1	IN THE SUPREME COURT	OF THE UNITED STATES
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3	GIRIDHAR C. SEKHAR,	:
4	Petitioner	: No. 12-357
5	V.	:
6	UNITED STATES	:
7		x
8	Wash	ington, D.C.
9	Tues	day, April 23, 2013
10		
11	The above-ent	itled matter came on for oral
12	argument before the Supreme	Court of the United States
13	at 10:10 a.m.	
14	APPEARANCES:	
15	PAUL D. CLEMENT, ESQ., Wash	ington, D.C.; on behalf of
16	Petitioner.	
17	SARAH E. HARRINGTON, ESQ.,	Assistant to the Solicitor
18	General, Department of J	ustice, Washington, D.C.; on
19	behalf of Respondent.	
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21		
22		
23		
24		
25		

Т	CONTENTS	
2	ORAL ARGUMENT OF	PAGE
3	PAUL D. CLEMENT, ESQ.	
4	On behalf of the Petitioner	3
5	ORAL ARGUMENT OF	
6	SARAH E. HARRINGTON, ESQ.	
7	On behalf of the Respondent	26
8	REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF	
9	PAUL D. CLEMENT, ESQ.	
10	On behalf of the Petitioner	57
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		

1	PROCEEDINGS			
2	(10:10 a.m.)			
3	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear argument			
4	this morning first in Case 12-357, Sekhar v. United			
5	States.			
6	Mr. Clement?			
7	ORAL ARGUMENT OF PAUL D. CLEMENT			
8	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER			
9	MR. CLEMENT: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it			
10	please the Court:			
11	The crime of extortion under the Hobbs Act,			
12	like the related crimes of larceny, burglary and			
13	embezzlement, is at bottom a property crime.			
14	Accordingly, understanding the scope of obtainable			
15	property under the Hobbs Act is critical to deciding the			
16	scope of the basic criminal prohibition.			
17	The Government has offered you a definition			
18	of property that only a prosecutor could love. Any			
19	intangible right with economic value, but that			
20	definition is fundamentally incompatible with this			
21	Court's precedence and with Congress's conscious			
22	decision in the Hobbs Act to criminalize the State			
23	New York State crime of extortion, but not the New York			
24	crime of coercion.			
25	JUSTICE KENNEDY: If the jury had had			

- 1 returned the verdict, which is at JA142, and it had
- 2 marked that the attempt to extort was to extort the
- 3 commitment, you might still maybe have some causation
- 4 arguments, but I assume the property argument you're
- 5 about to make is just irrelevant.
- 6 MR. CLEMENT: Well, I don't think it's
- 7 irrelevant, Justice Kennedy. I would have a different
- 8 argument. I think that I would stand first and foremost
- 9 on this Court's decision in Cleveland, where it
- 10 recognized that something like, I think the commitment,
- 11 certainly the video poker license was at issue there,
- 12 the Court also referenced an unissued patent.
- 13 And it recognized that there are things that
- 14 have value once they're issued, but in the hands of the
- 15 Government, they don't have value, and therefore don't
- 16 qualify as property.
- 17 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Could -- could the case
- 18 have been indicted -- has it been charged as one in
- 19 which what they were taking was the commissions that
- 20 would ultimately have been generated?
- 21 MR. CLEMENT: Well, Justice Kennedy, it
- 22 might have been possible to say that what was obtained
- 23 here was money, but I think if the Government had
- 24 prosecuted it under that theory, it would have to prove
- 25 that somehow the Government paid too much. I don't

- 1 think it can point just to the commissions.
- 2 And I would analogize it to the McNally
- 3 case. In the McNally case, you know, there was this
- 4 scheme in which various sort of friends of government
- officials were getting the commissions from a workmen's
- 6 compensation policy. And what this Court said is, well,
- 7 it would have been one thing if the Government had come
- 8 in and said that the Government paid commissions that
- 9 were too high, or the Government had received inferior
- 10 quality insurance.
- 11 But what the Government did there instead
- 12 was sort of take the shortcut and plead that what had
- 13 happened is, the Government had been deprived of its
- 14 interest in having the honest services --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, here, what the
- 16 Petitioner wanted were the commissions, ultimately. And
- 17 you can't commit extortion in order to get -- and that's
- 18 real money. It's for the Government to answer, not you,
- 19 but can -- do you have any idea why they didn't charge
- 20 that?
- 21 MR. CLEMENT: Well, I think the reason that
- 22 they didn't charge that is probably practically twofold.
- 23 One is that a commitment under New York law and practice
- 24 is not quite as what it sounds, it's not really a
- 25 commitment. And the best evidence of that is with the

