1	IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES
2	X
3	CITY OF COLUMBUS, ET AL., :
4	Petitioners :
5	v. : No. 01-419
6	OURS GARAGE AND WRECKER :
7	SERVICE, INC., ET AL. :
8	X
9	Washington, D.C.
LO	Tuesday, April 23, 2002
L1	The above-entitled matter came for oral argumen
L2	before the Supreme Court of the United States at 10:10
L 3	a.m.
L 4	APPEARANCES:
L 5	JEFFREY S. SUTTON, ESQ., Columbus, Ohio; on behalf of the
L 6	Petitioners.
L 7	MALCOLM L. STEWART, ESQ., Assistant to the Solicitor
L 8	General, Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.; on
L9	behalf of the United States, as amicus curiae,
20	supporting the Petitioners.
21	RICHARD A. CORDRAY, ESQ., Grove City, Ohio; on behalf of
22	the Respondents.
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1	PROCEEDINGS
2	(10:10 a.m.)
3	CHIEF JUSTICE REHNQUIST: We'll hear argument
4	now in No. 01-419, City of Columbus v. Ours Garage and
5	Wrecker Service, Inc.
6	Mr. Sutton.
7	ORAL ARGUMENT OF JEFFREY S. SUTTON
8	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONERS
9	MR. SUTTON: Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice. May
LO	it please the Court:
L1	The question presented in this case is whether
L2	Congress in 1994 divested the States of their traditional
L 3	authority to delegate police powers over local safety
L 4	matters to their political subdivisions. It would be no
L 5	small matter for Congress to impose such a restriction on
L6	the States, and we submit they did no such thing in this
L 7	instance.
L 8	In making that point, it may be helpful to look
L 9	at the text of the statute, which is reprinted in full in
20	the appendix to our brief, the blue brief. And page A-2
21	of that appendix specifically repeats the language of
22	(c)(2)(A), the operative provision at issue here.
23	And our first point, as a matter of the language
24	of the statute, is that Congress specifically said that
25	the preemption provision, quote, "shall not restrict the

- 1 safety regulatory authority of a State."
- Now, prior to 1994, Ohio, the State of Ohio, had
- 3 exercised regulatory authority in this area by delegating
- 4 its power specifically over tow truck regulations to local
- 5 political subdivisions. It's very difficult for us to
- 6 understand how the court of appeals interpretation does
- 7 not in fact, quote, "restrict the safety regulatory
- 8 authority of a State." That's --
- 9 QUESTION: Well, I think the argument on the
- other side, Mr. Sutton, is that the first section (a)(1)
- does say, no State or political subdivision thereof and no
- 12 interstate agency. It talks about a political subdivision
- so that when you come down to the section you've just
- quoted, and it only says State, there's perhaps a fair
- inference that only a State and not a political
- 16 subdivision is included.
- 17 MR. SUTTON: Yes, Your Honor. And the normal
- 18 Russello argument is that a litigant like myself is trying
- 19 to read into another provision a term that is specifically
- 20 mentioned elsewhere in the statute. Here the suggestion
- 21 is that we're trying to read the term, political
- 22 subdivision, into (c)(2)(A). That's not what we're trying
- 23 to do.
- What we're saying is the traditional safety
- 25 regulatory authority of a State was preserved by (c)(2)(A)

- 1 and traditionally States, including Ohio, had specifically
- 2 exercised that authority by delegating it in some
- 3 instances to State executive branch agencies and in other
- 4 instances, specifically here, to political subdivisions.
- 5 QUESTION: Would your argument be the same if
- 6 the State had not made a specific delegation? Did it make
- 7 a specific delegation with respect to tow trucks?
- 8 MR. SUTTON: Actually it did, although it's --
- 9 it's backwards, in the sense that they generally regulate
- 10 all motor carriers at the State level, but they exempted
- 11 tow trucks, therefore allowing political subdivisions like
- 12 Columbus to enact their own tow truck ordinances. So, in
- 13 fact, in this case it would be specific, although I
- 14 wouldn't say our argument rests on that point. Many
- 15 States like Ohio are home rule States, which in their
- 16 constitutions give general grants to political
- 17 subdivisions to have powers of local self-government. So,
- 18 in this case, I -- I would say it's a little easier
- 19 because there was something specific as to tow trucks, but
- 20 I wouldn't say that our argument rests on that point.
- 21 QUESTION: Mr. Sutton, would -- would you look a
- 22 little further down in, in the provision set forth in the
- 23 appendix to your brief? Look on page A-3. You were
- reading from (c)(2)(A) --
- MR. SUTTON: Yes, Your Honor.

- 1 QUESTION: -- in which it says, shall not
- 2 restrict the safety regulatory authority of a State. And
- 3 you say that includes, you know, political subdivisions of
- 4 a State.
- 5 MR. SUTTON: No. That it includes the right to
- 6 delegate political subdivisions.
- 7 QUESTION: All right. Okay. Just read two --
- 8 two lines later, (2)(C) where it says, does not apply.
- 9 MR. SUTTON: Right.
- 10 QUESTION: Again, it uses the same -- shall not
- 11 restrict, does not apply to the authority of a State, or a
- 12 political subdivision of a State, to enact or enforce a
- law, regulation, or other provision. Why in that
- 14 provision does it say does not apply to a State or a
- 15 political subdivision? Because you're telling us, when
- 16 you say State, it includes whatever authority the State
- 17 has to delegate to a political subdivision.
- 18 MR. SUTTON: We're not saying --
- 19 QUESTION: You wouldn't have --
- MR. SUTTON: We're not --
- 21 QUESTION: -- you wouldn't have needed that
- language there.
- 23 MR. SUTTON: We're not saying States are
- 24 political subdivisions. We're simply saying the
- 25 preservation of a State, deregulatory authority of a State

- 1 includes the power to delegate.
- But as to (c)(2)(C), keep in mind that was a
- 3 1995 amendment. That was not part of the original
- 4 legislation. So, the suggestion would be that
- 5 Congress's --
- 6 OUESTION: Well --
- 7 MR. SUTTON: -- style in 1995 modified the 1994
- 8 act. And no one is arguing --
- 9 QUESTION: I think we always look at an act in
- 10 toto and -- and don't try to piece it apart as to what was
- 11 enacted when. It seems to me we have to make sense of
- 12 this statute as a whole.
- MR. SUTTON: That's -- that's true, Your Honor.
- 14 But I -- in O'Gilve, the Court said specifically that a
- 15 later act cannot modify the terms of an earlier act.
- 16 But let me -- I think there's another answer
- 17 that --
- 18 QUESTION: It doesn't modify it, but it -- it
- 19 can give clear indication of what -- of what it meant. I
- 20 mean, you're assuming that it modifies it.
- MR. SUTTON: Right. Well, Your Honor, the --
- 22 the thing that I think may be helpful in thinking about
- 23 (c)(2)(C) and the other mentions of political subdivision
- 24 throughout 14501 is they're all in the context of --
- 25 context of the enact or enforce language, which is exactly

- 1 how (c)(1) reads. (c)(1) says these political bodies may
- 2 not enact or enforce these particular laws. That, of
- 3 course, is not the way (c)(2)(A) or, for that matter,
- 4 (a)(2) -- (a)(2) does exactly the same thing. It
- 5 preserves the safety regulatory authority of the State
- 6 over these various other provisions elsewhere identified
- 7 in title 49.
- When it comes to (c)(2)(C), it's dealing with a
- 9 topic specifically mentioned in (c)(1), prices. And it
- follows the exact same structure of (c)(1), not
- 11 surprisingly, because it's dealing with a topic that is
- 12 covered in (c)(1).
- 13 (c)(2)(A) --
- 14 QUESTION: Mr. Sutton, are you making the
- 15 distinction there between the safety regulations which
- 16 would be covered under (c)(2) and the economic regulation
- 17 which would be the main prohibition?
- 18 MR. SUTTON: Exactly, Your Honor. And there was
- 19 a division of authority, going back to 1966, where the old
- 20 ICC had regulated all of the economic issues over motor
- 21 carriers, and the Department of Transportation had
- 22 regulated all the safety issues. And what happens in 1994
- 23 is they're simply deregulating. The ICC is deregulating
- 24 this area. They wanted to make sure, as this Court said
- 25 in Morales, that States wouldn't undo that particular

