1	IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES
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3	MARC J. GABELLI AND BRUCE ALPERT, :
4	Petitioners : No. 11-1274
5	v. :
6	SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE :
7	COMMISSION :
8	x
9	Washington, D.C.
10	Tuesday, January 8, 2013
11	
12	The above-entitled matter came on for oral
13	argument before the Supreme Court of the United States
14	at 10:13 a.m.
15	APPEARANCES:
16	LEWIS LIMAN, ESQ., New York, New York; on behalf of
17	Petitioners.
18	JEFFREY B. WALL, ESQ., Assistant to the Solicitor
19	General, Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.;
20	on behalf of Respondent.
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1	CONTENTS	
2	ORAL ARGUMENT OF	PAGE
3	LEWIS LIMAN, ESQ.	
4	On behalf of the Petitioners	3
5	ORAL ARGUMENT OF	
6	JEFFREY B. WALL, ESQ.	
7	On behalf of the Respondent	21
8	REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF	
9	LEWIS LIMAN, ESQ.	
10	On behalf of the Petitioners	50
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		

Τ	PROCEEDINGS
2	(10:13 a.m.)
3	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear argument
4	first this morning in Case 11-1274, Gabelli and
5	Alpert v. the Securities and Exchange Commission.
6	Mr. Liman.
7	ORAL ARGUMENT OF LEWIS LIMAN
8	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONERS
9	MR. LIMAN: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it
10	please the Court:
11	This case concerns the statute dealing
12	exclusively with penalty claims brought by government
13	agencies to punish conduct made unlawful by statute.
14	Congress provided a clear and easily administered
15	statutory time limitation on the government's power to
16	punish: 5 years, except as otherwise provided by
17	Congress.
18	The case does not concern the statute
19	does not concern the government's power to seek remedial
20	remedies such as disgorgement and injunction.
21	Consistent with Congress's normal approach in penal
22	situations, Congress fixed a statute of limitations for
23	penalties. The court below, for the first time over the
24	century the statute has been in existence, sweepingly
25	concluded that unless Congress clearly directed

- 1 otherwise, the statute and the 5 years did not begin to
- 2 run from the time the defendant violated the law, the
- 3 ordinary rule for statutes providing for accrual, but
- 4 instead --
- 5 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Mr. Liman. Mr. Liman,
- 6 you -- you are typing this a penalty case. The
- 7 government says yes the accrual is the ordinary rule, but
- 8 discovery is the rule when there is fraud, and fraud is
- 9 alleged here. So how does the Court decide whether to
- 10 type this case a penalty case, as you urge, or a fraud
- 11 case, as the government urged -- urges, when both
- 12 captions fit?
- MR. LIMAN: Your Honor, I think there are
- 14 two answers to that. First is that the Court doesn't
- 15 need to decide, Congress has decided. Congress made it
- 16 quite clear that the rule of accrual applied to all
- 17 penalty claims. And as this Court held in
- 18 Clark v. Martinez, the same word in a statute cannot be
- 19 given different interpretations depending on the
- 20 underlying statute to which it is applied.
- 21 The second reason, though, Justice Ginsburg,
- 22 is that it is not correct to say, and this Court has
- 23 never said, that either the Bailey rule or the injury
- 24 accrual rule applies to a statutory fraud claim where
- 25 the government is seeking to punish. That would --

- 1 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Excuse me.
- 2 Justice Ginsburg points out that you're talking about
- 3 the statute, but the statute uses the term "accrual."
- 4 Is it correct to say that the term "accrual" is not used
- 5 in statute of limitations for crimes -- generally -- for
- 6 crimes?
- 7 MR. LIMAN: For -- for crimes, the general
- 8 word that is used is time period from the violation.
- 9 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Right. And this -- and
- 10 this talks about accrual. So that is indicative -- is
- 11 indicative of the fact that Congress is using a civil
- 12 analogue in the drafting of this statute.
- 13 MR. LIMAN: Your Honor, it indicates that
- 14 Congress is using accrual as it is understood at common
- 15 law. Common law, it means when the claim becomes ripe
- 16 and the plaintiff has the ability to sue. What that
- 17 means is, as the D.C. Circuit said in 3M -- and we think
- 18 the D.C. Circuit got it right on this -- that you look
- 19 to the underlying statute pursuant to which the
- 20 government is seeking a penalty to see when the claim
- 21 became ripe.
- In a penalty situation, and under the IAA,
- 23 which is what this concerns -- it doesn't concern a
- 24 common law fraud claim; it doesn't concern a claim where
- 25 there's even any element of deception that's required.

- 1 It's a breach of fiduciary duty. What the IAA says is
- 2 that the government can sue when the violation occurs.
- 3 Now --
- 4 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Mr. Liman, I understand
- 5 your argument, but I have a fundamental difficulty,
- 6 okay?
- 7 Bailey and Exploration Company, with
- 8 statutes not too dissimilar from this one, who read the
- 9 discovery rule into a fraud claim, both for a civil
- 10 litigant and for the government. The only way that I
- 11 can tease out a potential difference between Exploration
- 12 and this case is somehow that the penalty in this case
- is not for injury, but for punishment, as you called it.
- 14 Government as enforcer, rather than government as
- 15 victim.
- Some of us would say that the common wheel
- 17 is injured whenever someone breaks a law, so that that
- 18 distinction between enforcer and victim makes no sense.
- 19 How do you answer that point?
- MR. LIMAN: Justice Sotomayor, let me give
- 21 you the precise answer to that, which is that in this
- 22 case where the government is seeking a penalty, it is
- 23 not acting on behalf of underlying investors, and the
- 24 recovery is not one that is brought by way of damages or
- 25 disgorgement.

- 1 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: It's acting as a
- 2 sovereign to protect what it thinks is an ordered
- 3 society. And if you break that order, you are injuring
- 4 the society. That -- that's the best --
- 5 MR. LIMAN: Your Honor, I think that is the
- 6 articulation that the government would have to make. I
- 7 don't think it holds up, for several reasons. First of
- 8 all, it would represent an extreme departure from
- 9 anything this Court has ever held or, to our knowledge,
- 10 any court has ever held with respect to the application
- 11 of the discovery rule.
- 12 Second, when you're talking about penalty,
- 13 you're not talking about recovery to -- to victims.
- 14 Third, when we're talking about implying a rule, which
- is what the government's argument is here -- it's not an
- 16 argument to follow the plain language, it's an argument
- 17 to depart from the plain language -- you should look at,
- 18 and the cases direct you to look at, the policy
- 19 concerns. And when you're talking about discover -- a
- 20 discovery rule with respect to the government as
- 21 enforcer, the rules don't work. They don't work for
- 22 several reasons.
- First of all, when you've got an injury, a
- 24 party who is injured, the statute of limitations has a
- 25 natural start date that is not in control of the

- 1 plaintiff. There is a relationship to the underlying
- 2 violation. And that can be readily measured. None of
- 3 that is true when you're talking about the government in
- 4 a law enforcement capacity.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Liman, what you
- 6 suggested, when we talked about the discovery rule, is
- 7 that it has its basis in the notion that a defendant with
- 8 unclean hands who has committed deceptive conduct
- 9 preventing the plaintiff from understanding that he or
- 10 it has a cause of action -- you know, shouldn't be
- 11 entitled to the benefit of a statute of limitations.
- 12 And if that's the understanding that lies
- 13 behind the discovery rule, I guess the question for you
- is, why doesn't it apply in this case, as well as, in
- 15 a case where the person bringing the action has
- 16 himself suffered a harm?
- 17 MR. LIMAN: Justice Kagan, I've got two
- 18 answers to that question as well. The first is that --
- 19 that I don't think is the basis for the -- for the
- 20 discovery rule at bottom. The basis for the discovery
- 21 rule -- if you look at this Court's opinion in -- in
- 22 Rotella, if you look at the Seventh Circuit in Cada, the
- 23 D.C. Circuit in Connor -- is the notion that when the
- 24 plaintiff cannot discover the injury, doesn't know that
- 25 it's been injured, and cannot reasonably know that the

- 1 plaintiff's been injured, the plaintiff cannot take the
- 2 steps that other plaintiffs would take to investigate
- 3 and determine whether they've got a cause of action.
- 4 That's not applicable in a government
- 5 enforcement context because you're not talking about
- 6 there the government as a victim. The government may
- 7 not know of the underlying transaction, will not know of
- 8 the underlying transaction, unless the government asks.
- 9 The second reason is that there is a strain
- 10 that -- in the Bailey line of cases -- that really
- 11 speaks in terms of equitable tolling and fraudulent
- 12 concealment, that sort of a notion of unclean -- unclean
- 13 hands. That's not in this case because the government
- 14 affirmatively took it out. But we would submit --
- 15 JUSTICE GINSBURG: How did the government
- 16 take it out? I mean, the point here is that there was a
- 17 concealment. There was a hiding of what was -- the
- 18 impermissible action.
- 19 MR. LIMAN: That's -- that's not correct,
- 20 Justice Ginsburg. If you'd look at the -- at the
- 21 opinion below and you look at the complaint, the essence
- of the allegation, which we have not yet had a chance to
- 23 disprove before you on a motion to dismiss, is that
- 24 there were misrepresentations and omissions made to the
- 25 board of the mutual fund. There was no

- 1 misrepresentations made to the investing public. That
- 2 allegation is not in the complaint. It would not be
- 3 accurate. And there is no allegation whatsoever that
- 4 anything was hidden from the government or was in any
- 5 way concealed from the government. The records here
- 6 would have been available -- were available for the
- 7 government to look at, at any time.
- 8 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Mr. Liman, finishing up
- 9 a point you were just on previously, what's your
- 10 position with respect to fraudulent concealment?
- 11 Doesn't your theory preclude even the application of
- 12 that to tolling of the statute?
- MR. LIMAN: Your Honor, I think you could
- 14 and should conclude -- that if you reach that issue. I
- 15 don't think you need to reach that issue.
- 16 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But tell me about --
- 17 MR. LIMAN: Our theory doesn't require you
- 18 to come to that conclusion.
- 19 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: This is -- it's nice for
- 20 you to say that. But tell me, having announced your
- 21 theory, how the next step is avoidable? Under what
- 22 theory would we say you can't have a discovery rule, but
- 23 you can have a fraudulent concealment rule?
- MR. LIMAN: Your Honor, in the -- using the
- 25 same type of theory and the same methodology that the

- 1 Court employed in the RICO context, in the Claire case,
- 2 and in the Rotella case, one can read the statute, I
- 3 think you have to read the statute, here to say that
- 4 "accrue" means accrue. It's the time that the
- 5 government can first sue.
- That does not necessarily resolve the
- 7 question of whether there are equitable exceptions that
- 8 the government or any party could affirmatively assert
- 9 to toll the statute of limitations, not to delay the
- 10 accrual of the statute of limitations.
- 11 JUSTICE SCALIA: Mr. -- Mr. Liman, you
- 12 acknowledge that a civil action could be brought
- 13 beginning from the time when the injured plaintiff
- 14 discovers the fraud, right?
- MR. LIMAN: That's --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: So you're really not
- 17 arguing for what you might call a total statute of
- 18 repose. It seems to me odd that the defendant would be
- 19 relieved from prosecution by the government, but not
- 20 relieved from a suit for sometimes very substantial
- 21 damages by -- by an injured plaintiff who doesn't have
- 22 to sue until he's discovered the fraud.
- 23 MR. LIMAN: Your Honor, respectfully, we
- 24 don't think that's not odd at all. If you look in the
- 25 securities context, there is a 5-year statute of repose.

- 1 And it would be odd to think that the same Congress that
- 2 passed that 5-year statute of repose limiting even the
- 3 ability of an injured plaintiff without the tools of the
- 4 government to bring a private suit for damages, that's
- 5 the --
- 6 JUSTICE SCALIA: Sure. But that 5 years
- 7 doesn't begin to run until the private plaintiff
- 8 discovers the fraud, right?
- 9 MR. LIMAN: That's -- that's not correct,
- 10 Your Honor.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: No?
- 12 MR. LIMAN: Under Title 28 1658(b) the 5
- 13 years runs from the time of the violation. It's exactly
- 14 coextensive with 2462, and it's not an accident that it's
- 15 exactly coextensive.
- 16 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Mr. Liman, how does it
- 17 work with a disgorgement remedy? I take it that that's
- 18 still -- that you are not challenging the disgorgement?
- 19 MR. LIMAN: We are not challenging the
- 20 disgorgement in front of this Court, and if this Court
- 21 reverses the Second Circuit that -- that issue will
- 22 remain in the case and the SEC's claim for disgorgement
- 23 will remain, and that's really been the way --
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: But you don't apply --
- 25 you don't say it's too late for them to sue for

- 1 disgorgement?
- 2 MR. LIMAN: 2462 applies exclusively with
- 3 respect to penalties, fines and forfeitures. It does
- 4 not apply with respect to equitable remedies.
- 5 JUSTICE GINSBURG: So is there any statute
- of limitations on disgorgement?
- 7 MR. LIMAN: There is none. There is none.
- 8 JUSTICE BREYER: Does it apply to Social
- 9 Security? Does it apply to Veterans Affairs?
- 10 MR. LIMAN: The -- there is a Social
- 11 Security statute that --
- 12 JUSTICE BREYER: Does this statute apply to
- 13 Social Security?
- MR. LIMAN: Yes.
- 15 JUSTICE BREYER: Does it apply to Veterans
- 16 Affairs? Yes or no or you don't know?
- 17 MR. LIMAN: I don't know on Veterans
- 18 Affairs.
- 19 JUSTICE BREYER: What about Social Security?
- 20 MR. LIMAN: Social Security, there is an
- 21 underlying statute --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Then, I'm asking about this
- 23 statute. Does it apply?
- MR. LIMAN: The answer is yes. The answer
- 25 is yes. It applies to a broad range of statutes, unless

