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1	IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES	
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3	DAN'S CITY USED CARS, INC., :	
4	DBA DAN'S CITY AUTO BODY, :	
5	Petitioner : No. 12-52	
6	v. :	
7	ROBERT PELKEY :	
8	x	
9	Washington, D.C.	
10	Wednesday, March 20, 2013	
11		
12	The above-entitled matter came on for oral	
13	argument before the Supreme Court of the United States	
14	at 11:11 a.m.	
15	APPEARANCES:	
16	ANDRE D. BOUFFARD, ESQ., Burlington, Vermont; on behalf	
17	of Petitioner.	
18	BRIAN C. SHAUGHNESSY, ESQ., Manchester, New Hampshire;	
19	on behalf of Respondent.	
20	LEWIS S. YELIN, ESQ., Assistant to the Solicitor	
21	General, Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.;	
22	for United States, as amicus curiae, supporting	
23	Respondent.	
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Official

		Page 2
1	CONTENTS	
2	ORAL ARGUMENT OF	PAGE
3	ANDRE D. BOUFFARD, ESQ.	
4	On behalf of the Petitioner	3
5	ORAL ARGUMENT OF	
6	BRIAN C. SHAUGHNESSY, ESQ.	
7	On behalf of the Respondent	24
8	ORAL ARGUMENT OF	
9	LEWIS S. YELIN, ESQ.	
10	For United States, as amicus curiae,	
11	supporting Respondent	39
12	REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF	
13	ANDRE D. BOUFFARD, ESQ.	
14	On behalf of the Petitioner	49
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		

Page 3 1 PROCEEDINGS (11:11 a.m.) 2 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We will have 4 argument next in Case 12-52, Dan's City Used 5 Cars v. Pelkey. Mr. Bouffard? 6 ORAL ARGUMENT OF ANDRE D. BOUFFARD 8 ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER MR. BOUFFARD: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it 9 10 please the Court: The issue in this case is whether Section 11 12 14501 of the United States Transportation Code expressly preempts the Respondent's State law consumer protection 13 14 in tort claims for damages against a tow trucker who towed his vehicle lawfully and then, several months 15 later, disposed of the vehicle after the fees for towing 16 17 and storage had not been paid. 18 Both of these claims are preempted because they are directed at the conduct -- the type of conduct 19 20 that tow truck companies all over this country every day 21 engage in, in dealing with a particular type of tow that's referred to in the business as nonconsensual 22 23 tows. 24 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Mr. Bouffard, this law, 25 this New Hampshire law, it regulates storage. Is this a

- 1 law that applies only to the towing companies who tow
- 2 the automobile and then store it, or does the law apply,
- 3 say, to a garage, say, someone brings a car to a garage
- 4 for repairs, and does this storage law regulate garage
- 5 operations as well as towing operations?
- 6 MR. BOUFFARD: Justice Ginsburg, this law
- 7 regulates abandoned motor vehicles. It's an abandoned
- 8 motor vehicle law.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: So -- so it would apply
- 10 to a garage operator.
- 11 MR. BOUFFARD: Well, if a garage operator
- 12 came into possession of an abandoned motor vehicle, then
- 13 I suppose it would. If -- if you look at the -- at the
- 14 title to this subchapter of this New Hampshire statute,
- 15 the title is abandoned vehicles, Your Honor.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Yes, but what made it
- 17 abandoned was that they tried to locate the owner,
- 18 couldn't and so -- this same thing could happen with a
- 19 garage owner as happened to the towing truck. So
- 20 there's nothing peculiar about being in the towing
- 21 business that makes this storage application -- storage
- 22 statute apply.
- 23 MR. BOUFFARD: Well, let me be clear about
- 24 this statute, Your Honor. It's an abandoned vehicle
- 25 statute, and what's really important to understand with

- 1 this case is that none of the Plaintiff's claims rely on
- 2 this abandoned vehicle statute.
- 3 The Plaintiff has pled in his complaint a
- 4 couple of allegations of violations of this abandoned
- 5 vehicle law, but the substantive rights that were sued
- 6 upon by the Plaintiff in this case do not live in the
- 7 abandoned motor vehicle law.
- 8 The substantive rights that were sued upon
- 9 by the Plaintiff live in the State's consumer protection
- 10 law, which is a separate New Hampshire statute,
- 11 unrelated to the abandoned vehicle law. And secondly,
- 12 the claim that the -- the common law negligence claim in
- 13 this case arises out of the common law of New Hampshire.
- 14 It doesn't arise out of the abandoned motor vehicle law.
- 15 One of the sources of confusion, I would
- 16 submit, in the New Hampshire Supreme Court's decision is
- 17 that it did not adequately deal with the -- the role of
- 18 the abandoned vehicle law in this case. The abandoned
- 19 vehicle law actually plays a relatively minor role as it
- 20 relates to the causes of action that were pled in this
- 21 case and the causes of action that the preemption
- 22 defense is directed to in this case.
- JUSTICE BREYER: What's -- what's your
- 24 point? If it's not part of the towing law, then it's
- 25 further removed.

Page 6 1 MR. BOUFFARD: The reason -- the reason why 2 these claims are preempted, Your Honor, is because they all stem from the towing of the vehicle, which was 3 followed by the storage of the vehicle. 5 JUSTICE BREYER: I guess, I mean, I guess you could have thousands of claims across the country, 6 7 millions of claims where there are all kinds of towing laws. And -- you know, it says in Cambridge, Massachusetts 8 9 park your car here during a snow emergency, it will be towed. Probably every northeastern country has laws 10 like that. I guess there could be millions of 11 negligence claims when the thing is towed, the guy broke 12 a headlight. 13 MR. BOUFFARD: Well, I think that's a 14 15 different --JUSTICE BREYER: And are all those things 16 17 preempted? I would be amazed. 18 MR. BOUFFARD: I don't think so, Your Honor. 19 We're not --20 JUSTICE BREYER: Then what's the difference 21 between this and -- and what could arise any day of the I mean, as I read your brief, I -- are you saying 22 that all the northeast statutes that say your car will 23 24 be towed if you park here during a snow emergency, what 25 happens? I mean, do they have to go to the Department

Page 7 of Transportation? Boston couldn't function. 1 I know that they do tow cars. I don't know that firsthand, but 2 3 I've seen it. 4 (Laughter.) JUSTICE BREYER: So how's it supposed to 5 6 work? 7 MR. BOUFFARD: There's no -- there's no 8 claim in this case, Your Honor, that the abandoned motor vehicle law is preempted, that New Hampshire's abandoned 9 motor vehicle law --10 11 JUSTICE BREYER: Well, all right, there 12 isn't in this case, but I'm curious to know how it works because it seemed to me from what you're arguing, all 13 14 the abandoned motor vehicle laws and all the snow emergency towing and everything else that I see every 15 day would be preempted a fortiori. So you tell me how 16 it all works. 17 18 MR. BOUFFARD: We are arguing that the causes of action that were pled in this case, which are 19 a Consumer Protection Act claim for damages and 20 21 attorneys' fees -- treble damages actually in the 22 Consumer Protection Act claim. That claim is predicated on the consumer protection law. It's predicated on the 23 24 State of New Hampshire's policy protecting consumers. 25 Now, there's -- there's an allegation in the

- 1 complaint that there was also -- there happened to be a
- 2 violation of this abandoned vehicle law. But that is a
- 3 completely meaningless allegation as it relates to the
- 4 Consumer Protection Act because even if it were a
- 5 violation of the abandoned vehicle law, that would not
- 6 make it a violation of the consumer protection law.
- 7 Consumer protection laws are intended to regulate
- 8 fairness in business practices. That's what that
- 9 statute is about.
- 10 JUSTICE SCALIA: My question is -- is the
- 11 same as Justice Breyer's. It seems to me you are
- 12 running in the wrong direction. To the extent you say
- 13 the case doesn't involve New Hampshire's towing law but
- 14 involves just its general consumer protection law,
- 15 it's -- it's even further distant from being preempted.
- 16 I --
- 17 MR. BOUFFARD: Well, there's a difference,
- 18 Your Honor, Justice Scalia, between whether the case is
- 19 predicated on the New Hampshire towing law and whether
- 20 or not these causes of action are related to the towing
- 21 of the vehicle. Our point, and our primary argument, is
- 22 that all of these claims are related to, within the
- 23 meaning of this statute, to the towing of the vehicle.
- 24 JUSTICE SCALIA: Suppose -- I understand.
- 25 My goodness. Suppose a vehicle -- I pay for somebody to

Page 9 1 tow -- I agree that somebody will tow my vehicle and I will pay him \$100. And he tows the vehicle, puts it in 2 my garage and says, give me the \$100. And I say, ha, 3 4 ha, I'm not going to give you \$100. 5 (Laughter.) 6 JUSTICE SCALIA: Now, you think that that 7 general obligation under State law to pay a debt that you've contracted to pay is eliminated? 8 9 MR. BOUFFARD: That's a very different set 10 of circumstances, Justice Scalia. 11 JUSTICE SCALIA: Why is that different from normal consumer protection law? I -- I don't see that 12 it's so much different. 13 14 MR. BOUFFARD: Well, this -- this case involves a nonconsensual tow. This case involves a 15 situation where there was an opportunity, a fair 16 17 opportunity, to pay for the towing and the storage charges that had been incurred, and --18 19 JUSTICE ALITO: What difference does that Suppose there was a towing company that lawfully 20 make? 21 towed cars, but its practice was to hold the car for 22 24 hours and if it wasn't picked up they would immediately sell it for parts. 23 24 Your argument would be that's preempted by the Federal statute? 25

Page 10 1 MR. BOUFFARD: No, we wouldn't --JUSTICE ALITO: The State can't regulate 2 3 that? MR. BOUFFARD: I -- I think the State could 4 regulate that, Your Honor. What the State -- what 5 the -- what a private plaintiff can't do in a case like 6 this is assert claims like common law negligence 8 claims --9 JUSTICE ALITO: Right. A private 10 plaintiff could not assert a common law negligence claim if that were done? 11 12 MR. BOUFFARD: A --JUSTICE ALITO: Lawfully towed, sold for 13 14 parts within 24 hours because it wasn't picked up. 15 MR. BOUFFARD: I think -- I think a private plaintiff could -- could probably assert that, that 16 17 negligence claim. JUSTICE ALITO: Well, if that's -- if that 18 is not related to payment for services, then why is this 19 -- why is there such a relationship here? 20 21 MR. BOUFFARD: That situation doesn't 22 involve a payment dispute, Your Honor. This case -- the case we have before us today, involves a payment 23 24 dispute. This is really a payment dispute. A person --25 JUSTICE ALITO: It would involve a payment

- 1 dispute to the same extent as this. Towed, notice sent
- 2 out immediately, wasn't picked up within 24 hours, sell
- 3 it for parts.
- 4 MR. BOUFFARD: Well, that -- that's not a
- 5 payment dispute. The parties haven't -- haven't
- 6 disputed whether or not there -- there is a payment
- 7 obligation. The part -- this -- this case is about a
- 8 dispute over whether there is even an obligation to pay
- 9 for the -- the towing and the storage services. That's
- 10 what this case is about. This -- this plaintiff had an
- 11 opportunity to pay for and to discharge his obligation
- 12 under State law. I -- I feel the need to --
- 13 JUSTICE GINSBURG: When? When did that
- 14 opportunity come up? Because I thought that the notice
- 15 didn't get to the -- to the plaintiff, and then when the
- 16 lawyer said, I have a client, it's his car, then the
- 17 towing company went ahead and put it up for auction.
- 18 And then no bidders, so they sold it, pocketed the
- 19 money, gave nothing to the car owner. So I don't
- 20 understand how it's a dispute about payment. This is
- 21 not a case where the car owner said I won't pay for the
- 22 towing.
- 23 MR. BOUFFARD: Well, Justice Ginsburg, we
- 24 don't agree with that. It is -- it is exactly that kind
- 25 of case.

