and all of the
- 10 substantial evidence, but, yeah, of course,
- 11 that's a very different case. And I know
- that's always not a satisfactory answer. But,
- 13 here, this ETS is so far beyond healthcare
- 14 workers and what Congress identified in the
- 15 rescue plan as truly high-risk workplaces.
- 16 JUSTICE BARRETT: Right. So you're
- 17 saying that when we take the definition of
- "necessary," particularly when contrasted with
- "reasonably necessary" and the general grant of
- 20 authority, that it means something more and
- 21 that when we're looking at grave danger, there
- 22 had to be a more targeted industry-by-industry
- 23 analysis?
- MR. KELLER: Yes.
- JUSTICE BARRETT: Okay. And a

- 1 follow-up. Would you be here making these same
- 2 arguments if this were just a masking and
- 3 testing requirement and not the vaccine portion
- 4 of it?
- 5 MR. KELLER: Yes, I think that
- 6 mandatory testing is still a mandatory medical
- 7 procedure. OSHA has never, even in a regular
- 8 rule, done a blanket, widespread testing regime
- 9 over 84 million Americans.
- 10 JUSTICE BARRETT: What if it was just
- 11 masking?
- 12 MR. KELLER: I think we -- I don't
- think OSHA has the ability to set by emergency
- 14 rule nationwide COVID policy. You know, the
- 15 more that we back out of this and the more we
- say, well, if it's not an emergency rule or if
- it's targeted to a particular workplace, you
- 18 know, I think there can be debates about that.
- 19 But, as long as they're trying to set a
- 20 blanket-wide -- economy-wide policy by an
- 21 emergency rule, OSHA does not have that power.
- JUSTICE BARRETT: Thank you.
- 23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
- 24 counsel.
- Mr. Flowers, I don't quite know where

1 to look, but are you still on the line? 2 MR. FLOWERS: I am, Mr. Chief Justice. 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you. You may proceed. 4 5 ORAL ARGUMENT OF BENJAMIN M. FLOWERS ON BEHALF OF THE APPLICANTS IN NO. 21A247 6 7 MR. FLOWERS: Mr. Chief Justice, and 8 may it please the Court: 9 OSHA typically identifies a workplace 10 danger and then regulates it. But, here, the 11 President decided to regulate a danger and then 12 told OSHA to find a work-related basis for doing so. This resulted in the vaccine 13 14 mandate, a blunderbuss rule, nationwide in 15 scope, that requires the same thing of all 16 covered employers, regardless of the other 17 steps they've taken to protect employees, 18 regardless of the nature of their workplaces, 19 regardless of their employees' risk factors, and regardless of local conditions that state 20 21 and local officials are far better positioned to understand and accommodate. 2.2 23 So sweeping a rule is not necessary to 24 protect employees from a grave danger as the 25 emergency provision requires. And I want to be

- 1 clear that states share OSHA's desire to bring
- 2 this pandemic to a close, but the agency cannot
- 3 pursue that laudable goal unlawfully.
- 4 I welcome your questions.
- 5 JUSTICE THOMAS: So you're saying,
- 6 Mr. Flowers, that the first step in OSHA's
- 7 regulation is to identify the workforce, the
- 8 problem in that workforce, and then regulate
- 9 that?
- 10 MR. FLOWERS: That is typically how
- 11 OSHA proceeds. I don't know that there's a
- 12 requirement that says they must do that, but I
- think part of the problems we're seeing with
- 14 this rule is it's not truly intended to
- 15 regulate a workplace danger; it's -- it's --
- it's a danger that we all face simply as a
- 17 matter of waking up in the morning.
- JUSTICE THOMAS: Well, but --
- 19 MR. FLOWERS: And I -- and I -- I'm
- 20 sorry.
- JUSTICE THOMAS: I'm sorry to
- 22 interrupt you, but I -- the other part of my
- 23 question is, can a danger be so acute in the
- society that it is brought into the workforce
- and could hence be regulated by its mere

- 1 presence there and by the fact that it is so
- 2 acute?
- 3 MR. FLOWERS: It -- I think what they
- 4 need -- let -- all right. Let me answer this
- 5 in two steps. I can first define what we mean
- 6 by "work-related danger" and then talk about
- 7 how that applies here, and I think that'll get
- 8 to your question.
- 9 So, in terms of what we mean by
- "work-related danger," I think one way to think
- about that is, has the employer done or failed
- 12 to do something that creates a risk the
- 13 employee faces? And then the problem with
- 14 applying that here is, if you look at their own
- 15 explanation for what the risk is -- this is at
- 16 61411 of the Federal Register -- they say the
- 17 reason there's a risk in every workplace is you
- 18 interact, you come into contact with people at
- 19 the workplace.
- When you define the risk that broadly,
- 21 that is not something that's arising out of the
- 22 workplace. That's a risk we face when we wake
- 23 up, when we're with our families, when we stop
- to get coffee on the way to work, at work, when
- 25 we go to lunch, and in the evening if we go to

- 1 a sporting event or a concert.
- 2 So this kind of goes to Justice
- 3 Barrett's question, I believe, that if they
- 4 were to focus on a risk arising out of a -- a
- 5 particular aspect of the workplace that creates
- 6 a -- a risk of a different nature, like being
- 7 packed closely together in a meat-packing
- 8 plant, that could fairly be described as a
- 9 work-related danger.
- 10 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Flowers --
- 11 MR. FLOWERS: But this cannot.
- 12 JUSTICE KAGAN: Sorry to
- interrupt. Do you know of any workplaces that
- 14 have not fundamentally transformed themselves
- in the last two years? I mean, maybe like --
- 16 MR. FLOWERS: I --
- 17 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- landscapers, they
- 18 work outside. But, I mean, this idea that
- 19 there are only a few select workplaces that are
- 20 affected by COVID, I would have thought every
- 21 workplace has been affected by COVID. Every
- 22 workplace sent their workers home. Every
- 23 workplace had to make adjustments to the way
- 24 they do their business.
- I'm trying to figure out, like, why

- 1 this is a blunderbuss approach when everybody
- 2 knows from living their normal lives that every
- 3 workplace has been affected by this, save for,
- 4 you know, a few here and there.
- 5 MR. FLOWERS: So the way I would
- 6 answer that is to say just about every
- 7 workplace has been affected, but that doesn't
- 8 mean the work is arising from the workplace.
- 9 To take another example, if we look at
- 10 terrorism, there's some risk of terrorism that
- 11 we face when we wake up in the morning. We
- 12 face it at home, in public, and at work. And
- we adjusted to that after 9/11. If you see
- 14 something, say something. Ideas like that.
- Now the fact that you face that work
- 16 -- that risk when you go to work doesn't make
- it a workplace risk. It means it's an
- 18 ever-present risk.
- 19 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, why -- why not?
- 20 I mean, this is a -- the combination of lots of
- 21 people all going in to one indoor space and
- having to deal with each other for eight hours,
- 23 10 hours, however many hours a day, in those
- settings, the combination of the environment
- and the people that are in that environment

- 1 create a risk, I would think. I mean, tell me
- 2 if I'm wrong about this. I would think that
- 3 workplace risk is about the greatest least
- 4 controllable risk with respect to COVID that
- 5 any person has.
- 6 You know, everything else a person can
- 7 control. You can go to the baseball game or
- 8 not go to the baseball game. You can decide
- 9 who to go to the baseball game with. But you
- 10 can't do any of that in workplaces. You have
- 11 to be there. You have to be there for eight
- 12 hours a day. You have to be there in the exact
- environment that the workplace is set up with.
- 14 And you have to be there with a bunch of people
- you don't know and who might be completely
- 16 irresponsible.
- Where else do people have a greater
- 18 risk than at the workplace?
- MR. FLOWERS: Well, I think one thing,
- 20 with their families, which they have to spend
- 21 even more time with, especially if they have
- 22 children going to school and things of that
- 23 nature. But, in response to does the risk -- I
- 24 mean, of course, the risk arises at the
- workplace, but it's important to focus on the

- 1 risk they're talking about. They're not
- 2 talking about jobs where people do congregate
- 3 in settings like that that changes the nature
- 4 of the risk.
- 5 They say every single workplace where
- 6 people come inside for even a little bit is
- 7 covered. And so they've defined the risk to
- 8 mean simple human contact. And it could be no
- 9 more contact than you have at the grocery store
- or when you drop your kids off at school or
- 11 when you go to a -- a friend's house.
- 12 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, Mr. Flowers, in
- 13 fact --
- MR. FLOWERS: And that's the problem.
- 15 We're not --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: -- in fact, what --
- what this rule does is it says we're not going
- 18 to regulate some people. People who work
- 19 outdoors, forget about it. People who work
- alone, we don't have to worry about them. But
- 21 people who work in the way that lots and lots
- and lots of people work, which is surrounded by
- other people in indoor spaces, you know, with
- 24 -- without their own offices, you know, with
- 25 cubicles or with -- in -- in other mass

- 1 settings, you know, that's where the greatest
- 2 risk is. Not just that's where the risk of
- 3 ordinary life is. That is, in fact, where the
- 4 greatest risk is.
- 5 MR. FLOWERS: And if they had taken
- 6 that approach, they would have a much better
- 7 argument, but they don't because there are many
- 8 jobs here, including, for example, landscapers,
- 9 who may spend a little bit of time inside, five
- 10 minutes a day, to get the keys or punch their
- 11 time card --
- 12 JUSTICE BREYER: Well, is this right?
- 13 Is this right?
- MR. FLOWERS: -- but who are covered
- 15 --
- JUSTICE BREYER: What this says, what
- 17 I -- I mean, my law clerks have been busy
- 18 beavers on this case, I promise you, and what
- 19 they have on this issue is that there are
- 20 exceptions here. There aren't exceptions
- business by business, but there are exceptions,
- those who work from home, alone, or
- 23 substantially outdoors, or those who can show
- 24 that their conditions, practices, means,
- 25 methods, operations, or processes make their

1 workplaces as safe and healthful as the ETA --2 as the ETS can obtain a variance, okay? 3 So they did make some distinctions. MR. FLOWERS: Well --4 JUSTICE BREYER: Not industry by 5 6 industry, but my question really is, that I'd 7 like to turn this to, is a stay. You heard what I asked. I mean, you know, 750 million 8 9 new cases yesterday or close to that is a lot. I don't mean to be facetious. 10 11 But that -- that -- that's why I said 12 I would find it, you know, unbelievable that it 13 could be in the public interest to suddenly 14 stop these vaccinations. And the only answer 15 that was given was a lot of people will quit. 16 Well, OSHA considered that. My 17 wonderful law clerk has 61475, 63422, 61466, 61 18 474 and 475, those are pages. I don't think 19 you should read all 61,000, but, nonetheless, 20 there are at least five or 10 pages where they 21 went into this, and they said, in our view, 2.2 hmm, yeah, that's right, some people may quit, 23 maybe 3 percent. But more may quit when they 24 discover they have to work together with 2.5 unvaccinated others because that means they may

- 1 get the disease. Okay?
- 2 And more will quit because they'll be
- 3 -- maybe die or maybe they'll be in the
- 4 hospital or maybe they'll be sick and have to
- 5 stay home for two weeks. So they did the pros
- 6 and cons.
- 7 So I'd like to take Justice Kagan's
- 8 questions, which I think I share on the merits,
- 9 and just ask you, are you asking us both still
- 10 to issue a stay today, tomorrow, Monday, and
- 11 why, if you are?
- MR. FLOWERS: We are seeking an
- immediate -- thanks for the question. We are
- 14 seeking an immediate stay.
- As an initial matter, I think Alabama
- 16 Realtors takes their argument about the
- 17 beneficial effects of their legal action off
- 18 the table. If the Court considers it illegal,
- 19 then it's not in the public interest and it's
- 20 proper to enjoin it.
- Now the Court may say -- or stay it,
- 22 rather. The Court may decide that there's a
- 23 better way to unwind the illegal action than a
- 24 judicial action, and I think that's what
- Justice Kavanaugh's concurrence in the first

- 1 Alabama Realtors got to.
- 2 But what it can't do is say we judge
- 3 that these are very -- in our view, this
- 4 illegal action will lead to good effects, and
- 5 so we will allow that to happen.
- To Justice Kagan's question about the
- 7 who decides point, Congress tell -- told us who
- 8 decides at 2112 -- 28 USC 2112 says that courts
- 9 can issue stays, and the reason for that is
- 10 they recognize that this was without notice and
- 11 comment, and unless the courts could step in to
- abate illegal actions, nobody would be able to
- 13 do so.
- 14 And that's especially important here,
- where the -- the action they're, in our view,
- 16 mandating but at least strongly encouraging,
- 17 vaccination, cannot be undone.
- 18 Finally, the other point in the public
- 19 interest is one awkwardness of this situation
- is that the ETS is focused on what was really a
- 21 different pandemic. It's all about the Delta
- 22 variant. Now we are on to Omicron.
- 23 And as my presence here as a triple
- vaccinated individual by phone suggests and as
- Justice Sotomayor suggests and as the amicus

- 1 brief from the American Commitment Foundation
- 2 shows, vaccines do not appear to be very
- 3 effective in stopping the spread or
- 4 transmission.
- 5 They are very effective in stopping
- 6 severe consequences, and that's why our states
- 7 strongly urge people to get them. But I think
- 8 that makes it very hard to look at the numbers
- 9 they give and assume that they still apply
- 10 today --
- 11 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Counsel --
- MR. FLOWERS: -- where things are
- 13 entirely different --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- counsel, those
- 15 numbers show that Omicron is as deadly and
- 16 causes as much serious disease in the
- 17 unvaccinated as Delta did. The numbers, look
- 18 at the hospitalization rates that are going on.
- 19 We have more affected people in the country
- today than we had a year ago in January.
- 21 We have hospitals that are almost at
- 22 full capacity with people severely ill on
- ventilators. We have over 100,000 children,
- 24 which we've never had before, in -- in serious
- 25 condition and many on ventilators.