- 1 Congress otherwise provided. In fact, there are very
- 2 few penalty statutes to which it does not apply.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Defense Department?
- 4 MR. LIMAN: It does apply to a number of
- 5 Defense Department statutes. I'm hesitating --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Antitrust?
- 7 MR. LIMAN: I'm not sure on antitrust. But
- 8 I believe that it applies to -- it does apply to a
- 9 number of unfair trade practices. Antitrust, there may
- 10 be a separate statute.
- 11 JUSTICE BREYER: FTC, you don't know?
- MR. LIMAN: FTC, yes.
- 13 JUSTICE BREYER: It does apply to FTC, okay.
- 14 So Social Security, FTC. Veterans Affairs we don't
- 15 know, antitrust we don't know. Okay.
- 16 MR. LIMAN: One of the notable features,
- 17 Justice Breyer, is that if you look across the U.S.
- 18 Code, the government makes a point of saying: Well,
- 19 Congress uses penalty -- acknowledges that Congress has
- 20 used penalty when -- the word "penalty" when the
- 21 Congress has -- I'm sorry, it has used the word
- 22 "discovery" when Congress has wanted the statute to --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Mr. Liman, I'm a little
- 24 confused in your answer to Justice Scalia. You said
- 25 that the underlying case has a 5-year statute of repose

- 1 for a civil claim. If Bailey applies, however, those
- 2 claimants who have -- under your theory, who have been
- 3 directly injured. The presumption would apply of
- 4 discovery, if they were claiming a fraud.
- 5 MR. LIMAN: No -- no, Your Honor.
- 6 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So are you just arguing
- 7 that under this statutory scheme there is no application
- 8 of the discovery?
- 9 MR. LIMAN: This -- this Court has held in
- 10 the Lampf case that Bailey and Holmberg do not apply to
- 11 securities fraud case.
- 12 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Because of the
- 13 alternative language of 5 years.
- MR. LIMAN: Well, in Lampf it was 1-year and
- 15 3-year.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Right.
- 17 MR. LIMAN: And in the Merck case, the Court
- 18 made clear that the 5 years was the statute of -- the
- 19 statute of repose.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: That's what I thought
- 21 those involved.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Medicare, Medicaid?
- MR. LIMAN: Yes.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: It is true, though, isn't
- 25 it, that Justice Scalia pointed to an anomaly that could

- 1 easily exist in other contexts because this isn't only a
- 2 statute about securities violations. So that you might
- 3 have in other contexts in which this statute applies a
- 4 world in which a private individual could sue, but the
- 5 government -- could sue after the -- the period of
- 6 time --
- 7 MR. LIMAN: Yes.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: -- the 5 years, but the
- 9 government could not.
- 10 MR. LIMAN: Yes, Justice Kagan. And we
- 11 don't think that's an anomaly. We don't think it's an
- 12 anomaly for two reasons. First of all, in the private
- 13 context, as again I mentioned, the statute, the start
- 14 date for the statute of limitations is not in the
- 15 control of the plaintiff. That's a critical point.
- 16 It's critical in this Court's jurisprudence from Hubrick
- 17 forward. It -- there is a natural start date from when
- 18 the injury would be known to a reasonable plaintiff.
- 19 Not true with respect to the government, who may not
- 20 even know of the transaction. And -- but what it -- so
- 21 it's -- I don't think there's an anomaly because there
- 22 are different statutes of limitation.
- 23 JUSTICE KAGAN: And I take it that your view
- 24 would be that a case like Exploration, it's different
- 25 than this case because it does have a natural start

- 1 date; is that the idea?
- 2 MR. LIMAN: Number one, it does. And number
- 3 two, the relief being sought in Exploration was the
- 4 cancellation of a patent, so it was the government as a
- 5 party to a transaction. And what the Court really said
- 6 in Exploration, what the Court, in fact, said in
- 7 Exploration, is that there is no reason why the same
- 8 rule applied the same way couldn't benefit the
- 9 government, as well as the private plaintiff.
- 10 What the government is seeking here is not
- 11 the same rule and would not be applied in the same way
- 12 because you are talking about a transaction that is a,
- 13 frankly, a private transaction that there is no reason
- 14 that the government would know anything about. The
- 15 claim ultimately here is a claim about what was said in
- 16 a private conversation between the advisor to a mutual
- 17 fund and the mutual fund -- fund board.
- 18 So Exploration, what's notable is that the
- 19 government doesn't cite a single case where the
- 20 discovery rule has been applied to a party who is not a
- 21 victim or that it's been applied -- where it's been
- 22 applied and a penalty hasn't been -- a penalty has been
- 23 at issue. I mean, neither of those circumstances. We
- 24 are talking about a statute ultimately where the plain
- 25 language is clear and the government is invoking a

- 1 statutory canon not to try to interpret language of the
- 2 statute, not even to fill a gap in a statute, but to
- 3 override it. The canon that they say overrides the
- 4 plain language doesn't exist.
- 5 JUSTICE KENNEDY: In a civil -- in a civil
- 6 action brought by an injured investor or private party,
- 7 can that plaintiff, the injured investor, the private
- 8 party, in the ordinary course plead and rely upon an
- 9 earlier government determination that there had been a
- 10 violation and so that that's presumptive showing of
- 11 liability?
- MR. LIMAN: Your Honor --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: In other words, the SEC
- 14 makes an investigation, finds a violation; can a private
- 15 investor then rely on that as a presumptive showing of
- 16 liability?
- 17 MR. LIMAN: Yeah. I think the lower courts
- 18 are mixed on the extent to which you can rely upon the
- 19 actual allegations in a complaint.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: No, not the allegation.
- 21 It's an ultimate finding.
- MR. LIMAN: Absolutely.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: But then under your rule.
- 24 The plaintiff would be deprived of that.
- MR. LIMAN: No, that's not correct,

- 1 Your Honor. Under our rule the plaintiff has exactly
- 2 the same rights, regardless of how this case is
- 3 determined. The plaintiff's cause of action will turn
- 4 upon the underlying --
- 5 JUSTICE KENNEDY: But if the government's
- 6 statute of limitations runs out and the private investor
- 7 is on his own, then the private investor doesn't have
- 8 the advantage that exists in other cases of reliance on
- 9 a -- SEC finding as a presumptive showing of liability.
- 10 MR. LIMAN: Your Honor, that -- that -- our
- 11 argument only applies with respect to penalty. The
- 12 government has huge powers with respect to disgorgement
- 13 and injunctive relief. So, if the government believes
- 14 that there is a wrongdoing, the government still has the
- 15 ability to bring a claim and the private investors still
- 16 have the ability to rely upon the government's
- 17 enforcement action and whatever findings come out of
- 18 that. So there is nothing in our argument that
- 19 diminished, to any degree, the recovery abilities of a
- 20 private plaintiff.
- 21 In fact, as we've highlighted, that 5-year
- 22 period for the -- in the securities laws puts a premium
- 23 on the SEC acting promptly. And I would note that
- 24 that's something that is not accidental. If you go back
- 25 in the legislative history and look to the SEC's

- 1 reaction to the Lampf decision, the SEC urged a 5-year
- 2 statute of repose, saying that that struck in the
- 3 private context the right balance between repose when
- 4 you're dealing with complex commercial transactions and
- 5 enforcement and -- and recovery.
- 6 There's -- the position that the SEC is
- 7 taking now is a novel position that to -- to our
- 8 knowledge has not been taken by other regulators and
- 9 hasn't been taken by the SEC until -- until quite
- 10 recently. This statute's been on the books for quite a
- 11 long time, and it's notable that agencies have not urged
- 12 that -- that interpretation.
- 13 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Are there no statutes,
- 14 Mr. Liman, that say the claim accrues when the injury is
- 15 discovered, that use both -- both terms?
- 16 MR. LIMAN: I'm sorry, Justice Ginsburg. I
- 17 missed the question.
- 18 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Are there no statutes
- 19 that use both terms, "accrues" and "discovery"? A
- 20 statute, for example, that says, this claim accrues when
- 21 the injury is discovered?
- MR. LIMAN: There are statutes that use that
- 23 kind of language, and that's precisely our point because
- 24 it reflects that Congress recognizes the difference and
- 25 could, if Congress wanted, provide that a claim for the

- 1 violation of the IAA or for any other statute accrues
- 2 when it is discovered.
- If there are no further questions, I would
- 4 like to reserve the remainder of my time.
- 5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
- 6 Mr. Wall.
- 7 ORAL ARGUMENT OF JEFFREY B. WALL
- 8 ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENT
- 9 MR. WALL: Mr. Chief Justice and may it
- 10 please the Court:
- I think Justice Kennedy started us off in
- 12 the right place by focusing on the statute and its use
- of the term "accrual." And when counsel concedes that
- 14 that term had an established meaning at common law and
- 15 this statute picks it up, I think he gave away his case
- 16 because there were a cluster of concepts. One was the
- 17 general rule governing accrual: It accrues when the
- 18 plaintiff can -- has a right to sue.
- 19 But there was a specific principle for cases
- 20 of fraud and concealment. And I don't think there is
- 21 any basis in law or logic for Petitioner saying that
- 22 this statute meant to pick up one of those concepts and
- 23 not the other concept.
- 24 JUSTICE SCALIA: I don't think the common
- 25 law held that it didn't accrue. I think it was an

- 1 exception to the accrual rule, that, even though it
- 2 accrued earlier, we are going to allow a later suit
- 3 where -- where discovery is made later. I -- is that
- 4 the way those cases were framed, that it didn't accrue
- 5 until discovery?
- 6 MR. WALL: Justice Scalia, I don't want to
- 7 fight about it too much because from the government's
- 8 perspective, it doesn't matter --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, you are making the
- 10 argument, so you ought to fight about it.
- 11 MR. WALL: It doesn't matter how it's
- 12 labeled. It doesn't matter whether we label it as an
- interpretation of the statute or an exception for cases
- 14 of fraud or concealment. The result is the same.
- But I will say you are right, in some cases
- 16 it was described as an exception, but as long ago as
- 17 Kirby in 1887 and as recently as Merck --
- 18 JUSTICE SCALIA: And never in a criminal
- 19 case, right? Do you have a single case in which the
- 20 discovery rule was -- was applied in a criminal case
- 21 with respect to a penalty or a criminal sanction?
- MR. WALL: No, not in --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Not a single one.
- 24 MR. WALL: Well, no. The criminal context
- 25 is fundamentally different. This Court has said that

- 1 those statutes are construed liberally in favor of
- 2 repose and are presumptively not subject to --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Now, that's the question
- 4 because I certainly agree with Justice Scalia that this
- 5 is not an SEC statute, this is not a securities statute;
- 6 it is a statute that applies to all government actions,
- 7 which is a huge category across the board and it's about
- 8 200 years old.
- 9 And until 2004 I haven't found a single case
- 10 in which the government ever tried to assert the
- 11 discovery rule where what they were seeking was a civil
- 12 penalty, not to try to make themselves whole where they
- 13 are a victim, with one exception, a case called Maillard
- in the 19th century where they did make that assertion.
- 15 They were struck down by the district court, and the
- 16 attorney general in his opinion said, the district
- 17 court's absolutely right; of course, the government
- 18 cannot effectively abolish the statute of limitations
- 19 where what they're trying to do is to gather something
- 20 that's so close to a criminal case.
- 21 So my question is: Is there any case at all
- 22 until the year 2004, approximately, in which the
- 23 government has either tried or certainly succeeded in
- 24 taking this general statute and applying the discovery
- 25 rule where they are not a victim, they are trying to

- 1 enforce the law for the civil penalty?
- The reason I brought up Social Security,
- 3 Veteran's Affairs, Medicare, is it seems to me to have
- 4 enormous consequences for the government suddenly to try
- 5 to assert a quasi-criminal penalty and abolish the
- 6 statute of limitations, I mean, in a vast set of cases.
- 7 And that -- you know, I have overstated that last remark
- 8 a little bit, but I want you to see where I'm coming
- 9 from, which isn't so different from the -- from the
- 10 questions that have been put to you.
- 11 MR. WALL: Justice Breyer, most or many of
- 12 the penalty claims that are being brought under Section
- 13 2462 and other penalty statutes don't deal with fraud or
- 14 concealment, and I grant you that it is a problem --
- 15 JUSTICE BREYER: All I'm asking you for is
- 16 one case.
- 17 MR. WALL: So in -- it's a problem of fairly
- 18 recent vintage, to be sure --
- 19 JUSTICE BREYER: No, it is not a problem of
- 20 fairly recent vintage. I'd say for 200 years there is
- 21 no case. The only case, as far as I have been able to
- 22 discover, which is why I am asking, is that what created
- 23 the problem of recent vintage is that the Seventh
- 24 Circuit, I guess, or a couple of other circuits decided
- 25 that this discovery rule did apply to an effort by the

- 1 government to assert a civil penalty. That's what
- 2 created the problem. Before that there was no problem;
- 3 it was clear the government couldn't do it.
- 4 All right. Now, you will tell me that I'm
- 5 wrong by citing some cases that show I'm wrong. And
- 6 that's what I'm asking. I want to be told I'm wrong,
- 7 sort of.
- 8 (Laughter.)
- 9 MR. WALL: And I guess what I want to tell
- 10 you is there aren't cases out there one way or the
- 11 other. There aren't cases endorsing or declining to
- 12 adopt the discovery rule in the context of fraud or
- 13 concealment with civil penalty actions --
- 14 JUSTICE SCALIA: You'd expect that you'd
- 15 expect there to be some cases in a couple of hundred
- 16 years.
- 17 JUSTICE BREYER: No, I haven't found one.
- 18 JUSTICE SCALIA: Fraud is nothing new, for
- 19 Pete's sake.
- 20 MR. WALL: Justice Scalia, it's not that --
- 21 JUSTICE SCALIA: This is brand-new assertion
- 22 by the government that -- tell -- is there much
- 23 difference between the rule you are arguing for and a
- 24 rule that there is no statute of limitations?
- MR. WALL: Absolutely there is. Since --