- deregulatory effort. But at the same time, as (c)(2)(A)
- and (a)(2) makes clear, they wanted to preserve the
- 3 provisions of a separate part of title 49 dealing with
- 4 safety issues, something that DOT, a separate agency, had
- 5 always regulated. And I hope, Justice Scalia, this will
- 6 help in getting to your -- your point.
- 7 QUESTION: There's a --
- 8 MR. SUTTON: Oh, I'm sorry.
- 9 QUESTION: There's a question I think that still
- 10 would be left open even if you prevail; that is, whether
- 11 these regulations are appropriately characterized as
- 12 economic or safety. You say they're all safety.
- MR. SUTTON: Absolutely.
- 14 QUESTION: But that hasn't been adjudicated yet.
- 15 MR. SUTTON: Absolutely. And -- and if -- if
- 16 the court of appeals decision would reverse, it would
- 17 certainly be within the rights of respondents to go back
- 18 to the Sixth Circuit and say, as to some of these
- 19 provisions of the Columbus code, they are not in fact
- 20 safety ordinances or safety provisions, and therefore they
- 21 could be regulated as a price, route, or service.
- 22 But there's another, I think, important point
- 23 that responds to this issue of the mention of political
- 24 subdivisions elsewhere in 14501. I think there is general
- 25 agreement in the case that as to (c)(2)(A), all of the

- 1 other words, every single other word in (c)(2)(A)
- 2 including, for example, the definition of the term safety,
- 3 is defined not from 1994 on by looking at the difference
- 4 of -- between safety and price, routes, or services
- 5 mentioned in (c)(1) -- in other words, you would not
- 6 define safety after 1994 based on its contextual
- 7 comparison to prices --
- 8 QUESTION: Where -- where exactly is (c)(2)(A)?
- 9 MR. SUTTON: Excuse me, Your Honor. It's on
- 10 A-2 of our appendix, and it's -- it's labeled motor
- 11 carriers of property. Excuse me. I should have made that
- 12 more clear.
- The point I was trying to make is that these
- other terms in (c)(2)(A) I think all would agree would be
- defined by other provisions in title 49. For example, the
- 16 word safety would be defined by the provisions in chapter
- 17 311 of title 49, which is a large -- a large section of
- 18 the code dealing with safety provisions. It would not be
- 19 within the States' rights after 1994 to suddenly start
- 20 reinventing new definitions of safety, new definitions of
- 21 hazardous materials routing restrictions or size and
- 22 weight routing restrictions. We would be stuck with all
- 23 of those definitions, including notably those preemption
- 24 provisions. We think it would be a rather odd
- interpretation of (c)(2)(A) to say that, yes, you

- determine the meaning of all of these preserved matters by
- 2 reference to other parts of title 49, but you do not do so
- 3 when it comes to what the meaning of safety regulatory
- 4 authority of a State is.
- 5 And when you look at those other provisions of
- 6 title 49, it's quite clear that Congress contemplated in
- 7 all of them -- routing restrictions, safety -- that States
- 8 could delegate their power to local subdivisions. That's
- 9 not only in some of the statutory provisions, but it's in
- 10 the regulations.
- 11 QUESTION: Well, but it's not defined. It
- 12 doesn't -- there's not a definition that says, State
- includes political subdivision of a State.
- MR. SUTTON: That's not our argument, Your
- 15 Honor. We're not saying a State --
- 16 QUESTION: I understand it's not your argument.
- 17 MR. SUTTON: We're not saying --
- 18 QUESTION: It would be a stronger argument if
- 19 that were your argument. That -- that's my point.
- 20 (Laughter.)
- 21 MR. SUTTON: I -- I disagree, Your Honor. We're
- 22 not saying that -- Congress -- let me put it this way.
- 23 Congress has no right to empower a city. Congress can't
- 24 create a city. They can't give it a power. That's a
- 25 power the States have. It made perfect sense in (c)(2)(A)

- 1 to preserve the safety regulatory authority of a State
- 2 because it's the State legislature's job to determine what
- 3 other political bodies, if any, regulate in that area.
- 4 QUESTION: Well, in that connection, I was going
- 5 to ask could this -- suppose that you do not prevail in
- 6 this case and we accept the respondents' interpretation.
- 7 Could the State then every year have a cleanup statute in
- 8 which it says the State hereby adopts -- or authorizes
- 9 cities that are no less than X number of persons, no
- 10 greater than Y number of persons, obviously referring to
- 11 the City of Columbus, that -- that the State then allows
- 12 specifically Columbus to regulate, that it have an
- ordinance and it just tracks the whole ordinance?
- MR. SUTTON: Absolutely, Your Honor. And that
- 15 we think --
- 16 QUESTION: So, then we're not arguing about very
- 17 much in your view.
- 18 MR. SUTTON: Well, Your Honor, that would strike
- 19 me as an extraordinary hoop for Congress to ask the States
- 20 to step through. We're not aware of a single statute that
- 21 this Court has ever construed to mean that State
- 22 legislatures alone, but not their political subdivisions,
- 23 can regulate a particular area. I'm not aware of a single
- statute where that's ever happened.
- 25 QUESTION: There's a -- there's a problem with

- 1 cities when you get to safety regulation for trucks. Can
- 2 you give me an example of a safety regulation that a city
- 3 might want to have that wouldn't have a negative impact or
- 4 some impact on routes?
- 5 MR. SUTTON: Right. Excuse me? The last word?
- 6 QUESTION: On routes.
- 7 MR. SUTTON: Right. The -- and I think the
- 8 respondents' point is or suggestion is that it would be
- 9 quite natural for Congress to say, as to routing
- 10 restrictions, we want uniform laws. We want them to be
- 11 the same throughout the State, and we don't want to bother
- 12 with municipalities establishing different regulations for
- 13 a routing restriction. Well, the -- the whole point of a
- 14 routing restriction is to account for differences within
- the topography or geography of the States.
- 16 OUESTION: Yes, but I mean, there's a long
- 17 history in the ICC of trying to create, say, dynamite
- 18 truck routes. Well, you can imagine what something like
- 19 that does once you start talking about it within the city.
- 20 And -- and every neighborhood in sight says, send it
- 21 somewhere else. So, it's not illogical that people who
- are worried about creating uniformity of routes would say,
- 23 keep the cities out of this. It's -- it's a nightmare.
- 24 And -- and -- but I have no reason to know
- 25 whether this is so or not. And so I ask you, is there any

- 1 kind of safety regulation that doesn't get into that kind
- of routing nightmare when you talk about cities?
- 3 MR. SUTTON: Well, hazardous -- I -- I don't
- 4 think the general rule has been that either the Federal
- 5 Government or the States have been concerned about heavily
- 6 populated regions deciding, for example, to route
- 7 hazardous materials around their beltway as opposed to
- 8 through the middle. Everyone thinks that's a good idea,
- 9 and the cities generally, including Columbus, have been
- 10 left in control of that kind of decision, which is
- 11 something obviously one doesn't need to worry about --
- 12 QUESTION: But I'm looking for specifically --
- MR. SUTTON: In a size and weight situation, of
- 14 course, you're going to situations where bridges or
- 15 particular roads in, you know, densely populated areas
- 16 require different rules than in rural regions of a State
- 17 where, for example, the roads are bigger and even if
- they're not bigger, they're not as near to either
- 19 businesses or heavily populated areas.
- 20 QUESTION: How about a restriction that on a
- 21 particular residential street that's, nonetheless, an
- 22 arterial highway, no trucks over 10 tons?
- MR. SUTTON: Could -- could a -- a -- the
- 24 question, first of all, would be whether that relates to
- 25 interstate commerce, and if it relates to interstate

- 1 commerce -- that is, commerce between States -- then the
- 2 Department of Transportation is -- is going to very
- 3 heavily regulate that particular route restriction and --
- 4 and has authority to preempt it, even as a matter of
- 5 regulation. If it's purely intrastate, traditionally
- 6 that's been something that Congress or the agencies hardly
- 7 regulated at all, and to the extent they regulated them,
- 8 it was only when there was Federal funding. But for the
- 9 most part, the regime has been that a locality makes that
- 10 decision through a delegation of power from their State
- 11 legislature.
- 12 QUESTION: Mr. Sutton, can I ask you, do you
- 13 regard -- just assume the -- assume the other side is
- 14 right on their interpretation. Would that mean that a
- 15 city could not fix speed limits in neighborhoods? Speed
- limit is a safety regulation, isn't it?
- 17 MR. SUTTON: It is, Your Honor, but title 49 --
- 18 I think it's 31147 -- specifically says that traffic laws
- 19 -- I think a speeding limit would fall under that --
- 20 QUESTION: It would be a traffic law?
- 21 MR. SUTTON: -- is something that the Department
- 22 of Transportation does not regulate and neither does
- 23 Congress, which to me is one more indicator that you
- don't, after 1994, start having free-form debates about
- 25 what safety means.