- 1 JUSTICE GINSBURG: At what point did Pelkey
- 2 say, I won't pay for the towing?
- 3 MR. BOUFFARD: There -- there's a letter in
- 4 the record of the New Hampshire Supreme Court, Your
- 5 Honor, it's -- I believe it's at page 86 and 87 of the
- 6 record in the New Hampshire Supreme Court, which is a
- 7 letter from Mr. Shaughnessy, counsel for Mr. Pelkey, to
- 8 my client. And this letter was written something in the
- 9 range of 3 months after the towing took place, and --
- 10 and before the vehicle had been disposed of.
- 11 And the letter asserts that Mr. Pelkey
- 12 doesn't believe he should have to pay for any storage
- 13 fees. He would -- he would pay the towing fees, but he
- 14 doesn't believe he should have to pay for any of the
- 15 storage fees. And that's -- that's -- that's really
- 16 reflective of what this case is really all about. It's
- 17 about a dispute over payment.
- 18 And the reason why this case is so
- 19 significant --
- 20 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Not payment over towing,
- 21 payment over storage.
- 22 MR. BOUFFARD: He -- he offered in this
- 23 letter to pay the towing fees only. There was never any
- 24 tender of payment. There was an offer to pay, provided
- 25 that -- provided that my client would tow the vehicle

- 1 back to his place of residence because the vehicle
- 2 wasn't operative at the time.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: If this was a consensual
- 4 contract, he asked -- Justice Scalia's question. They
- 5 contracted for the tow. What State laws would be
- 6 preempted under the FAAAA with respect to that private
- 7 contract? Would there be any?
- 8 MR. BOUFFARD: The the -- any breach of
- 9 contract claim that might arise on behalf of the plaintiff
- 10 would not be preempted. That's what the Court decided in
- 11 the Wolens decision.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: How about, do consumer
- 13 fraud laws apply to that contract between the parties?
- 14 MR. BOUFFARD: The consumer fraud law
- 15 might --
- 16 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: That's the basis of his
- 17 claim here.
- 18 MR. BOUFFARD: It might apply as a matter of
- 19 State law, but it would be preempted.
- 20 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Ah, so you're arguing
- 21 that those laws would be preempted.
- MR. BOUFFARD: It would be preempted to the
- 23 extent that it's a -- the case involves a dispute over
- 24 payment for the services. This is a -- this case is
- 25 a --

Page 14 1 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: That gets back to whether the services include storage, which is what the 2 3 New Hampshire court said it doesn't. MR. BOUFFARD: The New Hampshire --4 5 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: That the movement of 6 property or towing doesn't include services for storage. 7 MR. BOUFFARD: That's what the New Hampshire 8 Supreme Court said, relying on the minority view that's come out of the Ninth Circuit in the Charas decision. 9 10 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So why don't you answer 11 that question? As I read the list of things that are preempted, they have to do with storage during 12 transportation. Why should we read it more broadly than 13 14 that? 15 MR. BOUFFARD: I think -- Justice Sotomayor, I think you are referring to the argument that's been 16 17 made by my friends with regard to the final phrase in 18 the statute with respect to transportation --19 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Exactly. 20 MR. BOUFFARD: And the short answer to that 21 question is that the term "transportation" is a defined term in Title 49, and it's defined very broadly for --22 for good reason because that term is used throughout 23 Title 49. In fact, the term is used to define the scope 24 of jurisdiction of the Department of Transportation, and 25

Page 15 1 the definition of transportation is quite broad, and --JUSTICE SCALIA: It -- it includes storage, 2 3 is the point you are coming to, right? MR. BOUFFARD: That's correct. 4 JUSTICE SCALIA: The definition includes 5 6 storage. You think it means -- it means storage at the 7 end of the transportation? Suppose you're -- you're a 8 company that moves goods, but we also store goods. You can -- you know, rent -- rent space and we will store 9 10 your furniture for years. If that company picks up some 11 goods, brings it to its warehouse and leaves it in its warehouse for 3 years, that storage is covered by 12 this -- by this statute, you think? 13 14 See, I thought the storage was -- was 15 storage in the course of the transportation. Sometimes when you're -- you know, changing the mode of 16 17 transportation, going from trucks to ships or something, you have to store it temporarily during -- during the 18 course of the transportation. That's how I would read 19 it. But you're saying, even if you're a storage 20 21 company, if you pick up goods and bring it to the place 22 where you store it, that's covered by -- by this 23 statute. 24 MR. BOUFFARD: No, that's not what I'm 25 saying, Your Honor. I'm saying that if you tow a motor

- 1 vehicle, you bring the motor vehicle into your
- 2 possession via towing and, as is the case here, you also
- 3 store the vehicle. And in particular in a case like
- 4 this, where the claimant was seeking to have the vehicle
- 5 returned to his place of business -- to his place of
- 6 residence, those are the facts of this case.
- 7 This wasn't necessarily the end of the
- 8 transportation. The plaintiff here, the Respondent, was
- 9 asking for further transportation services at the end of
- 10 the day. So on the facts of this case, the
- 11 transportation hadn't ended. But even if -- we do have
- 12 a situation where there would have been no further
- 13 transportation.
- 14 The -- the reading that my friends have
- 15 advocated inserts the word "incidental" to -- to
- 16 transportation in the statute that doesn't appear in the
- 17 statute.
- The definition of "transportation" doesn't
- 19 include the word -- doesn't say "storage incidental to
- 20 the movement of property."
- 21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Let's say you park
- 22 your tow trucks on somebody else's parking lot, and you
- 23 don't pay the rent. So they sell your tow truck. Is
- 24 your claim against your landlord preempted?
- 25 MR. BOUFFARD: I don't think so, Your Honor,

- 1 because I don't think that that scenario would fall
- 2 within what Congress intended by the term "services"
- 3 there. That -- that claim -- that claim that -- that
- 4 you've described, Mr. Chief Justice, is a claim that
- 5 would really be a -- a breach of contract claim between
- 6 the tow truck owners and his landlord. That would be
- 7 a -- a contract dispute. It wouldn't -- wouldn't relate
- 8 to the transportation services of the -- of the tow
- 9 truck company in a way that is picked up by this
- 10 preemption statute.
- It relates to it in a very tangential way,
- in a very remote way, I suppose, but not -- not in a way
- 13 that's close enough -- not in a way that -- that relates
- 14 to the business of a tow truck company in the way that
- 15 payment disputes over -- over the services relate to the
- 16 business of the tow truck company.
- 17 There are any number of different types of
- 18 disputes that motor carriers, like tow truck companies,
- 19 could get involved in that wouldn't be preempted here.
- 20 Motor carriers are involved in lots of different types
- 21 of business activity that doesn't involve the delivery
- 22 of their services. They could be involved in a real
- 23 estate transaction, for example.
- 24 They may be buying a new -- a new depot, and
- 25 there may be claims that arise out of disputes in

- 1 connection with that real estate transaction. Those
- 2 claims aren't preempted by this statute, even though in
- 3 a very remote sense, they -- those -- those disputes
- 4 might be related to the business of -- of the motor
- 5 carrier. It's very remote, unlike a situation where the
- 6 claim arises out of the actual delivery of the
- 7 transportation services.
- 8 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: How does -- so if
- 9 your tow truck is involved in an accident, is that --
- 10 and a suit is filed for negligence. Is that preempted?
- 11 MR. BOUFFARD: I don't think that's
- 12 preempted, Your Honor. I -- I -- and the reason I say
- 13 that is because there's a whole line of Court of
- 14 Appeals' decisions in the airline area that deal with
- 15 negligence claims arising out of the negligent operation
- 16 of the aircraft. And your scenario is the negligent
- 17 operation of a tow truck as opposed to an aircraft.
- 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I'm just looking at
- 19 the statutory language. It says -- you know, "related
- 20 to a service of a motor carrier with respect to the
- 21 transportation of property, " and you know, your motor --
- 22 your truck is involved in transporting property. That's
- 23 the claim against you, that you don't -- you don't
- 24 render good service because you're negligent in a -- and
- 25 it just seems to me to fit within the terms of the

- 1 statute, if you adopt as broad a reading as you adopt.
- 2 MR. BOUFFARD: Well, literally, I think
- 3 you're -- you're right, Your Honor, that -- that the
- 4 scenario you describe could fall within the literal
- 5 language of the statute, but the Court has said that we
- 6 can't go -- we can't necessarily go to the literal end
- 7 of the earth in the reading of the statute, and we have
- 8 to -- we have to limit this in some fashion. And the
- 9 limitation that the Court has fashioned --
- 10 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, let me tell you how
- 11 we -- it seems to me we've limited it in -- in the
- 12 Columbus case, Columbus v. Harrah's Garage and Wrecker
- 13 Services, Inc. We said that, "The clause -- the
- 14 clause's limitation to motor carrier services with
- 15 respect to the transportation of property massively
- 16 limits the scope of preemption to include only laws,
- 17 regulations, and other provisions that single out for
- 18 special treatment motor carriers of property."
- 19 And here you've told us that this case
- 20 doesn't involve any law that singles them out for -- for
- 21 special treatment. To the contrary, it's the general
- 22 consumer protection law.
- MR. BOUFFARD: Well --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: So you want us to eat those
- 25 words, they were wrong, or -- or somehow you don't come

Page 20 1 within them? MR. BOUFFARD: Respectfully, Justice Scalia, 2 I think those words came from your dissent in that case. 3 4 JUSTICE SCALIA: Ah. 5 (Laughter.) 6 JUSTICE SCALIA: I forgot that. (Laughter.) 8 JUSTICE SCALIA: So you say they were wrong, 9 you say? 10 (Laughter.) 11 MR. BOUFFARD: No, no. No, I don't say that they were wrong, Justice Scalia. What I -- what I would 12 though -- do though is I would point the Court to the 13 14 language of the statute, and not only the -- not only the specific statute involved here, the motor carrier 15 statute, but there's a -- there's a twin statute that 16 17 applies to air carriers. And it also applies to hybrid air and -- and motor carriers. 18 And I apologize, I haven't sent up a text of 19 this statute in our appendix or anything, but it's --20 21 it's Section 41713 of Title 49, and -- and it includes 22 very similar, general -- broad, general, preemptive language. And it does not -- neither of those -- those 23 provisions in 41713 contains limiting language that --24 25 that -- that would limit the scope of preemption in any

- 1 way.
- 2 The -- the -- and we know from the -- the
- 3 legislative intent with regard to the statute involved
- 4 in this case directly that Congress intended that the
- 5 scope of preemption for all of these different kinds of
- 6 industries would be coextensive. That's what Congress
- 7 was trying to achieve with this statute, was to give
- 8 motor carriers the same breadth of protection through
- 9 preemption that air carriers enjoy and that hybrid air
- 10 and motor carriers enjoy.
- 11 And so if there are no -- if there are no
- 12 limitations with regard to air carriers and -- and
- 13 hybrid air motor carriers of -- of the type that are
- 14 suggested by my friends for motor carriers, then -- then
- 15 that language at the end of 14501 can't be interpreted
- 16 in a -- in a strictly limiting fashion.
- 17 JUSTICE BREYER: No, there's a lot of
- 18 language in the majority pretty much along the line that
- 19 Justice Scalia said. And not sure if that's your point.
- 20 I mean, Justice Ginsburg wrote the majority, and she said
- 21 the reference to regulatory authority of a State, which
- 22 is a different reference, I agree, should be read to
- 23 preserve, not preempt traditional prerogative for the
- 24 State.
- 25 And Justice White said previously that you

- 1 have to start with the idea that this is -- historic
- 2 police powers of the State are not going to be
- 3 superseded by the Act, unless it's a clear manifest
- 4 purpose of Congress.
- 5 So I guess the problem is, with a lot of the
- 6 other things, that you yourself are in an area that is a
- 7 traditional matter of State regulation. It is, in fact,
- 8 regulated in a way that applies to everybody. It is
- 9 indirectly related to the transport itself, and that it
- 10 takes place on -- about storage that took place after
- 11 the event. So you have all that working against you.
- Now, the Columbus case does offer some hope
- 13 for the other side, I would think. But what do you
- 14 think?
- 15 MR. BOUFFARD: Well, Justice Breyer, let me
- 16 just say, first of all, that -- that consumer protection
- 17 is -- is -- I'm not sure I would concede that consumer
- 18 protection is -- is an area of traditional State
- 19 regulation. In fact, the New Hampshire consumer
- 20 protection law dates to 1970, and the Federal government
- 21 has largely occupied the field of motor carrier
- 22 transportation since 1935 with the enactment of the
- 23 Motor Vehicle Act in that year. So --
- 25 which is, what is it directed to? And that's the real

- 1 issue in this case. Yes, it's preempted with respect to
- 2 any towing activity. The issue is, is it -- is it
- 3 preempted, as the New Hampshire court, said to storage
- 4 and sale?
- 5 MR. BOUFFARD: That is what the
- 6 New Hampshire Supreme Court said, Justice Sotomayor. I
- 7 would submit that -- that that's an artificial
- 8 distinction that fails to take into account the broad
- 9 definition of "transportation" in Federal law.
- 10 If the Court has --
- 11 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But why should the tow
- 12 operation be treated any different from the garage when
- 13 they're doing the identical thing, that is, storing and
- 14 then selling the vehicle?
- 15 MR. BOUFFARD: Well, if a -- if a person has
- 16 brought their vehicle into a garage, Justice Ginsburg,
- 17 there's been no transportation by a motor carrier. The
- 18 difference is that in this case this whole scenario
- 19 started out with a transportation by a -- by a motor
- 20 carrier which also, once it had possession of the
- 21 vehicle, stored it.
- 22 And so in a garage scenario, I suppose if a
- 23 tower towed the vehicle to a garage and then left it,
- 24 left it at a garage to be worked on, that -- that garage
- owner wouldn't be in a position to say that I can assert

Page 24 1 a preemption defense because that garage owner has never -- has never engaged in the kind of transportation 2 activity that triggers this preemption law. 3 4 I hope that answers the question. May I reserve? 5 6 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Yes. Thank you, 7 counsel. 8 Mr. Shaughnessy? 9 ORAL ARGUMENT OF BRIAN C. SHAUGHNESSY 10 ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENT 11 MR. SHAUGHNESSY: Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice, and may it please the Court: 12 Transferring title and disposing of 13 14 Mr. Pelkey's car against his will and not compensating him for the loss of his personal property is not a 15 service of a motor carrier with respect to 16 transportation of property. The regulation of 17 18 State-created property interests is a field of traditional State regulation, and the broad sweep 19 advocated by Dan's City Used Auto in this case would 20 21 create a regulatory vacuum because there are no Federal laws that allow the sale of a motor vehicle. 22 23 Now, let me address some of the things that 24 my brother has argued that this case is about that we disagree about. My brother has argued that this case is 25