- 1 look, in 1990 the Commission was given the right to seek
- 2 civil penalties, so it could only have brought these
- 3 actions for the last 20 years. In those 20-plus years,
- 4 we have seen 25 reported cases dealing with 2462 and
- 5 civil penalties. In 19 of those cases, the Commission
- 6 brought its action within 5 years of the end of the
- 7 fraud. It used the discovery rule only to reach back
- 8 and get the beginning of the fraud.
- 9 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, but that
- 10 ignores the point that has been raised, is that this
- 11 statute does not just apply in the SEC context. How
- 12 many cases have you found across the board in the range
- 13 of those areas that Justice Breyer catalogued?
- MR. WALL: There are cases from the 1980s
- 15 and 1990s dealing with concealment, and in our view the
- 16 justification is the same for concealment as fraud.
- 17 JUSTICE BREYER: I mean, we are asking the
- 18 same question, but in 30 seconds I am going to conclude
- 19 there is none. What I want is a case before the year
- 20 2000 in which the government sought a civil penalty and
- 21 was not trying to recover money or land that it had
- 22 lost, and I want the name of that case in which they
- 23 said that the discovery rule applies.
- 24 The two that you cited, Amy and the case of
- 25 Broderick's Will, did involve the government being

- 1 injured by losing land or losing money, something like
- 2 that. So I have those and I don't think they count, but
- 3 I will look at them again. Is there anything else you
- 4 would like to refer me to?
- 5 MR. WALL: Justice Breyer, I don't think
- 6 there is anything on either side of the ledger, I will
- 7 be very upfront, other than the Maillard case, which I
- 8 think even courts at the time, an exploration company,
- 9 the court of appeals recognized --
- 10 JUSTICE SCALIA: It's not a matter of there
- 11 being nothing on either side of the ledger. What's
- 12 extraordinary is that the government has never asserted
- this, except in the 19th century, when it was rebuffed
- 14 and -- and repudiated its position. It isn't just that
- 15 there are no cases against you. It's you've never --
- 16 the government has never asserted it before.
- 17 MR. WALL: Justice Scalia, there were very
- 18 few civil penalty actions in which -- that involved
- 19 fraud or concealment, in which the government would have
- 20 needed to invoke it, or did invoke it and was rebuffed
- 21 by courts. I mean, this is a fairly modern problem, and
- the question is do all of the same concepts that
- 23 compelled one answer in these other contexts compel the
- 24 same answer here or does a rule that blankets the
- 25 waterfront --

- 1 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So, this is a very
- 2 modern problem, but how about the statute of Elizabeth,
- 3 which talked about penalties as being a criminal
- 4 sanction, but permitted private individuals, not the
- 5 government, to seek the penalties and keep it. So you
- 6 cite the statute of James, and I look at the statute of
- 7 Elizabeth, and try to find the analogy between which
- 8 one.
- 9 MR. WALL: Well, if this were a criminal
- 10 penalty, the government agrees --
- 11 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Even though private
- 12 parties could keep the money back then.
- 13 MR. WALL: That's right. But what the
- 14 Court's been clear on is that there are civil penalties
- 15 and there are criminal penalties and which side of the
- 16 line it falls on invokes a different set of background
- 17 rules and legal norms. The Congress denominated this as
- 18 a civil penalty --
- 19 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Could I move you to
- 20 another issue? If a party can defeat the government's
- 21 claim of discovery by showing that the government wasn't
- 22 reasonably diligent, how does a party ever accomplish
- 23 that? Aren't you going to raise the law enforcement
- 24 privilege, the -- some other privilege to block --
- 25 discovery?

- 1 MR. WALL: Justice Sotomayor, discovery is
- 2 playing itself out in cases like these in district
- 3 courts. Privilege has not been a very major issue and
- 4 the reason is defendants are by and large pointing to
- 5 things in the public domain -- private lawsuits, public
- 6 filings with the Commission, public statements -- to say
- 7 those put the Commission on constructive words --
- 8 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Well, if they fail
- 9 there, don't you think that they are going to also fail
- 10 because they are not going to be able to look at your
- 11 records to figure out exactly what you knew or didn't
- 12 know?
- 13 MR. WALL: No, not invariably. I mean, the
- 14 way this plays itself out in the district court is the
- 15 Commission says that it didn't know and a defendant
- 16 points to something in the public domain and says either
- 17 that put you on constructive notice or --
- 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So it depends really
- 19 on how many enforcement officers the SEC has, is it
- 20 reasonable for them to have been aware of the particular
- 21 item in some publication. Maybe if they've got 1,000
- 22 people reviewing it, but maybe not if they have 10; and
- 23 that's just not the -- I mean, it's not just the SEC;
- 24 it's all these other government areas.
- It seems to me that it's going to be almost

- 1 impossible for somebody to prove that the government
- 2 should have known about something. And which part of
- 3 the government? I mean, it's a big, big government, and
- 4 particular agencies -- well, you say, well, the Defense
- 5 Contractor Board should have known, but does that mean
- 6 that the U.S. attorney's office or the Defense Counsel's
- 7 office should have known?
- It seems to me that, at least with respect
- 9 to that aspect, you really are eliminating any real --
- 10 it's certainly not a lot of repose if the idea is, well,
- 11 I've got to establish that this particular government
- 12 agency should have known about this.
- 13 You certainly can't sit back and say, well,
- 14 5 years has gone by and --
- MR. WALL: Mr. Chief Justice, they can't
- 16 point to a single case where it has been difficult here,
- 17 and it hasn't been difficult --
- 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: They can't point to
- 19 a single case?
- 20 MR. WALL: Where it's been difficult in
- 21 order to make that determination. And it hasn't proven
- 22 difficult --
- 23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So you think it's
- 24 significant if you can't point to a single case?
- MR. WALL: Well, I think there are -- where

- 1 you should expect those cases to exist, yes.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Are -- are there cases
- 3 discussing whether or not a government agency has been
- 4 diligent in pursuing a fraud, a fraud investigation?
- 5 You see, in the private context we have some sense of
- 6 what the plaintiff has to do to protect the plaintiff's
- 7 rights. He has to be diligent. But to transpose that
- 8 to a governmental agency -- suppose the agency's over --
- 9 overworked or underfunded? I don't -- which way do you
- 10 come out when the government says that?
- 11 MR. WALL: Justice Kennedy, not just this
- 12 statute. There are other statutes, the False Claims Act
- 13 and others, that have specific provisions requiring
- 14 courts to determine when a government official would
- 15 reasonably have been on notice of certain circumstances.
- 16 That hasn't proven difficult in those contexts. It's
- 17 not difficult here.
- 18 JUSTICE ALITO: Well I have the same question
- 19 that Justice Kennedy just asked? What if a claim could
- 20 have reasonably been discovered by a government agency if
- 21 it had more resources, but given the resources that it had
- 22 it couldn't have reasonably discovered the claim? Would
- 23 the discovery rule apply there?
- MR. WALL: I -- I don't think so,
- 25 Justice Alito. I mean, I think we could say that there

- 1 might be circumstances where the Commission would be on
- 2 constructive notice and not a private plaintiff because
- 3 of its expertise. It would see something in the public
- 4 domain that should be meaningful to it that might not be
- 5 meaningful to a private plaintiff --
- 6 JUSTICE SCALIA: The False Claims Act
- 7 example you give is indeed a private plaintiff kind of a
- 8 case.
- 9 MR. WALL: That's --
- 10 JUSTICE SCALIA: Yes, you can say the
- 11 government, having been cheated, should have known it
- 12 was cheated. But we are talking here about prosecution,
- 13 essentially, prosecution for a civil penalty rather than
- 14 a criminal. By the way, doesn't the rule of lenity
- 15 apply whether the penalty is criminal or civil? So if I
- 16 think the word "accrual" is, at best, ambiguous,
- 17 shouldn't the tie go to the defendant?
- 18 MR. WALL: No. The court's been very -- I
- 19 mean, in all of the civil cases applying the fraud
- 20 discovery rule, the court has never looked to the
- 21 criminal analogies. The canon here is that ambiguities
- 22 get construed for the sovereign, not against it.
- 23 JUSTICE SCALIA: But my question is broader
- 24 than that. Does the rule of lenity not apply to all
- 25 penalties?

- 1 MR. WALL: I don't think it applies in the
- 2 context of a civil penalty. I don't think the -- I
- 3 don't think the --
- 4 JUSTICE SCALIA: Are you sure of that? My
- 5 belief is the contrary.
- 6 MR. WALL: I can't say that I focused on it
- 7 specifically, but I think if the Petitioner said --
- 8 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, it's an important
- 9 issue in this case, surely. I mean, if "accrual" is
- 10 ambiguous and we have a rule of lenity, we should
- 11 interpret it to favor the defendant.
- 12 MR. WALL: Justice Scalia, I don't --
- 13 Petitioner certainly couldn't claim that this civil
- 14 penalty should have to be proved beyond a reasonable
- 15 doubt, or that they are entitled to a constitutional
- 16 right to counsel. I don't know why one legal norm among
- 17 them all should change in the civil context and not the
- 18 others.
- 19 JUSTICE BREYER: The reason would be that
- 20 the -- you know, once you start talking about applying
- 21 this to Social Security, for example, or to Medicare,
- for example, or to DOD, for example, you have somebody
- 23 who did commit some fraud and they kept the money. You
- 24 know, she had five children not four, or she has five,
- 25 not six. And I can understand it being fair when the

- 1 government catches her -- you know, 18 years later, they
- 2 say, We want our money back. Okay. I say that's fair,
- 3 not necessarily merciful, but fair.
- 4 But then to go and say, and in addition we
- 5 want this civil penalty, even though -- of course, we
- 6 couldn't have discovered it. Don't you know there are 4
- 7 million people who get Social Security or 40 million or
- 8 something, and we can't police every one. And so
- 9 suddenly, I see I am opening the door, not just to
- 10 getting your money back, but to also you're having what
- 11 looked like criminal penalties years later without much
- 12 benefit of a statute of limitations.
- 13 That is at the back of my mind. And I'd
- 14 like to know, having brought it up front, what -- what
- 15 your response is.
- 16 MR. WALL: Absolutely. There are anomalies
- on both sides of the coin and I just want to touch on
- 18 both very briefly. Take the example you gave. In that
- 19 situation, the defendant's fraud or concealment
- 20 would allow it or him to escape paying civil penalties,
- 21 but not private damages.
- JUSTICE BREYER: That's right.
- 23 MR. WALL: This Court has never privileged a
- 24 private lawsuit above a government enforcement action in
- 25 the securities context --

- 1 JUSTICE BREYER: But this is not the
- 2 securities context. This is the context of -- that's
- 3 why I started down the road I was down.
- 4 MR. WALL: But even in that context, imagine
- 5 if there's a private right of action, the private
- 6 plaintiff will be able to recover damages and the
- 7 government will not --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Yes, because you have two
- 9 people who are hurt, where two people have been hurt.
- 10 For example, I wrote the case in Burk and we had the
- 11 statute of limitations and Congress focused on this.
- 12 And it wrote a two-tier statute. And it wrote a
- 13 two-tier statute in large part because it was concerned
- 14 about the problem you mention. You have a victim. So
- 15 you're either going to let the defendant keep the money
- 16 or the victim gets it back. I understand that, but this
- 17 is not that context. This is like a criminal context,
- 18 where not only are you getting your money back, but you
- 19 also want to assess a kind of criminal penalty. And in
- 20 that situation, I see a pretty clear line and I don't
- 21 understand why the government is so anxious to change
- 22 what has long been the apparent --
- MR. WALL: Justice Breyer imagine the opposite,
- 24 which is far more dangerous. Imagine a bank makes a bad
- 25 loan to a veteran, or a bank tells the FDIC that it's gotten

- 1 mortgage insurance to help lower income families buy
- 2 homes, and then that fraud or falsity escapes detection
- 3 for five years. The Veterans Administration or the FHA
- 4 then is barred from bringing a civil penalty action, and
- 5 there is no private right of action.
- 6 JUSTICE BREYER: That's correct, you have a
- 7 fraud and you can't put them in jail either, but you can
- 8 get your money back.
- 9 MR. WALL: But the reason there's no private
- 10 right of action in those contexts is, in part, because
- 11 government agencies can seek civil penalties. And I
- 12 cannot imagine that the Congress, which allowed agencies
- 13 to seek civil penalties, where here they had existing
- 14 remedies, would have thought that the only people who
- 15 could get away without paying them are the ones who
- 16 commit fraud or concealment and that remains hidden for
- 17 five years.
- 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: And the reason --
- 19 the reason there's no private action -- right of action
- 20 is not because the government could seek civil
- 21 penalties, it's because Congress hasn't provided a
- 22 private right of action.
- 23 MR. WALL: That's right because it thought
- 24 that the agencies could seek civil penalties and that
- 25 was sufficient.

- 1 JUSTICE BREYER: Oh, no, your case--
- 2 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But it didn't -- it
- 3 didn't necessarily think, and that's why we have a case,
- 4 that they could seek civil penalties 10 years later,
- 5 18 years later, however long, so long as they were busy
- 6 doing other things and didn't have a chance to know.
- 7 MR. WALL: No question. And in the average
- 8 typical case, the time that Congress afforded is enough
- 9 and we're not here claiming any different, but that --
- 10 JUSTICE GINSBURG: And it is a generous
- 11 period. It's -- it's 5 years. And, Mr. Wall, maybe you
- 12 can explain the SEC's pursuit of this -- of this case.
- 13 The alleged fraud went on from 1999 to 2002. It was
- 14 discovered in 2003. The SEC waited from 2003 to 2008 to
- 15 commence suit. What -- what is the reason for -- for
- 16 the delay from the time of discovery till the time suit
- 17 is instituted?
- 18 MR. WALL: Justice Ginsburg, there was a lot
- 19 of back and forth between the parties, document
- 20 exchanges, they wanted to make additional submissions.
- 21 The government hoped that there would be a settlement
- 22 that would encompass all the defendants. Ultimately,
- 23 there was a settlement that only went to the fund and
- 24 Petitioners did not settle and then the government put
- 25 together and brought its case.