So saying it's a different variant 1 2 just underscores the fact that without the --3 without some workplace rules with respect to vaccines and encouraging vaccines, because this 4 is not a vaccine mandate, and -- and requiring 5 6 masking and requiring isolation of people who 7 have tested for COVID, because none of you have 8 addressed that part of the ETS is to say something that should be self-evident to the 9 10 world but is not, which is, if you're sick, you can't come into work. The workplace can't let 11 12 you into the workplace and you shouldn't go on 13 unmasked. Tell me what's irrational about rules 14 15 of that nature when it is the workplace that 16 puts you into contact with people that will put 17 you at risk. 18 MR. FLOWERS: I don't know that we've 19 argued that the requirement is irrational. 20 And, indeed, there may be many states subject 21 to their own state laws that could impose this 2.2 themselves or private businesses. So we're not 23 making that there's still some --24 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So, if it's within 2.5 the police power to protect the health and

- 1 welfare of workers, you seem to be saying the
- 2 states can do it, but you're saying the federal
- 3 government can't even though it's facing the
- 4 same crisis in interstate commerce that states
- 5 are facing within their own borders.
- I -- I'm not sure I understand the
- 7 distinction why the states would have the power
- 8 but the federal government wouldn't.
- 9 MR. FLOWERS: The federal government
- 10 has no police power if we're asking about that.
- 11 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Oh, it does have
- 12 power with respect to protecting the health and
- 13 safety of workers. We have -- we have --
- 14 accept the constitutionality of OSHA.
- MR. FLOWERS: Yes. I took you to be
- 16 asking if they had a police power to protect
- 17 public health. They -- they absolutely have
- 18 the --
- 19 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: No, they have a
- 20 police power to protect workers.
- 21 MR. FLOWERS: I would not call it a
- 22 police power. I think the Commerce Clause
- 23 power allows them to address health -- sorry,
- is there a question?
- 25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: No. But it's

- 1 2 MR. FLOWERS: It allows them to 3 address health in the context of the workplace. JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Exactly. CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: It's a good 5 time to move to our sequential questioning. 6 7 Justice Thomas? JUSTICE THOMAS: Mr. Flowers, there's 8 9 been some talk -- suggestion or at least it seems to be implied that the vaccinations are 10 11 efficacious in preventing some degree of 12 infection to others. 13 Could you talk about that, 14 particularly as I remember in the filings that 15 the 18 to -- that the younger workers, the 16 20-year-olds who are unvaccinated are actually 17 safer than the older workers who are 18 vaccinated. So there are obviously some 19 differences. 20 Would you just talk about how 21 efficacious the vaccine is in the workplace?
- MR. FLOWERS: So I want -- first, I
 want to be very clear. We're -- we are strong
 promoters of vaccination because they do stop
- 25 serious illness.

1	In terms of stopping infection and
2	transmission, at least with the current
3	variant, it appears the numbers suggest to be
4	far less effective. But but and then, in
5	terms of the comparison you were asking about,
6	I think it's hard to define "grave," what the
7	grave danger in the abstract. What we can at
8	least mandate or at least demand from the
9	agency is internal consistency.
10	And if you look at their own data, the
11	CDC data from the last week of October,
12	unvaccinated individuals 18 to 29 were as
13	likely to die as vaccinated 50 to 64-year-olds
14	and five times less likely to die than
15	vaccinated 65 and up. Hospitalization was
16	between 18 and 49, that's not even just the
17	young was about as likely as vaccinated 65
18	and up.
19	If you look at the Griffin study that
20	they cite at 61418 of the Federal of the
21	Federal Register, unvaccinated and vaccinated
22	both had low risks of death and ICU.
23	As a societal matter, we are not
24	debating that COVID is serious, and it has
25	incredibly grave risk for some people, not for

- 1 everybody. And, finally, I'd point you to the
- 2 Scovy Study. Again, they cite that at 61418 of
- 3 the Federal Register. It showed that
- 4 vaccinated individuals who are 65 or older are
- 5 twice as likely to die as unvaccinated
- 6 individuals 18 to 49. And keep in mind that's
- 7 18 to 49, not 18 to 29. So that's -- it would
- 8 probably be even more skewed if you looked at
- 9 the -- the younger demographic.
- 10 JUSTICE THOMAS: Would the State of
- 11 Ohio have the -- in your -- I'm not saying this
- would be an approach you would take, but we --
- you had earlier a discussion about whether or
- 14 not the federal government had police powers in
- the workforce, and you suggested that the state
- 16 has those police powers.
- 17 Could the State of Ohio do what you
- 18 say OSHA cannot do?
- MR. FLOWERS: In terms of -- yes, my
- 20 position is the State of Ohio at least could
- 21 mandate vaccinations not only for workers but
- 22 for all individuals.
- Now I think that's an important point
- 24 to stress is we're talking here as though OSHA
- is the only entity that can regulate this, an

- 1 agency that no one thought had anything to do
- 2 with the pandemic until months, if not years,
- 3 into it.
- But we have the states and we have
- 5 private businesses and they're not sitting on
- 6 their hands. And -- and individuals are doing
- 7 things to try and bring this pandemic to a
- 8 close or at least learn to live with it.
- 9 Indeed, this Court, without any requirement
- 10 from OSHA, has found ways to -- to safely
- 11 conduct business.
- 12 JUSTICE THOMAS: I think my point is
- 13 rather that there seemed to be -- seems to be a
- 14 suggestion that this is all or nothing, that
- 15 the other governmental bodies do not have
- 16 police powers to regulate certain activities.
- 17 And you've answered my question. Thank you.
- 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 19 Breyer?
- JUSTICE BREYER: A quick question, I'm
- 21 just curious. I was searching for an example.
- 22 Universal risk inside and outside the
- 23 workplace, including the workplace, can OSHA
- 24 regulate it? Can OSHA regulate fire risks?
- 25 MR. FLOWERS: Yes. We don't draw the

- 1 distinction between in -- in the workplace and
- 2 out of work.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Okay. If they can
- 4 regulate fire risks, then why can't they
- 5 regulate this risk?
- 6 MR. FLOWERS: Because the difference
- 7 with the fire is that there's something about
- 8 the workplace, for example, not providing
- 9 safety equipment to put out the -- put out the
- 10 fire.
- 11 JUSTICE BREYER: Well, people throw
- 12 matches.
- MR. FLOWERS: They smoke.
- 14 JUSTICE BREYER: They smoke. Sometime
- 15 -- oh, they shouldn't, but they do. And -- and
- 16 -- or they throw a match or they -- you know, a
- 17 lot of causes, such as --
- 18 MR. FLOWERS: Right. That's right.
- 19 JUSTICE BREYER: -- fall --
- 20 crushing -- crushing people into -- not
- 21 crushing them. They come in the same room.
- 22 You understand the point. Okay. The
- 23 difference is?
- MR. FLOWERS: I do.
- 25 JUSTICE BREYER: Say it again so I

- 1 catch it.
- 2 MR. FLOWERS: Sure. I want to be -- I
- 3 want to be very clear about this. We accept
- 4 the line that's been drawn forever in Forging
- 5 Industry that simply the fact that a risk
- 6 exists outside the workplace doesn't mean you
- 7 can't address it when it's inside the
- 8 workplace.
- 9 What we dispute is the idea that a
- 10 risk that is ever present in all places can be
- 11 regulated simply because it's also in the
- 12 workplace.
- 13 And so you can regulate -- to be
- 14 clear, OSHA could regulate COVID-19 in the
- workplace when the employer does something like
- 16 packing individuals very closely together in a
- 17 poorly ventilated area that -- that -- that
- 18 enhances or changes the nature of the risk, I
- 19 should say. But that's not the risk they say
- 20 they're regulating. Again, 61411 of the
- 21 Federal Register, they say the risk is you'll
- 22 come into contact with individuals.
- 23 And the risk of encountering an
- 24 individual is an ever-present risk we face at
- 25 home, at work, and everywhere else.

1	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice Alito:
2	JUSTICE ALITO: I want to come back to
3	the question I asked Mr. Keller in light of all
4	that's been said this morning so far about
5	public health, about the value of vaccine to
6	vaccines to the general public, because I want
7	to make sure I understand precisely what the
8	question is before us.
9	And what I took from Mr. Keller's
10	answer, which seems to be right, is that the
11	question is whether there is a grave danger for
12	unvaccinated workers, period.
13	What the Secretary said was "employees
14	who are unvaccinated are in grave danger from
15	SARS COVID virus, but employees who are fully
16	vaccinated are not." So the the purpose
17	if this is to be sustained, it has to be on the
18	ground that it presents a grave danger to
19	unvaccinated workers who have chosen to be
20	unvaccinated.
21	That's my understanding of the issue,
22	but maybe I haven't understood it correctly.
23	Is that your understanding? And I'll ask the
24	Solicitor General the same question, or at
2.5	least I hope she will address it.