- 1 about payment. This case is not about payment. Mr.
- 2 Pelkey is not challenging that Dan's City Used Car had
- 3 the ability to tow the vehicle. We are not challenging
- 4 how it was towed. We are not challenging the price of
- 5 the tow. None of that is being challenged, and those
- 6 are all the services of a motor carrier.
- 7 Let me also --
- 8 JUSTICE SCALIA: What about the price of the
- 9 storage? Are you challenging that?
- 10 MR. SHAUGHNESSY: We are not challenging the
- 11 price of the storage. There was a reference to a letter
- 12 that I had sent to the Dan's City people several
- 13 months -- but there were two letters. The first letter
- 14 was actually quite close to, within several weeks of the
- 15 auction, where we said, no, we are looking to pay for
- 16 it.
- 17 The other letter was, I think in June, was
- 18 saying, you need to account for these proceeds. You
- 19 sold the vehicle at auction and there is equity in this
- 20 property, you need to account for these proceeds.
- 21 So we didn't challenge the storage, but that
- 22 brings up the issue raised by Justice Sotomayor with
- 23 respect to the storage. And I would disagree with the
- 24 characterization of my brother with respect to what RSA
- 25 262 is. RSA 262 talks about removed vehicles. It

- 1 actually provides the authority to law enforcement to
- 2 remove a vehicle that might be in a public way, but it
- 3 also gives the authority to a private landowner to have
- 4 a car removed that's on their private property. It does
- 5 not relate to the motor carrier services of a tow truck
- 6 operator.
- 7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But it seems to me
- 8 that you can't ignore the fact that part of what tow
- 9 trucks do is store things. I mean, it's a necessary and
- 10 integral part of the motor service, the transportation
- 11 of property, that they do. And regulation of the
- 12 storage will affect the services that they provide.
- 13 MR. SHAUGHNESSY: Well, we would say --
- 14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: It's not just
- 15 like -- it's not just like storing anything else.
- 16 MR. SHAUGHNESSY: Well, respectfully,
- 17 Mr. Chief Justice, we would say that storage is a
- 18 separate service altogether. And the act of
- 19 transportation -- and this is another place where I
- 20 would disagree with the characterization by my brother
- 21 with respect to the definition of "transportation." I
- 22 believe the definition of "transportation" specifically
- 23 refers to a "motor carrier," meaning a person providing
- 24 motor vehicle transportation for compensation, but also
- 25 relates to the movement of the passengers and the

- 1 property, and the services related to that movement.
- 2 So the very definition that applies to this
- 3 case and to the transportation services relate to the
- 4 movement of the property.
- 5 Here the movement has stopped. And the
- 6 storage that we are dealing with in this case is
- 7 precisely the storage that is in RSA 262, which is the
- 8 storage charges, not for the movement of the property.
- 9 So I would clarify, Mr. Chief Justice, that it is our
- 10 position that the transportation, with respect to the
- 11 transportation of property which Justice Scalia has
- 12 aptly pointed out, severely limits the scope of this
- 13 preemption statute.
- 14 The services of the motor carrier terminated
- 15 once the hook was off the tow truck. That is when it
- 16 stopped.
- 17 JUSTICE KAGAN: Suppose, Mr. Shaughnessy,
- 18 that the New Hampshire laws were more onerous than they
- 19 are. Suppose they said to a towing company, once you've
- 20 towed this car you have to hold on to it forever. Or
- 21 suppose they said to the towing company, you have to
- 22 hire private investigators to go figure out who owns
- 23 this car. Would any of those be preempted?
- 24 MR. SHAUGHNESSY: Yes. I believe it's
- 25 pointed out in the Rowe decision, in order for it to be

- 1 related to the motor carrier service you have to either
- 2 directly regulate that service or it has an indirect
- 3 connection with the service that significantly affects
- 4 the service.
- 5 In your example, it would be a direct
- 6 regulation. You're actually requiring a motor carrier
- 7 to actually provide a service that the marketplace
- 8 itself wouldn't provide or that the motor carrier would
- 9 not otherwise provide. So that is a direct regulation
- 10 or an example of directly regulating that would be
- 11 preempted under this statute. But what we are dealing
- 12 with here, is the storage afterward, is not that motor
- 13 carrier service. And I do believe the -- the language
- 14 at the end with respect to --
- 15 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: How do we draw the line,
- 16 that line that you just asked us to draw between direct
- 17 and indirect? How do we articulate that line?
- 18 MR. SHAUGHNESSY: The direct --
- 19 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Because now you're --
- 20 now you're articulating a different line. You are
- 21 saying this -- the hypothetical that Justice Kagan
- 22 posited is not storage-related, it is something
- 23 else-related. It's towing-related. What's the
- 24 difference?
- 25 MR. SHAUGHNESSY: Correct. The way I -- the

- 1 way I interpreted the hypothetical is the State is then
- 2 saying in order as a precondition to or as part of the
- 3 motor carrier service of transporting or towing that
- 4 vehicle, you also must provide this other service over
- 5 here, which is actually one of the problems with the
- 6 Rowe case and under the Maine State statute. Under
- 7 Maine State law what they were requiring the motor
- 8 carrier to do in Rowe was actually to provide the
- 9 verification service. And so that was a direct
- 10 regulation I believe that this Court found under Rowe.
- 11 JUSTICE SCALIA: You've just told us
- 12 anything that significantly affects the transportation
- 13 service is covered. And I think what your brother's
- 14 argument is, is that this significantly affects the
- 15 service, whether he can collect for the storage
- 16 after -- you know, after the -- after towing it by -- by
- 17 selling it, and by selling it on terms that are not so
- 18 onerous as to impinge upon his -- his ability to run the
- 19 business.
- MR. SHAUGHNESSY: Well, it may impinge upon
- 21 his ability or impinge upon how much he can collect. It
- 22 may impinge upon those things, Your Honor. But it
- 23 doesn't affect the service of the motor carrier with
- 24 respect to the transportation of the property because
- 25 that's the movement of the property.

- 1 Certainly getting paid is an important part
- 2 of the service that anybody provides, but that is
- 3 getting too attenuated, that's getting too far out.
- 4 That's getting towards --
- 5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, it isn't
- 6 too -- I mean, this is a provision of course in the
- 7 Federal Aviation Administration Act. Whatever rule we
- 8 adopt is going to apply to air transportation as well.
- 9 And is your position, for example, that
- 10 things related to a hangar at an airport, that those are
- 11 not covered by this at all? It seems to me that there
- 12 the connection between the transportation and the
- 13 storage, the storage of the airplane, you can see a
- 14 little bit more clearly how that would affect what the
- 15 airplane -- you know, can do. A lien -- you can't take
- 16 the airplane out of the hangar because you didn't pay
- 17 the rent or whatever.
- 18 MR. SHAUGHNESSY: There is an effect there,
- 19 and I do believe that this Court started drawing that
- 20 line actually in the Travelers case. And when the
- 21 Travelers case looked at this "related to," that's
- 22 what's causing the problem, "related to" and what does
- 23 "related to" mean? And as has been pointed out, if you
- 24 actually use "related to" to its extreme, everything is
- 25 related to everything else. That has been said several

- 1 times in the case law.
- But "related to" in Travelers, I believe in
- 3 that case the Court looked at -- there was attention to
- 4 that type of broad sweep of "related to" and the
- 5 presumption against preemption, which says we're not
- 6 going to preempt, but "related to" seems we are
- 7 preempting everything. So there was a tension.
- 8 So in Travelers we went to, well, we have to
- 9 take a look at what the manifest intent of Congress was
- 10 for the regulatory scheme. You have to look at the
- 11 intent of Congress, and certainly the best place to look
- 12 for that intent is first in the words that are used.
- But once we are looking at the intent, we
- 14 have to say does the actual thing that is being
- 15 regulated by the State, and they are putting in their
- 16 own policies by direct regulation by a positive
- 17 enactment, does it affect or significantly affect the
- 18 deregulatory purposes. And I believe that's the line
- 19 that was adopted in Rowe.
- JUSTICE BREYER: All right. Now, don't lose
- 21 that. I will ask you this question to, which favors you
- 22 in a sense but I want the answer really from the
- 23 Solicitor General who may know. But I'm going to ask it
- 24 to you too because you've probably both thought about
- 25 it. He may have -- they may have some experience on it.

- 1 If you start talking about significant
- 2 effect, without those last words, "deregulatory purpose"
- 3 I suddenly worry about the following, that every city in
- 4 the United States depends upon towing to regulate
- 5 parking within the city. We couldn't function without
- 6 it, although none of us like it. We know that it's
- 7 necessary. And certainly a law that provides for towing
- 8 does directly regulate the service of the tow truck. It
- 9 says do it. And then it tells you when not to do it.
- 10 So what's the -- what happens? Is every
- 11 traffic law in the United States involving towing
- 12 suddenly preempted? I can't believe that. How does
- 13 this work? So there is much more in significance in
- 14 this case than the words we write, perhaps, than in the
- 15 particular case.
- 16 And now, do you want to, in light of what my
- 17 concern is, add anything to what you say. And you may
- 18 not, the Solicitor General might, but I'd like to hear
- 19 anything you have to say about that.
- 20 MR. SHAUGHNESSY: Well, believe -- I believe
- 21 with respect to RSA 262, which is the statute that is in
- 22 this case, it doesn't require a tow truck company to do
- 23 anything.
- JUSTICE BREYER: No, you -- you can just
- 25 rest on that, but I'm going to have -- or somebody's

- 1 going to have to write an opinion. And we could just
- 2 say that, but I -- I don't see I can -- my own problem
- 3 is not being able to have an intelligent answer to that
- 4 without having some answer to the bigger picture. And
- 5 the bigger picture seems to me horrendously important.
- 6 And -- and I don't know what that answer is.
- 7 You seem to be getting there with the words
- 8 "deregulatory purpose." And I -- and I was thinking how
- 9 we might try to work with those, but go ahead.
- 10 MR. SHAUGHNESSY: Well, I think it's -- it
- 11 is an easier case in this case under the FAAAA --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Oh, I think it's much
- 13 harder than this case --
- MR. SHAUGHNESSY: Well, I --
- 15 JUSTICE BREYER: -- because the relationship
- 16 is -- is in the -- in the more general case is more
- 17 direct to the tow truck. It says "go tow." And
- 18 that's -- that's why I need some kind of bigger picture.
- 19 MR. SHAUGHNESSY: I'm getting lost in the
- 20 "go tow" command, if you will.
- 21 JUSTICE BREYER: We have a statute which
- 22 says, if you park your car here for more than 3 hours,
- 23 you will be towed, okay? And as part of that statute,
- though we don't see it, there is an arrangement for the
- 25 service of the city with the tow truck company, which

- 1 says when the parking person calls you and says -- the
- 2 meter says red, yellow, purple, green, you are to go
- 3 there and tow, okay?
- 4 Doesn't that sound as if it's regulating the
- 5 service of tow trucks? And I suspect across the
- 6 country, there is some variation on that theme, but
- 7 there are thousands of them. And since the words -- I
- 8 would be repeating it -- the words of this case may
- 9 affect that situation, I want to know what you know,
- 10 which may not be very much -- I don't blame you -- about
- 11 that broader situation.
- MR. SHAUGHNESSY: Well, thank you for the
- 13 out, Justice Breyer. But again, I -- I -- the reason
- 14 I'm getting lost is -- and I understand the -- the
- 15 example having to do with the City of Cambridge having
- 16 no -- no parking, and if you're there for 3 hours, that
- 17 allows -- there is this -- statutes that allow the tow
- 18 truck operator, the motor carrier, to go and collect
- 19 that under a nonconsensual tow. And a nonconsensual tow
- 20 is a special animal, unfortunately, because there are no
- 21 market forces in play there.
- 22 But I don't believe that that's affecting
- 23 the motor carrier service. There is nothing that forces
- 24 that tow truck carrier to go out and actually undertake
- 25 that tow. And if they do undertake the tow or do the

- 1 business or whatnot, then certainly, they would be under
- 2 whatever obligations that the State has.
- 3 And that's one of the problems I think we
- 4 have --
- 5 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I think that
- 6 Justice Breyer is -- I may be speaking for him -- he's
- 7 thinking that that State contract or that State
- 8 regulation that permits towing companies to do this is
- 9 preempted in some way. That would be his argument
- 10 because it affects --
- 11 JUSTICE BREYER: Or the opposite.
- 12 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: No?
- JUSTICE SCALIA: He's worried that it'll be
- 14 preempted.
- 15 JUSTICE BREYER: Correct.
- MR. SHAUGHNESSY: Right.
- 17 JUSTICE BREYER: Correct.
- 18 JUSTICE SCALIA: And he didn't -- he didn't
- 19 mention Cambridge, did he?
- MR. SHAUGHNESSY: No.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: I don't think so.
- 22 MR. SHAUGHNESSY: I think he did yesterday,
- 23 too, Your Honor.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Yeah, you're both from
- 25 Boston, Massachusetts.