- 1 JUSTICE KAGAN: But, Mr. Wall, I'll go even
- 2 further than Justice Ginsburg. I mean this case actually
- 3 seems to me a good example when Mr. Liman said there's
- 4 no natural starting point and Justice Kennedy and
- 5 Justice Alito referred to just -- this is a -- this is a
- 6 decision about enforcement priorities. The government
- 7 had decided not to go after market timers. And it
- 8 changed its decision when a State attorney general
- 9 decided to do it, and it embarrassed them that they had
- 10 made that enforcement priority decision, and then the
- 11 government made a different enforcement priority
- 12 decision. But that's not the kind of situation that the
- 13 discovery rule was intended to operate on, is it?
- MR. WALL: Justice Kagan, I don't think
- 15 that's fair. We didn't go -- it wasn't market timing
- 16 that we discovered. What General Spitzer announced was
- 17 there are advisors that are permitting market timing,
- 18 but misleading investors about it and they're doing it
- 19 in return for investments in other funds that they
- 20 manage, what are called sticky asset agreements, and
- 21 then we started doing market sweeps for those
- 22 agreements.
- 23 And I don't think we can ignore the evidence
- 24 here because we shouldn't decide the case based on
- 25 feverish hypotheticals. There are 25 reported cases

- 1 brought by the Commission involving this statute, 19
- 2 were brought within 5 years and they were just reaching
- 3 back to pick up the beginning of the fraud. And the
- 4 other six, including this case, the longest lag time was
- 5 six and a half years from the end of the fraud to
- 6 bringing the complaint.
- 7 And the reason is these are dynamic markets.
- 8 There's a lot going on in the public domain that puts
- 9 the commission on notice, inquiry or constructive, and
- 10 starts the clock running. Not only have we not seen a
- 11 10, a 15, a 20-year case, we haven't seen a 7-year case.
- 12 JUSTICE BREYER: Well, if all that's true,
- 13 and this is a point I want you to -- I'm not sure I am
- 14 right about this point, but remember your banking case
- 15 now, we're sounding like that, I thought -- doesn't the
- 16 doctrine of fraudulent concealment still apply? That
- 17 is, if the defendant, in fact, takes any affirmative
- 18 action to hide what's going on, the statute will be
- 19 tolled. Is that right?
- MR. WALL: That's right, but that --
- 21 JUSTICE BREYER: All right. As long as
- that's right, then in all your banking cases, there are
- 23 bank inspectors all over these banks, I hope -- you
- 24 know, about once a month or so --
- 25 MR. WALL: But Justice Breyer, that's --

- 1 JUSTICE BREYER: -- or once a year. And so
- 2 the chance of there -- the chance of this somehow
- 3 escaping notice without fraudulent concealment, which
- 4 would allow the government to extend the toll strikes me
- 5 as small, but am I right?
- 6 MR. WALL: Justice Breyer, I want to be
- 7 clear. In the government's view, the concealment would
- 8 apply, though Petitioners or others like them will be
- 9 back here making exactly the same arguments. The
- 10 government's point is just at equity fraud and
- 11 concealment were a pair and the justification was the
- 12 same for both.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, perhaps I've missed
- 14 something. I -- I came in here thinking that both
- 15 parties were willing to concede for purposes of this
- 16 case that there was a fraudulent concealment. Is
- 17 that -- is that wrong?
- 18 MR. WALL: I -- I --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: I mean, for purposes of
- 20 presenting the statute of limitations issue that's
- 21 before us.
- MR. WALL: I don't think the Petitioners are
- 23 disputing it here, but I think Mr. Liman acknowledged
- 24 earlier that, if pressed, his arguments could be
- 25 leveraged to get rid of the concealment doctrine, too.

- 1 JUSTICE SCALIA: He didn't concede that
- 2 there was fraudulent concealment. All he conceded is
- 3 that there was fraud, but later concealment to cover up
- 4 that fraud I don't think has been conceded.
- 5 MR. WALL: Oh, no, not -- I didn't --
- 6 I'm sorry, Justice Scalia. I wasn't trying to mislead.
- 7 This is not a concealment case. This is a fraud case.
- 8 JUSTICE BREYER: I thought it was the
- 9 opposite. In other words, I thought both parties, for
- 10 purposes of this argument, are assuming fraudulent
- 11 concealment has nothing to do with it. We are not to
- 12 consider fraudulent concealment.
- MR. WALL: This is a fraud case, not a
- 14 concealment case.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Am I right when I say that?
- MR. WALL: Yes. I was just trying to say
- 17 that once you say there is a concealment exception, the
- 18 fraud exception follows from equity because they were of
- 19 a piece. And once you say there is not a fraud
- 20 exception, the same arguments will be leveraged to get
- 21 rid of a concealment exception. And the reason that
- 22 equity treated them as -- of a piece was the deception
- 23 was the same. The fraud was self-concealing or even if
- 24 it was non-fraud, the defendant could conceal, but
- 25 either way --

- 1 JUSTICE SCALIA: Except that concealment is
- 2 sort -- you know, it's sort of a self-starter. You --
- 3 you -- it -- it doesn't apply always. It applies when
- 4 there is concealment, and the person who is being
- 5 subjected to the longer statute of limitations is on
- 6 notice that if he fraudulently conceals, he's extending
- 7 the statute. So I -- I don't think that the one has to
- 8 go with the other. Maybe they're both equitable
- 9 doctrines, but that doesn't -- that doesn't mean that we
- 10 have to apply them to this statute.
- 11 MR. WALL: Justice Scalia, for 300 years,
- 12 English and American courts looking at this problem have
- 13 said where the defendant's misconduct, be it fraud or be
- it concealment of a non-fraud, but where the defendant's
- 15 deception prevents a plaintiff from knowing that he, she
- or it has a cause of action, equity suspends the running
- 17 of a statute of limitations. Those -- that has been --
- 18 JUSTICE SCALIA: And for 300 years, that has
- 19 been said only with respect to civil actions, not with
- 20 respect to the government's attempt to exact a penalty.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: That's correct.
- 22 MR. WALL: Justice Scalia, this is a civil
- 23 action. I don't think even Petitioners are disputing
- 24 that.
- 25 JUSTICE BREYER: I assume that we are on the

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- 1 same ground, but I don't know that you have -- I mean,
- 2 I'm worried about your giving up the fraudulent
- 3 concealment. I mean, you wouldn't give up equitable
- 4 estoppel, would you?
- 5 MR. WALL: If I gave up anything on
- 6 fraudulent concealment, I didn't mean to.
- 7 JUSTICE BREYER: No, no, no. I mean -- I
- 8 mean, there's nothing --
- 9 (Laughter.)
- 10 MR. WALL: I want to be very clear, I give
- 11 up nothing.
- 12 JUSTICE BREYER: If we were to say -- if
- 13 we -- if the Court were to hold, it seemed to me, and
- 14 this is again tentative to get your response, but if the
- 15 -- if the Court were to hold the discovery doesn't --
- 16 rule doesn't apply, there's nothing in that that says
- 17 equitable -- equitable tolling doesn't apply, nothing in
- 18 that that says equitable estoppel doesn't apply, nothing
- in that that says fraudulent concealment doesn't apply.
- Now, you've shaken me a little bit on the
- 21 fraudulent concealment, but I don't know about the other
- 22 two.
- 23 MR. WALL: Well, all the same arguments are
- 24 going to apply. Petitioners --
- 25 JUSTICE BREYER: Oh, not the equitable

- 1 estoppel.
- MR. WALL: Oh, sure.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Equitable estoppel, the
- 4 person comes in and says, oh, yes, I'll tell you all
- 5 about what I did, but by the way, I won't assert a
- 6 statute of limitations defense, I promise. And the
- 7 Court says, hey, you just asserted one, you can't.
- 8 MR. WALL: Justice Breyer, Petitioners in a
- 9 future case would be back here saying: The text of the
- 10 statute says nothing about equitable estoppel. And even
- if you've applied it to everybody else's actions, you
- 12 can't apply it to me because I'm somehow different.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: And you will say nonsense
- in that future case, won't you?
- 15 (Laughter.)
- MR. WALL: That's -- I'll be as right then
- 17 as I am now.
- 18 (Laughter.)
- 19 MR. WALL: I mean, Petitioners' argument has
- 20 this sort air of unreality. You've applied it
- 21 everywhere else he says, but not to me. Think how odd
- 22 that is, Justice Scalia, that where you have a
- 23 background canon that says ambiguities get construed
- 24 for, and not against, the sovereign. When the sovereign
- 25 sues quasi-sovereign to enforce the laws, that is

- 1 somehow a subordinate interest and the sovereign alone
- 2 cannot take advantage of the Fraud Discovery Rule.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Wall, why is it that you
- 4 don't you have any cases? I mean, you said way back
- 5 when: This didn't come up, this is a modern problem.
- 6 So explain to me why this is a modern problem. This is
- 7 obviously an old statute. Are you saying that this
- 8 statute has not been used very -- was not used very much
- 9 until very, very recently?
- 10 MR. WALL: There are -- that's right. There
- 11 are very few cases that deal with this statute at all
- 12 and, obviously, in this context because the Commission's
- only had the ability to bring civil penalties for about
- 14 20 years.
- But I think that is not a problem unknown to
- 16 the law. Again and again, facing garden variety
- 17 limitations provisions written just like this one, this
- 18 Court applied the fraud discovery rule. And now they
- 19 come in and say, oh, but you've never applied it to this
- 20 statute. That's true, but everything about this statute
- 21 is identical as a matter of text and history to the
- 22 statute of Bailey.
- 23 The cause of action equally accrued there,
- 24 and this Court's applied it across bankruptcy, land,
- 25 patent cases --

- 1 JUSTICE KAGAN: But what you're running up
- 2 against is a skepticism, that -- you know, the
- 3 government, which has not -- asserted this power for 200
- 4 years, is now coming in and saying we want it. And
- 5 the question is why hasn't the government asserted this
- 6 power previously?
- 7 MR. WALL: I -- there are just very few
- 8 cases on it. I think there are very few civil penalty
- 9 actions that are being brought at all, certainly to
- 10 which this statute apply, and certainly that deal with
- 11 fraud or concealment and reach outside the 5-year
- 12 period. And I don't have a great answer for why there
- 13 aren't cases. All I can tell you is that -- it isn't
- 14 like there are cases rejecting our arguments. We just
- 15 see an absence of case law.
- 16 But what we do see are -- is cases like
- 17 Exploration Company, where the government comes in, is
- 18 really suing in a sovereign capacity, to redistribute
- 19 land from some private land owners to another by
- 20 annulling their patents. And this Court rejects
- 21 basically exactly the same arguments Petitioners are
- 22 making and says it applies equally to the government
- 23 when it brings an action as to private plaintiffs.
- Now, an action for civil penalties? No, the
- 25 relief here is a little different, but if one looks back

- 1 at the briefs the arguments are exactly the same. They
- 2 made exactly the same claims that the sky was falling
- 3 there, and for 100 years they have not been true. There
- 4 is nothing important about this statute as a matter of
- 5 text, structure or anything else from the other statutes
- 6 to which this Court has again and again applied the
- 7 rule. And the justification is the same. It's the
- 8 defendant's misconduct which keeps the plaintiff from
- 9 knowing of her cause of action.
- 10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Counsel, you made
- 11 the point earlier that it would be very odd that it's
- only the sovereign that doesn't benefit from the
- 13 discovery rule when other people can. But it's when
- it's the sovereign that's bringing the action that the
- 15 concerns about repose are particularly presented. You
- 16 know, the sovereign, with all of its resources, can
- 17 decide to go after whomever it discovers, however many
- 18 years after -- whether it's the Social Security
- 19 recipient that Justice Breyer mentioned or -- or anyone
- 20 else.
- 21 So I at least don't find it unusual that
- it's the sovereign in particular that doesn't get the
- 23 benefit of whenever you happen to find about it rule.
- MR. WALL: No question in the typical case,
- 25 but what equity has always said is in cases of fraud or

## Official

- 1 concealment the defendant is not entitled to repose
- 2 until there is discovery of the fraud. And equity has
- 3 never looked at the identity of the plaintiff, the
- 4 elements of the cause of action, the plaintiff's status,
- 5 role, party to what happened in the case. That is
- 6 never --
- 7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Would you agree that
- 8 when we're talking about the interests in repose that
- 9 the one plaintiff we should be particularly
- 10 concerned about is the government?
- 11 MR. WALL: I -- I don't think that there's a
- 12 basis for separating as between private damages lawsuits
- 13 and civil penalties. I think when Congress sets a
- 14 statute of limitations, that's a limitation on the
- 15 various forms of --
- 16 JUSTICE SCALIA: What about criminal
- 17 penalties? Would your argument be different with regard
- 18 to criminal?
- 19 MR. WALL: Justice Scalia --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Incidentally, what makes
- 21 something a civil penalty? You just call it a civil
- 22 penalty and -- and you don't have to prove it beyond a
- 23 reasonable doubt, and you get the benefit of this
- 24 extension that you are arguing for?
- MR. WALL: Justice Scalia, two very

- 1 important things. Yes, our argument would absolutely be
- 2 different in a criminal context. In cases like Marion
- 3 and Toussie, this Court has explained how statutes of
- 4 limitations function in the criminal context is very
- 5 different. They are presumptively not equitably tolled,
- 6 whereas civil statutes are presumptively equitably
- 7 tolled.
- 8 JUSTICE SCALIA: What makes -- what makes a
- 9 penalty a civil penalty?
- 10 MR. WALL: In Hudson v. United States --
- 11 JUSTICE SCALIA: I mean, a penalty is a
- 12 penalty as far as I'm concerned if the government's
- 13 taking money from me.
- MR. WALL: Justice Scalia, the Court walked
- 15 through in Hudson v. United States the test for
- 16 denominating a civil from a criminal penalty. The main
- 17 thing is what Congress denominates it, although you can
- 18 look behind that.
- 19 JUSTICE SCALIA: That's nice.
- MR. WALL: Here, there is no question that
- 21 this is a civil penalty. It was denominated by Congress
- 22 that way, it functions that way, it is phrased that way.
- 23 I think even Petitioners and all of their amici -- not a
- 24 single person on that side of the case has attempted to
- 25 argue this penalty is criminal rather than civil under

- 1 Hudson.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: That isn't my point, that
- 3 it is criminal. My point is, it doesn't seem to me to
- 4 make a whole lot of difference as far as these issues
- 5 are concerned.
- 6 MR. WALL: Justice Scalia, the Court has
- 7 always said that whether the penalty is civil or
- 8 criminal carries with it a different set of legal rules
- 9 or norms, and no party has ever successfully come into
- 10 court and said, well, it may be civil, but it's a little
- 11 criminal-like, so I should borrow from the criminal
- 12 context.
- 13 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: What about the --
- 14 what about the Halper case?
- MR. WALL: Mr. Chief Justice, I think Hudson
- 16 overruled Halper in large part, and no one here has
- 17 asked this Court to label this a criminal penalty. They
- 18 have asked the Court to call this a civil penalty and
- 19 yet say the fraud discovery rule does not apply. That,
- 20 there is no precedent for.
- 21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
- Mr. Liman, you have 5 minutes remaining.
- 23 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF LEWIS LIMAN
- ON BEHALF OF THE Petitioners
- 25 MR. LIMAN: Just a few points in rebuttal.