- 1 QUESTION: But even if the -- if it's not
- 2 federally regulated, would there, nevertheless, not be
- 3 preemption under their interpretation of this provision of
- 4 speed limit rules?
- 5 MR. SUTTON: On what ground? I mean, it would
- 6 have to be a price, route, or service for there to be
- 7 preemption.
- 8 QUESTION: No. I mean, if -- if you read the
- $9 \quad (c)(2)(A) --$
- 10 MR. SUTTON: As -- I see what you're saying.
- 11 QUESTION: -- as -- as saying only States are --
- 12 can -- are -- preserve the right to -- to regulate
- 13 safety --
- MR. SUTTON: Right.
- 15 QUESTION: -- it seems to me that would preempt
- 16 a local government's right to fix a 15-mile limit in a
- 17 school zone.
- 18 MR. SUTTON: I understand what you're saying. I
- 19 think the position they would take -- and maybe they could
- 20 clarify this -- is that if it's not a price, route, or
- 21 service, you ignore (c)(2)(A), and you simply go to the
- 22 rest of title 49. But I'm not -- I don't know the answer
- 23 to that.
- 24 If I could make one more point, Justice Scalia,
- 25 and I hope this responds somewhat to the point you raised

- 1 earlier. State laws, even if you think of them as State
- legislative acts, are being preempted in this case. Let's
- 3 ignore the State of Ohio. New York. The State of New
- 4 York says as to populations with more than 1 million
- 5 people, the cities in -- those populations can enact tow
- 6 truck ordinances. This interpretation that the court of
- 7 appeals embraced preempts that State law. There's no --
- 8 strictly speaking, there's no such thing as a city law
- 9 divorced from a State law. The city power comes from the
- 10 States and there's just no such thing. And we think, as
- 11 the lack of parallelism between (c)(1) and (c)(2)
- indicates, all they were doing was preserving that
- 13 traditional safety regulatory authority of a State.
- 14 If I could save the rest of my time for
- 15 rebuttal, I'd appreciate it. Thank you.
- 16 QUESTION: Very well, Mr. Sutton.
- Mr. Stewart, we'll hear from you.
- 18 ORAL ARGUMENT OF MALCOLM L. STEWART
- 19 ON BEHALF OF THE UNITED STATES,
- 20 AS AMICUS CURIAE, SUPPORTING THE PETITIONERS
- 21 MR. STEWART: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it
- 22 please the Court:
- 23 The phrase, safety regulatory authority of a
- 24 State, in section 14501(c)(2)(A) is most naturally read to
- 25 encompass the State's traditional authority to delegate

- 1 its powers to political subdivisions. That view is
- 2 supported by the larger statutory context in which the
- 3 phrase appears and by the purposes of the 1994 act.
- 4 As Mr. Sutton has explained and as this Court
- 5 has frequently recognized, one integral component of the
- 6 State's ability to regulate within its borders is to
- 7 delegate as much or as little power as it wishes to
- 8 subordinate political units.
- 9 QUESTION: We understand all that, of course.
- 10 And -- and in isolation, that phrase most naturally would
- 11 -- would mean safety regulatory authority of a State,
- including, of course, its ability to delegate it to
- 13 municipalities.
- But what is sticking in our craw is the fact
- 15 that elsewhere in the statute, the language is very
- 16 careful to distinguish between the authority of a State,
- on the one hand, and the -- and the separate authority of
- 18 political subdivisions of the State. Now, what -- what is
- 19 your explanation for those other separations?
- 20 MR. STEWART: I quess there are about three
- 21 responses we would make.
- The first is, as Mr. Sutton points out, this is
- 23 not a case in which the other provisions are identical but
- 24 for the inclusion of the word political subdivision. For
- instance, in subsection (c)(2)(C), which is at the -- the

- 1 top of A-3 of the --
- 2 QUESTION: Right.
- 3 MR. STEWART: -- petitioners' brief, it refers
- 4 to the authority of a State or a political subdivision of
- 5 a State to enact or enforce a law. Now, even though
- 6 delegating power to municipalities is an integral feature
- 7 of the State's regulatory authority, it would certainly be
- 8 less than clear that when a municipality enacted or
- 9 enforced a law, pursuant to such delegation, it could not
- 10 necessarily be said that the State had enacted or enforced
- 11 that law.
- 12 And so, if the provision left out political
- 13 subdivisions and simply said that the preemption rule does
- 14 not apply to the authority of a State to enact or enforce
- 15 a law, there would be ambiguity, and Congress -- whether
- it was necessary or not, Congress might rationally choose
- 17 to eliminate that potential ambiguity through an express
- 18 reference to political subdivision.
- 19 But the phrase that appears in subsection (2)(A)
- 20 is simply safety regulatory authority of a State, and
- 21 that, as you say, would most naturally be construed to
- 22 encompass the authority to delegate power to
- 23 municipalities.
- 24 The second point is that based on the country's
- 25 traditions, it would certainly be an unusual thing for

- 1 Congress to interfere with the States' decisions as to the
- 2 amount of power that should be delegated to subordinate
- 3 political units.
- 4 QUESTION: Has there been any -- what's the
- 5 closest case respondents could cite to show a contrary
- 6 practice?
- 7 MR. STEWART: I believe the respondents have
- 8 cited a couple of court of appeals cases which have
- 9 held --
- 10 QUESTION: From this Court?
- 11 MR. STEWART: None from this Court. The -- the
- 12 respondents have not cited any case in which this Court
- 13 has held that any Federal statute had the effect of
- 14 divesting a State of its authority to delegate power to
- 15 political subdivisions.
- 16 QUESTION: Well, there are many Federal statutes
- 17 that -- that make grants to municipalities for various
- 18 functions and don't make it to the State. This is a --
- 19 certainly the Federal Government interfering in the
- 20 relationship between the State and its municipalities.
- 21 And the State has no -- no ability to veto whether the
- 22 municipality is going to accept those funds or not. And
- 23 there's -- there's been a lot of controversy within the
- 24 States between the municipalities and the State government
- 25 as to -- as to what money should be accepted and so forth.

- 1 It seems to me that has exactly the same effect as what
- 2 you're talking about here. The Federal Government has,
- 3 indeed, indeed, intervened in the relationship between the
- 4 State and its -- and its political subdivisions.
- 5 MR. STEWART: We cited the Lee Deadwood case in
- 6 our brief as support for the proposition that Congress
- 7 would constitutionally be authorized to preempt municipal
- 8 law without preempting State law if it chose. Our only
- 9 point is it would be sufficiently unusual that we would
- 10 expect Congress to address the matter fairly directly.
- 11 QUESTION: Mr. Stewart, would you be able to
- 12 give us any examples of municipal safety regulations that
- are preempted by this section as it's been interpreted
- 14 below?
- 15 MR. STEWART: We -- I think that as it's been
- 16 interpreted --
- 17 QUESTION: As a practical matter?
- 18 MR. STEWART: As it's been interpreted below, I
- 19 believe the types of regulations that have been held
- 20 preempted are -- are fairly similar to the City of
- 21 Columbus's regulation, namely, a licensing scheme in which
- 22 the vehicle is inspected, the driver is tested to ensure
- 23 proficiency in the operation of the vehicle. And those
- have been held to be preempted on the ground that they
- 25 relate to routes --

- 1 QUESTION: So, we're really talking about
- 2 licensing schemes.
- 3 Is this anything that the State couldn't
- 4 undertake to do itself with its State driver's license and
- 5 so forth?
- 6 MR. STEWART: I -- I think that the licensing
- 7 scheme, while we would respect Ohio's decision to delegate
- 8 that to municipalities, it -- in truth I think this is
- 9 something that could fairly realistically be accomplished
- 10 at the State level.
- 11 Now, with respect to some of the other matters
- that are specified in (c)(2)(A), for instance, route
- controls based on size and weight or hazardous nature of
- 14 the cargo, because the determination at issue is whether a
- 15 particular vehicle or a particular cargo is suitable for a
- 16 particular stretch of road, those are the sorts of things
- 17 that can't realistically be expected to be done in their
- 18 entirety at the State level. And therefore, it would be a
- 19 particular disruption of the State's processes --
- 20 QUESTION: Mr. Stewart, before your time goes
- 21 out, will you give us your third point too? You gave us
- 22 the first two.
- 23 MR. STEWART: The third point is that to the
- 24 extent that the provision at issue here is ambiguous and
- 25 the Court wants to interpret it by reference to other