- 1 MR. FLOWERS: That is my
- 2 understanding. And I don't see how there could
- 3 be another understanding because the emergency
- 4 provision specifically says that such emergency
- 5 standard, meaning the precise one at issue,
- 6 must be necessary to protect employees from the
- 7 danger at issue. So the broad societal effects
- 8 are not -- are not at issue.
- 9 JUSTICE ALITO: And protection of
- 10 vaccinated employees, who may face some danger
- of contracting the virus, was not the basis for
- 12 this rule, is that correct?
- MR. FLOWERS: Correct. And I would go
- 14 further and say they cannot rely at all on the
- 15 risk to vaccinated workers because they
- 16 conclude -- this is 61419 of the Federal
- 17 Register -- that no one who's vaccinated is --
- is in grave danger.
- 19 JUSTICE ALITO: Thank you.
- 20 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 21 Sotomayor.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Counsel,
- 23 unvaccinated people you showed or you -- you
- 24 pointed to young people who had a different --
- 25 or had the same death rate as vaccinated older

- 1 people.
- 2 But the point is that it's not the
- 3 risk to the individual that's at question; it's
- 4 that risk plus the risk to others. And
- 5 unvaccinated people -- and the agency has shown
- 6 in its studies that unvaccinated people affect
- 7 other unvaccinated people. And they vary in
- 8 age and can be of ages and of conditions where
- 9 the effect will be serious, if not death. So
- 10 we're not talking -- I -- I don't know how
- 11 comparing apples to oranges in terms of the
- 12 risk factors makes any sense.
- But, secondly, if the grave risk is to
- 14 unvaccinated people, then how do we take that
- out of the equation, that it's not the risk
- just to them but the risk that they pose to
- others, including unvaccinated people?
- 18 MR. FLOWERS: So I'll -- I'll answer
- in two steps. On the apples to oranges, I
- 20 think it's vital because their -- they have to
- 21 be internally consistent. And their own logic
- is that nobody who's vaccinated faces a grave
- 23 danger. So unvaccinated folks of certain ages
- 24 are at lower risk of death and even
- 25 hospitalization, that has -- that is relevant

- 1 to calculating --
- 2 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But lower risk
- 3 doesn't --
- 4 MR. FLOWERS: -- the overall grave
- 5 danger.
- 6 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- lower risk
- 7 doesn't mean no risk. And lower risk can go
- 8 into the calculus of saying I -- we see -- and
- 9 that's what they said -- the risk to
- 10 unvaccinated people of all ages and all
- 11 conditions, and when you remain unmasked or
- 12 unvaccinated, you put yourself at risk, but you
- 13 put others.
- MR. FLOWERS: Right.
- 15 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Others,
- 16 unvaccinated people at risk and people who are
- 17 vaccinated. They may be at a lesser risk, but
- 18 the grave risk remains to people of all ages
- 19 and conditions that are unvaccinated.
- 20 MR. FLOWERS: Right, but -- but the
- 21 problem is they've defined numerical
- 22 probabilities that are equal to be grave in one
- case and not grave in the other, and that is
- 24 the definition of irrational.
- In terms of spread, their own ETS says

- 1 it's unclear the degree to which vaccinations
- 2 reduce transmission. They appear to have a
- 3 positive effect, and they appear, at least with
- 4 Delta and previous variants, to stop
- 5 contracting it in the first place. So, again,
- 6 if you look at the American Commitment
- 7 Foundation brief, it's highly doubtful that
- 8 that -- that the numbers are going to be
- 9 comparable when it comes to the Omicron
- 10 variant.
- 11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice Kagan.
- 12 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Flowers, just
- 13 continuing on that, if I understand your
- 14 answers to Justice Thomas and to Justice
- 15 Sotomayor, you basically said a couple things.
- 16 You said: Well, you know, we understand that
- 17 18- to 29-year-olds, even though they're not
- 18 going to die or wind up with very serious
- 19 injuries, that they can spread. You don't --
- you don't doubt that, that those people spread
- 21 to other people who might be more vulnerable?
- 22 You don't doubt that, right?
- MR. FLOWERS: That's right, but the
- 24 problem for -- for --
- 25 JUSTICE KAGAN: Okay. So just -- I --

- 1 I'm sorry to cut you off, but I just wanted to
- 2 state that as, like, the premise. And then the
- 3 question is: Well, you said, well, the agency
- 4 itself says that the danger is to other
- 5 unvaccinated people, older people,
- 6 immunocompromised people, whatever. And -- and
- 7 -- and you seem to be saying that because it's
- 8 to other unvaccinated people, kind of they
- 9 assumed the risk and the agency's power runs
- 10 out. Is that what you're saying?
- 11 Because I don't know about that kind
- of doctrine in the OSH Act or any place else in
- 13 administrative law, that because you can say
- 14 that, you know, somebody would prefer not to be
- 15 regulated, the agency loses its power.
- 16 MR. FLOWERS: That's not -- that's not
- 17 quite the point we're making. It's -- one --
- it goes to two points. The first is necessity.
- 19 So, if everyone who's vaccinated is not in
- 20 grave danger, then a narrower solution is, if
- 21 they think have the power to vaccinate, to
- 22 require the people in grave danger to be
- 23 vaccinated, and they are -- they are removed
- from the grave danger and the other individuals
- 25 are -- are not affected. So I think that's the

- 1 key point there.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Okay. Thank you.
- 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 4 Gorsuch?
- 5 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Mr. Flowers, I'd
- 6 like to return to the question of -- of who
- 7 decides. And I think we've all kind of come to
- 8 the point where we all agree that states have
- 9 -- have a wide police power under our
- 10 constitutional system that Congress has to
- 11 regulate consistent with the Commerce Clause
- 12 and -- and make the major decisions while
- agencies can do the work that Congress has
- 14 given them to do but not other kinds of work.
- 15 And the major questions doctrine kind of
- 16 regulates that interaction between Congress and
- 17 agencies.
- So it's not that judges are supposed
- 19 to decide some question of public health. It's
- about regulating the rules of the system to
- 21 ensure that the appropriate party does.
- 22 And so the question in my mind really
- turns a lot on the major questions doctrine in
- this case. Is this one that has been given to
- 25 the agencies to decide or one that Congress has

- 1 to make as a major question under our federal
- 2 system? And I haven't heard a lot of
- 3 discussion about that.
- 4 The Solicitor General says that the
- 5 major questions issue only comes into play when
- 6 a statute's ambiguous, and I'd like to give you
- 7 an opportunity to explain your view.
- 8 MR. FLOWERS: I -- I -- I think you
- 9 can view the major -- the major question
- doctrine, the phrase is sometimes used in
- 11 different contexts, and sometimes it is used as
- 12 kind of an ambiguity clarifier, an elephants in
- mouse holes point.
- But another way to look at it is
- something of a constitutional doubt canon where
- we recognize that although our non-delegation
- doctrine is not especially robust today, there
- 18 are limits on the amount of authority that
- 19 Congress can -- can give away.
- 20 And with respect to these major
- 21 questions that are going to affect people from
- 22 coast to coast and cost, you know, millions and
- 23 millions of dollars and potentially many jobs
- 24 and potentially infect -- affect public health,
- 25 we would expect Congress -- we would demand

- 1 Congress to at least speak clearly before we
- 2 will say an agency can exercise that power and
- 3 therefore before we're into the non-delegation
- 4 issue.
- 5 I -- I do want to stress
- 6 non-delegation. I mean, if they're right about
- 7 work-related danger, because I understand their
- 8 rule, it's any danger you could possibly face
- 9 at work. A grave danger is any danger that
- 10 could even conceivably result in death,
- "necessary" means useful, and through a
- 12 temporary and emergency standard, you can
- 13 require permanent abatement.
- If you put all that together, this is
- among the broadest and most standardless
- delegations of authority to an agency in the
- 17 United States Code.
- 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 19 Kavanaugh?
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Yeah, I want to
- 21 follow up on Justice Gorsuch's questions, which
- I think are important, and also Justice Kagan's
- 23 questions about the policy arguments that are
- 24 present here, especially in an emergency
- 25 situation.

1 So, as I understand it, you're 2 invoking the major questions doctrine and your 3 statutory argument to say that based on the Constitution's separation of powers, Congress 4 5 must act or the states must act and OSHA lacks 6 authority under the current statutes to do 7 this. That's your basic pitch, I think. MR. FLOWERS: I -- I think so as long 8 as "this" means the vaccine mandate. We're not 9 -- we're not disputing that they can regulate 10 11 COVID-19 to some degree. 12 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Okay. Yes, that's 13 what I meant by "this." 14 I want to give you an opportunity to 15 explain the value of insisting on that 16 congressional action for something like this at 17 the federal level in an emergency situation and 18 explain why we shouldn't defer more to the 19 executive or defer to the executive in what has been characterized, I think appropriately, as 20 -- as a crisis or an emergency kind of 21 2.2 situation. 23 What's the value of insisting on that 24 here? 2.5 MR. FLOWERS: Well, one -- one value

- of it is that when there's an emergency, it's
- 2 especially important that it be a considered,
- 3 thoughtful process, and legislation is more
- 4 likely to yield that. And in an emergency,
- 5 you're more likely to get broad agreement on --
- 6 on certain principles that can be enacted
- 7 through Congress. And, indeed, Congress has
- 8 taken many steps to ensure that there are to
- 9 address COVID-19.
- 10 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Thank you.
- 11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 12 Barrett?
- JUSTICE BARRETT: No questions.
- 14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
- 15 counsel.
- 16 General Prelogar.
- 17 ORAL ARGUMENT OF GEN. ELIZABETH B. PRELOGAR
- ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENTS
- 19 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Mr. Chief Justice,
- 20 and may it please the Court:
- 21 COVID-19 is the deadliest pandemic in
- 22 American history, and it poses a particularly
- 23 acute workplace danger. Workers are getting
- 24 sick and dying every day because of their
- 25 exposure to the virus at work.

1	OSHA amassed substantial evidence of
2	wide-sprayed widespread workplace outbreaks
3	across all industries. It studied the science
4	of how this virus is transmitted and found that
5	workers are exposed to danger when they're
6	inside together for as little as 15 minutes,
7	and OSHA considered the extensive evidence that
8	unvaccinated employees are at heightened risk
9	of contracting the virus, of transmitting it to
LO	others and infecting their coworkers, and of
L1	suffering the gravest consequences,
L2	hospitalization and even death.
L3	To protect against that grave danger,
L 4	the standard requires employers to adopt a
L5	policy that unvaccinated employees either get
L 6	vaccinated or mask and test. Those are
L7	commonplace and highly effective measures that
L8	OSHA determined were essential to stopping the
L9	spread of this dangerous disease at work.
20	The Applicants try to portray this
21	standard as unprecedented. But this lies in
22	the heartland of OSHA's regulatory authority.
23	Congress charged the agency with setting
24	nationwide standards to protect the health and
2.5	safety of employees throughout the nation, and

- 1 Congress specifically appropriated money to
- OSHA to address COVID-19 in the workplace.
- 3 Nothing in the statute or the agency's
- 4 regulatory history bars the use of these
- 5 measures. Just the opposite.
- 6 Section 669(a)(5) of the OSH Act specifically
- 7 contemplates that immunization requirements can
- 8 be imposed under the Act, and OSHA has
- 9 previously protected workers with measures like
- 10 masking, testing, and encouraging vaccination.
- 11 OSHA had statutory authority to rely
- on those measures here, which it found would
- 13 save 6,500 lives and prevent 250,000
- 14 hospitalizations in just six months.
- 15 As the preamble to the standard
- 16 explains, exposure to COVID-19 on the job is
- 17 the biggest threat to workers in OSHA's
- 18 history.
- The Court should reject the argument
- 20 that the agency is powerless to address that
- 21 grave danger.
- I welcome the Court's questions.
- JUSTICE THOMAS: General, the --
- 24 what's the -- the -- the problem you're getting
- 25 at? Is it the employer not providing -- making

1 sure that employees are vaccinated or masked, 2 or is it the employees who decline to be vaccinated or masked? 3 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Well, it's the 5 grave danger to exposure to COVID-19 --JUSTICE THOMAS: But who's --6 7 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- at work, Justice Thomas, and --8 9 JUSTICE THOMAS: -- who -- who is trying -- who refuses to do that? 10 11 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Ultimately, what 12 the agency is doing with these standards is 13 requiring that either through a vaccination 14 requirement or through a masking-and-testing 15 policy that unvaccinated workers who stand the 16 highest chance of contracting the virus at 17 work, of infecting others at work, and then, 18 ultimately, if they get -- if they catch COVID 19 at work, of then suffering death possibly or even hospitalization are protected in all of 20 21 those circumstances. So I think what this standard does is 2.2 23 it regulates employers by requiring them to adopt a policy that will directly target that 24

25

grave danger.

1	JUSTICE THOMAS: I I understand
2	that. But who is declining to do that? Is it
3	the employer or the employee?
4	GENERAL PRELOGAR: I think it can be
5	both. There are many employers around the
6	country that have voluntarily imposed these
7	kinds of requirements with their workers in
8	recognition that vaccination is the single most
9	effective way to protect workers in the
10	workplace or that have used masking and testing
11	requirements to the same end, so many employers
12	are doing it. But part of OSHA's function and
13	what Congress charged the agency with doing is
14	to look at those kinds of best practices and
15	impose them through standards to ensure that
16	workers, no matter what specific controls their
17	employers have in place, are maximally
18	protected.
19	JUSTICE THOMAS: One last question.
20	You make I think you put quite a bit of
21	weight on the acute crisis that we're in. But
22	do you would your argument also be would
23	your argument be the same for any infectious
24	disease that is taken into the workplace?
25	GENERAL PRELOGAR: No. I think that

1 with respect to other infectious diseases it 2 would be necessary for OSHA to develop the 3 record to demonstrate that the requisite risk level that the statute requires --4 5 JUSTICE THOMAS: But you could --GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- is satisfied. 6 7 JUSTICE THOMAS: -- it's not that you would do it, but could you do it? 8 9 GENERAL PRELOGAR: If there were, in 10 fact, a grave danger to employees posed by 11 another infectious disease, then, yes, we think 12 that Congress clearly contemplated that OSHA is 13 -- is obligated and charged with a 14 responsibility to protect workers. 15 JUSTICE THOMAS: Have you -- has OSHA 16 ever done that? 17 GENERAL PRELOGAR: OSHA has enacted 18 any number of standards --19 JUSTICE THOMAS: Example? 20 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- that address 21 those kinds of threats. For example, the 22 bloodborne pathogen standard that we have 23 pointed to before was intended to protect employees from the risk of viruses that they 24 25 can contract through bloodborne transmission.