- 1 last fund for this particular management company, they
- 2 got a commitment from the State and there was no
- 3 ultimate investment made.
- 4 So there's a subsequent step down the road.
- 5 JUSTICE KENNEDY: I see. I see.
- 6 MR. CLEMENT: So I think that's part of it.
- 7 The other thing I would say is as in
- 8 McNally, I think they would have had to prove that the
- 9 management fees were somehow excessive or something like
- 10 that, so they -- they didn't do that. They focused on
- 11 this recommendation.
- 12 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Clement --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, I took you away from
- 14 your argument about intangible property.
- 15 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Clement, just along the
- 16 same lines. What you're saying is that it still would
- 17 not be extortion -- let's say somebody in your client's
- 18 position runs an investment company, wants an
- 19 investment, wants the fees that come along with that
- 20 investment. Goes to -- let's say that there's a single
- 21 person who gets to decide whether to make that
- investment, and so to pay those fees, goes to that
- 23 person, threatens that person with something terrible
- 24 happening to him.
- 25 You're saying that that does not count as

- 1 extortion, that there's a reason that the Government
- 2 didn't charge it like that?
- 3 MR. CLEMENT: I would say that that -- I
- 4 would say a couple of things. I would say that's a
- 5 harder case than the one I have before you today. I
- 6 would say that I don't think that's actually extortion
- 7 if what they charge is the commitment, not the money
- 8 that goes -- that flows from the Government. And then
- 9 what I would say -- and the reason I would say that is
- 10 because of Cleveland.
- 11 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, they want the
- 12 investment with -- and the fees that come with the
- investment. So -- and that's why they're threatening
- 14 the person.
- 15 MR. CLEMENT: Right. And I would say that
- 16 under McNally, in that kind of case, what the Government
- 17 has to prove is that if they want to make the property
- 18 the money interest that the Government is paying out and
- 19 the person is obtaining, they have to show that there's
- 20 some sort of excessive commission or excessive sort of
- 21 management fee.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Even -- even though they
- 23 wouldn't have gotten the investment and they wouldn't
- 24 have gotten the fees absent the -- the threat of force
- 25 or -- or violence?

1	MR. CLEMENT: Again, that would be my
2	position. And I think it would follow from this Court's
3	decisions in cases like Cleveland and McNally because in
4	McNally, of course, the people who were part of that
5	fraudulent scheme, they were getting commissions from
6	the workmen comp program.
7	And the Government's theory was that just
8	interfering with the Government's decision about who to
9	give the workmen where to place the workmen's comp
LO	policies was enough of an interference to to support
L1	a fraud conviction. And this Court said no. And one of
L2	the things it then said is well, it would be different
L3	if if the Government went in and proved that the
L4	commissions that were paid were too high, or that the
L5	Government somehow got inadequate insurance.
L6	But if all they're doing is saying that
L7	what's going on here is sort of the interest of the
L8	Government in having its employees serve them honestly
L9	and in their best interest, and not in some third
20	party's best interest, that brings you squarely into
21	honest services. And nobody's saying that doing that's
22	a good thing, but it's it's the traditional office of
23	the State law crime of coercion. It's
24	JUSTICE GINSBURG: But it's the coercion
25	crime, at least under New York definition, requires