Page 36 1 JUSTICE BREYER: And they're -- they're very attractive places except in the winter. 2 3 But a -- a motor carrier vehicle -- a 4 service, transportation includes related to the movement of passengers or property. Related to the movement of 5 6 passengers or property. So we have these words "related to" again. I -- well, you've given me a couple of ideas, but I -- maybe they'll turn out not to be 8 relevant, but -- but -- which I hope. 9 10 JUSTICE SCALIA: I think maybe -- maybe we 11 have to make it up, what the limitation -- I mean, you're quite right, everything's related to everything 12 else. And we've had trouble with the same -- the very 13 14 same words with ERISA, and -- and started off trying to give it its -- its apparent meaning, "related to," and 15 we finally concluded you can't do that. 16 17 So what do you want us to make up? What 18 kind of a limitation do you --19 (Laughter.) 20 MR. SHAUGHNESSY: Well -- Justice Scalia, I 21 don't think you have to make up too much in this 22 particular case. It gets easier to draw the line because of the with respect to transportation of 23 property. So with respect to the FAAAA and motor 24 25 carriers, we're drawing the line as to only the services

- of the movement of the property, and that is limiting.
- 2 And I do -- I would agree with your dissent.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Related to -- related to --
- 4 related to the movement of the property. That's the
- 5 problem. It's the "related to" words.
- 6 MR. SHAUGHNESSY: Correct. And then we go
- 7 back to the instructions in Rowe, which -- which
- 8 provided the framework that when you're interpreting
- 9 related to, you go: One, is it direct -- directly
- 10 regulating or directly affecting service; or, if it's an
- 11 indirect effect, which obviously it can be, it has to
- 12 have a significant impact on the services.
- 13 And then there's the ultimate out of Morales
- 14 that says if it's -- it could certainly connect, but if
- 15 it's too far attenuated to the purposes of Congress,
- 16 it's just not going to be done.
- 17 I know that doesn't help with the line
- 18 drawing in -- in connection of the gray area that we're
- 19 dealing with in this case, but I do believe in this
- 20 particular case, it is easier because we have that --
- 21 those words of limitation, "with respect to the
- 22 transportation of property" are words of limitation, and
- 23 they are not present in the ADA, and they were not
- 24 present with the ERISA cases, which deals with a broad
- 25 regulatory scheme with long history and other things

- 1 that apply.
- We don't have that in this case. I believe
- 3 the New Hampshire Supreme Court got it right when they
- 4 were focusing on actually what is a service of a motor
- 5 carrier, and I believe we do have words of limitation in
- 6 this particular case.
- 7 So what the Supreme Court of New Hampshire
- 8 said is, "The manner in which a company in possession of
- 9 a towed vehicle may" -- not must -- "may dispose of the
- 10 vehicle to collect on a debt created by the operation of
- 11 State law is far removed from Congress's aim of
- 12 promoting free markets and equalizing the competitive
- 13 playing -- playing field between motor carriers and air
- 14 carriers, and help assure transportation rate services
- 15 reflect maximum reliance on -- on forces."
- 16 I also believe that the Petitioner has
- 17 basically given up the case and conceded the case in
- 18 several places in their brief and in here in oral
- 19 argument today. If you look at page 34 of the
- 20 Petitioner's brief, it says that most -- that "The most
- 21 that Dan's City really can say is that the services
- within the meaning of Section 14501(c)(1) includes
- 23 activities that are incidental and distinct from the
- 24 actual transportation services."
- 25 So the Petitioner's brief is calling the

- 1 storage afterwards, after the transportation has
- 2 stopped. And -- and they call it incidental and
- 3 distinct.
- In the reply brief at page 21, they say,
- 5 "Moreover, criminal laws prohibiting theft are not the
- 6 kind of burdensome State economic regulation Congress
- 7 sought to prevent with the FAAAA, nor are abandoned
- 8 vehicle laws such as New Hampshire Chapter 262 in its
- 9 regulations which do not hamper the operations of tow
- 10 truckers. Instead they establish procedures for the
- 11 efficient handling and disposition of abandoned
- 12 vehicles."
- So they're conceding that RSA 262 in this
- 14 case, the statute does not have a significant impact,
- 15 so this is not a clear case.
- 16 I see I have more time, but I think I've
- 17 made all my points, if there are no more questions.
- 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
- Mr. Yelin, welcome.
- 20 ORAL ARGUMENT OF LEWIS S. YELIN,
- 21 FOR THE UNITED STATES, AS AMICUS CURIAE,
- 22 SUPPORTING THE RESPONDENT
- 23 MR. YELIN: Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice,
- 24 and may it please the Court:
- 25 Congress deregulated the trucking industry

- 1 to eliminate undue interference with market forces and
- 2 consumer choice. But market forces and consumer choice
- 3 cannot operate on the sale of nonconsensually towed
- 4 cars, and there's little reason to think that Congress
- 5 intended to preempt State laws that regulate that
- 6 conduct.
- 7 This Court in this case, as in many
- 8 preemption cases involving the phrase "related to," must
- 9 engage in a -- in a process of sensible line drawing.
- 10 Everything is related to everything else in
- 11 the literal sense. And the Court in Travelers suggested
- 12 that the Court should not -- courts should not use
- 13 uncritical literalism in determining the scope of a
- 14 preemption provision.
- 15 I think that this Court does have some work
- 16 to do in this case, but a lot of the groundwork has
- 17 already been laid in the Rowe case. In Rowe, this Court
- 18 held that a State law is related to a motor carrier
- 19 service if the State law either directly regulates the
- 20 service or if it has an indirect connection with the
- 21 service and a significant -- forbidden significant
- 22 effect on Congress's deregulatory and preemptive
- 23 objectives. I think --
- 24 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, it's -- I
- 25 asked your friend on the other side the question.

Page 41 1 Storage is part of what tow trucks do. Maybe in a way that -- you know, cross-country trucks don't. And it 2 seems to me if you have a local jurisdiction who figures 3 4 out, well, this is a great way to make a lot of money or -- you know, to give -- or the other way -- you know, 5 you can charge -- charge a lot because we want to keep 6 subsidized tow trucks. I mean, why isn't that fairly 8 directly related to the service they provide? It's certainly a foreseeable 9 MR. YELIN: 10 service that could be provided. The question is whether 11 it has a sufficient locus to the transportation itself. 12 I think there are indications in the statute 13 itself and the statutory purposes which suggest that the 14 Court should view service as a separate type of service,

18 The reason for that, Your Honor --

19 JUSTICE SCALIA: I don't understand what you

independent and distinct from transportation, at least

in the towing context where the motor transportation has

20 just said. Say it again.

15

16

17

ceased.

21 MR. YELIN: Yes, sir. I think that there

22 are reasons in the statutory text itself and in the

23 statutory objectives for viewing service as

24 independent -- excuse me, storage --

25 JUSTICE SCALIA: Service where? Service

- 1 where?
- 2 MR. YELIN: I misspoke, Justice Scalia.
- 3 Storage --
- 4 JUSTICE SCALIA: Storage, ah. I see.
- 5 MR. YELIN: -- as independent of
- 6 transportation. And the reasons for that are as
- 7 follows: First, let me start with the statutory text.
- 8 The statute defines "transportation" as "services
- 9 related to the transportation of property." And for -
- 10 and storage has been in the Interstate Commerce Act for
- 11 over 100 years, the term "storage." And for over 100
- 12 years this Court has construed disputes concerning
- 13 storage and considered whether or not Federal law
- 14 governed or State law governed.
- 15 When the storage was before delivery of a
- 16 package, for example, the storage was considered to be
- 17 storage in transit and it was part of the transportation
- 18 itself. But if the storage occurred after delivery,
- 19 that was a separate service not connected with the
- 20 transportation.
- 21 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Yelin, I gave
- 22 Mr. Shaughnessy a couple of hypotheticals about very
- 23 onerous regulations involving storage after the towing
- 24 that might very conceivably have an effect on the tower,
- 25 drive up the tower's prices, conceivably even drive the

- 1 tower out of the market. So how do we draw the line as
- 2 between this and those kinds of things?
- 3 MR. YELIN: So I have two points that I
- 4 would like to make with respect to that, Your Honor.
- 5 The first is that I think the hypotheticals you gave are
- 6 much more difficult cases and could very well cross the
- 7 line if a State tried to indirectly influence towers.
- 8 For example, let's assume, if I may elaborate on your
- 9 hypothetical, that a State really disliked the practice
- 10 of nonconsensual towing, and really wanted to try and
- 11 reign it in and so imposed certain conditions on towers
- 12 that would discourage them from engaging in this
- 13 particular type of service.
- I think that would be an indirect type of
- 15 regulation, but it would, as a matter of fact, it really
- 16 would impair the ability or the interest of towers to
- 17 provide this service to --
- 18 JUSTICE SCALIA: How do we discover that?
- 19 Do we look into the city council hearings or what?
- 20 MR. YELIN: I think in part, Your Honor --
- 21 JUSTICE SCALIA: No, I want to be able to
- 22 look at the law and say the law is preempted or the law
- 23 isn't preempted. Don't tell me -- you know, the purpose
- 24 of the law is this or that. That's not something I am
- 25 able to do.

- 1 MR. YELIN: Your Honor, I think some of
- 2 these preemption questions necessarily are factual in
- 3 part in nature. The Court, to consider whether or not a
- 4 service of the motor carrier is affected by an indirect
- 5 statute is --
- 6 JUSTICE SCALIA: Yes, that's factual. But
- 7 whether the intent of the city council was this or that
- 8 is not factual.
- 9 MR. YELIN: Oh, no. That's right, Your
- 10 Honor. And I didn't mean to suggest that that would be
- 11 part of the inquiry.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: I thought that is what you
- 13 meant.
- MR. YELIN: No, Your Honor. The question is
- 15 whether it would have that effect, that factual effect.
- 16 And if I may, I think it's critical in this case to
- 17 point out that Petitioner has conceded at page 21 of its
- 18 reply brief that laws like Chapter 262 do not hamper
- 19 towing industry practices. And Respondent's amicus
- 20 Towing and Recovery Association explains that laws like
- 21 this provide a critical backbone for nonconsensual
- 22 towing services. In the absence --
- 23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, but I mean,
- 24 maybe these, but you can easily imagine that these types
- 25 of laws would be subject to abuse and would have an

- 1 adverse impact on the towing company and, therefore, on
- 2 the transportation of property.
- 3 MR. YELIN: And if there were such abusive
- 4 laws, Your Honor, and if they do impair the
- 5 transportation of property and the services that a tower
- 6 was willing to provide, I think that the Court would
- 7 likely consider those cases and consider those --
- 8 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, now we only --
- 9 now we not only have to decide whether this type of law
- 10 is related to it, but once we say some of those laws
- 11 might be and some won't be, depending upon the impact in
- 12 a particular case.
- 13 MR. YELIN: Your Honor, I think every law
- 14 has to be considered in its application, and I think
- 15 that, for example, in Morales, the Court just didn't
- 16 consider --
- 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Every law doesn't
- 18 have to be considered in its application. If you say
- 19 you can't speak out on the sidewalk, it doesn't matter
- 20 what they apply it, you can consider that law
- 21 absolutely.
- 22 MR. YELIN: Fair enough, Your Honor. My
- 23 comment was too broad. What I would say is some laws
- 24 will be obvious. Those that directly regulate towing
- 25 industries, for example, a State law that flatly

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Page 46
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      prohibits nonconsensual towing would be the type of
 2
      direct regulation which is proscribed by this preemption
 3
      clause.
 4
                  When you are talking about indirect
 5
      regulation, however, that perhaps is where I think one
      needs to consider it on an as-applied basis because
 6
      indirect regulation by definition is not going to have
 7
 8
      an obvious direct limit on towing services and the
      question the Court will have to consider is whether the
 9
      indirect regulation is sufficiently onerous that it does
10
11
      impair the provision of towing services.
12
                  JUSTICE BREYER: It seems to me that there --
     we have two choices. In Morales, since I can mock my own
13
      opinions, I wrote at the end, "it's not -- when it's too
14
15
      tenuous, remote or peripheral." That's singularly unhelpful.
16
                  (Laughter.)
17
                  JUSTICE BREYER: It seems to -- there --
                  JUSTICE SCALIA: I thought so at the time.
18
                  (Laughter.)
19
                  JUSTICE BREYER: Yes, you were right.
20
                  There are two directions you could go. But
21
      first I would like to know, it seems my guess is it is
22
      universally thought by cities that this Act does not
23
24
      preempt their normal parking regulations. Am I right
      about that?
25
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Page 47 1 MR. YELIN: You are right about that, Your 2 Honor. 3 JUSTICE BREYER: Okay. Then we either have 4 to take this tenuous, et cetera, this is too much, this 5 isn't too much, da, da, da, or you've given -- there is 6 another thought being thrown out and that is you relate it to the basic purposes of the deregulation act and you say that where the city is regulating something that 8 never was, could not be, and is not part of a regulated 9 10 or deregulated market, i.e. has nothing to do with the 11 subject matter, then it is not preempted. 12 Now, do you want us to take that approach? Should we punt and just use the words like "tenuous" 13 14 or -- and if we take the implicit suggestion, what's the 15 right way to do it? 16 MR. YELIN: Your Honor, I think the two 17 alternatives you sketched are not mutually exclusive. In fact, I think they support each other. I believe 18 that when a State law does not have a significant effect 19 on Congress's deregulatory and preemptive objectives, it 20 21 is by definition going to be too tenuously connected to 22 the motor carrier services. I would propose, Your Honor, that in this 23 context, where the Department of Transportation would 24 25 have no regulatory authority and where there is no