- 1 So it's not --
- 2 JUSTICE THOMAS: Is that in -- is that
- 3 in the general workplace or just in healthcare
- 4 sectors?
- 5 GENERAL PRELOGAR: That standard
- 6 applied anywhere where employees can
- 7 predictably encounter bloodborne pathogens. So
- 8 it wasn't just the healthcare context. It can
- 9 apply to flight attendants. It can apply to
- 10 janitors. It was a standard that directly
- 11 targeted the exposure wherever it exists, just
- 12 like this one does.
- 13 JUSTICE THOMAS: Thank you.
- 14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: General, you
- said just a short while ago that this presented
- 16 -- COVID presented a grave danger to people in
- the workplace. In a few minutes, we'll hear an
- 18 argument in the CMS case, and it will be that
- 19 it presents a grave danger in Medicare and
- 20 Medicaid facilities.
- Not here, but in the lower courts, the
- 22 federal contractor mandate, the argument is
- 23 going to be it's a grave danger to federal
- 24 contractors.
- 25 Could you give me examples of some

- 1 federal agencies where you would be willing to
- 2 say COVID is not a grave danger in their -- in
- 3 that context?
- 4 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Well, Mr. Chief
- 5 Justice, I haven't, of course, surveyed the
- 6 landscape of all of the different authorities
- 7 that federal agencies can invoke. I -- I take
- 8 the point of the question --
- 9 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, but you
- 10 represent them on a regular basis here, so you
- 11 have a pretty general idea of some other
- 12 examples of federal agencies.
- 13 And my point obviously is that I don't
- think, as more and more mandates, more and more
- agencies come into place, it's a little hard to
- 16 accept the idea that this is particularized to
- 17 this thing, that it's an OSHA regulation, that
- it's a CMS regulation, that it's a federal
- 19 contractor regulation.
- It seems to me that it's that the
- 21 government is trying to work across the
- 22 waterfront and it's just going agency by
- 23 agency. I mean, this has been referred to, the
- 24 approach, as a workaround, and I'm wondering
- 25 what it is you're trying to work around.

1 GENERAL PRELOGAR: What we're trying 2 to do here and what OSHA did was rely on its 3 express statutory authority to provide -- to provide protection to America's workforce from 4 grave dangers like this one. 5 6 So I take the point and don't dispute 7 that COVID-19 is a danger in many contexts and falls within the jurisdiction of other agencies 8 9 as well, but I think to suggest that because 10 this disease is so prevalent, because it presents such a widespread harm, somehow OSHA 11 12 has less power to do anything about it with 13 respect to the --14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: No, it's not 15 so much that OSHA has less power. It's that 16 the idea that this is specific to particular 17 agencies really doesn't hold much water when 18 you're picking them off one by -- one by one. 19 I think maybe it should be analyzed more broadly as this is, in effect, an effort 20 21 to cover the waterfront. I'm not saying it's a 22 bad thing. 23 But I don't know that we should try to 24 find, okay, what specific thing can we find to 2.5 say, oh, this is covered by OSHA? What

1 specific thing can we find to say that this is 2 covered by the hospitals? What specific thing 3 can we find to say, oh, no, we're doing this because this is a federal contractor? 4 It seems to me that the more and more 5 6 mandates that pop up in different agencies, 7 it's fair -- I wonder if it's not fair for us to look at the Court as a general exercise of 8 9 power by the federal government and then ask the questions of, well, why doesn't Congress 10 11 have a say in this, and why don't the -- why 12 doesn't this be the primary responsibility of 13 the states? 14 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Congress absolutely 15 has a say in this, and it spoke here. It 16 passed the OSH Act and -- and promulgated 17 Section 655(c) specifically to empower OSHA to 18 take action to protect workers from grave 19 dangers from physically --20 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: When did it --21 when did it do that? 2.2 GENERAL PRELOGAR: The OSH Act was enacted in 1970, I believe. And the agency, as 23 24 it explained in the preamble to this rule,

documented substantial evidence to show why

2.5

- 1 this constitutes a grave danger in the
- 2 workplace.
- 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, I don't
- 4 think you can say that that's specifically
- 5 addressed -- addressed to this problem.
- 6 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Well, Mr. Chief
- 7 Justice, the Court obviously has a statute in
- 8 front of it that it needs to examine. I think
- 9 that there is no doubt that COVID-19
- 10 constitutes a physically hazardous agent within
- 11 the meaning of this provision. I think that
- 12 the immediacy and magnitude of harm here
- 13 clearly constitutes a grave danger.
- 14 Unvaccinated workers stand a 1-in-14 chance of
- being hospitalized, a 1-in-200 chance of dying.
- 16 The country hasn't --
- 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: It sounds like
- 18 the sort of thing --
- 19 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- seen numbers
- 20 like that --
- 21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: -- it sounds
- 22 like the sort of thing that states will be
- 23 responding to or should be or -- and that
- 24 Congress should be responding to or should be,
- 25 rather than, agency by agency, the federal

- 1 government, the executive branch, acting alone,
- 2 is responding to it. And we're supposed to
- 3 say, well, yes, this is a CMS problem; yes,
- 4 this is an OSHA problem; yes, this is a federal
- 5 contractor problem. The military is on its
- 6 own; they take orders.
- 7 But, again, I guess I'm just repeating
- 8 myself. It seems to me that we should be
- 9 looking at it as an across-the-board issue, as
- 10 opposed to let's see what OSHA looks like,
- 11 let's see what CMS looks like.
- 12 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Well, I think that
- 13 you --
- 14 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: General, this
- is -- I'm sorry. Go ahead.
- 16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Go ahead.
- 17 GENERAL PRELOGAR: I was just going to
- 18 say, Mr. Chief Justice, that I think the Court,
- in approaching issues of statutory
- 20 interpretation and looking at agencies'
- 21 regulatory authority, has always started with
- the text that Congress enacted for purposes of
- 23 understanding whether the agency has power to
- 24 act. And the fact that there are other
- 25 agencies here that likewise, we think, are

- 1 empowered to act to present -- to protect
- 2 America against what is -- what is happening in
- 3 this country right now shouldn't diminish the
- 4 force of the express statutory
- 5 authorization here.
- 6 JUSTICE BREYER: Yeah, but I think the
- 7 question is this. I mean, it is a rather deep
- 8 -- in a sense, a deep question. Can you -- or
- 9 maybe you did. Could the White House, say,
- 10 issue an order to all federal employees, and
- 11 what it says is every federal employee in any
- 12 agency who has authority under a statute, which
- means all of them, to require those whom they
- 14 regulate to insist that their employees be
- 15 vaccinated, do it?
- Now they can't legally tell you do it.
- But it's a strong policy. And that's what's
- 18 happened. Now I don't know the implications of
- 19 that. I never thought of that. But I think
- 20 that's what you're being asked, is that -- is
- 21 that -- and -- and I don't know if you ever
- thought of it. But, I mean, has that happened?
- 23 GENERAL PRELOGAR: I think it's
- 24 incorrect to say that that is what is happening
- 25 here. This policy clearly --

JUSTICE BREYER: Yeah, but, I mean, 1 2 has that happened generally? Has that 3 happened? Did somebody issue such an order? GENERAL PRELOGAR: Justice Breyer, 4 5 standing before you today, I'm not sure that I can think of a precise historical example of 6 7 that kind of order. JUSTICE BREYER: No, no, I mean in 8 9 this instance. The answer -- your answer, I take it, is no, there is no such order. 10 11 GENERAL PRELOGAR: That's right. I 12 mean, certainly, I think that -- that 13 throughout this nation there is --14 JUSTICE BREYER: I don't want to put 15 words in your mouth. Don't tell me there isn't 16 such an order if there is. 17 GENERAL PRELOGAR: No, I'm not aware 18 of any such order. 19 JUSTICE BREYER: All right. Or 20 something like that, okay. I have one other 21 question, which is because I'm operating 22 between two things. One is the -- the merits, 23 which might be difficult. I don't know. 24 not taking a view on that, but at least they're difficult and could take time. 2.5

1 And the other is the question of a 2 stay. Now, on the question of a stay, I read 3 from research that we've done, but I don't know if it's right, that the argument was -- what 4 about the argument that they've made? One is 5 6 that, well, if we issue a stay today, tomorrow 7 more people will stay home and things will get worse. See? That was one of their arguments. 8 9 And the other argument -- well, all 10 right, what about that? That seemed to me to 11 be the main one. 12 GENERAL PRELOGAR: As I understand the 13 argument, they're concerned about worker attrition with respect to that -- that 14 15 particular claim. 16 JUSTICE BREYER: Yeah. 17 GENERAL PRELOGAR: And the agency gave 18 sustained attention to this very issue. It 19 spanned several pages of the Federal Register. 20 The agency looked at surveys that attempt to 21 analyze how workers will respond and looked at 2.2 the real, on-the-ground practical experience of 23 companies that had imposed these kinds of mandates and found that there was substantial 24 2.5 compliance levels and that the concern that

- 1 workers would leave in droves was -- was
- 2 misplaced.
- 3 And then the agency further emphasized
- 4 that it had provided flexibility to employers
- 5 to adopt a mask-and-test policy instead of a
- 6 vaccination requirement specifically because
- 7 the employers are best positioned to understand
- 8 --
- 9 JUSTICE BREYER: Yeah. Okay. Okay.
- 10 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- their workforce
- and to know which of these options is going to
- 12 ensure maximum compliance.
- JUSTICE ALITO: On this --
- 14 JUSTICE BREYER: What about on the
- merits? I just have one other, which is on the
- 16 merits. You've heard and you've read the
- argument on the other side that, look, what
- 18 OSHA could easily have done or should have done
- is go through industry by industry or groups of
- 20 industries by groups of industries and -- and
- 21 say there's this here and there's that there.
- Instead, what they did is everybody
- over a hundred employees, except for, and then
- 24 they had a few exceptions, working alone,
- working at home, a religious exemption, you can

1 prove to us that you have some other thing 2 that's just as good. You know, they went that 3 way, across industries instead of one by the That's one of their arguments. 4 5 What would you say to that? 6 GENERAL PRELOGAR: My response to that 7 is that the Secretary here cited overwhelming scientific and medical evidence that the grave 8 9 danger exists based on how this virus is 10 transmitted anywhere people gather indoors 11 together. 12 And that applies to a lot of 13 workplaces, but that just turns on the nature of how this virus is communicable between 14 15 people. As -- as Justice Kagan noted, often 16 employees have little control over their work environments. They can't control whether they 17 18 can socially distance, who they come into 19 contact with, what precautions those people are 20 taking, what ventilation systems exist. And, 21 ultimately, OSHA determined that anywhere there 2.2 is a risk of indoor transmission, there is a 23 grave danger to unvaccinated employees.