- 1 First of all, with respect to whether this
- 2 is a criminal penalty and whether the rules of lenity
- 3 apply, this Court has held in the Commissioner v.
- 4 Ackerly case that the rule of lenity applies to civil
- 5 penalties.
- 6 Just as an --
- 7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I'm sorry. What
- 8 case?
- 9 MR. LIMAN: I believe it's Commissioner
- 10 against Ackerly. It's cited in one of the -- one of the
- 11 amicus briefs.
- 12 Second, the concession that you just heard a
- 13 moment ago, that the statute would not apply as the
- 14 government says it should apply if this was deemed to be
- 15 a criminal penalty, we submit under this Court's
- 16 reasoning in Clark v. Martinez, it just gave away the
- 17 store in the government's case because if it is
- 18 possible -- as the government has now admitted it's
- 19 possible -- and I don't want to get into all of the
- 20 permutations of Hudson -- but if it is possible that the
- 21 label of civil penalty does not -- is not dispositive as
- 22 to whether a penalty is civil or criminal, then, as the
- 23 Court held in Clark v. Martinez, the lowest common
- 24 denominator applies.
- One has to interpret this statute so that it

- 1 is applicable across the range of statutes. And if
- 2 that's so, then it follows, it runs from accrual as that
- 3 word is commonly understood.
- 4 Next point. The government said that there
- 5 are no cases where the Court considered the -- the claim
- 6 that it is making. We would point the Court's attention
- 7 to the Rotella case, in which in the context of a
- 8 private plaintiff, who did not have the resources of the
- 9 government, the argument was made that the RICO statute
- 10 should have a discovery of the violation-type principle.
- 11 And the argument was made there that RICO
- 12 can encompass a pattern of fraudulent acts. And the
- 13 plaintiff in that case said, as the government says
- 14 here, fraud can be concealed, can be complex, can be
- 15 difficult to discover.
- And the Court unanimously had a response to
- 17 that. The response was that, at least as soon as you
- 18 know the injury, where there is an injury element, the
- 19 difficulty of discovery of the actual violation doesn't
- 20 defer the running of the statute of limitations. It
- 21 would defeat the purposes of a statute of limitations.
- The government also argued that the problems
- 23 of privilege are not significant ones. We would point
- 24 the Court's attention to the Joint Appendix in the
- 25 Second Circuit, where the government asserted privilege

- 1 with respect to our questions about its investigations
- 2 of the counterparty to this alleged quid -- quid pro
- 3 quo.
- 4 The Court also asked a question of whether
- 5 there are any cases in which courts have dealt with
- 6 government agencies being diligent, and the claim being
- 7 the government agency was not diligent. The Court has
- 8 dealt with that in a related context, in the
- 9 Heckler v. Cheney context. And in the Heckler v. Cheney
- 10 context the Court held that type of issue, how an
- 11 administrative agency treats facts that are -- that it
- 12 discovers and whether it chooses to bring a claim or
- 13 not, whether it chooses to believe that they are in
- 14 violation of a statute, the agency is charged with
- 15 administering is not fit for judicial review. No
- 16 different result should apply here.
- 17 Just two more points. The False Claims Act
- 18 has a -- which has an explicit discovery rule, also has
- 19 a statute of repose. It would be very odd, indeed, if
- 20 the one circumstance where Congress, one of the few
- 21 circumstances where Congress chose to use the word
- 22 "discovery," was where the government was injured, and
- 23 they -- Congress chose to impose a statute of repose,
- 24 where, as they say in the 100 or other statutes that use
- 25 language, fraud-like language, Congress intended there

## Official

1	to be discovery and no repose.
2	And that really ties into the last point,
3	which is that there are, by our count, if you look at
4	fraud, misleading, false statement-type statutes, there
5	are somewhere like 80 or 100-type statutes that use that
6	kind of language that would be applicable if this Court
7	affirms the Second Circuit.
8	This case was in the government says this
9	case was an outlier. There is no reason to believe this
10	case will remain an outlier.
11	Thank you.
12	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
13	Counsel.
14	The case is submitted.
15	(Whereupon, at 11:14 a.m., the case in the
16	above-entitled matter was submitted.)
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21	
22	
23	
24	
25	

	potions 22.6 25.12	allowed 26.12	apply 9.14 12.24	ossumo 42.25
<u>A</u>	actions 23:6 25:13	<b>allowed</b> 36:12	apply 8:14 12:24	assume 42:25
abilities 19:19	26:3 27:18 42:19	Alpert 1:3 3:5	13:4,8,9,12,15,23	assuming 41:10
<b>ability</b> 5:16 12:3	44:11 46:9	alternative 15:13	14:2,4,8,13 15:3	attempt 42:20
19:15,16 45:13	acts 52:12	ambiguities 32:21	15:10 24:25 26:11	attempted 49:24
<b>able</b> 24:21 29:10	actual 18:19 52:19	44:23	31:23 32:15,24	attention 52:6,24
35:6	addition 34:4	ambiguous 32:16	39:16 40:8 42:3,10	attorney 23:16 38:8
abolish23:18 24:5	additional 37:20	33:10	43:16,17,18,19,24	attorney's 30:6
above-entitled 1:12	administered 3:14	American 42:12	44:12 46:10 50:19	available 10:6,6
54:16	administering 53:15	<b>amici</b> 49:23	51:3,13,14 53:16	average 37:7
absence 46:15	Administration 36:3	amicus 51:11	applying 23:24	avoidable 10:21
absolutely 18:22	administrative	<b>Amy</b> 26:24	32:19 33:20	aware 29:20
23:17 25:25 34:16	53:11	analogies 32:21	approach 3:21	<b>a.m</b> 1:14 3:2 54:15
49:1	admitted51:18	analogue 5:12	approximately	
accident 12:14	adopt 25:12	analogy 28:7	23:22	<u>B</u>
accidental 19:24	<b>advantage</b> 19:8 45:2	announced 10:20	areas 26:13 29:24	<b>B</b> 1:18 2:6 21:7
accomplish 28:22	advisor 17:16	38:16	<b>argue</b> 49:25	back 19:24 26:7
accrual 4:3,7,16,24	advisors 38:17	annulling 46:20	argued 52:22	28:12 30:13 34:2
5:3,4,10,14 11:10	<b>Affairs</b> 13:9,16,18	anomalies 34:16	<b>arguing</b> 11:17 15:6	34:10,13 35:16,18
21:13,17 22:1	14:14 24:3	anomaly 15:25	25:23 48:24	36:8 37:19 39:3
32:16 33:9 52:2	affirmative 39:17	16:11,12,21	<b>argument</b> 1:13 2:2,5	40:9 44:9 45:4
accrue 11:4,4 21:25	affirmatively 9:14	answer 6:19,21	2:8 3:3,7 6:5 7:15	46:25
22:4	11:8	13:24,24 14:24	7:16,16 19:11,18	background 28:16
accrued 22:2 45:23	affirms 54:7	27:23,24 46:12	21:7 22:10 41:10	44:23
accrues 20:14,19,20	afforded 37:8	<b>answers</b> 4:14 8:18	44:19 48:17 49:1	<b>bad</b> 35:24
21:1,17	agencies 3:13 20:11	<b>antitrust</b> 14:6,7,9,15	50:23 52:9,11	<b>Bailey</b> 4:23 6:7 9:10
accurate 10:3	30:4 36:11,12,24	anxious 35:21	arguments 40:9,24	15:1,10 45:22
<b>Ackerly</b> 51:4,10	53:6	apparent 35:22	41:20 43:23 46:14	balance 20:3
acknowledge 11:12	agency 30:12 31:3,8	appeals 27:9	46:21 47:1	<b>bank</b> 35:24,25 39:23
acknowledged	31:20 53:7,11,14	APPEARANCES	articulation 7:6	<b>banking</b> 39:14,22
40:23	agency's 31:8	1:15	asked31:19 50:17	bankruptcy 45:24
acknowledges	ago 22:16 51:13	Appendix 52:24	50:18 53:4	<b>banks</b> 39:23
14:19	<b>agree</b> 23:4 48:7	applicable 9:4 52:1	asking 13:22 24:15	barred 36:4
Act 31:12 32:6	agreements 38:20	54:6	24:22 25:6 26:17	<b>based</b> 38:24
53:17	38:22	application 7:10	asks 9:8	basically 46:21
acting 6:23 7:1	agrees 28:10	10:11 15:7	aspect 30:9	<b>basis</b> 8:7,19,20
19:23	air 44:20	applied 4:16,20 17:8	assert 11:8 23:10	21:21 48:12
action 8:10,15 9:3	<b>Alito</b> 31:18,25 38:5	17:11,20,21,22	24:5 25:1 44:5	beginning 11:13
9:18 11:12 18:6	allegation 9:22 10:2	22:20 44:11,20	asserted 27:12,16	26:8 39:3
19:3,17 26:6 34:24	10:3 18:20	45:18,19,24 47:6	44:7 46:3,5 52:25	<b>behalf</b> 1:16,20 2:4,7
35:5 36:4,5,10,19	allegations 18:19	applies 4:24 13:2,25	assertion 23:14	2:10 3:8 6:23 21:8
36:19,22 39:18	alleged 4:9 37:13	14:8 15:1 16:3	25:21	50:24
42:16,23 45:23	53:2	19:11 23:6 26:23	assess 35:19	belief 33:5
46:23,24 47:9,14	allow22:2 34:20	33:1 42:3 46:22	asset 38:20	<b>believe</b> 14:8 51:9
48:4	40:4	51:4,24	Assistant 1:18	53:13 54:9
70.7		,		
				•

believes 19:13	BRUCE 1:3	45:11,25 46:8,13	<b>civil</b> 5:11 6:9 11:12	commission 1:7 3:5
<b>benefit</b> 8:11 17:8	<b>Burk</b> 35:10	46:14,16 47:25	15:1 18:5,5 23:11	26:1,5 29:6,7,15
34:12 47:12,23	<b>busy</b> 37:5	49:2 52:5 53:5	24:1 25:1,13 26:2	32:1 39:1,9
48:23	<b>buy</b> 36:1	catalogued 26:13	26:5,20 27:18	Commissioner 51:3
<b>best</b> 7:4 32:16		catches 34:1	28:14,18 32:13,15	51:9
<b>beyond</b> 33:14 48:22	C	category 23:7	32:19 33:2,13,17	Commission's 45:12
<b>big</b> 30:3,3	C 2:1 3:1	cause 8:10 9:3 19:3	34:5,20 36:4,11,13	<b>commit</b> 33:23 36:16
<b>bit</b> 24:8 43:20	Cada 8:22	42:16 45:23 47:9	36:20,24 37:4	committed 8:8
blankets 27:24	<b>call</b> 11:17 48:21	48:4	42:19,22 45:13	<b>common</b> 5:14,15,24
<b>block</b> 28:24	50:18	<b>century</b> 3:24 23:14	46:8,24 48:13,21	6:16 21:14,24
<b>board</b> 9:25 17:17	<b>called</b> 6:13 23:13	27:13	48:21 49:6,9,16,21	51:23
23:7 26:12 30:5	38:20	certain 31:15	49:25 50:7,10,18	commonly 52:3
<b>books</b> 20:10	cancellation 17:4	certainly 23:4,23	51:4,21,22	<b>company</b> 6:7 27:8
borrow50:11	<b>canon</b> 18:1,3 32:21	30:10,13 33:13	<b>claim</b> 4:24 5:15,20	46:17
<b>bottom</b> 8:20	44:23	46:9,10	5:24,24 6:9 12:22	<b>compel</b> 27:23
brand-new25:21	<b>capacity</b> 8:4 46:18	challenging 12:18	15:1 17:15,15	compelled 27:23
breach 6:1	captions 4:12	12:19	19:15 20:14,20,25	<b>complaint</b> 9:21 10:2
break 7:3	carries 50:8	<b>chance</b> 9:22 37:6	28:21 31:19,22	18:19 39:6
breaks 6:17	<b>case</b> 3:4,11,18 4:6	40:2,2	33:13 52:5 53:6,12	<b>complex</b> 20:4 52:14
<b>Breyer</b> 13:8,12,15	4:10,10,11 6:12,12	<b>change</b> 33:17 35:21	claimants 15:2	conceal 41:24
13:19,22 14:3,6,11	6:22 8:14,15 9:13	changed 38:8	<b>claiming</b> 15:4 37:9	concealed 10:5
14:13,17 15:22	11:1,2 12:22 14:25	charged 53:14	<b>claims</b> 3:12 4:17	52:14
23:3 24:11,15,19	15:10,11,17 16:24	<b>cheated</b> 32:11,12	24:12 31:12 32:6	concealment 9:12
25:17 26:13,17	16:25 17:19 19:2	<b>Cheney</b> 53:9,9	47:2 53:17	9:17 10:10,23
27:5 33:19 34:22	21:15 22:19,19,20	<b>Chief</b> 3:3,9 21:5,9	Claire 11:1	21:20 22:14 24:14
35:1,8,23 36:6	23:9,13,20,21	26:9 29:18 30:15	Clark 4:18 51:16,23	25:13 26:15,16
37:1 39:12,21,25	24:16,21,21 26:19	30:18,23 36:18	<b>clear</b> 3:14 4:16	27:19 34:19 36:16
40:1,6 41:8,15	26:22,24 27:7	37:2 47:10 48:7	15:18 17:25 25:3	39:16 40:3,7,11,16
42:25 43:7,12,25	30:16,19,24 32:8	50:13,15,21 51:7	28:14 35:20 40:7	40:25 41:2,3,7,11
44:3,8 47:19	33:9 35:10 37:1,3	54:12	43:10	41:12,14,17,21
<b>briefly</b> 34:18	37:8,12,25 38:2,24	children33:24	clearly 3:25	42:1,4,14 43:3,6
<b>briefs</b> 47:1 51:11	39:4,11,11,14	<b>chooses</b> 53:12,13	<b>clock</b> 39:10	43:19,21 46:11
<b>bring</b> 12:4 19:15	40:16 41:7,7,13,14	<b>chose</b> 53:21,23	<b>close</b> 23:20	48:1
45:13 53:12	44:9,14 46:15	<b>Circuit</b> 5:17,18 8:22	cluster21:16	conceals 42:6
<b>bringing</b> 8:15 36:4	47:24 48:5 49:24	8:23 12:21 24:24	Code 14:18	<b>concede</b> 40:15 41:1
39:6 47:14	50:14 51:4,8,17	52:25 54:7	coextensive 12:14	conceded41:2,4
<b>brings</b> 46:23	52:7,13 54:8,9,10	circuits 24:24	12:15	concedes 21:13
<b>broad</b> 13:25	54:14,15	circumstance 53:20	<b>coin</b> 34:17	concept 21:23
broader 32:23	cases 7:18 9:10 19:8	circumstances	<b>come</b> 10:18 19:17	<b>concepts</b> 21:16,22
Broderick's 26:25	21:19 22:4,13,15	17:23 31:15 32:1	31:10 45:5,19 50:9	27:22
<b>brought</b> 3:12 6:24	24:6 25:5,10,11,15	53:21	comes 44:4 46:17	<b>concern</b> 3:18,19
11:12 18:6 24:2,12	26:4,5,12,14 27:15	<b>cite</b> 17:19 28:6	<b>coming</b> 24:8 46:4	5:23,24
26:2,6 34:14 37:25	29:2 31:1,2 32:19	cited 26:24 51:10	commence 37:15	concerned 35:13
39:1,2 46:9	38:25 39:22 45:4	citing 25:5	commercial 20:4	48:10 49:12 50:5