Page 48 1 private market that could fill the vacuum that would be 2 created by the removal of State laws creating the 3 structure for the private choices that are undertaken 4 here, this would be a prime example. 5 JUSTICE SCALIA: So it would depend upon how 6 severe the consumer protection law is, is that right? If it's a consumer protection law that really whacks the 8 tow truck operator, that would be different from a moderate, benign consumer protection law? We have to 9 10 examine each consumer protection law on its own, is that 11 it? 12 MR. YELIN: I think the answer has to be yes, Justice Scalia. In Morales, for example, the Court 13 14 considered the application of the consumer protection law where the States were trying to use specific 15 quidelines. 16 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, why doesn't 18 this one really whack them, though? It's treble damages and all that. 19 20 You can answer my question, yes. 21 (Laughter.) 22 MR. YELIN: Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice. Your Honor, the Consumer Protection Act 23 24 claims that are asserted here are premised on Chapter 262, which structures the background organization of the 25

Page 49 1 nonconsensual towing services altogether. There will be no treble damages if the substantive provisions were 2 3 satisfied. If they are not, that would be a different 4 question. 5 And, Your Honor, there has been no evidence suggested here that in fact treble damages for a 6 violation of the background laws which structure the standards that tow truck companies are supposed to 8 undertake would have that harm. 9 10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel. 11 Mr. Bouffard, you have 3 minutes remaining. 12 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF ANDREW D. BOUFFARD 13 ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER 14 MR. BOUFFARD: Thank you. Let me take a couple of moments to try to 15 address some of the questions that seem to be troubling 16 17 some of the Justices. Justice Breyer, the simple answer to why 18 local traffic safety laws wouldn't be preempted is that 19 there's an exemption for the safety regulatory authority 20 21 of States in the statute. 22 JUSTICE BREYER: Thank you. 23 MR. BOUFFARD: And, Justice Kagan, the 24 reason why this -- this case goes over the line and is 25 preempted is because what the Plaintiff's damages claims

Page 50 in this case seek to do is they seek to enforce duties

2 that go well beyond what even the New Hampshire

3 abandoned vehicle law requires.

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4 They seek to impose duties of reasonable

5 care to seek out the owner of the vehicle; they --

6 the -- the -- the negligence claim seeks to impose a

7 duty to act -- a duty of reasonable care in disposing of

8 the vehicle; and -- and a duty of reasonable care to

9 return the vehicle to Mr. Pelkey.

10 And those duties and what has been a breach

of those duties will be determined by a jury. And so

when tow truckers are faced in the future with having to

13 live up to those sets of duties, they will never know

14 whether or not, in any given situation, their conduct

15 will be second-quessed as having been not reasonable by

16 a jury and they will be subjected to damages claims by

17 plaintiffs. Under the -- the abandoned vehicle law, the

18 rule is very simple in New Hampshire and under -- and in

19 many other jurisdictions -- pay, or your vehicle can be

20 sold. It's a very simple rule. And --

21 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But it also tells how the

22 vehicle will be sold -- sold, and your client is

23 invoking that statute in order to be able to sell the

car, but wants to have enforced only the parts that are

25 favorable to the tow operation. And the -- the regime

Page 51 in New Hampshire is, yes, you can sell the vehicle, but

- 2 this is how you do it. And it seems to me that that's
- 3 not how it was done here.
- 4 MR. BOUFFARD: Well, Justice Ginsburg,
- 5 actually, the -- the tower here wasn't invoking the law,
- 6 the tower was simply following what the law says in
- 7 terms of the process. This is a mandatory process.
- 8 When -- when a person comes into possession of another's
- 9 vehicle in New Hampshire and -- and there's no claim
- 10 made for the vehicle, the law requires that the tow
- 11 trucker report that fact to the Department of Motor
- 12 Vehicles.

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- 13 And the Department of Motor Vehicles then
- looks at the information that's provided and then
- 15 instructs the tower about the process of whether or not
- 16 the vehicle can -- can be sold without notice, or if
- 17 it -- if notice is required, what notice is required.
- 18 JUSTICE KAGAN: But it's a process that
- 19 allows you in certain circumstances to sell the car and
- 20 to take the money. And what Justice Ginsburg is
- 21 suggesting is -- you know, you have to take the bitter
- 22 with the sweet.
- 23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Please.
- 24 MR. BOUFFARD: Well, I -- I think
- 25 that the -- the New Hampshire law is the New Hampshire

Official

	Page 52
1	law, and what we have here is is a tow trucker that
2	was just making a good faith a good faith attempt to
3	comply with the law. And if if tow truckers that are
4	making good faith attempts to comply with the law are
5	faced with Consumer Protection Act claims and negligence
6	claims and the kinds of remedies that come with Consumer
7	Protection Act claims, that will have a significant
8	impact on the business of these motor carriers.
9	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
10	The case is submitted.
11	(Whereupon, at 12:10 p.m., the case in the
12	above-entitled matter was submitted.)
13	
14	
15	
16	
17	
18	
19	
20	
21	
22	
23	
24	
25	

	24:20	48:12,20 49:18	Assistant 1:20	bidders 11:18
A 14.7	affect 26:12	answers 24:4	Association	bigger 33:4,5,18
abandoned 4:7	29:23 30:14	anybody 30:2	44:20	bit 30:14
4:7,12,15,17	31:17,17 34:9	apologize 20:19	assume 43:8	bitter 51:21
4:24 5:2,4,7,11	afterward 28:12	apparent 36:15	assume 43.8 assure 38:14	blame 34:10
5:14,18,18 7:8			as-applied 46:6	BODY 1:4
7:9,14 8:2,5	agree 9:1 11:24 21:22 37:2	Appeals 18:14		Boston 7:1
39:7,11 50:3	ah 13:20 20:4	appear 16:16 APPEARAN	attempt 52:2	35:25
50:17	42:4	1:15	attempts 52:4 attention 31:3	
ability 25:3		· -		Bouffard 1:16
29:18,21 43:16	ahead 11:17	appendix 20:20	attenuated 30:3	2:3,13 3:6,7,9
able 33:3 43:21	33:9	application 4:21	37:15	3:24 4:6,11,23
43:25 50:23	aim 38:11	45:14,18 48:14	attorneys 7:21	6:1,14,18 7:7
above-entitled	air 20:17,18	applies 4:1	attractive 36:2	7:18 8:17 9:9
1:12 52:12	21:9,9,12,13	20:17,17 22:8	auction 11:17	9:14 10:1,4,12
absence 44:22	30:8 38:13	27:2	25:15,19	10:15,21 11:4
absolutely 45:21	aircraft 18:16	apply 4:2,9,22	authority 21:21	11:23 12:3,22
abuse 44:25	18:17	13:13,18 30:8	26:1,3 47:25	13:8,14,18,22
abusive 45:3	airline 18:14	38:1 45:20	49:20	14:4,7,15,20
accident 18:9	airplane 30:13	approach 47:12	Auto 1:4 24:20	15:4,24 16:25
account 23:8	30:15,16	aptly 27:12	automobile 4:2	18:11 19:2,23
25:18,20	airport 30:10	area 18:14 22:6	Aviation 30:7	20:2,11 22:15
achieve 21:7	ALITO 9:19	22:18 37:18	a.m 1:14 3:2	23:5,15 49:11
act 7:20,22 8:4	10:2,9,13,18	argued 24:24,25	B	49:12,14,23
22:3,23 26:18	10:25	arguing 7:13,18		51:4,24
30:7 42:10	allegation 7:25	13:20	back 13:1 14:1	breach 13:8
46:23 47:7	8:3	argument 1:13	37:7	17:5 50:10
48:23 50:7	allegations 5:4	2:2,5,8,12 3:4	backbone 44:21	breadth 21:8
52:5,7	allow 24:22	3:7 8:21 9:24	background	Breyer 5:23 6:5
action 5:20,21	34:17	14:16 24:9	48:25 49:7	6:16,20 7:5,11
7:19 8:20	allows 34:17	29:14 35:9	basic 47:7	21:17 22:15
activities 38:23	51:19	38:19 39:20	basically 38:17	31:20 32:24
activity 17:21	alternatives	49:12	basis 13:16 46:6	33:12,15,21
23:2 24:3	47:17	arises 5:13 18:6	behalf 1:16,19	34:13 35:6,11
actual 18:6	altogether 26:18	arising 18:15	2:4,7,14 3:8	35:15,17 36:1
31:14 38:24	49:1	arrangement	13:9 24:10	46:12,17,20
ADA 37:23	amazed 6:17	33:24	49:13	47:3 49:18,22
add 32:17	amicus 1:22	articulate 28:17	believe 12:5,12	Breyer's 8:11
address 24:23	2:10 39:21	articulating	12:14 26:22	BRIAN 1:18 2:6
49:16	44:19	28:20	27:24 28:13	24:9
adequately 5:17	ANDRE 1:16	artificial 23:7	29:10 30:19	brief 6:22 38:18
Administration	2:3,13 3:7	asked 13:4	31:2,18 32:12	38:20,25 39:4
30:7	ANDREW	28:16 40:25	32:20,20 34:22	44:18
adopt 19:1,1	49:12	asking 16:9	37:19 38:2,5	bring 15:21 16:1
30:8	animal 34:20	assert 10:7,10	38:16 47:18	brings 4:3 15:11
adopted 31:19	another's 51:8	10:16 23:25	benign 48:9	25:22
adverse 45:1	answer 14:10,20	asserted 48:24	best 31:11	broad 15:1 19:1
advocated 16:15	31:22 33:3,4,6	asserts 12:11	beyond 50:2	20:22 23:8
	•	•	•	

				Tuge 3
24:19 31:4	carriers 17:18	challenging 25:2	50:16 52:5,6,7	concede 22:17
37:24 45:23	17:20 19:18	25:3,4,9,10	clarify 27:9	conceded 38:17
broader 34:11	20:17,18 21:8	changing 15:16	clause 19:13	44:17
broadly 14:13	21:9,10,12,13	Chapter 39:8	46:3	conceding 39:13
14:22	21:14 36:25	44:18 48:24	clause's 19:14	conceivably
broke 6:12	38:13,14 52:8	characterizati	clear 4:23 22:3	42:24,25
brother 24:24	cars 1:3 3:5 7:2	25:24 26:20	39:15	concern 32:17
24:25 25:24	9:21 40:4	Charas 14:9	clearly 30:14	concerning
26:20	case 3:4,11 5:1,6	charge 41:6,6	client 11:16 12:8	42:12
brother's 29:13	5:13,18,21,22	charges 9:18	12:25 50:22	concluded 36:16
brought 23:16	7:8,12,19 8:13	27:8	close 17:13	conditions 43:11
burdensome	8:18 9:14,15	Chief 3:3,9	25:14	conduct 3:19,19
39:6	10:6,22,23	16:21 17:4	Code 3:12	40:6 50:14
Burlington 1:16	11:7,10,21,25	18:8,18 24:6	coextensive 21:6	confusion 5:15
business 3:22	12:16,18 13:23	24:12 26:7,14	collect 29:15,21	Congress 17:2
4:21 8:8 16:5	13:24 16:2,3,6	26:17 27:9	34:18 38:10	21:4,6 22:4
17:14,16,21	16:10 19:12,19	30:5 39:18,23	Columbus 19:12	31:9,11 37:15
18:4 29:19	20:3 21:4	40:24 44:23	19:12 22:12	39:6,25 40:4
35:1 52:8	22:12 23:1,18	45:8,17 48:17	come 11:14 14:9	Congress's
buying 17:24	24:20,24,25	48:22 49:10	19:25 52:6	38:11 40:22
	25:1 27:3,6	51:23 52:9	comes 51:8	47:20
C	29:6 30:20,21	choice 40:2,2	coming 15:3	connect 37:14
C 1:18 2:1,6 3:1	31:1,3 32:14	choices 46:13	command 33:20	connected 42:19
24:9	32:15,22 33:11	48:3	comment 45:23	47:21
call 39:2	33:11,13,16	Circuit 14:9	Commerce	connection 18:1
calling 38:25	34:8 36:22	circumstances	42:10	28:3 30:12
calls 34:1	37:19,20 38:2	9:10 51:19	common 5:12,13	37:18 40:20
Cambridge 6:8	38:6,17,17	cities 46:23	10:7,10	consensual 13:3
34:15 35:19	39:14,15 40:7	city 1:3,4 3:4	companies 3:20	consider 44:3
car 4:3 6:9,23	40:16,17 44:16	24:20 25:2,12	4:1 17:18 35:8	45:7,7,16,20
9:21 11:16,19	45:12 49:24	32:3,5 33:25	49:8	46:6,9
11:21 24:14	50:1 52:10,11	34:15 38:21	company 9:20	considered
25:2 26:4	cases 37:24 40:8	43:19 44:7	11:17 15:8,10	42:13,16 45:14
27:20,23 33:22	43:6 45:7	47:8	15:21 17:9,14	45:18 48:14
50:24 51:19	causes 5:20,21	claim 5:12,12	17:16 27:19,21	construed 42:12
care 50:5,7,8	7:19 8:20	7:8,20,22,22	32:22 33:25	consumer 3:13
carrier 18:5,20	causing 30:22	10:10,17 13:9	38:8 45:1	5:9 7:20,22,23
19:14 20:15	ceased 41:17	13:17 16:24	compensating	8:4,6,7,14 9:12
22:21 23:17,20	certain 43:11	17:3,3,4,5 18:6	24:14	13:12,14 19:22
24:16 25:6	51:19	18:23 50:6	compensation	22:16,17,19
26:5,23 27:14	certainly 30:1	51:9	26:24	40:2,2 48:6,7,9
28:1,6,8,13	31:11 32:7	claimant 16:4	competitive	48:10,14,23
29:3,8,23	35:1 37:14	claims 3:14,18	38:12	52:5,6
34:18,23,24	41:9	5:1 6:2,6,7,12	complaint 5:3	consumers 7:24
36:3 38:5	cetera 47:4	8:22 10:7,8	8:1	contains 20:24
40:18 44:4	challenge 25:21	17:25 18:2,15	completely 8:3	context 41:16
47:22	challenged 25:5	48:24 49:25	comply 52:3,4	47:24