Justice's hypothetical focused on -- I think

Now I take the point, as the Chief

24

2.5

- Justice Barrett focused on this as well -- that
- 2 there are certain workplaces -- factories,
- 3 assembly lines -- where the risk is even
- 4 graver, where the danger and the -- the chance
- 5 of transmission is heightened. But I don't
- 6 think that that in any sense calls into
- 7 question the Secretary's determination that
- 8 there is a baseline grave danger in any
- 9 worksite where that inside risk of transmission
- 10 can occur.
- 11 JUSTICE ALITO: Can I ask you a
- 12 question --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: General, can we --
- 14 I'm sorry.
- 15 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice Alito.
- JUSTICE ALITO: I just wanted to ask
- 17 you a question on this issue of the
- 18 commencement of enforcement and the issuance of
- 19 a stay.
- This ETS was issued a couple of months
- 21 ago, isn't that right?
- 22 GENERAL PRELOGAR: On November 5.
- 23 That's correct.
- JUSTICE ALITO: Yeah, on November 5.
- 25 All right. And it hasn't been enforced during

- 1 that period. These cases arrived at this Court
- 2 just a short time ago. They present lots of
- 3 difficult, complicated issues. We have
- 4 hundreds of pages of briefing. We're receiving
- 5 very helpful arguments this morning.
- Does the federal government object to
- 7 our taking a couple of days maybe to think
- 8 about this, to digest the arguments before
- 9 people start losing jobs?
- 10 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Well, Justice
- 11 Alito, if you're asking whether it would be
- 12 appropriate for the Court to issue a brief
- administrative stay, certainly, we think that
- 14 that would be within the Court's prerogative if
- it -- if it thinks that it's necessary to do
- 16 that.
- 17 Ultimately, for the injunction that
- 18 they're actually asking for here, the
- 19 Applicants would have to show an indisputably
- 20 clear right to relief, which we think they
- 21 can't satisfy.
- JUSTICE ALITO: Well, I -- no, I'm
- asking about an administrative stay. I won't
- 24 get into an argument about indisputably clear.
- 25 But your argument -- your point is you think it

1 would be appropriate or would not be 2 appropriate if we issued a short administrative 3 stay? Or if we do that, are you going to say, well, they're causing people to die every day? 4 5 GENERAL PRELOGAR: We do think that 6 the agency found that there is grave harm every 7 day, and the numbers are stark, thousands of 8 lives --9 JUSTICE ALITO: But there was that grave harm during every single day --10 11 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- hundreds of 12 thousands of hospitalizations over six months. 13 JUSTICE ALITO: -- but was there not 14 that same grave harm during every single day 15 between the time when this was issued and --16 and today? 17 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Well, certainly, we 18 think that the harm has existed and been present throughout, and the agency specifically 19 20 set aggressive compliance deadlines to --21 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, my answer -- I 22 asked a really simple question. And you have 23 the prerogative to say, no, we think, you know, horrible consequences are going to -- are going 24 25 to ensue if you issue even an administrative

- 1 stay of a short period of time, and we don't
- 2 think that you need to have that time to digest
- 3 this case and decide it.
- 4 GENERAL PRELOGAR: I'm not going to
- 5 say that, Justice Alito. If the Court believes
- 6 that it needs a brief administrative stay,
- 7 then, of course, it can enter it.
- 8 JUSTICE KAGAN: But you mean "brief,"
- 9 don't you?
- 10 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yes. We think that
- 11 there are lives being lost every day.
- 12 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, brief
- 13 compared --
- JUSTICE BREYER: I thought 750 --
- 15 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I'm sorry.
- 16 Brief compared to what? The months that it --
- 17 excuse me -- the months that it hasn't been in
- 18 effect since November, whatever it is, when the
- 19 courts have been active in this area, or
- 20 brief -- brief compared to what?
- 21 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Well, Mr. Chief
- Justice, I think that the agency well explained
- 23 that the employers who are covered by this
- 24 needed time to come into compliance. The
- 25 agency announced that it was exercising

- 1 enforcement discretion because of the confusion
- 2 that had been created by the Fifth Circuit
- 3 stay.
- 4 Maybe it would be helpful for me to
- 5 explain exactly what the January 10 deadline
- 6 means with respect to compliance. The agency
- 7 has announced that for employers who are acting
- 8 in good faith, it is not going to enforce any
- 9 of the provisions of this ETS until January 10.
- 10 And what that means as a practical matter is
- 11 that employers need to be adopting their
- 12 policies, they need to be ascertaining the
- vaccination status of their employees, and as
- of January 10, they need to be requiring
- 15 masking for any employees who remain
- 16 unvaccinated.
- 17 So it's not as though immediately
- 18 employee -- employees are going to be quitting
- 19 their jobs or leaving in response with the
- 20 worst predictions. On January 10, if this
- 21 standard remains in effect, then masking will
- 22 immediately be required, and the testing will
- 23 kick in on February 9.
- JUSTICE BREYER: So, if we delay that
- one day, maybe I'm wrong, and please tell me if

- 1 I am, but the numbers I read is, when they
- 2 issued this order, there were approximately
- 3 70-something thousand new cases every day. And
- 4 yesterday there were close to 750,000.
- 5 So, if we delay it a day and if it
- 6 were to have effect, then 750,000 more people
- 7 will have COVID who otherwise, if we didn't
- 8 delay it, wouldn't have? I mean, I -- I don't
- 9 doubt the power of the Court to issue a stay.
- 10 I'm just saying, what are the consequences of
- 11 that?
- 12 And if I'm wrong, you better tell me
- 13 I'm wrong because I -- I thought that it really
- 14 did make a difference to people who might get
- 15 -- you have the numbers. I saw the numbers.
- Well, all right, what -- so what --
- 17 what do you say? Now you say does not --
- that's really not a problem?
- 19 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Justice Breyer, we
- 20 -- we absolutely agree that this pandemic has
- 21 been dynamic, that it is constantly evolving
- 22 and that the current conditions are -- are
- 23 posing a truly grave danger.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: General, am I to
- 25 understand from your previous answer that

- enforcement qua testing doesn't occur until
 February 9, correct?

 GENERAL PRELOGAR: That's correct,

 Justice Sotomayor.
- 5 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: The only thing 6 that would happen in the next few days or -- up 7 to now, everybody should have a plan in place,
- 8 correct?
- 9 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Correct.
- 10 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: There's no -- been
- 11 no stay. So starting tomorrow, the only thing
- that are required are masks, correct?
- 13 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Masking for
- 14 unvaccinated workers, that's correct.
- 15 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: That's the only
- thing that occurs. And so, until February 9,
- when the testing comes into effect, that's when
- 18 the threat of -- of resignations or expense
- 19 comes into effect, correct?
- 20 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yes, as I
- 21 understand the -- what the Applicants are
- 22 arguing here, especially --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So --
- 24 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- on the testing
- aspect.

1 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- so the need for an administrative stay, if we're talking about 2 3 a few days, is really small, if -- very small, 4 correct? 5 GENERAL PRELOGAR: I certainly myself 6 do not think an administrative stay would be warranted here, but I of course defer to the 7 Court on that. 8 9 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: All right. One other question if I might --10 11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I'm sorry, I 12 don't believe I was --JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- counsel. 13 14 I want to go back to the Chief's 15 question and to Justice Thomas's question 16 and -- and in part, to Neil -- to Justice 17 Gorsuch's questions earlier, the issue of who 18 should act and who can act. 19 An agency takes a while to act, and 20 this is -- and it's acting under an emergency 21 order or an emergency statutory delegation by 22 Congress. And the Chief says, Congress should 23 act; we shouldn't let every agency act. 24 Could you speak about the relative 25 both expertise and speed with which Congress

- 1 can act in -- to survey the countless worksites
- 2 in our economy to identify the health and
- 3 safety hazards in each one and to legislate
- 4 with the granular specificity necessary --
- 5 necessary to address the hazards in all of
- 6 these different workplaces?
- 7 I understood the fact that in an
- 8 emergency we should not violate the
- 9 Constitution, but I'm not quite sure what
- 10 regulation of safe and healthy, what provision
- 11 of the Constitution it violates.
- But I want you to get to the -- to --
- 13 to the general question some of my colleagues
- 14 have raised. Who's in a better position to act
- and why and why is it in a better position to
- 16 act constitutionally?
- 17 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yes. Of course,
- 18 Justice Sotomayor.
- To be clear, we think that Congress
- 20 has already acted here in passing
- 21 Section 655(c) to authorize OSHA to take this
- 22 kind of swift action in response to an
- 23 emergency situation.
- 24 If you look at the plain text of the
- 25 statute, we think that OSHA's standard clearly

- 1 falls within the terms that Congress enacted.
- 2 COVID-19 is a grave danger, it's a physically
- 3 harmful agent, and the agency found that these
- 4 measures are essential to protect workers.
- 5 So we think that the statutory
- 6 language already exists. And to the extent
- 7 that the Applicants are suggesting that there's
- 8 some kind of specific authorization requirement
- 9 here that Congress had to do more, I think that
- 10 gets to the heart of your question, which is
- 11 that when this Court has interpreted statutes
- before, it hasn't departed from plain meaning
- and imposed that kind of burden on Congress to
- 14 legislate with that specificity and that
- 15 granularity, particularly in an emergency
- 16 situation like this one.
- 17 And the Applicants have pointed to no
- 18 aspect of the statute that would warrant that
- 19 kind of result here. It's their interpretation
- 20 that runs counter to express statutory
- 21 provisions, Section 669(a)(5), that
- 22 specifically contemplates that immunization
- 23 requirements can be imposed, the American
- 24 Recovery Plan Act that -- where Congress
- 25 specifically appropriated \$100 million to OSHA

- 1 and directed it in -- in the words of the
- 2 legislation to carry out COVID-19-related
- 3 worker protection activities.
- 4 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well,
- 5 you're -- you're saying that Congress acted.
- 6 Don't -- don't complain that Congress hasn't
- 7 done anything and that -- you know, that was 50
- 8 years ago that you're saying Congress acted. I
- 9 don't think it had COVID in mind. That was
- 10 almost closer to the Spanish Flu than it is to
- 11 today's problem.
- 12 Now I understand the idea that
- agencies are more expert than Congress, and I
- 14 understand the idea that they can move more
- 15 quickly than Congress. But this is something
- 16 that the federal government has never done
- 17 before, right, mandated vaccine coverage?
- 18 GENERAL PRELOGAR: It's true that
- 19 there has been no standard that looks exactly
- 20 like this one. The federal government has
- 21 encouraged vaccination as this standard does in
- 22 other provisions like the bloodborne pathogens
- 23 standard. And masking and medical testing of
- 24 employees are common features of OSHA
- 25 standards.

1 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, is --2 is -- is it that important consideration that 3 we should take into effect, for example, along with the fact that the police power to take 4 such action is more commonly exercised by the 5 6 states, and we've had many cases coming out of 7 the states and municipalities that -- that give -- that -- that evidence that. 8 And also that it's -- yes, 50 years 9 10 ago Congress passed a general provision, but I 11 think it's certainly hard to argue, and you're 12 doing a good job of it, that that gives free 13 rein to the agencies to take -- I guess this is 14 invoking the major cases doctrine, that it 15 gives free rein to the agencies to enact such 16 broad regulation that is -- was certainly 17 unfamiliar to Congress in 1970. 18 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Well, there are a 19 lot of elements to that question. I'd like to 20 try to take them in turn. 21 I -- I -- I think that Congress did 22 specifically contemplate that there would be 23 emergency situations that posed grave dangers 24 to workers throughout America, and it 25 specifically empowered OSHA to take action in

- 1 response to that.
- 2 I understand the -- the suggestion
- 3 here that the standard is unprecedented, but I
- 4 don't think it withstands scrutiny. If you
- 5 look at the various claims that the Applicants
- 6 are making, they -- they first object to the
- 7 scope of the standard, the number of employers
- 8 who are covered, but OSHA commonly issues
- 9 nationwide standards that govern all employers
- 10 throughout the nation with respect to risks
- 11 that exist throughout the nation, and that
- describes COVID-19. There is substantial
- 13 evidence here to justify the scope of the
- 14 standard.
- 15 With --
- 16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank -- go
- 17 ahead.
- 18 GENERAL PRELOGAR: And just to -- to
- 19 close the loop with one final response, which
- 20 is to focus on the particular mitigation
- 21 measures. There too, we think that there is no
- 22 indication that Congress couldn't have
- 23 anticipated or intended OSHA to use these types
- of measures to combat a deadly virus at work.
- 25 Immunization is specifically

- 1 referenced in Section 669(a)(5). It is the
- 2 single most effective way to target the spread
- 3 of a deadly virus, and to think that Congress
- 4 would have meant to preclude OSHA from
- 5 encouraging vaccination, I think, is
- 6 inconsistent both with the text of the statute
- 7 and with the broader history of immunization
- 8 requirements in this country, which have
- 9 commonly been imposed.
- 10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
- 11 counsel.
- 12 Justice Thomas, anything further?
- JUSTICE THOMAS: Just I'm -- I'm
- 14 curious. This probably doesn't go to the
- disposition of this matter, but is a vaccine
- the only way to treat COVID?
- 17 GENERAL PRELOGAR: It is certainly the
- 18 single most effective way to target all of the
- 19 hazards OSHA identified, both the -- the
- 20 chances of contracting the virus in the first
- 21 place, the risk of infecting other workers on
- the worksite, and with respect to the negative
- 23 health consequences, that vaccination provides
- 24 protection on all of those fronts.
- JUSTICE THOMAS: Thank you.