2 11 5 22	26.6.42.21	D 2.1	1425	27.16.20.12.42.15
concerns 3:11 5:23	36:6 42:21	<b>D</b> 3:1	14:3,5	37:16 38:13 43:15
7:19 47:15	counsel 21:5,13	damages 6:24 11:21	departure 7:8	45:2,18 47:13 48:2
concession 51:12	33:16 47:10 50:21	12:4 34:21 35:6	depending 4:19	50:19 52:10,19
conclude 10:14	54:12,13	48:12	depends 29:18	53:18,22 54:1
26:18	Counsel's 30:6	dangerous 35:24	deprived 18:24	discussing 31:3
concluded 3:25	<b>count</b> 27:2 54:3	date 7:25 16:14,17	described 22:16	disgorgement 3:20
conclusion 10:18	counterparty 53:2	17:1	detection 36:2	6:25 12:17,18,20
<b>conduct</b> 3:13 8:8	<b>couple</b> 24:24 25:15	<b>deal</b> 24:13 45:11	<b>determination</b> 18:9	12:22 13:1,6 19:12
confused 14:24	<b>course</b> 18:8 23:17	46:10	30:21	dismiss 9:23
<b>Congress</b> 3:14,17	34:5	<b>dealing</b> 3:11 20:4	<b>determine</b> 9:3 31:14	dispositive 51:21
3:22,25 4:15,15	<b>court</b> 1:1,13 3:10,23	26:4,15	determined 19:3	disprove 9:23
5:11,14 12:1 14:1	4:9,14,17,22 7:9	<b>dealt</b> 53:5,8	difference 6:11	disputing 40:23
14:19,19,21,22	7:10 11:1 12:20,20	deception 5:25	20:24 25:23 50:4	42:23
20:24,25 28:17	15:9,17 17:5,6	41:22 42:15	<b>different</b> 4:19 16:22	dissimilar 6:8
35:11 36:12,21	21:10 22:25 23:15	deceptive 8:8	16:24 22:25 24:9	distinction 6:18
37:8 48:13 49:17	27:9 29:14 32:20	<b>decide</b> 4:9,15 38:24	28:16 37:9 38:11	<b>district</b> 23:15,16
49:21 53:20,21,23	34:23 43:13,15	47:17	44:12 46:25 48:17	29:2,14
53:25	44:7 45:18 46:20	<b>decided</b> 4:15 24:24	49:2,5 50:8 53:16	doctrine 39:16
Congress's 3:21	47:6 49:3,14 50:6	38:7,9	<b>difficult</b> 30:16,17,20	40:25
Connor 8:23	50:10,17,18 51:3	<b>decision</b> 20:1 38:6,8	30:22 31:16,17	doctrines 42:9
consequences 24:4	51:23 52:5,16 53:4	38:10,12	52:15	document 37:19
consider 41:12	53:7,10 54:6	declining 25:11	<b>difficulty</b> 6:5 52:19	<b>DOD</b> 33:22
considered 52:5	<b>courts</b> 18:17 27:8,21	deemed 51:14	<b>diligent</b> 28:22 31:4,7	<b>doing</b> 37:6 38:18,21
Consistent 3:21	29:3 31:14 42:12	<b>defeat</b> 28:20 52:21	53:6,7	domain 29:5,16 32:4
constitutional 33:15	53:5	defendant 4:2 8:7	diminished 19:19	39:8
constructive 29:7	court's 8:21 16:16	11:18 29:15 32:17	direct 7:18	door 34:9
29:17 32:2 39:9	23:17 28:14 32:18	33:11 35:15 39:17	directed 3:25	<b>doubt</b> 33:15 48:23
construed 23:1	45:24 51:15 52:6	41:24 48:1	directly 15:3	drafting 5:12
32:22 44:23	52:24	defendants 29:4	<b>discover</b> 7:19 8:24	<b>duty</b> 6:1
context 9:5 11:1,25	cover41:3	37:22	24:22 52:15	dynamic 39:7
16:13 20:3 22:24	created 24:22 25:2	defendant's 34:19	discovered 11:22	<b>D.C</b> 1:9,19 5:17,18
25:12 26:11 31:5	crimes 5:5,6,7	42:13,14 47:8	20:15,21 21:2	8:23
33:2,17 34:25 35:2	<b>criminal</b> 22:18,20	<b>defense</b> 14:3,5 30:4	31:20,22 34:6	
35:2,4,17,17 45:12	22:21,24 23:20	30:6 44:6	37:14 38:16	E
49:2,4 50:12 52:7	28:3,9,15 32:14,15	<b>defer</b> 52:20	discovers 11:14	<b>E</b> 2:1 3:1,1
53:8,9,10	32:21 34:11 35:17	degree 19:19	12:8 47:17 53:12	earlier 18:9 22:2
contexts 16:1,3	35:19 48:16,18	<b>delay</b> 11:9 37:16	discovery 4:8 6:9	40:24 47:11
27:23 31:16 36:10	49:2,4,16,25 50:3	denominated 28:17	7:11,20 8:6,13,20	easily 3:14 16:1
Contractor 30:5	50:8,11,17 51:2,15	49:21	8:20 10:22 14:22	effectively 23:18
contrary 33:5	51:22	denominates 49:17	15:4,8 17:20 20:19	<b>effort</b> 24:25
<b>control</b> 7:25 16:15	criminal-like 50:11	denominating 49:16	22:3,5,20 23:11,24	either4:23 23:23
conversation 17:16	<b>critical</b> 16:15,16	denominator 51:24	24:25 25:12 26:7	27:6,11 29:16
correct 4:22 5:4		depart 7:17	26:23 28:21,25	35:15 36:7 41:25
9:19 12:9 18:25	D	Department 1:19	29:1 31:23 32:20	<b>element</b> 5:25 52:18
		_		

elements 48:4	46.21 47.1 2	<b>falls</b> 28:16	5.24 6.0 11.14 22	0.15 20 12.16 24
	46:21 47:1,2	false 31:12 32:6	5:24 6:9 11:14,22	9:15,20 12:16,24 13:5 20:13,16,18
eliminating 30:9	example 20:20 32:7		12:8 15:4,11 21:20	′ ′
Elizabeth 28:2,7 else's 44:11	33:21,22,22 34:18 35:10 38:3	53:17 54:4	22:14 24:13 25:12	37:10,18 38:2
		falsity 36:2	25:18 26:7,8,16	give 6:20 32:7 43:3
embarrassed 38:9	exception 22:1,13	<b>families</b> 36:1	27:19 31:4,4 32:19	43:10
employed 11:1	22:16 23:13 41:17	far 24:21 35:24	33:23 34:19 36:2,7	given 4:19 26:1
encompass 37:22	41:18,20,21	49:12 50:4	36:16 37:13 39:3,5	31:21
52:12	exceptions 11:7	favor 23:1 33:11	40:10 41:3,4,7,13	giving 43:2
endorsing 25:11	<b>Exchange</b> 1:6 3:5	FDIC 35:25	41:18,19,23 42:13	<b>go</b> 19:24 32:17 34:4
enforce 24:1 44:25	exchanges 37:20	features 14:16	45:2,18 46:11	38:1,7,15 42:8
enforcement 8:4 9:5	exclusively 3:12	feverish 38:25	47:25 48:2 50:19	47:17
19:17 20:5 28:23	13:2	FHA 36:3	52:14 54:4	going 22:2 26:18
29:19 34:24 38:6	Excuse 5:1	fiduciary 6:1	fraudulent 9:11	28:23 29:9,10,25
38:10,11	exist 16:1 18:4 31:1	<b>fight</b> 22:7,10	10:10,23 39:16	35:15 39:8,18
<b>enforcer</b> 6:14,18	existence 3:24	figure 29:11	40:3,16 41:2,10,12	43:24
7:21	existing 36:13	filings 29:6	43:2,6,19,21 52:12	good 38:3
English42:12	exists 19:8	<b>fill</b> 18:2	fraudulently 42:6	gotten 35:25
enormous 24:4	<b>expect</b> 25:14,15	<b>find</b> 28:7 47:21,23	fraud-like 53:25	governing 21:17
<b>entitled</b> 8:11 33:15	31:1	<b>finding</b> 18:21 19:9	<b>front</b> 12:20 34:14	government 3:12
48:1	expertise 32:3	findings 19:17	<b>FTC</b> 14:11,12,13,14	4:7,11,25 5:20 6:2
equally 45:23 46:22	<b>explain</b> 37:12 45:6	<b>finds</b> 18:14	function 49:4	6:10,14,14,22 7:6
<b>equitable</b> 9:11 11:7	explained 49:3	<b>fines</b> 13:3	functions 49:22	7:20 8:3 9:4,6,6,8
13:4 42:8 43:3,17	explicit 53:18	finishing 10:8	<b>fund</b> 9:25 17:17,17	9:13,15 10:4,5,7
43:17,18,25 44:3	exploration 6:7,11	<b>first</b> 3:4,23 4:14 7:7	17:17 37:23	11:5,8,19 12:4
44:10	16:24 17:3,6,7,18	7:23 8:18 11:5	fundamental 6:5	14:18 16:5,9,19
equitably 49:5,6	27:8 46:17	16:12 51:1	fundamentally	17:4,9,10,14,19
<b>equity</b> 40:10 41:18	extend 40:4	<b>fit</b> 4:12 53:15	22:25	17:25 18:9 19:12
41:22 42:16 47:25	extending 42:6	<b>five</b> 33:24,24 36:3	<b>funds</b> 38:19	19:13,14 23:6,10
48:2	extension 48:24	36:17	further 21:3 38:2	23:17,23 24:4 25:1
escape 34:20	extent 18:18	<b>fixed</b> 3:22	<b>future</b> 44:9,14	25:3,22 26:20,25
escapes 36:2	extraordinary 27:12		G	27:12,16,19 28:5
escaping 40:3	extreme 7:8	focusing 21:12		28:10,21 29:24
<b>ESQ</b> 1:16,18 2:3,6,9		follow7:16	<b>G</b> 3:1	30:1,3,3,11 31:3
essence 9:21	-	<b>follows</b> 41:18 52:2	Gabelli 1:3 3:4	31:10,14,20 32:11
essentially 32:13	<b>facing</b> 45:16	forfeitures 13:3	gap 18:2	34:1,24 35:7,21
establish 30:11	fact 5:11 14:1 17:6	<b>forms</b> 48:15	garden45:16	36:11,20 37:21,24
established 21:14	19:21 39:17	<b>forth</b> 37:19	gather 23:19	38:6,11 40:4 46:3
<b>estoppel</b> 43:4,18	facts 53:11	forward 16:17	general 1:19 5:7	46:5,17,22 48:10
44:1,3,10	fail 29:8,9	<b>found</b> 23:9 25:17	21:17 23:16,24	51:14,18 52:4,9,13
everybody 44:11	fair 33:25 34:2,3	26:12	38:8,16	52:22,25 53:6,7,22
evidence 38:23	38:15	<b>four</b> 33:24	generally 5:5	54:8
exact 42:20	fairly 24:17,20	framed 22:4	generous 37:10	governmental 31:8
<b>exactly</b> 12:13,15	27:21	frankly 17:13	<b>getting</b> 34:10 35:18	government's 3:15
19:1 29:11 40:9	falling 47:2	<b>fraud</b> 4:8,8,10,24	<b>Ginsburg</b> 4:5,21 5:2	3:19 7:15 19:5,16