- 1 relevant statutory provisions, it is important to examine
- 2 the larger statutory context. That is, (c)(2)(A) is not
- 3 limited to safety. It specifies these other matters, and
- 4 as Mr. Sutton was pointing out, the other matters are
- 5 covered in detail in different provisions of title 49. In
- 6 general, those other provisions of title 49 contain their
- 7 own preemption provisions. They explain at -- at great
- 8 length what States can and can't do. At least in the area
- 9 of safety, State law is specifically defined to include
- 10 the law of the local governmental unit, and so the -- the
- 11 safety regime in the other parts of title 49 specifically
- 12 contemplates municipal safety regulation. And it would be
- odd to think that Congress, in this oblique way, has
- 14 superseded that carefully developed statutory framework.
- And to put this in larger historical context, to
- 16 follow up on Mr. Sutton's point, from 1966 to 1995, at the
- 17 Federal level there was division of regulatory authority
- 18 between the ICC which did economic regulation and the
- 19 Department of Transportation which did safety regulation.
- 20 And it's no coincidence that State law as to economic
- 21 matters was preempted at about the same time that the ICC
- 22 saw its powers diminished and the ICC was eventually
- 23 eliminated altogether. This was part of a larger program
- 24 of deregulating the economics of commercial trucking.
- 25 But --

- 1 QUESTION: Who -- who administers this statute?
- 2 Is there a Federal agency that -- that can be said to be
- 3 administering this -- this statute?
- 4 MR. STEWART: There -- there is no Federal
- 5 agency entrusted with the administration of this
- 6 particular statute. The Department of Transportation
- 7 administers the related provisions of title 49 that are
- 8 specifically addressed to these matters, and their
- 9 implementation of their responsibilities under those
- 10 provisions would be affected by this Court's decision in
- 11 this case because if there is no municipal safety
- 12 regulation at all, that would obviously have an impact on
- their administration of the scheme for determining when
- 14 municipal regulation is and is not permitted. But they
- 15 are not specifically entrusted with authority over this
- 16 scheme.
- So -- so to return to the point about the
- 18 division of responsibilities, Congress eliminated the ICC,
- 19 eliminated Federal economic regulation of commercial
- 20 trucking, and at the same time it preempted State law in
- 21 order to ensure that the States didn't undo the Federal
- 22 deregulatory efforts. But there's been no Federal
- 23 deregulation in matters of trucking safety. The prior
- 24 provisions of title 49 remain on the books.
- There's no expression of congressional

- 1 discontent with the manner in which power in those areas
- 2 has been divided between the Federal, State, and local
- 3 governments. To the contrary, the conference report
- 4 accompanying the 1994 act refers specifically to those
- 5 preexisting provisions and expresses the intent that their
- 6 administration continue unchanged.
- 7 QUESTION: May I ask this question on the
- 8 division of responsibility? Is it your view -- your
- 9 understanding that the cities would not be able in their
- 10 licensing scheme to regulate the rates that the truckers
- 11 charge?
- MR. STEWART: That's correct.
- If there are no further questions, I have
- 14 nothing further.
- 15 QUESTION: To what extent, Mr. Stewart, does the
- 16 Department of Transportation -- you said there's no
- 17 administrator of the statute, but they do have authority
- 18 under the motor safety -- motor carrier safety assistance
- 19 program that seems to be relevant.
- 20 MR. STEWART: The motor carrier safety
- 21 assistance program, and they also have authority under
- 22 other provisions of title 49 to review and declare to be
- 23 preempted State and local laws -- State and local safety
- 24 laws that apply to transportation in interstate commerce.
- 25 Again, those are not provisions of this particular

- 1 statute. They are among the preexisting provisions of
- 2 title 49 that were intended to be preserved by subsection
- $3 \quad (c)(2)(A).$
- 4 QUESTION: Thank you, Mr. Stewart.
- 5 Mr. Cordray, we'll hear from you.
- 6 ORAL ARGUMENT OF RICHARD A. CORDRAY
- 7 ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENTS
- 8 QUESTION: Mr. Cordray, I hope you'll tell us
- 9 the practical effects of the decision below.
- 10 MR. CORDRAY: The practical effect of the
- 11 decision below, as you uncovered it in your questioning
- 12 earlier, is that Federal law preempts municipalities and
- other local governments from imposing their own individual
- 14 licensing schemes upon motor carriers of property and that
- 15 is --
- 16 QUESTION: Well, it also speaks to routes or
- 17 weight limitations. Are there situations where the city
- 18 or town is particularly aware of traffic problems within
- 19 the city or a weak bridge or something and that its
- 20 limitations are needed?
- 21 MR. CORDRAY: Size and weight limitations, as
- the other matters addressed in (c)(2)(A), would be
- 23 regulated at the State level, not at the local level under
- 24 the proper reading of this statute. And the reason is
- 25 that Congress did not want to open up the trucking

- 1 industry, where it was attempting to do something new,
- which is deregulate it nationwide and create an unfettered
- 3 free market for trucking and transportation services.
- 4 QUESTION: So that if a city says no trucks
- 5 through the park with the public playground between
- 6 certain hours, that has to be the -- the State? That's
- 7 the only one that could do that?
- 8 MR. CORDRAY: That could be done at the State
- 9 level and it could be done either by going to the State
- 10 legislature, as you suggested, or it could be done by
- 11 setting up a very simple administrative scheme at the
- 12 State level where you would go to the State department --
- 13 QUESTION: Well, why would --
- 14 QUESTION: Well, most cities I've been in had --
- 15 QUESTION: -- why would Congress choose to -- to
- 16 regulate in that way, say we want the State to do it but
- 17 not the locality?
- 18 MR. CORDRAY: Specifically because they were
- 19 trying to deregulate this market nationwide. To leave in
- 20 place every municipality with the option to license
- 21 different motor carriers of property is not only --
- 22 QUESTION: No. I'm not talking about licensing.
- 23 I'm talking about the -- the example of, say, that no
- trucks over 10 tons on this particular road.
- MR. CORDRAY: Again, I think that petitioners

- 1 agree and all the courts have agreed that every subsection
- of (c)(2)(A) has to be read together, and to the extent
- 3 municipal authority is being preempted in one respect,
- 4 it's being preempted in all. And the reason is that
- 5 Congress was recognizing that schemes directed
- 6 specifically to motor carriers of property at the local
- 7 level simply incorporated too much regulation that would
- 8 interfere with and impede a free market for transportation
- 9 services and motor carriers --
- 10 QUESTION: May I ask a similar question?
- 11 Supposing that there's a heavy rain storm in a city or
- 12 something and it becomes unsafe to use a certain street if
- 13 the truck is over a certain size. Could -- the police
- would not be permitted to divert the traffic around that
- 15 particular flooded area, I suppose.
- 16 MR. CORDRAY: Certainly they could. This goes
- 17 to your question you asked earlier which is whether
- 18 traffic laws, ordinary, general traffic laws, would be
- 19 preempted under our --
- 20 QUESTION: No. This is for safety reasons.
- MR. CORDRAY: -- statute --
- 22 QUESTION: They figure it's -- it's dangerous
- 23 because the thing is too deep and the trucks have to over-
- 24 set -- overturn or something like that.
- 25 MR. CORDRAY: They -- they would be -- they

- 1 would be diverting --
- 2 QUESTION: It would be preempted, I guess.
- 3 MR. CORDRAY: They would be -- no. They would
- 4 be diverting presumably all traffic that's heavy enough to
- 5 create a safety problem.
- 6 QUESTION: Supposing -- truck size traffic, yes.
- 7 MR. CORDRAY: Yes, but -- but it's not directed
- 8 simply to motor carriers of property. It's directed to
- 9 all trucks, all oversize vehicles. It could be private
- 10 vehicles, RVs that people use to take vacations, whatever
- 11 it might be. That would be permissible.
- 12 And traffic laws, I want to stress, are not
- 13 preempted by this statute. This statute is not limitless.
- 14 As this Court has --
- 15 QUESTION: Well, then what about the -- the
- 16 answer that you gave earlier to the question that the
- 17 Chief Justice and I had? No -- no trucks through the
- 18 playground or -- or through a residential neighborhood at
- 19 a certain time. I thought you said that would be
- 20 preempted, but now you're saying it applies only if
- 21 they're motor carriers of property?
- 22 MR. CORDRAY: Let me step back. If the
- 23 ordinance related to all oversize vehicles -- that would
- 24 be a general traffic regulation -- that would be
- 25 permissible. And I'll -- and I'll get to that in a

- 1 moment, why traffic laws are not preempted by the statute.
- 2 They -- they are not related to price, route, or service
- 3 of motor carriers of property.
- 4 If it was directed specifically to a type of
- 5 motor carrier of property, as this licensing scheme is --
- 6 it applies directly, specifically, and only to tow trucks
- 7 -- that would be a different matter. Municipalities are
- 8 not permitted to do that, and Congress specifically wanted
- 9 to do that because although there was a tradition of lots
- of regulation at the State and local level, Congress was
- 11 making a policy decision, as it's free to do, to say that
- 12 all of that is impeding a free market for transportation
- services and motor carriers that's affecting broad
- 14 segments of the American economy. We want to bring down
- 15 costs, rid us of these inefficiencies --
- 16 QUESTION: I understand that, but I'm at the
- 17 same question that I think everyone has asked. In my mind
- 18 -- and I might be misremembering -- there are lots of
- 19 streets -- there used to be in San Francisco and you'd see
- 20 a sign, and it would say, no trucks over 3-and-a-half
- 21 tons. And it seems to me in Boston I can think of seeing
- 22 signs. I thought maybe they said, no trucks over such and
- 23 such. Maybe they just say no vehicle over such and such.
- 24 And my impression is that in many cities there are many
- 25 such streets, and which streets there are is a matter for