1	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
2	Breyer, anything further?
3	Justice Alito?
4	JUSTICE ALITO: On the issue of
5	whether you're trying to squeeze an elephant
6	into a mouse hole and the question of whether
7	this is fundamentally different from anything
8	that OSHA has ever done before, I want to see
9	if it might be fundamentally different in at
LO	least two respects and get your answer to to
L1	the question.
L2	Most OSHA regulations, all of the ones
L3	with which I'm familiar, affect employees when
L 4	they are on the job but not when they are not
L5	on the job. And this affects employees all the
L 6	time. If you're vaccinated while you're on the
L7	job, you're vaccinated when you're not on the
L8	job.
L9	Isn't this different from anything
20	OSHA has done before in that respect?
21	GENERAL PRELOGAR: So two responses to
22	that. First, of course, there's also a
23	mask-and-test option here, so I think even
24	JUSTICE ALITO: Okay
25	GENERAL PRELOGAR: on that

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1
               JUSTICE ALITO: -- well, right now --
 2
              GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- analysis --
 3
               JUSTICE ALITO: -- I'm talking just
      about the vaccine.
 4
 5
               GENERAL PRELOGAR: So focusing just on
 6
      vaccination, I think that that's a way to
7
      describe it, that it also provides protection
8
      when you're not at work.
9
               But OSHA was directly targeting and --
10
      and trying to provide the protection at work,
11
      and I don't think there's any basis in the text
12
      of the statute to think that this kind of --
13
               JUSTICE ALITO: All right. Suppose
14
      that --
15
               GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- protection is
16
      off limits.
17
               JUSTICE ALITO: -- I mean, suppose --
18
      this is a little science fiction, but maybe it
19
     will illustrate a point.
20
               Suppose that this protection were
21
     provided not by the administration of a vaccine
22
     but by waving a wand over employees when they
23
     arrive at work, and suppose that wand also had
24
      the capability of taking away this protection
25
     when the employee leaves work.
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1 Would OSHA have the authority to tell 2 employees you must -- we will -- we are going 3 to wave -- you must have this wand waved over you when you arrive, but you can't have it 4 5 taken off when you leave? 6 GENERAL PRELOGAR: No, I don't think 7 that OSHA would have that authority. JUSTICE ALITO: All right. So it's 8 different in that respect. And here's another 9 respect in which it may be different. And I 10 11 don't want to be misunderstood in making this 12 point because I'm not saying the vaccines are 13 unsafe. The FDA has approved them. It's found 14 that they're safe. It's said that the benefits 15 greatly outweigh the risks. I'm not contesting 16 that in any way. I don't want to be 17 misunderstood. I'm sure I will be 18 misunderstood. I just want to emphasize I'm 19 not making that point. 20 But is it not the case that this -these vaccines and every other vaccine of which 21 22 I'm aware and many other medications have 23 benefits and they also have risks and that some 24 people who are vaccinated and some people who 2.5 take medication that is highly beneficial will

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1 suffer adverse consequences? Is that not true
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- 2 of these vaccines? And if that is -- is that
- 3 true?
- 4 GENERAL PRELOGAR: That can be true,
- 5 but, of course, there is far, far greater risk
- 6 from being --
- JUSTICE ALITO: But there are --
- 8 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- unvaccinated --
- 9 JUSTICE ALITO: -- there is -- there
- 10 --
- 11 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- by orders of
- 12 magnitude.
- 13 JUSTICE ALITO: Right. There is some
- 14 risk, do you dispute that?
- 15 GENERAL PRELOGAR: There can be a very
- minimal risk with respect to some individuals,
- 17 but -- but, again, I would emphasize that I
- 18 think that -- there would be no basis to think
- 19 that these FDA-approved and authorized vaccines
- 20 are not safe and effective. They are the
- 21 single-most effective.
- JUSTICE ALITO: No, I'm not making
- 23 that point. I tried to make it as clear as I
- 24 could. I'm not making that point. I'm not
- 25 making that point. I'm not making that point.

1	There is a risk, right? Has any other
2	has OSHA ever imposed any other safety
3	regulation that imposes some extra risk, some
4	different risk, on the employee, so that if you
5	have to wear a hard hat on the job, wearing a
6	hard hat has some adverse health consequences?
7	Can you think of anything else that's like
8	this?
9	GENERAL PRELOGAR: I can't think of
LO	anything else that's precisely like this, but I
L1	think that to suggest that OSHA is precluded
L2	from using the most common, routine, safe,
L3	effective, proven strategy to fight an
L 4	infectious disease at work would be a departure
L5	from how this statute should be understood.
L 6	JUSTICE KAGAN: Can I just say,
L7	General, that regulators think of risk/risk
L 8	tradeoffs constantly when they make
L9	regulations, that there are constant situations
20	in which there are risk/risk tradeoffs, risks
21	on both sides, but one risk vastly outweighs
22	another risk and that that comes up throughout
23	regulatory space.
24	GENERAL PRELOGAR: That's absolutely
25	true. And one of the risks that OSHA was

1 quarding against here was the risk that 2 unvaccinated workers posed to other workers 3 because they are so much more likely to 4 transmit --5 JUSTICE ALITO: To other --6 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- this deadly 7 disease to them. 8 JUSTICE ALITO: -- what type of workers? To other -- to vaccinated workers? 9 10 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yes, the grave 11 danger finding --12 JUSTICE ALITO: I thought the --13 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- was based on unvaccinated --14 15 JUSTICE ALITO: -- Secretary --16 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- workers. JUSTICE ALITO: -- disclaimed that. 17 18 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yes. The grave 19 danger finding is limited to unvaccinated 20 workers --21 JUSTICE ALITO: Right, so that's not __ 2.2 23 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- who are far more 24 likely to --2.5 JUSTICE ALITO: -- a concern for us?

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1
               GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- contract it from
 2
      their coworkers as well.
               JUSTICE ALITO: That's not a concern
 3
      for us, is it? We can't sustain this on that
 4
      ground, that this is helpful to the vaccinated
 5
     workers because the unvaccinated workers
 6
7
     present a risk to them.
               GENERAL PRELOGAR: Oh, to be clear,
 8
 9
      they present a risk to other unvaccinated
10
     workers --
11
               JUSTICE ALITO: All of whom have --
12
               GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- who might be
13
      older --
14
               JUSTICE ALITO: -- all of --
15
               GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- who might have
16
      other comorbidities --
               JUSTICE ALITO: -- all of whom have
17
18
     balanced the risks differently, maybe very
19
      foolishly, but they want to balance the risks
20
     presented to their health in a different way.
21
     And OSHA says, no, you can't do that, and that
22
      applies when you're on the job and also when
23
     you're not on the job and for the rest of your
24
      life because you have to take these vaccines,
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unless the testing option is viable.

1 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Well, one small 2 factual correction if I could and then a 3 broader legal point. I think it's wrong to say that everyone who's unvaccinated is just 4 5 assuming the risk. Some people can't get 6 vaccinations for medical reasons. Some people 7 have deeply held religious beliefs and are 8 entitled to religious exemptions. And OSHA is 9 entitled to try to protect those unvaccinated 10 workers, no matter the reason they're 11 unvaccinated. 12 Just on the broader legal point, the 13 idea that OSHA is powerless to act to protect 14 workers if they simply want to assume the risk 15 is inconsistent with how the OSH Act has been 16 understood throughout its history. OSHA 17 frequently requires employers to require that the employees use protective gear --18 19 JUSTICE ALITO: No, but isn't -- isn't it --20 21 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- or take 22 precautions. It's not --JUSTICE ALITO: -- isn't it the case 23 that, most of the time, there's this strong 24 reason for saying that it isn't a defense to an 25

- 1 OSH Act charge, that the employers assumed the
- 2 risk voluntarily, that under most
- 3 circumstances, employers have an incentive to
- 4 avoid compliance with, to avoid the cost and
- 5 inconvenience of a regulation, and so we don't
- 6 want to have the -- put the employees under
- 7 pressure, overt or implied, to -- to waive the
- 8 protection of a -- a regulation, a protective
- 9 regulation?
- 10 But there's no such incentive here.
- 11 They're free. The vaccines are free. And to
- 12 the extent they keep workers healthy and on the
- job, it's in the interests of the employers to
- 14 have them vaccinated.
- 15 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Well, certainly,
- 16 the -- the fact that workers in the past have
- 17 not wanted to use certain protections has not
- 18 provided a defense to regulations that have
- 19 been issued under the OSH Act.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Counsel, if I
- 21 might just go back to Justice Alito's question,
- there's no vaccine mandate here, correct?
- 23 GENERAL PRELOGAR: That's correct.
- 24 And that's what I started with, that, of
- course, any employer can opt for the

1 mask-and-test option instead. 2 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So, really, the 3 question is between masking and testing and/or vaccine, but no employer is being put at risk 4 5 greater than they choose to undertake 6 themselves, correct? 7 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yes. The -- the employers have a choice to adopt either of 8 those policies. And OSHA estimated that 9 10 40 percent of employers would adopt the 11 mask-and-test policy. 12 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Number two, with 13 respect to the issue of whether a person has 14 chosen to run the risk by being unvaccinated, 15 you point out that some people can't for a 16 variety of different reasons. But the risk 17 here is not just to the person; it's to 18 everybody else they put at risk, correct? 19 GENERAL PRELOGAR: That's correct. 20 The grave danger finding was premised on 21 unvaccinated individuals, but OSHA emphasized 22 that ensuring that unvaccinated individuals are 23 not spreading the virus in the workplace will 24 protect everyone they come into contact with. 2.5 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So they may not be

- 1 a grave danger to other -- other people, but I
- don't see why OSHA has to close its eyes to the
- 3 fact that they place grave risks to
- 4 unvaccinated and substantial risk to other
- 5 people, correct?
- 6 GENERAL PRELOGAR: That's right, and
- 7 OSHA specifically emphasized that vaccinated
- 8 individuals may still be at significant risk.
- 9 It wasn't ruling out that possibility. Its
- 10 grave danger finding was focused on all of the
- 11 ways that -- that being unvaccinated
- 12 contributes to the spread of this disease.
- 13 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Thank you,
- 14 counsel.
- 15 JUSTICE ALITO: Is the testing
- 16 alternative viable at the present time in light
- of the stories that we see about the long lines
- 18 that are required to be tested?
- 19 GENERAL PRELOGAR: The agency gave
- 20 sustained attention to testing capacity in the
- 21 preamble to the rule. It looked at existing
- 22 testing capacity and projected out of what
- 23 additional capacity would be necessary for
- 24 employers that choose to adopt the
- 25 mask-and-test policy and concluded that there

- 1 would be ample testing in order to comply with
- 2 the rule.
- 3 I'm obviously familiar with the -- the
- 4 news stories that you're referencing, and I
- 5 think that the agency could adjust if that
- 6 proves to be a problem, but with respect to
- 7 reviewing this rule, there was certainly a
- 8 substantial basis for the Secretary to conclude
- 9 that this was a viable option.
- 10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice Kagan?
- 11 JUSTICE KAGAN: General, I'd like to
- 12 ask the -- the -- the government's views of the
- major questions doctrine that a number of my
- 14 colleagues have asked about.
- 15 And as I -- I see it, there are sort
- of two ways that such a doctrine could operate.
- One is with respect to ambiguous statutes,
- 18 ambiguous either because they're vague or
- 19 because there are statutes that seem to have
- 20 conflicting provisions, you know, where they
- 21 point both ways, and then the major questions
- 22 doctrine is an aid to interpretation of that
- 23 statute. It's essentially a kind of clue about
- 24 how you should interpret a very
- 25 difficult-to-understand statute.