- 1 force. And -- and here, it's a threat of exposure of an
- 2 embarrassing fact.
- 3 So what -- am I right about that, that the
- 4 coercion, which is not a Federal crime but is a State
- 5 crime, requires a threat of force to restrict another's
- 6 freedom?
- 7 MR. CLEMENT: I don't believe that's
- 8 correct, Justice Ginsburg.
- 9 This was charged by New York State
- 10 authorities as coercion. So the very crime that
- 11 Congress didn't incorporate into the Hobbs Act, the New
- 12 York crime of coercion, was charged here, and it's my
- 13 understanding that the New York crime of coercion, like
- 14 the earlier version of coercion in the racketeer -- in
- 15 the Anti-Racketeering Act of 1934, like the traditional
- 16 model penal code definition of coercion -- it's the --
- 17 the threat part of it is the same as extortion.
- 18 So it covers a threat to a person or to
- 19 property. And it's been interpreted certainly to
- 20 include threats to disclose information like this.
- 21 So I think the real difference between the
- 22 crime of extortion and the crime of coercion, both as a
- 23 general matter and under New York law, is whether or not
- 24 property is obtained. And that's ultimately what's so
- 25 problematic about the Government's definition here

- 1 because their definition is essentially the property
- 2 includes the autonomy interest of a business to operate
- 3 free from coercion.
- 4 JUSTICE ALITO: What is your definition
- 5 of -- of property? In your reply brief, you begin by
- 6 saying that you're -- you are not arguing that the
- 7 property has to be tangible and includes some forms of
- 8 intangible property.
- 9 How would you draw the line?
- 10 MR. CLEMENT: I would say that for property
- 11 to come within the terms of the Hobbs Act prohibition on
- 12 obtaining property, it has to be alienable,
- 13 transferable, moveable. That's the critical thing. So
- 14 the distinction is not between alienable and
- 15 inalienable.
- 16 A patent is an inalienable -- I mean,
- 17 rather, a patent is an intangible property right, but
- 18 it's transferable, it's obtainable, it is sellable, and
- 19 so it has the characteristics of things that I think
- 20 come within the traditional definition.
- 21 JUSTICE BREYER: What about -- what about
- the mob goes to a grocer and says, you know, you're dead
- 23 or something if you sell Cheerios, and the reason is
- 24 because they have a monopoly, some other grocer who's
- 25 connected has a monopoly. And they threaten him. Now,

- 1 does that violate Hobbs Act?
- 2 MR. CLEMENT: I think --
- JUSTICE BREYER: What he did was -- and
- 4 he's -- he's not going to sell Cheerios.
- 5 MR. CLEMENT: Right. I -- I would say that
- 6 that hypothetical that you've given me would be
- 7 coercion, it would not be extortion under the Hobbs Act.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Now -- now, in fact,
- 9 they're doing it to get money, and they do get money,
- 10 but via the means of the other grocer. And there is
- 11 nothing in the words of this Act that says that the
- 12 property has to be taken from the individual whom you
- 13 coerce.
- 14 It's easy to imagine situations where the
- 15 coerced individual has a relationship, direct, special
- 16 and so forth, with the person who has the money. So
- 17 what happens when, say, the mob coerces the person
- 18 without the property so that he will do a thing such
- 19 that the person with the property gives them the
- 20 property?
- 21 MR. CLEMENT: I think, at least as I
- 22 understand your hypothetical, where the relationship
- 23 between the two parties, basically they are competitors,
- 24 I would say that that's two distinct relationships.
- 25 JUSTICE BREYER: All right. Now just make

- 1 it different. What they do is they get the assistant
- 2 bank employee and they threaten him to do such a thing
- 3 such as shout at a certain time where they know that
- 4 that shouting will lead them to be able to rob the bank.
- 5 I mean, you know, it's easy to think up.
- 6 What I can't figure out here is, is there
- 7 some requirement that the person who is coerced has to
- 8 be the same person as the person who gives them the
- 9 property. If the answer to that's no, then none of the
- 10 Government's chamber of horribles is horrible because
- 11 there's a way around it.
- MR. CLEMENT: Well, I think the answer to it
- is, it depends. I don't think I can give you a
- 14 definitive that the --
- JUSTICE BREYER: And you haven't found
- 16 anything on this. You'd be making it up now, is that
- 17 basically it?
- 18 MR. CLEMENT: Well, what -- what I would
- 19 tell you is I think the assumption of most of the cases
- 20 is that the person that is the pressure of --
- 21 JUSTICE BREYER: Is the -- is the one?
- 22 MR. CLEMENT: Is the person who's offering
- 23 up the property. This Court's --
- 24 JUSTICE SCALIA: Isn't that what the word
- 25 "extort" means? You extort something from someone? It