	1		1	1 age 3
contract 13:4,7	curiae 1:22 2:10	depending	dispose 38:9	40:19 47:3
13:9,13 17:5,7	39:21	45:11	disposed 3:16	elaborate 43:8
35:7	curious 7:12	depends 32:4	12:10	eliminate 40:1
contracted 9:8		depot 17:24	disposing 24:13	eliminated 9:8
13:5	D	deregulated	50:7	else's 16:22
contrary 19:21	D 1:16 2:3,13	39:25 47:10	disposition	else-related
correct 15:4	3:1,7 49:12	deregulation	39:11	28:23
28:25 35:15,17	da 47:5,5,5	47:7	dispute 10:22,24	emergency 6:9
37:6	damages 3:14	deregulatory	10:24 11:1,5,8	6:24 7:15
council 43:19	7:20,21 48:18	31:18 32:2	11:20 12:17	enactment
44:7	49:2,6,25	33:8 40:22	13:23 17:7	22:22 31:17
counsel 12:7	50:16	47:20	disputed 11:6	ended 16:11
24:7 39:18	Dan's 3:4 24:20	describe 19:4	disputes 17:15	enforce 50:1
49:10 52:9	25:2,12 38:21	described 17:4	17:18,25 18:3	enforced 50:24
country 3:20 6:6	DAN'S 1:3,4	determined	42:12	enforcement
6:10 34:6	dates 22:20	50:11	dissent 20:3	26:1
couple 5:4 36:7	day 3:20 6:21	determining	37:2	engage 3:21
42:22 49:15	7:16 16:10	40:13	distant 8:15	40:9
course 15:15,19	DBA 1:4	difference 6:20	distinct 38:23	engaged 24:2
30:6	deal 5:17 18:14	8:17 9:19	39:3 41:15	engaging 43:12
court 1:1,13	dealing 3:21	23:18 28:24	distinction 23:8	enjoy 21:9,10
3:10 12:4,6	27:6 28:11	different 6:15	doing 23:13	equalizing 38:12
13:10 14:3,8	37:19	9:9,11,13	draw 28:15,16	equity 25:19
18:13 19:5,9	deals 37:24	17:17,20 21:5	36:22 43:1	ERISA 36:14
20:13 23:3,6	debt 9:7 38:10	21:22 23:12	drawing 30:19	37:24
23:10 24:12	decide 45:9	28:20 48:8	36:25 37:18	ESQ 1:16,18,20
29:10 30:19	decided 13:10	49:3	40:9	2:3,6,9,13
31:3 38:3,7	decision 5:16	difficult 43:6	drive 42:25,25	establish 39:10
39:24 40:7,11	13:11 14:9	direct 28:5,9,16	duties 50:1,4,10	estate 17:23
40:12,15,17	27:25	28:18 29:9	50:11,13	18:1
41:14 42:12	decisions 18:14	31:16 33:17	duty 50:7,7,8	et 47:4
44:3 45:6,15	defense 5:22 24:1	37:9 46:2,8	D.C 1:9,21	event 22:11
46:9 48:13	define 14:24	directed 3:19		everybody 22:8
courts 40:12	define 14:24 defined 14:21,22	5:22 22:25	-	everything's
Court's 5:16	defined 14:21,22 defines 42:8	direction 8:12	E 2:1 3:1,1 earth 19:7	36:12
covered 15:12	definition 15:1,5	directions 46:21	earth 19:7	evidence 49:5
15:22 29:13	16:18 23:9	directly 21:4	36:22 37:20	exactly 11:24
30:11	26:21,22 27:2	28:2,10 32:8	easily 44:24	14:19
create 24:21	46:7 47:21	37:9,10 40:19	easily 44.24 eat 19:24	examine 48:10
created 38:10	delivery 17:21	41:8 45:24	economic 39:6	example 17:23
48:2	18:6 42:15,18	disagree 24:25	effect 30:18 32:2	28:5,10 30:9
creating 48:2	Department	25:23 26:20	37:11 40:22	34:15 42:16
criminal 39:5	1:21 6:25	discharge 11:11	42:24 44:15,15	43:8 45:15,25
critical 44:16,21	14:25 47:24	discourage	47:19	48:4,13
cross 43:6	51:11,13	43:12 discover 43:18	efficient 39:11	exclusive 47:17 excuse 41:24
cross-country 41:2	depend 48:5	disliked 43:9	either 28:1	
41.4	acpena 10.5	43.7	20.1	exemption
		<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

49:20	final 14:17	34:14	5:13,16 8:19	hybrid 20:17
	finally 36:16	Ginsburg 3:24	12:4,6 14:3,4,7	21:9,13
experience 31:25	first 22:16 25:13	U		· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
	31:12 42:7	4:6,9,16 11:13	22:19 23:3,6	hypothetical 28:21 29:1
explains 44:20		11:23 12:1	27:18 38:3,7	43:9
expressly 3:12	43:5 46:22	21:20 23:11,16	39:8 50:2,18	
extent 8:12 11:1	firsthand 7:2	50:21 51:4,20	51:1,9,25,25	hypotheticals 42:22 43:5
13:23	fit 18:25	give 9:3,4 21:7	Hampshire's	42:22 43:3
extreme 30:24	flatly 45:25	36:15 41:5	7:9,24 8:13	I
$oxed{\mathbf{F}}$	focusing 38:4 followed 6:4	given 36:7 38:17	handling 39:11	idea 22:1
FAAAA 13:6		47:5 50:14	hangar 30:10,16	ideas 36:8
33:11 36:24	following 32:3	gives 26:3	happen 4:18	identical 23:13
39:7	51:6 follows 42:7	go 6:25 19:6,6	happened 4:19 8:1	ignore 26:8
faced 50:12 52:5	forbidden 40:21	27:22 33:9,17 33:20 34:2,18		imagine 44:24
fact 14:24 22:7		· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	happens 6:25 32:10	immediately
22:19 26:8	forces 34:21,23	34:24 37:6,9 46:21 50:2		9:23 11:2
43:15 47:18	38:15 40:1,2 foreseeable 41:9		harder 33:13 harm 49:9	impact 37:12
49:6 51:11	forever 27:20	goes 49:24 going 9:4 15:17	Harrah's 19:12	39:14 45:1,11
facts 16:6,10		22:2 30:8 31:6	headlight 6:13	52:8
factual 44:2,6,8	forgot 20:6 fortiori 7:16	31:23 32:25	hear 32:18	impair 43:16
44:15	found 29:10	33:1 37:16	hearings 43:19	45:4 46:11
fails 23:8	framework 37:8	46:7 47:21	held 40:18	impinge 29:18
fair 9:16 45:22				29:20,21,22
fairly 41:7	fraud 13:13,14 free 38:12	good 14:23	help 37:17 38:14 hire 27:22	implicit 47:14
fairness 8:8		18:24 52:2,2,4		important 4:25
faith 52:2,2,4	friend 40:25 friends 14:17	goodness 8:25	historic 22:1	30:1 33:5
fall 17:1 19:4	16:14 21:14	goods 15:8,8,11 15:21	history 37:25 hold 9:21 27:20	impose 50:4,6
far 30:3 37:15	function 7:1		Honor 4:15,24	imposed 43:11
38:11	32:5	governed 42:14 42:14	6:2,18 7:8 8:18	incidental 16:15
fashion 19:8	furniture 15:10	*	10:5,22 12:5	16:19 38:23
21:16	further 5:25	government 22:20	15:25 16:25	39:2
fashioned 19:9	8:15 16:9,12	gray 37:18	18:12 19:3	include 14:2,6
favorable 50:25	future 50:12	great 41:4	29:22 35:23	16:19 19:16
favors 31:21	1 uture 30.12	green 34:2	41:18 43:4,20	includes 15:2,5
Federal 9:25	G	groundwork	44:1,10,14	20:21 36:4
22:20 23:9	$\overline{\mathbf{G}}$ 3:1	40:16	45:4,13,22	38:22
24:21 30:7	garage 4:3,3,4	guess 6:5,5,11	47:2,16,23	incurred 9:18
42:13	4:10,11,19 9:3	22:5 46:22	48:23 49:5	independent
feel 11:12	19:12 23:12,16	guidelines 48:16	hook 27:15	41:15,24 42:5
fees 3:16 7:21	23:22,23,24,24	guidelines 48.10 guy 6:12	hope 22:12 24:4	indications
12:13,13,15,23	24:1	guy 0.12	36:9	41:12
field 22:21 24:18	general 1:21	<u> </u>	horrendously	indirect 28:2,17
38:13	8:14 9:7 19:21	ha 9:3,4	33:5	37:11 40:20
figure 27:22	20:22,22 31:23	hamper 39:9	hours 9:22	43:14 44:4
figures 41:3	32:18 33:16	44:18	10:14 11:2	46:4,7,10
filed 18:10	getting 30:1,3,3	Hampshire 1:18	33:22 34:16	indirectly 22:9
fill 48:1	30:4 33:7,19	3:25 4:14 5:10	how's 7:5	43:7
			IIUW B /.J	
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

				Page 5
45:25		51:20,23 52:9	29:7 31:1 32:7	28:15,16,17,20
industry 39:25	<u>J</u>	Justices 49:17	32:11 38:11	30:20 31:18
44:19	June 25:17	Justices 49.17	40:18,19 42:13	36:22,25 37:17
	jurisdiction	K	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	
influence 43:7	14:25 41:3	Kagan 27:17	42:14 43:22,22	40:9 43:1,7
information	jurisdictions	28:21 42:21	43:22,24 45:9	49:24
51:14	50:19	49:23 51:18	45:13,17,20,25	list 14:11
inquiry 44:11	jury 50:11,16	keep 41:6	47:19 48:6,7,9	literal 19:4,6
inserts 16:15	Justice 1:21 3:3	kind 11:24 24:2	48:10,15 50:3	40:11
instructions	3:9,24 4:6,9,16		50:17 51:5,6	literalism 40:13
37:7	5:23 6:5,16,20	33:18 36:18	51:10,25 52:1	literally 19:2
instructs 51:15	7:5,11 8:10,11	39:6	52:3,4	little 30:14 40:4
integral 26:10	8:18,24 9:6,10	kinds 6:7 21:5	lawfully 3:15	live 5:6,9 50:13
intelligent 33:3	9:11,19 10:2,9	43:2 52:6	9:20 10:13	local 41:3 49:19
intended 8:7	10:13,18,25	know 6:8 7:1,2	laws 6:8,10 7:14	locate 4:17
17:2 21:4 40:5	11:13,23 12:1	7:12 15:9,16	8:7 13:5,13,21	locus 41:11
intent 21:3 31:9	12:20 13:3,4	18:19,21 21:2	19:16 24:22	long 37:25
31:11,12,13	13:12,16,20	29:16 30:15	27:18 39:5,8	look 4:13 31:9
44:7	14:1,5,10,15	31:23 32:6	40:5 44:18,20	31:10,11 38:19
interest 43:16	14:19 15:2,5	33:6 34:9,9	44:25 45:4,10	43:19,22
interests 24:18	16:21 17:4	37:17 41:2,5,5	45:23 48:2	looked 30:21
interference	18:8,18 19:10	43:23 46:22	49:7,19	31:3
40:1	19:24 20:2,4,6	50:13 51:21	lawyer 11:16	looking 18:18
interpreted	20:8,12 21:17		leaves 15:11	25:15 31:13
21:15 29:1	21:19,20,25	L	left 23:23,24	looks 51:14
interpreting	22:15,24 23:6	laid 40:17	legislative 21:3	lose 31:20
37:8	23:11,16 24:6	landlord 16:24	letter 12:3,7,8	loss 24:15
Interstate 42:10	24:12 25:8,22	17:6	12:11,23 25:11	lost 33:19 34:14
investigators	26:7,14,17	landowner 26:3	25:13,17	lot 16:22 21:17
27:22	27:9,11,17	language 18:19	letters 25:13	22:5 40:16
invoking 50:23	28:15,19,21	19:5 20:14,23	let's 16:21 43:8	41:4,6
51:5	, ,	20:24 21:15,18	LEWIS 1:20 2:9	lots 17:20
involve 8:13	29:11 30:5	28:13	39:20	
10:22,25 17:21	31:20 32:24	largely 22:21	lien 30:15	M
19:20	33:12,15,21	Laughter 7:4	light 32:16	Maine 29:6,7
involved 17:19	34:13 35:5,6	9:5 20:5,7,10	limit 19:8 20:25	majority 21:18
17:20,22 18:9	35:11,12,13,15	36:19 46:16,19	46:8	21:20
18:22 20:15	35:17,18,21,24	48:21	limitation 19:9	making 52:2,4
21:3	36:1,10,20	law 3:13,24,25	19:14 36:11,18	Manchester Manchester
involves 8:14	37:3 39:18,23	4:1,2,4,6,8 5:5	37:21,22 38:5	1:18
9:15,15 10:23	40:24 41:19,25	5:7,10,11,12	limitations	mandatory 51:7
13:23	42:2,4,21	5:13,14,18,19	21:12	manifest 22:3
involving 32:11	43:18,21 44:6	5:24 7:9,10,23	limited 19:11	31:9
40:8 42:23	44:12,23 45:8	8:2,5,6,13,14	limiting 20:24	manner 38:8
	45:17 46:12,17	8:19 9:7,12	21:16 37:1	March 1:10
issue 3:11 23:1,2 25:22	46:18,20 47:3	10:7,10 11:12	limits 19:16	market 34:21
it'll 35:13	48:5,13,17,22	13:14,19 19:20	27:12	40:1,2 43:1
	49:10,18,22,23	19:22 22:20		47:10 48:1
i.e 47:10	50:21 51:4,18	23:9 24:3 26:1	line 18:13 21:18	17.10 70.1
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