1 And the second way is there's really 2 nothing difficult to understand about this. 3 The agency action falls within the scope of the statutory authority. There's just no question 4 that it does. And yet, because the agency 5 action is kind of a big deal, we're just going 6 7 to ignore the fact that it falls clearly within the scope of the delegated authority and say 8 9 that, notwithstanding that that's true, 10 Congress has to re-up it. 11 So I think I'd like you to talk about 12 those two versions of the major questions 13 doctrine with respect to this rule. You know, 14 does -- what do you think of those two 15 versions, and which of the versions potentially 16 applies here? GENERAL PRELOGAR: I think that 17 18 perfectly encapsulates the two versions. And 19 we think that this Court's precedents clearly demonstrate that it's the first version that 20 21 you articulated is the way that the Court has 22 previously considered economic and political 23 consequences. So it's never been the case that the 24 2.5 Court has started at the outset by saying does

1 this seem like a big deal, does this agency action have a lot of consequences, and then 3 used that as a basis to depart from the plain language of the statute or to say Congress has 4 to specifically authorize it; we're not going 5 6 to give the statutory text its -- its ordinary 7 meaning. Instead, in the cases where the Court 8 9 has looked at those kinds of consequences, it has always identified a conflict with other 10 11 express statutory language, a conflict with other statutes that Congress has enacted that 12 13 directly addressed the issue at question, or a conflict with the entire structure of the 14 15 statute such that it would be unrecognizable to 16 the Congress that enacted it. 17 And it's only been in those situations 18 where the Court has identified a textual and 19 structural problem with the agency's 20 interpretation in the beginning, using those 21 traditional tools of statutory construction, 2.2 that the Court has then gone on to say that its 23 interpretation of the statute is confirmed by 24 the economic and political consequences that

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would ensue.

1 So I think it would be a sea change 2 for this Court to reverse the order of 3 operations as the Applicants are asking for here and to start off by asking does this seem 4 5 like it has economic and political 6 consequences, and it would ultimately do a 7 disservice to principles of the separation of powers and to -- to Congress's ability to have 8 9 its clear statutory enactments, even if they're broad, given the effect that they have. 10 11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice 12 Gorsuch? 13 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Yes. So my -- my 14 question with respect to the major questions 15 doctrine is this: We accept that it's not our 16 role to decide public health questions, but it 17 is our important job to decide who should 18 decide those questions. 19 I think we all agree on that. And, here, our choice on the one hand is a federal 20 21 agency and on the other hand the Congress of 2.2 the United States and state governments. Now you argue we should not consider 23 24 the major questions doctrine unless and until 2.5 we find a statutory ambiguity. I understand

- 1 that. But let's -- let's say the Court does
- 2 find such an ambiguity. I know you'll contest
- 3 the premise, but let's just work on it.
- 4 If -- if there is an ambiguity, why
- 5 isn't this a major question that, therefore,
- 6 belongs to the people's representatives of the
- 7 states and in the halls of Congress, given that
- 8 the statute at issue here is, as the Chief
- 9 Justice pointed out, 50 years old, doesn't
- 10 address this question.
- 11 The rule affects, I believe, we're
- told, 80 million people, and the government
- reserves the right to extend it to every
- 14 private business in the country.
- 15 Traditionally, states have had the
- 16 responsibility for overseeing vaccination
- 17 mandates. I rejected a challenge to one just
- 18 the other day from New Mexico.
- 19 Congress has had a year to act on the
- 20 question of vaccine mandates already. As the
- 21 Chief Justice points out, it appears that the
- federal government is going agency by agency as
- 23 a workaround to its inability to get Congress
- 24 to act.
- The risks imposed here are not

- 1 unilateral. There are risks to those who
- 2 choose not to be vaccinated that they're trying
- 3 to avoid sometimes, as you discussed with
- 4 Justice Alito and conceded to him.
- 5 Traditionally, OSHA has had rules that
- 6 affect workplace hazards that are unique to the
- 7 workplace and don't involve hazards that affect
- 8 individuals 24 hours a day.
- 9 So that's kind of the general tick
- 10 list we have before us, and I'd just like you
- 11 to address, again, the question, assuming the
- 12 statute's ambiguous, why isn't this a major
- 13 question that normally under our Constitution
- 14 would reserve -- be reserved for the people's
- 15 representatives in the states in the first
- instance and in the halls of Congress in the
- 17 second?
- 18 GENERAL PRELOGAR: So accepting the
- assumption that there's an ambiguity, which, of
- 20 course, we disagree with, as you know, I think
- 21 that many of the factors you identified are
- just simply inconsistent with the whole premise
- 23 of the OSH Act.
- So it's true that states have a police
- 25 power over health and safety. But, as this

- 1 Court recognized in the Gade case, Congress in
- 2 enacting the OSH Act specifically brought the
- 3 federal government into the role of protecting
- 4 the health and safety of America's workers and
- 5 displacing and preempting state law in that
- 6 field.
- 7 And so I think the idea that simply
- 8 because states have that residual police power
- 9 provides a basis to assume that the OSH Act
- 10 can't have any application or that there has to
- 11 be a specific authorization here of each and
- 12 every type of mitigation measure is just
- 13 fundamentally inconsistent with Congress's
- 14 policy as embodied in that Act.
- 15 JUSTICE GORSUCH: What do we make of
- 16 the fact that Congress -- that OSHA has not
- traditionally mandated other vaccines for other
- 18 hazards that could be -- pose a graze -- grave
- 19 risk, some might say? The flu kills people
- 20 every year. Other grave diseases do too. And
- 21 there are vaccines against many. And -- and we
- don't need to list them all.
- But, traditionally, OSHA has not
- 24 regulated in this area.
- 25 GENERAL PRELOGAR: I think that that's

- 1 explained by the fact that COVID-19 is an
- 2 unprecedented pandemic that has a magnitude and
- 3 proportion that --
- 4 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Well, polio --
- 5 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- OSHA has never
- 6 seen before.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- I mean, people
- 8 forget polio. That was a pretty bad, you can
- 9 call it a pandemic, you can call it an endemic,
- 10 I don't know what you'd call it, but it was a
- 11 terrible scourge on this country for many
- 12 years.
- We have vaccines against that -- that,
- 14 but the federal government through OSHA, so far
- as I know, and you can correct me, does not
- 16 mandate every worker in the country to receive
- 17 such a vaccine. We have flu vaccines. The flu
- 18 kills, I believe, hundreds, thousands of people
- 19 every year. OSHA has never purported to
- 20 regulate on that basis.
- 21 What do we make of that when we're
- thinking about what qualifies as a major
- 23 question and what doesn't?
- 24 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Well, with respect
- 25 to other diseases where there are effective

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1 vaccinations, I think that the simple
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- 2 explanation for why OSHA hasn't had to regulate
- 3 workplace exposure to that is because virtually
- 4 all workers are already vaccinated.
- 5 With respect to many of those
- 6 diseases, all of us have at one time or another
- 7 been subject to compulsory vaccination
- 8 requirements --
- 9 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Is that true with
- 10 the flu?
- 11 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- mostly --
- 12 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Do we -- do we know
- 13 that to be true with the flu?
- 14 GENERAL PRELOGAR: The flu is an
- exception because it's a seasonal illness, and,
- 16 there, I think that the explanation for the
- failure to regulate is that it doesn't present
- anything approximating the kind of hazard or
- 19 danger to workers as COVID-19. I -- I don't
- 20 want to suggest that it would be --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Are you suggesting
- that it doesn't pose a grave risk?
- 23 GENERAL PRELOGAR: I think that the
- 24 agency would have to build the record to
- demonstrate that it would clear that statutory

1 hurdle for --2 JUSTICE GORSUCH: But it might? 3 GENERAL PRELOGAR: It would depend on the evidence. Certainly, if there were another 4 5 1918 influenza outbreak like the country 6 experienced before, yes, absolutely, I think 7 OSHA could regulate exposure to influenza in 8 the workplace. That's similar to what's 9 happening -- happening with COVID-19 right now. 10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice 11 Kavanaugh? 12 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: I want to follow 13 up on Justice Gorsuch's and Justice Kagan's 14 questions with how the major questions doctrine 15 applies and really first zero in on this 16 question of ambiguity. 17 We've used words like vague, subtle, 18 oblique, cryptic, and ambiguous to describe the 19 kind of language that would trigger the major questions doctrine if it is a major question. 20 21 We haven't only used the word 22 ambiguous. And it seems to me that a question 23 that I'd like your help on is applying language 24 that is subtle, cryptic, oblique to a new context hasn't been done before in the last 50 2.5

1 years. How do we think about a question like that? And in answering that, think about the benzene case, the Brown & Williamson case with 3 tobacco, benzene with cancer, and the UARG case 4 with greenhouse gas emissions. All three were 5 6 the agency was applying this broad but arguably 7 cryptic language to a new context. I think that's one way to characterize them. 8 9 How do we think about that? 10 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Well, I think, 11 Justice Kavanaugh, looking at those three cases 12 in particular, that the reason the Court 13 concluded that the language was -- was cryptic 14 or oblique was because it identified other 15 textual or structural reasons that ran counter to the agency's interpretation. 16 17 So, in the utility air case that you 18 referenced, the Court observed that the 19 asserted regulation would overthrow the entire 20 statutory scheme. The agency had conceded that 21 it was never what Congress could have possibly 2.2 intended. So that was a structural indication 23 that the agency's regulation was impermissible. 24 With respect to the benzene case, 2.5 there too, there was a question about whether

- 1 there was an entitlement to regulate without
- 2 any finding of risk, and that was in tension
- 3 with other statutory provisions, so there was a
- 4 conflict.
- 5 And with the Brown & Williamson case
- 6 that you mentioned, the Court chronicled a long
- 7 line of statutes that had directly addressed
- 8 the issue of regulation of tobacco products and
- 9 would have been flatly inconsistent with the
- 10 agency's asserted jurisdiction.
- 11 So there's never been a case where the
- 12 Court has just confronted broad language and
- 13 said, oh, it seems cryptic or oblique and so
- it's a major question and we're not going to
- 15 give it its plain meaning. In all of those
- 16 cases, there was a -- a -- a textual and
- 17 structural reason for the Court to conclude
- 18 that there was something wrong with the
- 19 agency's claimed authority.
- 20 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: In all three
- 21 cases, there were strong dissents that said the
- 22 opposite of that, though, that said actually
- 23 the statutory language is clear and that the
- 24 Court -- you know, Justice Marshall's dissent
- in the benzene case is very powerful that the

- 1 Court was simply scaling back from the plain
- 2 language because of its concern about the
- 3 significance of regulating every workplace in
- 4 America to take out any risk of cancer.
- 5 So there were dissents that made that
- 6 point, but the majority seemed nonetheless to
- 7 apply the major questions doctrine.
- 8 GENERAL PRELOGAR: There were
- 9 certainly dissents in those cases that thought
- 10 that the statutory terms could get the agency
- 11 there. But, here, I think the critical
- 12 difference is that the Applicants haven't
- pointed to anything in this statute that
- 14 approximates the kind of textual or structural
- problem that has prompted the Court to look at
- those kinds of consequences before.
- 17 And it would be their interpretation
- 18 that creates those problems. They would render
- 19 superfluous Section 669(a)(5)'s specific
- 20 recognition that immunization requirements can
- 21 be imposed under the OSH Act itself. By saying
- 22 that OSHA can't regulate COVID-19 in the
- workplace, they'd give no effect to Congress's
- 24 appropriation just last year directing OSHA to
- do just that and to target that grave danger.