				rage 53
22:7 28:20 40:7,10	<b>hurt</b> 35:9,9	51:25	16:8,10,23 38:1,14	44:15,18
42:20 49:12 51:17	hypotheticals 38:25	interpretation 20:12	45:3 46:1	law4:2 5:15,15,24
grant 24:14		22:13	keep 28:5,12 35:15	6:17 8:4 21:14,21
great 46:12	I	interpretations 4:19	keeps 47:8	21:25 24:1 28:23
ground 43:1	IAA 5:22 6:1 21:1	invariably 29:13	<b>Kennedy</b> 5:1,9 18:5	45:16 46:15
guess 8:13 24:24	idea 17:1 30:10	investigate 9:2	18:13,20,23 19:5	laws 19:22 44:25
25:9	identical 45:21	investigation 18:14	21:11 31:2,11,19	lawsuit 34:24
25.7	identity 48:3	31:4	38:4 40:13,19	lawsuits 29:5 48:12
H	<b>ignore</b> 38:23	investigations 53:1	42:21	ledger 27:6,11
half 39:5	<b>ignores</b> 26:10	investing 10:1	kept 33:23	legal 28:17 33:16
<b>Halper</b> 50:14,16	imagine 35:4,23,24	investments 38:19	kind 20:23 32:7	50:8
hands 8:8 9:13	36:12	investments 36.17 investor 18:6,7,15	35:19 38:12 54:6	legislative 19:25
happen47:23	impermissible 9:18	19:6,7	Kirby 22:17	lenity 32:14,24
happened 48:5	implying 7:14	investors 6:23 19:15	knew 29:11	33:10 51:2,4
harm 8:16	<b>important</b> 33:8 47:4	38:18	knew 29.11 know 8:10,24,25 9:7	leveraged 40:25
hear 3:3	49:1	invoke 27:20,20	9:7 13:16,17 14:11	41:20
heard 51:12	<b>impose</b> 53:23	invokes 28:16	14:15,15 16:20	<b>LEWIS</b> 1:16 2:3,9
Heckler 53:9,9	impossible 30:1	invoking 17:25	17:14 24:7 29:12	3:7 50:23
<b>held</b> 4:17 7:9,10	Incidentally 48:20	invoking 17.23	29:15 33:16,20,24	liability 18:11,16
15:9 21:25 51:3,23	including 39:4	involved 15:21	34:1,6,14 37:6	19:9
53:10	income 36:1	27:18	39:24 42:2 43:1,21	liberally 23:1
<b>help</b> 36:1	indicates 5:13	involving 39:1	46:2 47:16 52:18	lies 8:12
hesitating 14:5	indicative 5:10,11	issue 10:14,15	knowing 42:15 47:9	<b>Liman</b> 1:16 2:3,9 3:6
hey 44:7	individual 16:4	12:21 17:23 28:20	knowledge 7:9 20:8	3:7,9 4:5,5,13 5:7
<b>hidden</b> 10:4 36:16	individuals 28:4	29:3 33:9 40:20	known 16:18 30:2,5	5:13 6:4,20 7:5 8:5
hide 39:18	injunction 3:20	53:10	30:7,12 32:11	8:17 9:19 10:8,13
hiding 9:17	injunctive 19:13	issues 50:4	30.7,12 32.11	10:17,24 11:11,15
highlighted 19:21	injured 6:17 7:24	item 29:21	L	11:23 12:9,12,16
history 19:25 45:21	8:25 9:1 11:13,21	10011129.21	label 22:12 50:17	12:19 13:2,7,10,14
hold 43:13,15	12:3 15:3 18:6,7	J	51:21	13:17,20,24 14:4,7
holds 7:7	27:1 53:22	$\overline{\mathbf{J}}$ 1:3	labeled 22:12	13.17,20,24 14.4,7
Holmberg 15:10	injuring 7:3	<b>jail</b> 36:7	lag 39:4	15:14,17,23 16:7
homes 36:2	<b>injury</b> 4:23 6:13 7:23	James 28:6	<b>Lampf</b> 15:10,14	16:10 17:2 18:12
Honor 4:13 5:13 7:5	8:24 16:18 20:14	January 1:10	20:1	18:17,22,25 19:10
10:13,24 11:23	20:21 52:18,18	<b>JEFFREY</b> 1:18 2:6	land 26:21 27:1	20:14,16,22 38:3
12:10 15:5 18:12	inquiry 39:9	21:7	45:24 46:19,19	40:23 50:22,23,25
19:1,10	inspectors 39:23	<b>Joint</b> 52:24	language 7:16,17	51:9
hope 39:23	instituted 37:17	judicial 53:15	15:13 17:25 18:1,4	limitation 3:15
hoped 37:21	insurance 36:1	jurisprudence 16:16	20:23 53:25,25	16:22 48:14
Hubrick 16:16	intended 38:13	justification 26:16	54:6	limitations 3:22 5:5
Hudson 49:10,15	53:25	40:11 47:7	large 29:4 35:13	7:24 8:11 11:9,10
50:1,15 51:20	interest 45:1		50:16	13:6 16:14 19:6
huge 19:12 23:7	interests 48:8	K	late 12:25	23:18 24:6 25:24
hundred 25:15	interpret 18:1 33:11	<b>Kagan</b> 8:5,17 15:24	Laughter 25:8 43:9	34:12 35:11 40:20
	T T			J+.12 JJ.11 40.20
	I	l	<u> </u>	ı

	1	1	1	1
42:5,17 44:6 45:17	<b>Martinez</b> 4:18 51:16	36:8 49:13	occurs 6:2	48:9
48:14 49:4 52:20	51:23	month 39:24	odd 11:18,24 12:1	<b>parties</b> 28:12 37:19
52:21	matter 1:12 22:8,11	morning 3:4	44:21 47:11 53:19	40:15 41:9
limiting 12:2	22:12 27:10 45:21	mortgage 36:1	<b>office</b> 30:6,7	party 7:24 11:8 17:5
<b>line</b> 9:10 28:16	47:4 54:16	motion 9:23	officers 29:19	17:20 18:6,8 28:20
35:20	mean 9:16 17:23	move 28:19	official 31:14	28:22 48:5 50:9
litigant 6:10	24:6 26:17 27:21	<b>mutual</b> 9:25 17:16	<b>oh</b> 37:1 41:5 43:25	passed 12:2
little 14:23 24:8	29:13,23 30:3,5	17:17	44:2,4 45:19	patent 17:4 45:25
43:20 46:25 50:10	31:25 32:19 33:9		okay 6:6 14:13,15	patents 46:20
loan 35:25	38:2 40:19 42:9	N	34:2	pattern 52:12
logic 21:21	43:1,3,6,7,8 44:19	N 2:1,1 3:1	old 23:8 45:7	<b>paying</b> 34:20 36:15
long 20:11 22:16	45:4 49:11	name 26:22	omissions 9:24	<b>penal</b> 3:21
35:22 37:5,5 39:21	meaning 21:14	natural 7:25 16:17	once 33:20 39:24	<b>penalties</b> 3:23 13:3
longer 42:5	meaningful 32:4,5	16:25 38:4	40:1 41:17,19	26:2,5 28:3,5,14
longest 39:4	means 5:15,17 11:4	necessarily 11:6	ones 36:15 52:23	28:15 32:25 34:11
look 5:18 7:17,18	meant 21:22	34:3 37:3	opening 34:9	34:20 36:11,13,21
8:21,22 9:20,21	measured 8:2	need4:15 10:15	operate 38:13	36:24 37:4 45:13
10:7 11:24 14:17	Medicaid 15:22	needed 27:20	<b>opinion</b> 8:21 9:21	46:24 48:13,17
19:25 26:1 27:3	Medicare 15:22	neither 17:23	23:16	51:5
28:6 29:10 49:18	24:3 33:21	never4:23 22:18	<b>opposite</b> 35:23 41:9	<b>penalty</b> 3:12 4:6,10
54:3	mention 35:14	27:12,15,16 32:20	oral 1:12 2:2,5 3:7	4:17 5:20,22 6:12
looked 32:20 34:11	mentioned 16:13	34:23 45:19 48:3,6	21:7	6:22 7:12 14:2,19
48:3	47:19	new 1:16,16 25:18	order7:3 30:21	14:20,20 17:22,22
looking 42:12	merciful 34:3	nice 10:19 49:19	ordered 7:2	19:11 22:21 23:12
looks 46:25	<b>Merck</b> 15:17 22:17	nonsense 44:13	<b>ordinary</b> 4:3,7 18:8	24:1,5,12,13 25:1
<b>losing</b> 27:1,1	methodology 10:25	non-fraud 41:24	ought 22:10	25:13 26:20 27:18
lost 26:22	<b>million</b> 34:7,7	42:14	<b>outlier</b> 54:9,10	28:10,18 32:13,15
<b>lot</b> 30:10 37:18 39:8	<b>mind</b> 34:13	norm 33:16	outside 46:11	33:2,14 34:5 35:19
50:4	minutes 50:22	normal 3:21	override 18:3	36:4 42:20 46:8
lower 18:17 36:1	misconduct 42:13	norms 28:17 50:9	overrides 18:3	48:21,22 49:9,9,11
lowest 51:23	47:8	notable 14:16 17:18	overruled 50:16	49:12,16,21,25
M	mislead 41:6	20:11	overstated 24:7	50:7,17,18 51:2,15
	misleading 38:18	note 19:23	overworked 31:9	51:21,22
Maillard 23:13 27:7	54:4	notice 29:17 31:15	<b>owners</b> 46:19	people 29:22 34:7
main 49:16	misrepresentations	32:2 39:9 40:3	P	35:9,9 36:14 47:13
major 29:3	9:24 10:1	42:6		period 5:8 16:5
making 22:9 40:9 46:22 52:6	missed 20:17 40:13	notion 8:7,23 9:12	P3:1	19:22 37:11 46:12
	mixed 18:18	novel 20:7	PAGE 2:2	permitted 28:4
manage 38:20 MARC 1:3	modern 27:21 28:2	number 14:4,9 17:2	pair 40:11	permitting 38:17
Marion 49:2	45:5,6	17:2	<b>part</b> 30:2 35:13 36:10 50:16	permutations 51:20
	moment 51:13	0		person 8:15 42:4
market 38:7,15,17 38:21	money 26:21 27:1	O 2:1 3:1	<b>particular</b> 29:20 30:4,11 47:22	44:4 49:24
markets 39:7	28:12 33:23 34:2	obviously 45:7,12	particularly 47:15	perspective 22:8
markets 39.7	34:10 35:15,18	02.120001j 10.11,12	parucularly 47:13	<b>Pete's</b> 25:19

D-444 21 21
Petitioner 21:21
33:7,13
Petitioners 1:4,17
2:4,10 3:8 37:24
40:8,22 42:23
43:24 44:8,19
46:21 49:23 50:24
phrased49:22
pick 21:22 39:3
picks 21:15
piece 41:19,22
<b>place</b> 21:12
<b>plain</b> 7:16,17 17:24
18:4
<b>plaintiff</b> 5:16 8:1,9
8:24 9:1 11:13,21
12:3,7 16:15,18
17:9 18:7,24 19:1
19:20 21:18 31:6
32:2,5,7 35:6
42:15 47:8 48:3,9
52:8,13
plaintiffs 9:2 46:23
<b>plaintiff's</b> 9:1 19:3
31:6 48:4
playing 29:2
plays 29:14
plead 18:8
please 3:10 21:10
point 6:19 9:16 10:9
14:18 16:15 20:23
26:10 30:16,18,24
, ,
38:4 39:13,14
40:10 47:11 50:2,3
52:4,6,23 54:2
pointed 15:25
pointing 29:4
points 5:2 29:16
50:25 53:17
police 34:8
policy 7:18
<b>position</b> 10:10 20:6
20:7 27:14
<b>possible</b> 51:18,19

51:20
potential 6:11
•
power3:15,19 46:3
46:6
powers 19:12
practices 14:9
precedent 50:20
precise 6:21
precisely 20:23
preclude 10:11
premium 19:22
presented47:15
presenting 40:20
pressed 40:24
presumption 15:3
presumptive 18:10
18:15 19:9
presumptively 23:2
49:5,6
pretty 35:20
preventing 8:9
preventing 6.5
previously 10:9 46:6
<b>principle</b> 21:19 52:10
priorities 38:6
<b>priority</b> 38:10,11
<b>private</b> 12:4,7 16:4
16:12 17:9,13,16
18:6,7,14 19:6,7
19:15,20 20:3 28:4
28:11 29:5 31:5
32:2,5,7 34:21,24
35:5,5 36:5,9,19
36:22 46:19,23
48:12 52:8
privilege 28:24,24
29:3 52:23,25
privileged 34:23
pro 53:2
•
<b>problem</b> 24:14,17
24:19,23 25:2,2
27:21 28:2 35:14

42:12 45:5,6,15

problems 52:22 promise 44:6 promptly 19:23 prosecution 11:19 32:12.13 **protect** 7:2 31:6 **prove** 30:1 48:22 **proved** 33:14 proven 30:21 31:16 **provide** 20:25 **provided** 3:14,16 14:1 36:21 providing 4:3 provisions 31:13 45:17 **public** 10:1 29:5,5,6 29:16 32:3 39:8 publication 29:21 punish 3:13,16 4:25 punishment 6:13 **purposes** 40:15,19 41:10 52:21 pursuant 5:19 pursuing 31:4 **pursuit** 37:12 **put** 24:10 29:7,17 36:7 37:24 puts 19:22 39:8

## Q quasi-criminal 24:5 quasi-sovereign 44:25 question 8:13,18 11:7 20:17 23:3,21 26:18 27:22 31:18 32:23 37:7 46:5 47:24 49:20 53:4 questions 21:3 24:10 53:1 quid 53:2,2 quite 4:16 20:9,10 quo 53:3

R **R** 3:1 raise 28:23 raised 26:10 range 13:25 26:12 52:1 **reach** 10:14.15 26:7 46:11 reaching 39:2 reaction 20:1 read 6:8 11:2.3 readily 8:2 **real** 30:9 really 9:10 11:16 12:23 17:5 29:18 30:9 46:18 54:2 reason 4:21 9:9 17:7 17:13 24:2 29:4 33:19 36:9.18.19 37:15 39:7 41:21 54:9 reasonable 16:18 29:20 33:14 48:23 reasonably 8:25 28:22 31:15,20,22 reasoning 51:16 reasons 7:7,22 16:12 rebuffed 27:13,20 rebuttal 2:8 50:23 50:25 recipient 47:19 recognized 27:9 recognizes 20:24 records 10:5 29:11 recover 26:21 35:6 recovery 6:24 7:13 19:19 20:5 redistribute 46:18 refer 27:4 referred 38:5 reflects 20:24 **regard** 48:17

regardless 19:2

regulators 20:8 rejecting 46:14 rejects 46:20 related 53:8 relationship 8:1 reliance 19:8 **relief** 17:3 19:13 46:25 relieved 11:19,20 rely 18:8,15,18 19:16 remain 12:22,23 54:10 remainder 21:4 remaining 50:22 **remains** 36:16 remark 24:7 remedial 3:19 **remedies** 3:20 13:4 36:14 **remedy** 12:17 remember 39:14 **reported** 26:4 38:25 repose 11:18,25 12:2 14:25 15:19 20:2,3 23:2 30:10 47:15 48:1,8 53:19 53:23 54:1 represent 7:8 repudiated 27:14 require 10:17 required 5:25 requiring 31:13 reserve 21:4 resolve 11:6 **resources** 31:21,21 47:16 52:8 respect 7:10,20 10:10 13:3,4 16:19 19:11,12 22:21 30:8 42:19,20 51:1 53:1 respectfully 11:23 Respondent 1:20