- 1 means you get it from him, you don't get it from some
- 2 third party.
- 3 MR. CLEMENT: I think that's basically
- 4 right, Justice Scalia. What I would say, though, is I
- 5 think there's an exception to the -- at least to the
- 6 following extent, which I think it would be open to the
- 7 Government, to basically say that within an entity, if
- 8 you sort of put the pressure on one agent of the
- 9 corporation and you actually get the money from another
- 10 agent of the same corporation, that that's probably
- 11 close enough.
- 12 And so in this case, if the pressure was put
- on a particular individual and they obtained like actual
- 14 cash from the Government, that might be a different
- 15 case. But, of course, here what they received was this
- 16 commitment, which I think is analogous to the video
- 17 poker license in the Cleveland case, so I don't think
- 18 that's --
- 19 JUSTICE KAGAN: But if you think the
- 20 commitment is real cash, is a real contract, real cash,
- 21 real property, right? Then it wouldn't matter under
- 22 that -- under what you just said, that the threat was
- 23 made to the general counsel rather than to the final
- 24 person who issued the money, isn't that right?
- 25 MR. CLEMENT: I -- I don't disagree with

- 1 that, Justice Kagan, but I think that's because they're
- 2 all sort of agents to the same principal. And I'm not
- 3 sure you get all the way to what Justice Breyer was
- 4 suggesting, which you can sort of run it through
- 5 competitors or something like that.
- 6 JUSTICE KAGAN: Right. But you wouldn't
- 7 say, well, we're dealing with an organization, so it's
- 8 only extortion if you threaten the person who writes the
- 9 check?
- 10 MR. CLEMENT: No. I --
- 11 JUSTICE KAGAN: If you threaten the person
- 12 who makes a recommendation to the person who writes the
- 13 check, that's good enough.
- MR. CLEMENT: Exactly, Your Honor. But what
- 15 I would also say is, you know, this is a real case and
- 16 there are real jury findings, and as Justice Kennedy
- 17 alluded to, there were a variety of theories of property
- 18 put in front of the jury. They were invited to circle
- 19 as many of them as they could, as many as they found
- 20 satisfied, and the only one they circled was the
- 21 recommendation.
- 22 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Mr. Clement, what is --
- 23 I'm sort of trying to figure out why you're trying to
- 24 get the word "property" to do the work of the "obtain"
- 25 part of the statute because when you answered

- 1 Justice Alito you were using the terms of "obtain" to
- 2 define property, which is in my mind a sort of strange
- 3 way to do things, okay? Property generally means value
- 4 of some sort and you don't use any of those words in
- 5 your definition.
- 6 So what you're using in my mind, and not
- 7 illogically, is to say that the second part of the
- 8 statute has to do some work, so it has to mean that
- 9 you're taking something of value away from someone else.
- 10 That makes logical sense to me. And I understand the
- 11 second piece of your argument, which is the
- 12 recommendation -- not the recommendation, but his honest
- 13 services were -- wasn't being given to your client, it
- 14 was being given to the employer.
- 15 So your client obtained nothing of value for
- 16 himself. He didn't get anything transferred to him.
- 17 And that -- that argument makes eminent sense to me.
- 18 And I tease it out of your brief, but I don't know why
- 19 you're trying to get our definition of "property" to do
- 20 that work.
- MR. CLEMENT: Well --
- 22 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Why isn't the work in
- 23 the "obtain" part?
- 24 MR. CLEMENT: Justice Sotomayor, I'm happy
- 25 to have you rule in favor of my client on "obtained" or

- 1 "property" and, as Scheidler II demonstrates, those
- 2 terms are really kind of married together. And I guess
- 3 the reason I sort of think that the "obtained" and the
- 4 "property" should be construed together is twofold.
- 5 One, structurally that's what the statute does. So when
- 6 you're talking about, in a statute, property that can be
- 7 obtained, I think that's a clue that you're not talking
- 8 about property in its broadest manifestation.
- 9 And you contrast that with, say, the Clayton
- 10 Act that talks about disjunctively property and -- or
- 11 property rights, and there you have a clue that Congress
- 12 means a very broad conception. When it's talking about
- 13 it in conjunction with "obtained," I think it has a
- 14 narrower ambit in mind.
- 15 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So take the Government's
- 16 definition that property is anything of value.
- 17 MR. CLEMENT: Right.
- 18 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: All right. And let's
- 19 assume because it -- as I said, that seems to have some
- 20 sort of conceptual appeal. Then make the argument for
- 21 me.
- MR. CLEMENT: Well --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Then make your argument
- 24 for me why this isn't an obtaining.
- 25 MR. CLEMENT: Well, what I would say is