				rage 3
marketplace	22:23 23:17,19	50:2,18 51:1,9	operations 4:5,5	38:6 43:13
28:7	24:16,22 25:6	51:25,25	39:9	45:12
markets 38:12	26:5,10,23,24	Ninth 14:9	operative 13:2	parties 11:5
Massachusetts	27:14 28:1,6,8	nonconsensual	operator 4:10	13:13
6:8 35:25	28:12 29:3,7	3:22 9:15	4:11 26:6	parts 9:23 10:14
massively 19:15	29:23 34:18,23	34:19,19 43:10	34:18 48:8	11:3 50:24
matter 1:12	36:3,24 38:4	44:21 46:1	opinion 33:1	passengers
13:18 22:7	38:13 40:18	49:1	opinions 46:14	26:25 36:5,6
43:15 45:19	41:16 44:4	nonconsensua	opportunity	pay 8:25 9:2,7,8
47:11 52:12	47:22 51:11,13	40:3	9:16,17 11:11	9:17 11:8,11
maximum 38:15	52:8	normal 9:12	11:14	11:21 12:2,12
mean 6:5,22,25	movement 14:5	46:24	opposed 18:17	12:13,14,23,24
21:20 26:9	16:20 26:25	northeast 6:23	opposite 35:11	16:23 25:15
30:6,23 36:11	27:1,4,5,8	northeastern	oral 1:12 2:2,5,8	30:16 50:19
41:7 44:10,23	29:25 36:4,5	6:10	3:7 24:9 38:18	payment 10:19
meaning 8:23	37:1,4	notice 11:1,14	39:20	10:22,23,24,25
26:23 36:15	moves 15:8	51:16,17,17	order 27:25 29:2	11:5,6,20
38:22	mutually 47:17	number 17:17	50:23	12:17,20,21,24
meaningless 8:3			organization	13:24 17:15
means 15:6,6	N	0	48:25	25:1,1
meant 44:13	N 2:1,1 3:1	O 2:1 3:1	owner 4:17,19	peculiar 4:20
mention 35:19	nature 44:3	objectives 40:23	11:19,21 23:25	Pelkey 1:7 3:5
meter 34:2	necessarily 16:7	41:23 47:20	24:1 50:5	12:1,7,11 25:2
millions 6:7,11	19:6 44:2	obligation 9:7	owners 17:6	50:9
minor 5:19	necessary 26:9	11:7,8,11	owns 27:22	Pelkey's 24:14
minority 14:8	32:7	obligations 35:2		people 25:12
minutes 49:11	need 11:12	obvious 45:24	P	peripheral
misspoke 42:2	25:18,20 33:18	46:8	P 3:1	46:15
mock 46:13	needs 46:6	obviously 37:11	package 42:16	permits 35:8
mode 15:16	negligence 5:12	occupied 22:21	page 2:2 12:5	person 10:24
moderate 48:9	6:12 10:7,10	occurred 42:18	38:19 39:4	23:15 26:23
moments 49:15	10:17 18:10,15	offer 12:24	44:17	34:1 51:8
money 11:19	50:6 52:5	22:12	paid 3:17 30:1	personal 24:15
41:4 51:20	negligent 18:15	offered 12:22	park 6:9,24	Petitioner 1:5
months 3:15	18:16,24	Oh 33:12 44:9	16:21 33:22	1:17 2:4,14 3:8
12:9 25:13	neither 20:23	okay 33:23 34:3	parking 16:22	38:16 44:17
Morales 37:13	never 12:23 24:2	47:3	32:5 34:1,16	49:13
45:15 46:13	24:2 47:9	once 23:20	46:24	Petitioner's
48:13	50:13	27:15,19 31:13	part 5:24 11:7	38:20,25
motor 4:7,8,12	new 1:18 3:25	45:10	26:8,10 29:2	phrase 14:17
5:7,14 7:8,10	4:14 5:10,13	onerous 27:18	30:1 33:23	40:8
7:14 15:25	5:16 7:9,24	29:18 42:23	41:1 42:17	pick 15:21
16:1 17:18,20	8:13,19 12:4,6	46:10	43:20 44:3,11	picked 9:22
18:4,20,21	14:3,4,7 17:24	operate 40:3	47:9	10:14 11:2
19:14,18 20:15	17:24 22:19	operation 18:15	particular 3:21	17:9
20:18 21:8,10	23:3,6 27:18	18:17 23:12	16:3 32:15	picks 15:10
21:13,14 22:21	38:3,7 39:8	38:10 50:25	36:22 37:20	picture 33:4,5
	1	1	1	1

				1 age 3
33:18	29:2	26:3,4 27:22	30:2 32:7	43:15 48:7,18
place 12:9 13:1	predicated 7:22	48:1,3	providing 26:23	reason 6:1,1
15:21 16:5,5	7:23 8:19	probably 6:10	provision 30:6	12:18 14:23
22:10,10 26:19	preempt 21:23	10:16 31:24	40:14 46:11	18:12 34:13
31:11	31:6 40:5	problem 22:5,24	provisions 19:17	40:4 41:18
places 36:2	46:24	30:22 33:2	20:24 49:2	49:24
38:18	preempted 3:18	37:5	public 26:2	reasonable 50:4
plaintiff 5:3,6,9	6:2,17 7:9,16	problems 29:5	punt 47:13	50:7,8,15
10:6,10,16	8:15 9:24 13:6	35:3	purple 34:2	reasons 41:22
11:10,15 13:9	13:10,19,21,22	procedures	purpose 22:4	42:6
16:8	14:12 16:24	39:10	32:2 33:8	REBUTTAL
plaintiffs 50:17	17:19 18:2,10	proceeds 25:18	43:23	2:12 49:12
Plaintiff's 5:1	18:12 23:1,3	25:20	purposes 31:18	record 12:4,6
49:25	27:23 28:11	process 40:9	37:15 41:13	Recovery 44:20
play 34:21	32:12 35:9,14	51:7,7,15,18	47:7	red 34:2
playing 38:13,13	43:22,23 47:11	prohibiting 39:5	put 11:17	reference 21:21
plays 5:19	49:19,25	prohibits 46:1	puts 9:2	21:22 25:11
please 3:10	preempting	promoting	putting 31:15	referred 3:22
24:12 39:24	31:7	38:12	p.m 52:11	referring 14:16
51:23	preemption	property 14:6		refers 26:23
pled 5:3,20 7:19	5:21 17:10	16:20 18:21,22	Q	reflect 38:15
pocketed 11:18	19:16 20:25	19:15,18 24:15	question 8:10	reflective 12:16
point 5:24 8:21	21:5,9 24:1,3	24:17,18 25:20	13:4 14:11,21	regard 14:17
12:1 15:3	27:13 31:5	26:4,11 27:1,4	24:4 31:21	21:3,12
20:13 21:19	40:8,14 44:2	27:8,11 29:24	40:25 41:10	regime 50:25
44:17	46:2	29:25 36:5,6	44:14 46:9	regulate 4:4 8:7
pointed 27:12	preemptive	36:24 37:1,4	48:20 49:4	10:2,5 28:2
27:25 30:23	20:22 40:22	37:22 42:9	questions 39:17	32:4,8 40:5
points 39:17	47:20	45:2,5	44:2 49:16	45:24
43:3	preempts 3:13	propose 47:23	quite 15:1 25:14	regulated 22:8
police 22:2	premised 48:24	proscribed 46:2	36:12	31:15 47:9
policies 31:16	prerogative	protecting 7:24		regulates 3:25
policy 7:24	21:23	protection 3:13	R	4:7 40:19
posited 28:22	present 37:23,24	5:9 7:20,22,23	R 3:1	regulating 28:10
position 23:25	preserve 21:23	8:4,6,7,14 9:12	raised 25:22	34:4 37:10
27:10 30:9	presumption	19:22 21:8	range 12:9	47:8
positive 31:16	31:5	22:16,18,20	rate 38:14	regulation 22:7
possession 4:12	pretty 21:18	48:6,7,9,10,14	read 6:22 14:11	22:19 24:17,19
16:2 23:20	prevent 39:7	48:23 52:5,7	14:13 15:19	26:11 28:6,9
38:8 51:8	previously	provide 26:12	21:22	29:10 31:16
powers 22:2	21:25	28:7,8,9 29:4,8	reading 16:14	35:8 39:6
practice 9:21	price 25:4,8,11	41:8 43:17	19:1,7	43:15 46:2,5,7
43:9	prices 42:25	44:21 45:6	real 17:22 18:1	46:10
practices 8:8	primary 8:21	provided 12:24	22:25	regulations
44:19	prime 48:4	12:25 37:8	really 4:25	19:17 39:9
precisely 27:7	private 10:6,9	41:10 51:14	10:24 12:15,16	42:23 46:24
precondition	10:15 13:6	provides 26:1	17:5 31:22	regulatory
			38:21 43:9,10	