- 1 the municipality to decide. And it's a shifting pattern,
- 2 and typically it's in residential areas. And there's lots
- 3 of local regulation of that kind. That's my impression.
- 4 And I want to know, on your reading of this
- 5 statute, does this change when I'm thinking of those signs
- on one street after another? Does that all change because
- 7 they're preempted, and now each neighborhood has to go to
- 8 Sacramento, if they're in California, and convince the --
- 9 the legislature? I'd be very surprised if that is so,
- that Congress changed so well established a municipal
- 11 pattern of behavior without saying anything about it. And
- 12 therefore, I think everyone is driving at the same
- 13 question. I understand about all the licensing stuff, but
- 14 I want to know the answer to that question.
- 15 MR. CORDRAY: All right. Again, it's not what's
- 16 specifically at issue in this case, but I understand the
- 17 Court wants the answer to the hypothetical. Absolutely.
- 18 QUESTION: It has nothing to do with this case.
- 19 I'm saying when your -- accept the fact that if I accept
- 20 your position in this case --
- MR. CORDRAY: Yes.
- 22 QUESTION: -- at the moment I'm thinking all
- 23 this traditional regulation of what street you can use if
- 24 you're a truck is being wiped out. I mean, that's
- 25 relevant.

- 1 MR. CORDRAY: It could be dealt with either of
- 2 two ways, Your Honor. Either it could be regarded as a
- 3 general traffic law, like a one-way street, like a speed
- 4 limit, and the like, in which case we believe that it
- 5 would not come within the preemption clause ex ante
- 6 because it has to have a connection with or reference to
- 7 motor carriers of property to come within the terms of
- 8 this preemption clause --
- 9 QUESTION: Motor carriers of property or just
- 10 motor carriers?
- MR. CORDRAY: Motor carriers of property which
- 12 is what --
- 13 QUESTION: In other words, if they -- if they
- don't say on the street motor carriers of property cannot
- use this, then it's not preempted.
- 16 MR. CORDRAY: Then it is a general traffic
- 17 regulation no different from where the speed limit says 55
- 18 miles per hour and trucks have to obey it, just as cars
- 19 do. And motor carriers --
- 20 QUESTION: Well, does the term, motor carriers
- 21 of property -- does that mean motor carriers of property
- for hire or any motor carrier that is carrying property?
- 23 MR. CORDRAY: Well, it would be those who come
- 24 within the terms of this specific preemption clause.
- QUESTION: Yes, that's what I want to know.

- 1 Which does it mean?
- 2 MR. CORDRAY: Yes. I -- I believe that this
- 3 statute is referring to for hire carriers of -- motor
- 4 carriers of property.
- 5 QUESTION: So -- so, if a State were to say all
- 6 prices of all trucks in this State have to be \$50 -- all
- 7 trucks -- and they don't say motor carriers of property,
- 8 that's not preempted.
- 9 MR. CORDRAY: No, that is not correct because
- 10 it's specifically referenced --
- 11 QUESTION: Of course, it's not correct. And
- 12 similarly, if they say on a street, no truck can use this
- 13 street --
- MR. CORDRAY: Yes.
- 15 QUESTION: -- and they don't say motor carriers
- of property, it's the same.
- 17 MR. CORDRAY: The reason is -- no. The reason
- 18 is that specifically references price. There are lots of
- 19 laws that in -- tangentially will affect routes. All
- 20 right? A one-way street law, for example, has to be
- 21 obeyed by trucks, just as it is by cars. That's not
- 22 within this preemption clause. So, that's one way to
- 23 address it. All right. And -- and that would be true of
- 24 all general traffic laws, just as it's true of all general
- 25 tort laws, general tax laws.

- 1 QUESTION: Mr. Cordray, on this point, look at
- on page A-2, (c)(1), the general rule. It has at the very
- 3 end of it the phrase, with respect to the transportation
- 4 of property.
- 5 MR. CORDRAY: Right.
- 6 QUESTION: Where are you reading from?
- 7 QUESTION: I'm reading on page A-2, (c)(1), the
- 8 general rule from which (c)(2) is -- is an exception. And
- 9 the general rule is, except as provided, blah, blah, blah,
- 10 blah, no State, political subdivision shall enact any
- 11 provision having the force and effect of law related to a
- 12 price, route, or service of any motor carrier. And then
- there's a lot of other language. And then at the very
- end, with respect to the transportation of property. Does
- 15 that phrase at the end go all the way back to related to a
- 16 price, route, or service with respect to the
- 17 transportation of property?
- 18 MR. CORDRAY: I believe it does, Your Honor, and
- 19 it's just -- it's just --
- 20 QUESTION: Well, that would make it a very
- 21 narrow provision then, wouldn't it, that -- that we're
- 22 excluding the -- the municipalities from?
- MR. CORDRAY: I believe it is.
- 24 QUESTION: They just couldn't say you're not
- 25 allowed to use this street to carry -- to carry moving

- 1 goods or --
- 2 MR. CORDRAY: This is a key point.
- 3 QUESTION: But you're -- you're asking -- you're
- 4 asking us to -- to have a very careful grammatically
- 5 correct reading of the act, and in your answer that --
- 6 that you've just given to Justice Scalia, transportation
- 7 of property is preceded by an or. It seems to me the
- 8 first clause is quite independent, related to a price,
- 9 route, or service of any motor carrier. That's it.
- 10 MR. CORDRAY: With --
- 11 QUESTION: So, I'm not sure the qualification
- 12 you urge on us, in order to mitigate the effects of this
- 13 holding works.
- 14 QUESTION: Well, I don't know what it would go
- 15 to if it didn't go to that. It can't go to the stuff
- 16 after the or. Or any motor -- motor private carrier,
- 17 broker or freight forwarder with respect to the
- 18 transportation of -- what is a -- what is a motor private
- 19 carrier with respect to the transportation of -- of
- 20 property? It has no meaning unless you read it all the
- 21 way back up to price, route, or service with respect to
- 22 the transportation --
- 23 MR. CORDRAY: And the title of the provision is
- 24 motor carriers of property. That's specifically what
- 25 they're dealing with, as distinguished from motor carriers

- of passengers, which are addressed earlier in the same
- 2 section of the statute, 14501(a).
- 3 QUESTION: It's not the best statute, is it?
- 4 MR. CORDRAY: I beg your pardon?
- 5 QUESTION: It's not the best statute.
- 6 (Laughter.)
- 7 MR. CORDRAY: It's -- it's clear enough with
- 8 respect to the things we care about here, which is that --
- 9 QUESTION: Well, but I don't think it is.
- 10 MR. CORDRAY: -- Congress very carefully
- 11 attempted to distinguish between a State and a political
- 12 subdivision of a State. And it did so repeatedly in the
- 13 statute for the specific purpose of drawing a distinction
- 14 between them. And the only way --
- 15 QUESTION: There's not a word of legislative
- 16 history I take it --
- 17 QUESTION: If you read (c)(1) as narrowly as
- 18 you're suggesting, you don't even need the exemption
- 19 because it only relates to law, regulation, or other
- 20 provision related to price, route, or service. So -- and
- it doesn't even reach safety.
- 22 MR. CORDRAY: No, that's not true, Your Honor.
- 23 And this case is a good example of it. They are
- 24 attempting to impose a licensing scheme with respect to
- 25 tow trucks and could do it with respect to any motor

- 1 carrier of property, parcel delivery service, or the like.
- 2 And their -- their rationale for doing so apparently is
- 3 safety. But in fact, that is exactly what is preempted by
- 4 this statute and by this clause.
- 5 QUESTION: But, Mr. Cordray, that's open. Mr.
- 6 Sutton said that that question whether these regulations
- 7 are genuine safety regulations or, on the other hand,
- 8 economic is not determined by this case. Here the
- 9 question is whatever is safety, may the State delegate
- 10 that authority to the municipalities.
- I did want to get your response to a question
- 12 Justice Kennedy asked Mr. -- and it was answered for you
- by Mr. Sutton. Suppose the State says, okay, we do
- business by dealing with municipalities. So, we will
- 15 simply take the municipal regulation of Toledo and the
- 16 municipal regulation of Columbus, and we'll put it all
- 17 together in one package. It will say, State regulation of
- 18 safety, and -- and we'll preserve everything. Would that
- 19 be permissible under your reading of this Federal statute?
- 20 MR. CORDRAY: Yes, it would, Your Honor. It
- 21 would. If the State is doing the regulating or enacting
- 22 the law, under this statute, the way it reads and the --
- 23 the way it was designed, that would be permissible, even
- 24 if it's nonuniform. If we wanted to make it uniform, we'd
- 25 have to go to the legislature and try to get that package