2.7.21.0	50.9 51.2	12.10.20.14.14	grapa II 40.5	11.0 10 17 25 12 2
2:7 21:8	50:8 51:2	13:19,20 14:14	small 40:5	11:9,10,17,25 12:2
response 34:15	run 4:2 12:7	24:2 33:21 34:7	<b>Social</b> 13:8,10,13,19	13:5,11,12,21,23
43:14 52:16,17	running 39:10 42:16	47:18	13:20 14:14 24:2	14:10,22,25 15:18
result 22:14 53:16	46:1 52:20	SEC's 12:22 19:25	33:21 34:7 47:18	15:19 16:2,3,13,14
return 38:19	runs 12:13 19:6 52:2	37:12	society 7:3,4	17:24 18:2,2 19:6
reverses 12:21	S	see 5:20 24:8 31:5	Solicitor 1:18	20:2,20 21:1,12,15
review 53:15	S 2:1 3:1	32:3 34:9 35:20	somebody 30:1	21:22 22:13 23:5,5
reviewing 29:22	sake 25:19	46:15,16	33:22	23:6,18,24 24:6
<b>RICO</b> 11:1 52:9,11	sanction 22:21 28:4	seek 3:19 26:1 28:5	soon 52:17	25:24 26:11 28:2,6
rid 40:25 41:21	saying 14:18 20:2	36:11,13,20,24	sorry 14:21 20:16	28:6 31:12 34:12
right 5:9,18 11:14	21:21 44:9 45:7	37:4	41:6 51:7	35:11,12,13 39:1
12:8 15:16 20:3	46:4	seeking 4:25 5:20	sort 9:12 25:7 42:2,2	39:18 40:20 42:5,7
21:12,18 22:15,19	says 4:7 6:1 20:20	6:22 17:10 23:11	44:20	42:10,17 44:6,10
23:17 25:4 26:1	29:15,16 31:10	seen 26:4 39:10,11	<b>Sotomayor</b> 6:4,20	45:7,8,11,20,20
28:13 33:16 34:22	43:16,18,19 44:4,7	self-concealing	7:1 10:8,16,19	45:22 46:10 47:4
35:5 36:5,10,19,22	44:10,21,23 46:22	41:23	14:23 15:6,12,16	48:14 51:13,25
36:23 39:14,19,20	51:14 52:13 54:8	self-starter42:2	15:20 28:1,11,19	52:9,20,21 53:14
39:21,22 40:5	Scalia 11:11,16 12:6	sense 6:18 31:5	29:1,8	53:19,23
41:15 44:16 45:10	12:11 14:24 15:25	separate 14:10	sought 17:3 26:20	statutes 4:3 6:8
rights 19:2 31:7	21:24 22:6,9,18,23	separating 48:12	sounding 39:15	13:25 14:2,5 16:22
ripe 5:15,21	23:4 25:14,18,20	set 24:6 28:16 50:8	sovereign 7:2 32:22	20:13,18,22 23:1
road 35:3	25:21 27:10,17	sets 48:13	44:24,24 45:1	24:13 31:12 47:5
<b>ROBERTS</b> 3:3 21:5	32:6,10,23 33:4,8	settle 37:24	46:18 47:12,14,16	49:3,6 52:1 53:24
26:9 29:18 30:18	33:12 41:1,6 42:1	settlement 37:21,23	47:22	54:4,5
30:23 36:18 37:2	42:11,18,22 44:13	Seventh 8:22 24:23	speaks 9:11	statute's 20:10
47:10 48:7 50:13	44:22 48:16,19,20	shaken 43:20	specific 21:19 31:13	statutory 3:15 4:24
50:21 51:7 54:12	48:25 49:8,11,14	show25:5	specifically 33:7	15:7 18:1
role 48:5	49:19 50:2,6	showing 18:10,15	<b>Spitzer</b> 38:16	step 10:21
Rotella 8:22 11:2	scheme 15:7	19:9 28:21	start 7:25 16:13,17	steps 9:2
52:7	<b>SEC</b> 18:13 19:9,23	side 27:6,11 28:15	16:25 33:20	sticky 38:20
rule 4:3,7,8,16,23	20:1,6,9 23:5	49:24	started21:11 35:3	store 51:17
4:24 6:9 7:11,14	26:11 29:19,23	sides 34:17	38:21	strain 9:9
7:20 8:6,13,20,21	37:14	significant 30:24	<b>starting</b> 38:4	strikes 40:4
10:22,23 17:8,11	second 4:21 7:12 9:9	52:23	starts 39:10	struck 20:2 23:15
17:20 18:23 19:1	12:21 51:12 52:25	single 17:19 22:19	State 38:8	structure 47:5
21:17 22:1,20	54:7	22:23 23:9 30:16	statements 29:6	subject 23:2
23:11,25 24:25	seconds 26:18	30:19,24 49:24	statement-type 54:4	subjected 42:5
25:12,23,24 26:7	Section 24:12	sit 30:13	States 1:1,13 49:10	<b>submissions</b> 37:20
26:23 27:24 31:23	securities 1:6 3:5	situation 5:22 34:19	49:15	submit 9:14 51:15
32:14,20,24 33:10	11:25 15:11 16:2	35:20 38:12	status 48:4	submitted 54:14,16
38:13 43:16 45:2	19:22 23:5 34:25	situations 3:22	statute 3:11,13,18	subordinate 45:1
45:18 47:7,13,23	35:2	six 33:25 39:4,5	3:22,24 4:1,18,20	substantial 11:20
50:19 51:4 53:18	Security 13:9,11,13	skepticism46:2	5:3,3,5,12,19 7:24	succeeded 23:23
rules 7:21 28:17	Security 13.7,11,13	sky 47:2	8:11 10:12 11:2,3	successfully 50:9
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	l	l

**suddenly** 24:4 34:9 **thing** 49:17 transactions 20:4 **unusual** 47:21 29:13 30:15,20,25 **sue** 5:16 6:2 11:5,22 things 29:5 37:6 transpose 31:7 upfront 27:7 31:11,24 32:9,18 12:25 16:4.5 21:18 49:1 treated41:22 **urge** 4:10 33:1,6,12 34:16,23 think 4:13 5:17 7:5,7 sues 44:25 **treats** 53:11 urged4:11 20:1,11 35:4,23 36:9,23 suffered 8:16 8:19 10:13,15 11:3 tried23:10,23 37:7,11,18 38:1,14 **urges** 4:11 sufficient 36:25 11:24 12:1 16:11 **true** 8:3 15:24 16:19 use 20:15,19,22 39:20,25 40:6,18 suggested 8:6 16:11,21 18:17 39:12 45:20 47:3 21:12 53:21,24 40:22 41:5,13,16 **suing** 46:18 21:11,15,20,24,25 **try** 18:1 23:12 24:4 54:5 42:11,22 43:5,10 **suit** 11:20 12:4 22:2 27:2,5,8 29:9 28:7 uses 5:3 14:19 43:23 44:2,8,16,19 37:15.16 trying 23:19,25 30:23,25 31:24,25 **U.S** 14:17 30:6 45:3,10 46:7 47:24 32:16 33:1,2,3,7 26:21 41:6,16 48:11,19,25 49:10 suppose 31:8  $\mathbf{V}$ **Supreme** 1:1,13 37:3 38:14,23 Tuesday 1:10 49:14,20 50:6,15 v 1:5 3:5 4:18 49:10 **sure** 12:6 14:7 24:18 40:22,23 41:4 42:7 turn 19:3 want 22:6 24:8 25:6 49:15 51:3,16,23 33:4 39:13 44:2 42:23 44:21 45:15 **two** 4:14 8:17 16:12 25:9 26:19,22 34:2 53:9.9 46:8 48:11,13 **surely** 33:9 17:3 26:24 35:8,9 34:5,17 35:19 variety 45:16 suspends 42:16 49:23 50:15 43:22 48:25 53:17 39:13 40:6 43:10 various 48:15 sweepingly 3:24 thinking 40:14 two-tier35:12.13 46:4 51:19 vast 24:6 **sweeps** 38:21 thinks 7:2 **type** 4:10 10:25 wanted 14:22 20:25 veteran 35:25 **Third** 7:14 53:10 37:20 T **Veterans** 13:9,15 thought 15:20 36:14 typical 37:8 47:24 Washington 1:9,19 **T** 2:1.1 13:17 14:14 36:3 36:23 39:15 41:8,9 **typing** 4:6 wasn't 28:21 38:15 take 9:1,2,16 12:17 Veteran's 24:3 tie 32:17 41:6 U 16:23 34:18 45:2 victim 6:15,18 9:6 ties 54:2 waterfront 27:25 ultimate 18:21 taken 20:8.9 17:21 23:13.25 **till** 37:16 way 6:10,24 10:5 **ultimately** 17:15,24 takes 39:17 35:14,16 time 3:15,23 4:2 5:8 12:23 17:8,11 22:4 37:22 talked 8:6 28:3 victims 7:13 10:7 11:4,13 12:13 25:10 29:14 31:9 **talking** 5:2 7:12,13 unanimously 52:16 view 16:23 26:15 16:6 20:11 21:4 32:14 41:25 44:5 7:14,19 8:3 9:5 unclean 8:8 9:12,12 40:7 27:8 37:8,16,16 45:4 49:22,22,22 17:12,24 32:12 underfunded 31:9 **vintage** 24:18,20,23 39:4 went 37:13.23 33:20 48:8 underlying 4:20 violated 4:2 **timers** 38:7 **We'll** 3:3 talks 5:10 5:19 6:23 8:1 9:7,8 violation 5:8 6:2 8:2 timing 38:15,17 we're 7:14 37:9 tease 6:11 13:21 14:25 19:4 12:13 18:10.14 **Title** 12:12 39:15 48:8 **tell** 10:16,20 25:4,9 understand 6:4 21:1 52:19 53:14 told 25:6 we've 19:21 25:22 44:4 46:13 33:25 35:16,21 violations 16:2 toll 11:9 40:4 whatsoever 10:3 understanding 8:9 tells 35:25 violation-type 52:10 tolled 39:19 49:5,7 **wheel** 6:16 tentative 43:14 8:12 tolling 9:11 10:12 **willing** 40:15 W term 5:3,4 21:13,14 understood 5:14 43:17 word 4:18 5:8 14:20 waited 37:14 terms 9:11 20:15,19 52:3 tools 12:3 14:21 32:16 52:3 walked49:14 test 49:15 **unfair** 14:9 total 11:17 53:21 **Wall** 1:18 2:6 21:6,7 text 44:9 45:21 47:5 **United** 1:1,13 49:10 touch 34:17 words 18:13 29:7 21:9 22:6,11,22,24 **Thank** 21:5 50:21 49:15 Toussie 49:3 41:9 24:11,17 25:9,20 54:11.12 **unknown** 45:15 trade 14:9 work 7:21,21 12:17 25:25 26:14 27:5 theory 10:11,17,21 unlawful 3:13 **world** 16:4 transaction 9:7,8 27:17 28:9,13 29:1 unreality 44:20 10:22,25 15:2 16:20 17:5,12,13 worried43:2

			Page 64
wouldn't 43:3	<b>20</b> 26:3 45:14		
written45:17	<b>20-plus</b> 26:3		
wrong 25:5,5,6	<b>20-year</b> 39:11		
40:17	<b>200</b> 23:8 24:20 46:3		
wrongdoing 19:14	<b>2000</b> 26:20		
wrote 35:10,12,12	<b>2002</b> 37:13		
	<b>2003</b> 37:14,14		
X	<b>2004</b> 23:9,22		
<b>x</b> 1:2,8	<b>2008</b> 37:14		
Y	<b>2013</b> 1:10		
Yeah 18:17	<b>21</b> 2:7		
year 23:22 26:19	<b>2462</b> 12:14 13:2		
<b>year</b> 23.22 20.19 40:1	24:13 26:4		
years 3:16 4:1 12:6	<b>25</b> 26:4 38:25		
12:13 15:13,18	<b>28</b> 12:12		
16:8 23:8 24:20			
25:16 26:3,3,6	3		
30:14 34:1,11 36:3	3 2:4		
36:17 37:4,5,11	<b>3M</b> 5:17		
39:2,5 42:11,18	3-year 15:15		
45:14 46:4 47:3,18	<b>30</b> 26:18		
,	<b>300</b> 42:11,18		
York 1:16,16	4	•	
1	<b>4</b> 34:6		
<b>1,000</b> 29:21	<b>40</b> 34:7		
1-year 15:14	40 34.7		
<b>10</b> 29:22 37:4 39:11	5		
<b>10:13</b> 1:14 3:2	<b>5</b> 3:16 4:1 12:6,12		
<b>100</b> 47:3 53:24	15:13,18 16:8 26:6		
<b>100-type</b> 54:5	30:14 37:11 39:2		
<b>11-1274</b> 1:4 3:4	50:22		
<b>11:14</b> 54:15	5-year 11:25 12:2		
<b>15</b> 39:11	14:25 19:21 20:1		
<b>1658(b)</b> 12:12	46:11		
<b>18</b> 34:1 37:5	<b>50</b> 2:10		
<b>1887</b> 22:17			
<b>19</b> 26:5 39:1	7		
<b>19th</b> 23:14 27:13	<b>7-year</b> 39:11		
<b>1980s</b> 26:14			
<b>1990</b> 26:1	8		
<b>1990s</b> 26:15	8 1:10		
<b>1999</b> 37:13	80 54:5		
2			