1 And so, in this case, we think that 2 all of the textual clues line up on our side, 3 in addition to the plain language of the statute. 4 5 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: And one other 6 question related to this -- sorry to prolong 7 this -- but Congress has specifically referred to vaccines in a variety of contexts. 8 Immigration contexts, those statutes authorize 9 10 specifically via language vaccines. Military 11 contexts, which you would expect, at least the 12 Anthrax vaccine is referenced in the military 13 statutes. The National Childhood Vaccine Act passed in '86 refers, and it's a different 14 15 context, but dealing with vaccines. And so 16 that's one point. 17 And the other is since -- not forever, 18 but 2005, President Bush gave a very detailed 19 speech kind of predicting what has happened, and it's eerie to read it, and yet, in the --20 21 in the years since, there has not been at least 2.2 a vaccine statute passed by Congress to deal 23 with this kind of thing, even though he, in -in the wake of 9/11, but still was putting the 24 2.5 country on notice of this problem that was

- 1 going to hit us at some point.
- 2 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Well, I certainly
- 3 recognize that there are other statutes where
- 4 Congress has specifically referred to
- 5 vaccination, and I think that maybe that would
- 6 get the Applicants some traction here if, for
- 7 example, this Act specifically referred to
- 8 other mitigation measures and -- and
- 9 illuminated what kinds of things OSHA could do
- 10 and left vaccination off the list. But it
- 11 doesn't do that.
- 12 And so I think to suggest that there
- is some negative inference to be drawn is
- inconsistent with how Congress drafted this
- 15 statute in recognition that OSHA would be
- 16 positioned to understand the kinds of control
- measures that are necessary against the variety
- 18 of workplace hazards.
- 19 And if I could make just make one
- 20 additional point on that. Of course, as I've
- 21 emphasized, there is an express reference to
- 22 immunization requirements in the OSH Act
- itself, so we think that that actually provides
- 24 additional confirmation that Congress was
- 25 thinking about that and could have anticipated

- 1 it and that religious exemption would have no
- 2 application if, in fact, immunization is just
- 3 off limits.
- 4 But I think as well it's important to
- 5 look at this against the backdrop of
- 6 immunization requirements in our country. This
- 7 is not some kind of newfangled thing. As I've
- 8 mentioned before, most of us have been subject
- 9 to compulsory vaccination requirements at
- 10 various points throughout our lifetime.
- 11 And so the idea that Congress couldn't
- 12 have anticipated that in dealing with the --
- 13 the deadliest virus that OSHA has experienced
- in its history, it might think that vaccination
- 15 -- encouragement of vaccination would be an
- appropriate way to protect workers, I think, is
- 17 just inconsistent with the idea that
- 18 vaccination is often the single-most effective
- 19 way to target a virus.
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Thank you.
- 21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 22 Barrett?
- JUSTICE BARRETT: General Prelogar, I
- 24 have two questions, both of which address the
- 25 status of this rule as an emergency temporary

- 1 standard. So my first question has to do with
- 2 the question with which Justice Thomas opened,
- 3 which is the meaning of "necessary." So, of
- 4 course, when OSHA passes a rule through its
- 5 regular regulatory process, it has to go
- 6 through notice and comment, and that's a way of
- 7 holding an agency accountable. All affected
- 8 people have an opportunity to comment, and the
- 9 agency develops a robust record.
- 10 With an ETS, of course, the agency can
- 11 circumvent that process so that it can act more
- 12 quickly. So, for an ETS, we would want that
- power to be the exception, not the rule. And
- one contrast that the Applicants point out
- between OSHA's authority to issue an ETS versus
- 16 a regular regulation is that for its exercise
- of power in the normal course, it need only
- find that a regulation be reasonably necessary,
- but, for an ETS, it has to satisfy a necessary
- 20 standard.
- Now you've argued, and I think there's
- 22 a lot of intuitive appeal to this, that when
- you're facing an emergency of the magnitude of
- 24 this pandemic, that this power effectively --
- 25 can be used most effectively as a blunt

1 instrument. You know, we don't have time to 2 make industry by industry specific kind of 3 calculations because we want to move with 4 speed. 5 But how do you reconcile that understanding of "necessary" with the broader 6 "reasonably necessary" standard in OSHA's 7 normal regulatory authority? 8 9 GENERAL PRELOGAR: So we certainly 10 agree that the Emergency Temporary Standard's reference to "necessary" as contrasted with 11 12 "reasonably necessary and appropriate" is a --13 is a heightened burden and includes a measure 14 of tailoring that's necessary with respect to 15 the particular mitigation measures. But I don't think that that helps the 16 17 Applicants here because they haven't come 18 forward with any alternative mitigation 19 measures that they think would equally protect 20 the workers that OSHA found were in grave --21 JUSTICE BARRETT: But do they have --2.2 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- danger. 23 JUSTICE BARRETT: -- to come forward with that evidence, or did OSHA have to 24 25 consider it and reject it? Because another

part of their contention is that OSHA did not 1 2 adequately explain why this measure, this particular rule and its scope was necessary 3 4 $vis-\alpha-vis$ or as compared to other 5 possibilities. 6 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Well, OSHA explained that at length over dozens of pages 8 in the 150-page preamble to the rule. OSHA specifically explained why vaccination as the single most effective way to target all of the 10 11 ways that the virus threatens workers in the 12 workplace was a necessary measure here. 1.3 And it further explained why masking 14 and testing would be essential if workers 15 remain unvaccinated, in order to ensure that, 16 despite their higher risk level of contracting the virus, they couldn't carry it into the 17 18 workplace and spread it to their coworkers. 19 So I think the suggestion that this 2.0 wasn't adequately explained is inconsistent 21 with the -- the arguments they're making. 2.2 And as I understand their tailoring 23 arguments -- and this actually touches on the question you asked earlier in the argument --24

they're really focused on two things, the

- 1 categories of workers and the -- the particular
- 2 workplaces. And they haven't suggested that
- 3 there are other mitigation measures there that
- 4 OSHA neglected to consider. They're saying
- 5 those things should have just been carved out
- 6 altogether.
- 7 But that is inconsistent with the
- 8 Secretary's judgment that all unvaccinated
- 9 workers face a grave danger and that the risk
- 10 exists anywhere that employees are gathered
- 11 indoors together.
- 12 And, again, there might be
- 13 subcategories within those groups that are in
- 14 graver danger, but I don't think there is any
- 15 basis on this record to conclude that the
- 16 agency lacked substantial evidence to draw the
- 17 lines that it did.
- JUSTICE BARRETT: That's helpful.
- 19 Thank you.
- 20 My -- my second question is, again,
- 21 about the status of this rule as an ETS. So
- 22 Chief Judge Sutton pointed out in his dissent
- 23 from the denial of initial en banc that OSHA
- 24 did not adopt this rule in response to the
- emergency qua emergency because that had been

1 ongoing since early 2020, but, instead, it 2 responded to new facts on the ground, which 3 included the widespread availability of a vaccine, that maybe it was a surprise many 4 people chose to forgo, and the emergence of the 5 Delta variant. 6 7 And Chief Judge Sutton pointed out that in an extended pandemic, or I don't know 8 9 if we've moved to an endemic, such as this one, 10 facts will continually change. New variants 11 will emerge. There might be new treatments, 12 new vaccinations. We have boosters now, right? 13 So now full vaccination might not just be the 14 two jabs; it might include a booster as well. 15 So when does the emergency end? I 16 mean, a lot of this argument has been about 17 Congress's failure to act. Two years from now, 18 do we have any reason to think that COVID will be gone or that new variants might not be 19 20 emerging? And when -- when must OSHA actually 21 resort to its regular authority and go through 2.2 notice and comment and not simply be kind of 23 doing it in this quick way, which doesn't

afford people the voice in the process that

they are otherwise entitled to?

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_	GENERAL FRELOGAR. SO I CHILIR, II I
2	could respond to that in a few different ways,
3	Congress defined when the emergency exists. It
4	labeled this an Emergency Temporary Standard,
5	but it's dictated by the statutory
6	requirements. So there has to be a grave
7	danger from a physically harmful agent or a new
8	hazard, and the measures have to be necessary
9	to protect against that danger. And we don't
10	think that there is an additional free-floating
11	requirement about emergency status that has to
12	be taken into account.
13	JUSTICE BARRETT: So it could be an
14	emergency two more years from now?
15	GENERAL PRELOGAR: Well, I certainly
16	take the point that the emergency can be of
17	substantial duration. Of course, this is not a
18	way to to bypass notice and comment
19	permanently. Congress further specified that
20	the agency is expected to conduct a rulemaking
21	process over six months, and that's why the
22	agency estimated the lives saved, the
23	hospitalizations prevented over the six-month
24	life of the rule.
25	JUSTICE BARRETT: Sure, but I was

- 1 envisioning a new rule, right? Like, you know,
- OSHA might, two years from now, adopt something
- 3 that's different from this vaccine or
- 4 mask-and-test mandate. I'm just talking about
- 5 the limits more generally on OSHA's power under
- 6 the ETS provision.
- 7 GENERAL PRELOGAR: The limits, I
- 8 think, are the ones written into the statute.
- 9 And so, if you want to project out two years
- 10 from now, I think it's entirely possible, of
- 11 course, that the trajectory of the pandemic
- 12 will change. I certainly hope so. And in that
- 13 case, OSHA, I think, would have to, if it
- wanted to regulate again, cross the high burden
- of showing a grave danger.
- 16 You know, this is a -- an authority it
- 17 has used sparingly in cases of -- of what we
- think are true emergencies, and I think to
- 19 suggest based on concern about what might
- 20 happen in the future that its authority should
- 21 be constrained or clipped now, when we are in
- the middle of an unprecedented pandemic that is
- 23 claiming more lives than we've seen in a
- 24 shorter amount of time, would do a disservice
- 25 to Congress's anticipation that OSHA might need

- 1 to act quickly in response to dangers like
- 2 this.
- JUSTICE BARRETT: Thank you.
- 4 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Mr. Keller,
- 5 rebuttal?
- 6 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF SCOTT A. KELLER
- 7 ON BEHALF OF THE APPLICANTS IN NO. 21A244
- 8 MR. KELLER: Two points, Mr. Chief
- 9 Justice.
- 10 First, we need a stay now before
- 11 enforcement starts. Our members have to submit
- 12 publicly their plans to how to comply with this
- 13 regulatory behemoth on Monday. Vaccines would
- need to occur by February 9. You would need
- 15 two vaccines to comply. Those vaccines would
- 16 have to start immediately. Tracking and
- 17 recordkeeping cannot happen overnight.
- And on tests, you heard my friend, the
- 19 Solicitor General, mention the media reports
- 20 that we've all seen about shortages of tests
- 21 and costs increasing. Our declarations,
- 22 Appendix page 345 and 374, confirm that as
- 23 well.
- And that's exactly why workers will
- 25 quit right away. You don't even have to take

- 1 our word for it. The federal government, the
- 2 Postal Service and Amtrak both say the same
- 3 things. What OSHA did is they cherry-picked
- 4 one study about healthcare workers, a very
- 5 specific industry, and what that worker
- 6 attrition rate would be. Again, two
- 7 declaration cites, we have plenty more, but
- 8 Appendix pages 351 and 374.
- 9 And my second point to close on is
- 10 about who decides in the public interest, and I
- 11 would submit that this Court's precedents
- 12 answer that.
- We're not asking this Court to reverse
- 14 anything. Industrial Union 40 years ago in
- Justice Stevens's controlling opinion said that
- 16 there was an absence of a clear mandate in the
- 17 OSH Act, so it's unreasonable to assume that
- 18 Congress gave OSHA unprecedented power over
- 19 American industry and the emergency power is
- 20 also narrowly circumscribed, yet, here, OSHA
- 21 has never before done mandated vaccines or
- 22 widespread testing, much less over all
- industries or on an emergency basis.
- So whether we're talking about the
- agency's failure to explain, whether we're

1	talking about the statutory term "necessary,"					
2	whether we're talking about how this has to be					
3	tethered to the workplace under the major					
4	questions doctrine, under any one of those					
5	theories, we are likely to succeed on the					
6	merits.					
7	And, finally, when it comes to the					
8	public interest, as this Court just recognized					
9	a few months ago, it is undisputable that the					
10	public has a strong interest in combatting the					
11	spread of the COVID-19 delta variant, but our					
12	system does not permit agencies to act					
13	unlawfully, even in pursuit of desirable ends.					
14	We would respectfully request a stay					
15	of this unprecedented sweeping S ETS before					
16	Monday.					
17	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,					
18	counsel. The applications are submitted.					
19	(Whereupon, at 12:09 p.m., the					
20	applications were submitted.)					
21						
22						
23						
24						
25						

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