- 1 amended or go perhaps to the State department of
- 2 transportation which also could do this through an
- 3 administrative scheme.
- 4 QUESTION: So, it's strictly a question of form
- 5 that we're dealing with, that States, you can delegate to
- 6 your cities, as you always have, just say, cities, what do
- 7 you want and we'll give it to you by enacting a State law.
- 8 MR. CORDRAY: No. It's not simply a matter of
- 9 form because Congress made a judgment that if there were
- 10 50 different States imposing their own schemes, that would
- 11 be less impediments and -- and tangle of restrictions
- impeding a free market than if 39,000 municipalities and
- 13 local governments around the country were free on their
- own to do what they wished, and that that -- that was in
- 15 fact very much undercutting the desire to get to a free
- 16 market in transportation services.
- 17 But I also want to go back to your comment and
- 18 your question earlier. This statute does not itself
- 19 distinguish between economic regulation that's preempted
- 20 on the one hand and safety regulation that's not on the
- 21 other. The phrasing of the statute is much broader. It
- 22 is related to price, route, and services of a motor
- 23 carrier of property. That may not only be economic
- 24 regulation. And so the notion that that's the divide and
- 25 we can simply remand, the lower court can sort it out, I

- believe is not correct.
- Now, as we've seen here, the fact that the --
- 3 the statute is broad does not mean it's all encompassing.
- 4 I mean, I could see an argument that truck -- trucking
- 5 companies no longer now have to pay corporate tax because
- 6 that affects their price. But that's a general provision.
- 7 As this Court has said in construing ERISA and needs to be
- 8 imported here in the Dillingham case and the like, there
- 9 has to be a connection with or reference to the specific
- 10 item at issue. Here motor carriers of property. And
- 11 that's what we have with this licensing scheme here which
- is directed specifically at tow trucks and will have a
- 13 very direct relation and -- and effect on their prices and
- 14 services.
- I also want to mention the problem of surplusage
- 16 because it's not been mentioned on the other side, and
- 17 it's very important here. What possible reason would
- 18 Congress have had for including in the statute what
- 19 obviously is a key phrase? It shows up seven times in the
- 20 course of the single statute. Political subdivision of a
- 21 State. Why would that be included at all if the authority
- 22 of a State is to be read, as petitioners would have it, to
- 23 always include within it the authority of a political
- 24 subdivision.
- 25 QUESTION: Their -- their answer is that -- that

- 1 when you speak of the regulatory authority of a State,
- 2 that naturally connotes the authority to -- to delegate
- 3 that to -- to municipalities. But when you speak of the
- 4 authority of a State to enact or enforce a law, that --
- 5 that much less naturally includes the authority of a
- 6 municipality to enact or enforce a law so that -- and all
- 7 of those other references are in connection with that
- 8 phrase, to enact or enforce a law. Are they not?
- 9 MR. CORDRAY: Two reasons why that does not
- 10 work, Your Honor. They agreed that the subsections of
- (c)(2)(A) have to be read in parallel and the second one
- 12 with respect to size and weight and the like. It doesn't
- 13 say anything about regulatory authority. It just says
- 14 authority of a State.
- 15 Second, in the preemption clause itself --
- 16 QUESTION: Wait, wait. I -- I missed that.
- 17 MR. CORDRAY: Well, regulatory authority is the
- 18 phrase used in the first subclause --
- 19 QUESTION: Right.
- 20 MR. CORDRAY: -- of (c)(2)(A) related to safety.
- 21 QUESTION: Yes.
- 22 MR. CORDRAY: But they're not talking about
- 23 authority to regulate. They're just talking about
- 24 authority of a State with respect to the size and weight,
- 25 hazardous cargo, and then with respect to insurance. And

- 1 insurance is an excellent example I'll get to in a moment.
- 2 But also in the preemption clause itself,
- 3 (c)(1), it refers to the authority of a State to enact or
- 4 enforce a law or regulation. That is regulatory
- 5 authority, and it distinguishes it full stop from the
- 6 authority of a political subdivision of a State to do the
- 7 same thing. What? Enact or enforce a regulation. So,
- 8 the regulatory authority is being discussed specifically
- 9 in the preemption clause itself.
- 10 That's the fallacy of starting the analysis here
- 11 by jumping all the way to (c)(2)(A) and wrenching that
- 12 text out of context and divorcing it from the preemption
- 13 clause that it's meant to be a savings subordinate to.
- 14 But the preemption clause itself --
- 15 QUESTION: No, but (c)(1) uses may enact or
- 16 enforce just as -- as (c)(2)(C) does, whereas (c)(2)(A)
- 17 does not. The to enact or enforce language applies in
- 18 every subsection except the one that we're arguing about.
- 19 MR. CORDRAY: That's correct, which is a telling
- 20 point. In every subsection, Congress went out of its way
- 21 to add political subdivision of a State. I've still not
- 22 heard a single sensible explanation for why they would
- 23 bother to do that.
- 24 QUESTION: Well, if -- but if you didn't add the
- 25 political subdivision in those States and if you had a

- 1 home rule State, then a local government could -- would
- 2 not be affected by it.
- 3 MR. CORDRAY: No, not correct because their
- 4 notion is that State includes delegating to its local
- 5 government as a delegated power from the State. They want
- 6 to read the two as being encompassed within one another.
- 7 QUESTION: When you described the regulatory --
- 8 regulatory authority in gross as you do in (2)(A), then it
- 9 would apply to the authority to delegate. But when you're
- 10 talking about authority to enact or enforce, then you have
- 11 to identify the entities that do the enacting and the
- 12 enforcing. It seems to me that's a perfectly logical
- 13 distinction.
- MR. CORDRAY: Well, I don't believe it is, Your
- 15 Honor. And again, there's nothing about regulatory
- 16 authority that is unique in this statute because (c)(2)(A)
- does refer to regulatory authority with respect to safety,
- 18 but it doesn't refer to regulatory authority with
- 19 respect --
- 20 QUESTION: Well, don't you agree that if you
- 21 didn't have all the other subdivisions in here, that would
- 22 be the normal reading of regulatory authority, which would
- include the authority to delegate?
- 24 MR. CORDRAY: I would agree that if (c)(2)(A)
- 25 alone were the statute --

- 1 QUESTION: Correct.
- 2 MR. CORDRAY: -- that would be a sensible
- 3 reading. But if you -- that -- that's taking it out of a
- 4 context where Congress specifically is dealing with a
- 5 State and a political subdivision regularly in the statute
- 6 and then in one instance a special kind --
- 7 QUESTION: Yes, but in one -- but in one
- 8 provision, they say regulatory authority, which has a
- 9 plain meaning that you'd be -- brings a result you
- 10 disagree with. In the other they consistently use
- 11 authority of a State or a political subdivision to enact
- 12 or enforce.
- MR. CORDRAY: But it doesn't --
- 14 QUESTION: If you don't refer to political
- 15 subdivision, it just wouldn't include it.
- 16 MR. CORDRAY: It doesn't have a plain meaning.
- 17 It doesn't really have any meaning because in the
- 18 preemption clause itself, they're referring to the
- 19 authority of a State to regulate, and they're separately
- 20 referring to the authority of --
- 21 QUESTION: No. It says a State or a political
- 22 subdivision may not enact or enforce. That's the language
- of the preemption clause.
- 24 MR. CORDRAY: Correct. That's right. Enact or
- 25 enforce what? A regulation, which is the same thing as to

- 1 regulate.
- 2 QUESTION: (c)(2)(A) at the bottom of page A-2
- 3 in the same sentence uses this shall not restrict the
- 4 safety regulatory a State -- authority of a State with
- 5 respect -- or the authority of a State. They don't use
- 6 the adjective regulatory even in the second clause.
- 7 MR. CORDRAY: That was my point. I was trying
- 8 to make it earlier. I -- I didn't make it as clearly as
- 9 you just did. But that's exactly --
- 10 QUESTION: Well, obviously, I -- I missed it, so
- 11 say it again.
- 12 (Laughter.)
- 13 MR. CORDRAY: Well, that's exactly right.
- 14 Trying to give some special meaning -- `
- 15 QUESTION: Where? What -- what section are you
- 16 talking about?
- 17 MR. CORDRAY: We're talking about (c)(2)(A).
- 18 QUESTION: At the bottom of page A-2.
- 19 MR. CORDRAY: This is a point I tried to make
- 20 earlier and I did not make it as clearly as the Chief
- 21 Justice just did.
- 22 QUESTION: I didn't get it.
- 23 MR. CORDRAY: But they're attempting to give
- 24 some special meaning to the phrase safety regulatory
- 25 authority, but by their own argument, that can't follow