				Page 60
21:21 24:21	29:7	50:20	20:21 38:22	set 9:9
31:10 37:25	reserve 24:5	run 29:18	see 7:15 9:12	sets 50:13
47:25 49:20	residence 13:1	running 8:12	15:14 30:13	severe 48:6
reign 43:11	16:6	Tunning 0.12	33:2,24 39:16	severely 27:12
relate 17:7,15	respect 13:6	S	42:4	Shaughnessy
26:5 27:3 47:6	14:18 18:20	S 1:20 2:1,9 3:1	seek 50:1,1,4,5	1:18 2:6 12:7
related 8:20,22	19:15 23:1	39:20	seeking 16:4	24:8,9,11
10:19 18:4,19	24:16 25:23,24	safety 49:19,20	seeks 50:6	25:10 26:13,16
22:9 27:1 28:1	26:21 27:10	sale 23:4 24:22	seen 7:3	27:17,24 28:18
30:10,21,22,23	28:14 29:24	40:3	sell 9:23 11:2	28:25 29:20
30:24,25 31:2	32:21 36:23,24	satisfied 49:3	16:23 50:23	30:18 32:20
31:4,6 36:4,5,6	37:21 43:4	saying 6:22	51:1,19	33:10,14,19
36:12,15 37:3	respectfully	15:20,25,25	selling 23:14	34:12 35:16,20
37:3,4,5,9 40:8	20:2 26:16	25:18 28:21	29:17,17	35:22 36:20
40:10,18 41:8	Respondent	29:2	sense 18:3 31:22	37:6 42:22
42:9 45:10	1:19,23 2:7,11	says 6:8 9:3	40:11	ships 15:17
relates 5:20 8:3	16:8 24:10	18:19 31:5	sensible 40:9	ships 13.17 short 14:20
17:11,13 26:25	39:22	32:9 33:17,22	sent 11:1 20:19	side 22:13 40:25
relationship	Respondent's	34:1,1,2 37:14	25:12	sidewalk 45:19
10:20 33:15	3:13 44:19	38:20 51:6	separate 5:10	significance
relatively 5:19	rest 32:25	Scalia 8:10,18	26:18 41:14	32:13
relevant 36:9	return 50:9	8:24 9:6,10,11	42:19	significant
reliance 38:15	returned 16:5	15:2,5 19:10	service 18:20,24	12:19 32:1
rely 5:1	right 7:11 10:9	19:24 20:2,4,6	24:16 26:10,18	37:12 39:14
relying 14:8	15:3 19:3	20:8,12 21:19	28:1,2,3,4,7,13	40:21,21 47:19
remaining 49:11	31:20 35:16	25:8 27:11	29:3,4,9,13,15	52:7
remedies 52:6	36:12 38:3	29:11 35:13,18	29:23 30:2	significantly
remote 17:12	44:9 46:20,24	35:21,24 36:10	32:8 33:25	28:3 29:12,14
18:3,5 46:15	47:1,15 48:6	36:20 37:3	34:5,23 36:4	31:17
removal 48:2	rights 5:5,8	41:19,25 42:2	37:10 38:4	similar 20:22
remove 26:2	ROBERT 1:7	42:4 43:18,21	40:19,20,21	simple 49:18
removed 5:25	ROBERTS 3:3	44:6,12 46:18	41:8,10,14,14	50:18,20
25:25 26:4	16:21 18:8,18	48:5,13	41:23,25,25	simply 51:6
38:11	24:6 26:7,14	Scalia's 13:4	42:19 43:13,17	single 19:17
render 18:24	30:5 39:18	scenario 17:1	44:4	singles 19:20
rent 15:9,9	40:24 44:23	18:16 19:4	services 10:19	singularly 46:15
16:23 30:17	45:8,17 48:17	23:18,22	11:9 13:24	sir 41:21
repairs 4:4	49:10 51:23	scheme 31:10	14:2,6 16:9	situation 9:16
repeating 34:8	52:9	37:25	17:2,8,15,22	10:21 16:12
reply 39:4 44:18	role 5:17,19	scope 14:24	18:7 19:13,14	18:5 34:9,11
report 51:11	Rowe 27:25 29:6	19:16 20:25	25:6 26:5,12	50:14
require 32:22	29:8,10 31:19	21:5 27:12	27:1,3,14	sketched 47:17
required 51:17	37:7 40:17,17	40:13	36:25 37:12	snow 6:9,24
51:17	RSA 25:24,25	secondly 5:11	38:14,21,24	7:14
requires 50:3	27:7 32:21	second-guessed	42:8 44:22	sold 10:13 11:18
51:10	39:13	50:15	45:5 46:8,11	25:19 50:20,22
requiring 28:6	rule 30:7 50:18	Section 3:11	47:22 49:1	50:22 51:16
requiring 20.0	1410 30.7 30.10		T1.22 TJ.1	30.22 31.10
	l	l	l	l

				Page 61
Solicitor 1:20	24:18	strictly 21:16	sweep 24:19	37:25 43:2
31:23 32:18	statute 4:14,22	structure 48:3	31:4	think 6:14,18
somebody 8:25	4:24,25 5:2,10	49:7	sweet 51:22	9:6 10:4,15,15
9:1 16:22	8:9,23 9:25	structures 48:25	SWCCt 51.22	14:15,16 15:6
somebody's	14:18 15:13,23	subchapter 4:14	T	15:13 16:25
32:25	16:16,17 17:10	subject 44:25	T 2:1,1	17:1 18:11
Sotomayor	18:2 19:1,5,7	47:11	take 23:8 30:15	19:2 20:3
12:20 13:3,12	20:14,15,16,16	subjected 50:16	31:9 47:4,12	22:13,14 25:17
13:16,20 14:1	20:20 21:3,7	subjected 50.10 submit 5:16	47:14 49:15	29:13 33:10,12
14:5,10,15,19	27:13 28:11	23:7	51:20,21	35:3,5,21,22
22:24 23:6	29:6 32:21	submitted 52:10	takes 22:10	36:10,21 39:16
25:22 28:15,19	33:21,23 39:14	52:12	talking 32:1	40:4,15,23
35:5,12	41:12 42:8	subsidized 41:7	46:4	41:12,21 43:5
· ·	44:5 49:21	substantive 5:5	talks 25:25	43:14,20 44:1
sought 39:7 sound 34:4	50:23	5:8 49:2	tangential 17:11	'
			tell 7:16 19:10	44:16 45:6,13 45:14 46:5
sources 5:15	statutes 6:23 34:17	suddenly 32:3 32:12	43:23	
space 15:9		- :	tells 32:9 50:21	47:16,18 48:12
speak 45:19	statutory 18:19	sued 5:5,8	temporarily	51:24
speaking 35:6	41:13,22,23	sufficient 41:11	15:18	thinking 33:8
special 19:18,21	42:7	sufficiently	tender 12:24	35:7
34:20	stem 6:3	46:10	tension 31:7	thought 11:14
specific 20:15	stopped 27:5,16	suggest 41:13	tenuous 46:15	15:14 31:24
48:15	39:2	44:10	47:4,13	44:12 46:18,23
specifically	storage 3:17,25	suggested 21:14	tenuously 47:21	47:6
26:22	4:4,21,21 6:4	40:11 49:6	term 14:21,22	thousands 6:6
standards 49:8	9:17 11:9	suggesting	14:23,24 17:2	34:7
start 22:1 32:1	12:12,15,21	51:21	42:11	thrown 47:6
42:7	14:2,6,12 15:2	suggestion	terminated	time 13:2 39:16
started 23:19	15:6,6,12,14	47:14	27:14	46:18
30:19 36:14	15:15,20 16:19	suit 18:10	terms 18:25	times 31:1
State 3:13 7:24	22:10 23:3	superseded 22:3	29:17 51:7	title 4:14,15
9:7 10:2,4,5	25:9,11,21,23	support 47:18	text 20:19 41:22	14:22,24 20:21
11:12 13:5,19	26:12,17 27:6	supporting 1:22	42:7	24:13
21:21,24 22:2	27:7,8 28:12	2:11 39:22	thank 24:6,11	today 10:23
22:7,18 24:19	29:15 30:13,13	suppose 4:13	,	38:19
29:1,6,7 31:15	39:1 41:1,24	8:24,25 9:20	34:12 39:18,23 48:22 49:10,14	told 19:19 29:11
35:2,7,7 38:11	42:3,4,10,11	15:7 17:12	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	tort 3:14
39:6 40:5,18	42:13,15,16,17	23:22 27:17,19	49:22 52:9	tow 3:14,20,21
40:19 42:14	42:18,23	27:21	that's 21:19	4:1 7:2 9:1,1
43:7,9 45:25	storage-related	supposed 7:5	theft 39:5 theme 34:6	9:15 12:25
47:19 48:2	28:22	49:8		13:5 15:25
States 1:1,13,22	store 4:2 15:8,9	Supreme 1:1,13	thing 4:18 6:12	16:22,23 17:6
2:10 3:12 32:4	15:18,22 16:3	5:16 12:4,6	23:13 31:14	17:8,14,16,18
32:11 39:21	26:9	14:8 23:6 38:3	things 6:16	18:9,17 23:11
48:15 49:21	stored 23:21	38:7	14:11 22:6	25:3,5 26:5,8
State's 5:9	storing 23:13	sure 21:19 22:17	24:23 26:9	27:15 32:8,22
State-created	26:15	suspect 34:5	29:22 30:10	33:17,17,20,25

34:3,5,17,19	transportation	16:22 26:9	5:19 6:3,4 7:9	week 6:22
34:19,24,25,25	3:12 7:1 14:13	34:5 41:1,2,7	7:10,14 8:2,5	weeks 25:14
39:9 41:1,7	14:18,21,25	try 33:9 43:10	8:21,23,25 9:1	welcome 39:19
48:8 49:8	15:1,7,15,17	49:15	9:2 12:10,25	went 11:17 31:8
50:12,25 51:10	15:19 16:8,9	trying 21:7	13:1 16:1,1,3,4	we're 6:19 31:5
52:1,3	16:11,13,16,18	36:14 48:15	22:23 23:14,16	36:25 37:18
towed 3:15 6:10	17:8 18:7,21	turn 36:8	23:21,23 24:22	we've 19:11
6:12,24 9:21	19:15 22:22	twin 20:16	25:3,19 26:2	36:13
10:13 11:1	23:9,17,19	two 25:13 43:3	26:24 29:4	whack 48:18
23:23 25:4	24:2,17 26:10	46:13,21 47:16	36:3 38:9,10	whacks 48:7
27:20 33:23	26:19,21,22,24	type 3:19,21	39:8 50:3,5,8,9	whatnot 35:1
38:9 40:3	27:3,10,11	21:13 31:4	50:17,19,22	White 21:25
tower 23:23	29:12,24 30:8	41:14 43:13,14	51:1,9,10,16	willing 45:6
42:24 43:1	30:12 36:4,23	45:9 46:1	vehicles 4:7,15	winter 36:2
45:5 51:5,6,15	37:22 38:14,24	types 17:17,20	25:25 39:12	Wolens 13:11
towers 43:7,11	39:1 41:11,15	44:24	51:12,13	word 16:15,19
43:16	41:16 42:6,8,9		verification 29:9	words 19:25
tower's 42:25	42:17,20 45:2	U	Vermont 1:16	20:3 31:12
towing 3:16 4:1	45:5 47:24	ultimate 37:13	view 14:8 41:14	32:2,14 33:7
4:5,19,20 5:24	transporting	uncritical 40:13	viewing 41:23	34:7,8 36:6,14
6:3,7 7:15 8:13	18:22 29:3	understand 4:25	violation 8:2,5,6	37:5,21,22
8:19,20,23	Travelers 30:20	8:24 11:20	49:7	38:5 47:13
9:17,20 11:9	30:21 31:2,8	34:14 41:19	violations 5:4	work 7:6 32:13
11:17,22 12:2	40:11	undertake 34:24		33:9 40:15
12:9,13,20,23	treated 23:12	34:25 49:9	W	worked 23:24
14:6 16:2 23:2	treatment 19:18	undertaken	want 19:24	working 22:11
27:19,21 29:3	19:21	48:3	31:22 32:16	works 7:12,17
29:16 32:4,7	treble 7:21	undue 40:1	34:9 36:17	worried 35:13
32:11 35:8	48:18 49:2,6	unfortunately	41:6 43:21	worry 32:3
41:16 42:23	tried 4:17 43:7	34:20	47:12	wouldn't 10:1
43:10 44:19,20	triggers 24:3	unhelpful 46:15	wanted 43:10	17:7,7,19
44:22 45:1,24	trouble 36:13	United 1:1,13,22	wants 50:24	23:25 28:8
46:1,8,11 49:1	troubling 49:16	2:10 3:12 32:4	warehouse	49:19
towing-related	truck 3:20 4:19	32:11 39:21	15:11,12	Wrecker 19:12
28:23	16:23 17:6,9	universally	Washington 1:9	write 32:14 33:1
tows 3:23 9:2	17:14,16,18	46:23	1:21	written 12:8
traditional	18:9,17,22	unrelated 5:11	wasn't 9:22	wrong 8:12
21:23 22:7,18	26:5 27:15	use 30:24 40:12	10:14 11:2	19:25 20:8,12
24:19	32:8,22 33:17	47:13 48:15	13:2 16:7 51:5	wrote 21:20
traffic 32:11	33:25 34:18,24	T 7	way 17:9,11,12	46:14
49:19	48:8 49:8	<u>V</u>	17:12,13,14	T 7
transaction	trucker 3:14	v 1:6 3:5 19:12	21:1 22:8 26:2	<u>X</u>
17:23 18:1	51:11 52:1	vacuum 24:21	28:25 29:1	x 1:2,8
Transferring	truckers 39:10	48:1	35:9 41:1,4,5	Y
24:13	50:12 52:3	variation 34:6	47:15	
transit 42:17	trucking 39:25	vehicle 3:15,16	Wednesday	Yeah 35:24
transport 22:9	trucks 15:17	4:8,12,24 5:2,5	1:10	year 22:23
		5:7,11,14,18		years 15:10,12

			Page 63
40.11.10	l ————		
42:11,12	8		
Yelin 1:20 2:9	86 12:5		
39:19,20,23	87 12:5		
41:9,21 42:2,5			
42:21 43:3,20			
44:1,9,14 45:3			
45:13,22 47:1			
47:16 48:12,22			
yellow 34:2			
yesterday 35:22			
\$			
\$100 9:2,3,4			
1			
100 42:11,11			
11:11 1:14 3:2			
12-52 1:5 3:4			
12:10 52:11			
14501 3:12			
21:15			
14501(c)(1)			
38:22			
1935 22:22			
1935 22:22 1970 22:20			
19/0/22:20			
2			
20 1:10			
201 .10 2013 1:10			
21 39:4 44:17			
24 2:7 9:22			
10:14 11:2			
262 25:25,25			
27:7 32:21			
39:8,13 44:18			
48:25			
3			
3 2:4 12:9 15:12			
33:22 34:16			
49:11			
34 38:19			
39 2:11			
4			
41713 20:21,24			
49 2:14 14:22,24			
20:21			
L			