- 1 because they want to -- they have to read all these
- 2 provisions the same way. And the second subclause there
- 3 refers --
- 4 QUESTION: The authority of a State.
- 5 MR. CORDRAY: -- to the authority of a State,
- 6 nothing about safety, nothing about regulatory, and has to
- 7 be read in the same fashion.
- 8 I would also point out that the third subclause
- 9 there, which relates to insurance requirements, they would
- 10 be saying that municipalities are free to impose their own
- insurance requirements upon motor carriers of property.
- 12 So, FedEx, UPS in different municipalities would have to
- 13 meet different insurance requirements. They'd have to do
- 14 different kinds of filings and have very different kinds
- 15 of --
- 16 QUESTION: You're too fast for me. Where is the
- insurance requirement?
- 18 QUESTION: At the very end of that provision.
- 19 MR. CORDRAY: It's the third subclause in
- 20 (2)(A).
- 21 QUESTION: (2)(A).
- 22 QUESTION: Oh, in -- in (2)(A), okay.
- MR. CORDRAY: And that is completely at odds
- 24 with the statute because in 14504, which this Court is
- 25 going to take up in a case called Yellow Freight next

- 1 term, it says specifically there -- Congress said even 50
- 2 registrations by motor carriers of property in different
- 3 States for insurance purposes is too many for our taste.
- 4 We think there should only be one, and they said the
- 5 single State --
- 6 QUESTION: Well, what about the middle one?
- 7 What about the middle one? It says, the authority of a
- 8 State to impose highway limitations.
- 9 MR. CORDRAY: Yes.
- 10 QUESTION: Now, I can't figure out, for the life
- of me, how -- why Congress would have wanted to say the
- 12 State can impose limitations on the use of highways, but
- 13 the city cannot impose limitations on the use of streets.
- 14 But your reading would lead to that.
- 15 MR. CORDRAY: That would be one respect, Your
- 16 Honor, in which either -- if it was a general traffic
- 17 regulation, then it would not be preempted at all. Or if
- 18 it were preempted, it would have to be done at the State
- 19 level and it could be done by the --
- 20 QUESTION: I thought part of your argument was
- 21 also that streets are not highways, and I'm surprised you
- 22 didn't make that point when we were talking about the --
- 23 you know, no trucks on a school street or something like
- 24 that. Isn't the term highways arguably different from --
- from local residential neighborhood streets?

- 1 MR. CORDRAY: Arguably it could be, but I
- 2 believe for purposes of title 49, it's a defined term to
- 3 include streets. But our point there was that it's
- 4 perfectly sensible for Congress to say that the States
- 5 shall deal with these issues, but not the municipality.
- 6 QUESTION: And you found not a word -- am I
- 7 right? There is not a word in the history of this --
- 8 although there was some human being who wrote these words,
- 9 there is not a word in any document, hearing, report,
- 10 debate that casts any light on this one way or the other.
- 11 MR. CORDRAY: One way or the other. But again,
- 12 traffic regulations --
- 13 QUESTION: Is that right?
- MR. CORDRAY: -- generally are not within the
- 15 preemption clause.
- 16 QUESTION: No, no. I'm just trying to -- it's
- 17 mysterious to me.
- 18 MR. CORDRAY: Yes. The legislative history
- 19 here --
- 20 QUESTION: And I'm having trouble, and therefore
- 21 I -- I just sometimes look at the legislative history --
- MR. CORDRAY: Yes, I understand.
- 23 QUESTION: -- to try to figure it out. And you
- 24 haven't found anything, nor does the other --
- MR. CORDRAY: The legislative history here is

- 1 confused and somewhat unilluminating.
- 2 QUESTION: I guess we'll have to use the
- 3 statute.
- 4 (Laughter.)
- 5 QUESTION: Mr. Cordray, is there -- is there an
- 6 example -- any other example of a Federal statute -- I
- 7 mean, it is unusual to say, States, you can no longer
- 8 decide how your authority is going to be exercised. An
- 9 ordinary mode of a State exercising its authority is to
- 10 delegate it to localities. Apart from this statute, is
- 11 there any other Federal statute that says, State, you may
- do it but you may not delegate it to a regional or local
- or municipal unit?
- MR. CORDRAY: There are two responses to that
- 15 question. The first is the example that was already given
- 16 which is when the Federal Government puts a grant to a
- 17 municipality full stop and doesn't allow the State to
- 18 control the use of that grant, that's an example like
- 19 this.
- 20 But the other point I would make is throughout
- 21 its history, Congress has --
- 22 QUESTION: Well, that's a State -- that's --
- 23 that's --
- 24 MR. CORDRAY: May I --
- 25 QUESTION: -- Congress giving money to a

- 1 municipality. I asked an instance in which Congress says,
- 2 State, you may do it but you, State, may not delegate.
- 3 MR. CORDRAY: I know of none, but this is a new
- 4 departure for Congress. They have always taken free
- 5 markets and sought to regulate them. Here they're taking
- 6 a market they had regulated and the States and localities
- 7 had regulated and they're now trying to deregulate it.
- 8 That's a new development and it calls for new measures.
- 9 And the measure here was to try to clear away all this
- 10 underbrush of -- of State and local restriction --
- 11 QUESTION: Since it was -- since you say it's
- 12 singular and this is new, wouldn't you expect Congress to
- make a clear statement that the State may not delegate
- 14 this authority because --
- 15 MR. CORDRAY: Congress did make a clear
- 16 statement by including the term, political subdivision,
- 17 whenever it wanted political subdivisions to either have
- 18 authority or be restricted in that authority, and then
- 19 specifically speaking only to States here. There could
- 20 not be a clearer statement of that. Why else ever use the
- 21 term, political subdivision? That is unexplained.
- 22 QUESTION: And the State may not delegate this
- 23 authority to a political subdivision. Just as simple as
- that, to negate what has been the assumption all along.
- 25 MR. CORDRAY: They could have used the term

- 1 State everywhere alone and then said, State but not
- 2 political subdivision, here. Or they could this term,
- 3 State and political subdivision, everywhere and omit the
- 4 term, political subdivision, here. Those are the same
- 5 meaning and they're the same purpose.
- 6 And again, canons of construction have been
- 7 denigrated in this case, but they have to do with the
- 8 natural and ordinary reading of statutes. The baseline
- 9 that Congress uses to draft laws in some confidence that
- 10 the executive branch and the courts will interpret them as
- 11 Congress meant them, and that's exactly what's --
- 12 QUESTION: The executive branch. Now, you -- I
- 13 know you have said, and I quite agree, that the Department
- of Transportation has no supervisory authority, it has no
- 15 Chevron deference. But doesn't it deserve some respect
- 16 from the courts simply because it has familiarity with the
- 17 area of motor carrier regulation that the courts don't?
- 18 MR. CORDRAY: That's a -- that's a statement I
- 19 couldn't disagree with more strongly. The Solicitor
- 20 General here has conceded they have no authority to
- 21 administer this statute. The notion that you have a --
- 22 QUESTION: They've not conceded the Department
- 23 of Transportation -- you -- deserves no respect.
- 24 MR. CORDRAY: The -- the notion that a
- 25 deregulatory statute that took governmental entities out

- 1 of an area to create a free market would now be subject to
- 2 umpiring by the Federal agency, in terms of the scope of
- 3 preemption, which is an issue this Court has always said
- 4 is for the courts to determine --
- 5 QUESTION: I didn't say umpiring. I said its
- 6 views on the proper construction of this statute. What
- 7 weight, if any, should this Court give to the Department
- 8 of Transportation's view, this is what the statute means?
- 9 Not as an umpire, not as a referee.
- 10 MR. CORDRAY: Their construction is to leave
- 11 them as an umpire. But I would say certainly not Chevron
- 12 deference. At most some sort of Skidmore respect, but
- 13 that's only entitled where there's some sort of reason to
- think that before they got to their litigation position
- 15 here, which has migrated in the course of this case -- it
- 16 started off as an argument about repeal by implication.
- 17 It's now turned into argument about sort of reading
- 18 statutes together to import them into this statute -- is
- 19 entitled to really, I think, no respect here because it is
- 20 not persuasive. They have not analyzed the statute in
- 21 detail --
- 22 QUESTION: Well, if -- if you lose, you know --
- 23 MR. CORDRAY: -- in any of their prior --
- 24 OUESTION: If you're changing your argument --
- 25 you know, if you lost in the lower court, you'd probably

- 1 be well advised to change your argument.
- 2 (Laughter.)
- MR. CORDRAY: I wouldn't disagree with that,
- 4 Your Honor. But again --
- 5 QUESTION: Mr. Cordray, what -- what about the
- 6 point made that if -- if you accept your interpretation,
- 7 municipalities not only would not be able to enact
- 8 regulations themselves, they would not be able to enforce
- 9 regulations adopted by the -- by the State, which would be
- 10 a great inconvenience, that the only enforcement can be by
- 11 the State police and not by local -- local police.
- MR. CORDRAY: We agree, but that's not what this
- 13 preemption clause is about or any preemption clause is
- ever about. When they say enact or enforce here, they
- don't use it in the terms of making law and executing the
- 16 law. They use it in the -- in the sense of enacting new
- 17 law or applying -- or enforcing and applying preexisting
- 18 law.
- 19 And the point of this preemption clause is to
- 20 say that municipalities do not have the authority to act
- 21 in this realm by imposing their own public policies. It's
- 22 a matter of either new law or preexisting law. That's the
- 23 structure of many of these preemption statutes the Court
- 24 has dealt with.
- 25 OUESTION: If we think this statute is -- that

- 1 there are arguments either way for interpreting it,
- 2 shouldn't we pay heed to the petitioners' point that it's
- 3 a very serious matter for the Congress of the United
- 4 States to tell States how they should govern themselves?
- 5 MR. CORDRAY: We think the language of the
- 6 statute is clear here, Your Honor. They explicitly
- 7 extinguished the power of the municipality --
- 8 QUESTION: Let's -- let's say we -- we disagree
- 9 with that. Is -- is that not -- let's say we find the
- 10 statute in -- in equipoise, or the arguments. Should we
- 11 not give force to the argument petitioner makes that the
- 12 States should be presumed to have the authority to
- determine how best to govern themselves?
- MR. CORDRAY: No. There's no substantive Tenth
- 15 Amendment issue here. There's no commandeering of States
- or local governments to enact some sort of program. This
- 17 is the same as the Court in Wolens where they said this
- 18 statute must be read to say the State cannot legislate in
- 19 this area, but they can enforce contracts through their
- 20 courts. There's no Tenth Amendment problem with that.
- 21 That's Congress exercising its power under the Supremacy
- 22 Clause, anything in the laws or constitution of the States
- 23 notwithstanding.
- 24 And as the Solicitor General said in the brief
- in the Mortier case, the notion that when Congress decided

- 1 that there could be State regulation but they had to
- 2 preempt local regulation, that they would somehow have to
- 3 be forced to preempt State regulation as well, simply
- 4 turns the Tenth Amendment on its head. So, we don't think
- 5 that there's any -- any serious constitutional issue here.
- 6 QUESTION: It seems to me your argument boils
- 7 down to the point that there are 10 provisions in the
- 8 statute. Nine of them are perfectly clear. The tenth
- 9 says the same thing, but we're not going to read it the
- 10 way it seems to read because it's not as clear as the
- 11 other nine.
- MR. CORDRAY: No, that's not what it boils down.
- 13 QUESTION: That's about all it amounts to.
- MR. CORDRAY: It boils down to the fact that
- 15 Congress deliberately inserted a phrase here, political
- 16 subdivision of a State, so that it can preempt --
- 17 QUESTION: In the -- in the nine, right.
- MR. CORDRAY: And -- and it --
- 19 QUESTION: If you just read the one all by
- 20 itself, it's perfectly clear too.
- MR. CORDRAY: Well, it's -- it is clear, I
- 22 believe, because it's clear because they said a State
- 23 cannot -- a political subdivision cannot --
- QUESTION: But the only reason --
- 25 MR. CORDRAY: -- and they state the authority of

- 1 a State to do certain things.
- 2 QUESTION: The only support you have is they're
- 3 not as detailed and specific in the one in question as
- 4 they are in the other nine.
- 5 MR. CORDRAY: No. I think it is equally
- 6 detailed and specific. And -- and there's no rationale
- 7 for Congress legislating in this way or drafting this
- 8 language or enacting it unless they intended to make a
- 9 difference. That's -- that's the whole purpose of
- 10 including that language.
- 11 QUESTION: Your support is the context of the
- 12 statute, which --
- 13 MR. CORDRAY: No. Text and context. Text and
- 14 context. That's correct.
- 15 QUESTION: Thank you, Mr. Cordray.
- 16 Mr. Sutton, you have 4 minutes remaining.
- 17 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF JEFFREY S. SUTTON
- 18 ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONERS
- 19 MR. SUTTON: I'd like to respond to a few of the
- 20 points --
- 21 QUESTION: Mr. Sutton, could you ask one --
- 22 answer one factual question for me? Your -- your brother
- 23 made the argument that in -- in reading (c)(2)(A), he went
- 24 to the last clause and said on your theory every political
- 25 subdivision could enact its own financial responsibility

- 1 and insurance laws and so on.
- 2 MR. SUTTON: Yes.
- 3 QUESTION: And that would be a crazy scheme. My
- 4 -- my question is, is there in fact any history of
- 5 municipalities enacting these kinds of statutes so that
- 6 it's something that might have been in Congress's mind?
- 7 MR. SUTTON: No, Your Honor, not in -- in the
- 8 insurance area. But there's a -- I think a better answer
- 9 to that concern, and the better answer is, our point is
- that (c)(2)(A) incorporates all of these preexisting
- 11 preemption provisions. They are preemption provisions in
- other parts of title 49, whether it's insurance, safety,
- 13 size and weight routing, or hazardous material routing.
- So, the problem with Justice O'Connor's point of
- 15 practical consequences -- in reversing the Sixth Circuit,
- 16 there is no gap here. Why? Because for 60 years,
- 17 Congress and the Department of Transportation have been
- 18 regulating these very areas, both with respect to State
- laws and city laws, to the extent they've been enacted.
- 20 So, the multiplicity of insurance regulations is a false
- 21 concern. I mean, the -- Congress has already indicated in
- 31138 and 39 what the rules are there. The Department of
- 23 Transportation has implemented regulations that do get
- 24 Chevron deference, and they lay out what the rules are.
- 25 QUESTION: The same problem, you didn't, is --

- 1 to me anyway, is -- is (3)(A). Do you see what I'm
- 2 thinking? I mean, the same human being at the same time
- 3 wrote the words in -- in (c)(2)(A) and he used the word
- 4 State, and at precisely the same time, he wrote the second
- 5 exception, which is (3)(A) --
- 6 MR. SUTTON: Right.
- 7 QUESTION: -- and he put in political
- 8 subdivision. And what I cannot get over is I don't see
- 9 how a single human being on the same day at the same time
- 10 could write two exceptions, use the word "State" in one
- and use the word "political subdivision" in the other,
- 12 without meaning a difference.
- MR. SUTTON: Right. Your Honor, look -- compare
- 14 (3)(A) to (c)(1). They follow the exact same enact or
- 15 enforce language. (c)(2)(A) does not use the enact or
- 16 enforce language.
- 17 QUESTION: That's the answer.
- 18 MR. SUTTON: That's the answer, number one.
- 19 Number two, remember, (c)(3) is for the benefit
- 20 of motor carriers. They want to make sure they could have
- 21 these rules, whether city or State, apply to them on a
- 22 city-by-city not State-by-State basis.
- Now, the -- the regulatory purpose, Your Honor
- 24 -- the landmark legislation in this area was the 1980 law
- 25 that deregulated interstate commerce. Everyone agrees

- 1 that did not divest cities of authority.
- The 1994 law at issue here was about intrastate
- 3 commerce, primarily to put FedEx and UPS on a level
- 4 playing field, and suddenly respondents are saying that
- 5 deregulated -- regulatory purpose required the divestment
- 6 of local authority?
- 7 QUESTION: Well, what's -- what's Congress's
- 8 authority to regulate intrastate commerce?
- 9 MR. SUTTON: It's at its outer edges, and that
- 10 to me is what is so odd about this particular
- interpretation. They're saying in the intrastate area,
- 12 you could divest States of their authority to delegate,
- 13 but they've not done it in the interstate area? I mean,
- 14 how absurd is that? It's -- it's got it exactly
- 15 backwards.
- 16 Now, the practical consequences -- I want to go
- 17 back to again -- of their interpretation. (c)(2)(A),
- 18 they've agreed, has to be construed the same way
- 19 throughout, and there are countless -- as we indicated in
- 20 our opening brief, every State in the country has
- 21 delegations to cities that have size and weight controls,
- 22 size and weight rules that would be eliminated by this
- 23 particular construction.
- 24 Thank you.
- 25 CHIEF JUSTICE REHNQUIST: Thank you, Mr. Sutton.

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