- 1 obtaining, as this Court made clear in Scheidler II, is
- 2 not some metaphysical obtaining. I mean, the argument
- 3 was made to this Court that the abortion protesters
- 4 obtained the autonomy interest of the business in -- the
- 5 clinics, in deciding whether -- who to serve and when to
- 6 serve and when to be open and when to be closed.
- 7 And this Court said no, and it said
- 8 principally that that's not obtaining, but it's -- but
- 9 it also noted, I guess you'd call it dictum, that
- 10 what -- what -- obviously, what the Hobbs Act, based on
- 11 its common law roots in extortion, is talking about is
- 12 the kind of property that can be deprived, it can then
- 13 be transferred, sold, exercised.
- 14 And I do think. Just to get the second part
- 15 of my answer out if I could, it's just -- the common law
- 16 roots here are also where you see the definition of
- 17 property can't be as broad as the Government suggests.
- 18 Because extortion is one of the classic common law
- 19 property crimes. The definition of property, for
- 20 purposes of extortion, ought to be the same as the
- 21 definition of property for larceny, embezzlement,
- 22 burglary.
- You can't go into somebody's house and steal
- 24 their honest services or their autonomy interests. So
- 25 the kind of property you can obtain for purposes of the

- 1 Hobbs Act is that same kind of alienable, transferable,
- 2 moveable property.
- 3 JUSTICE SCALIA: Suppose -- suppose that the
- 4 person coerced here was a -- was a corrupt person and
- 5 had put his recommendation out for bids. Okay? He
- 6 said, you know, I'll -- I'll recommend whoever pays me
- 7 the most money. Would that alter this case?
- 8 MR. CLEMENT: I don't --
- 9 JUSTICE SCALIA: If -- if then somebody
- 10 comes in and says, well, I'm not going to pay you the
- 11 money, but I'll -- I'll break your knees if you don't
- 12 recommend me, would that be extortion?
- 13 MR. CLEMENT: It would not, Justice Scalia,
- 14 and I would say because -- if the State of Louisiana in
- 15 the Cleveland case, if there was a corrupt official who
- 16 was putting those video poker licenses on sale on the on
- 17 the sly, I don't think that would change the result there.
- 18 This Court said that those kind of government things do
- 19 not have value in the hands of the government. The fact
- 20 that somebody, you know, could sort of be corrupt and
- 21 therefore have a little auction on the side I don't
- 22 think changes that basic fact.
- I would say, too, that there's an important
- 24 difference here between a hypothetical case where what
- 25 somebody's trying to do is kind of get something for

- 1 nothing and essentially get the benefit of the work of a
- 2 government official. But that's not what's at issue
- 3 here.
- 4 This is not a client who's trying to get --
- 5 like, you know, they wanted an opinion on how to
- 6 incorporate in the State of New York and they thought,
- 7 well, the lawyers are kind of expensive in the private
- 8 sector, so I'm just going to coerce it from this
- 9 government official. All they care about in this case
- 10 is the bottom line, thumbs up, thumbs down
- 11 recommendation.
- I don't think this case would be any
- 13 different if there were an investment committee within
- 14 the State government and you had to get unanimous assent
- 15 to an investment and there was one holdout.
- 16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Why isn't that --
- 17 you focused on transferability when you began. Why
- 18 isn't that completely transferable? I have leverage
- 19 against this official and if you want him to recommend
- 20 yes on your investment, you have to pay me a certain
- 21 amount of money. And you can transfer that. You've got
- 22 everybody in, say, you know, the association or whatever
- 23 and you can auction that off. It seems to me it's
- 24 perfectly transferable from the defendant to anyone
- 25 else.

- 1 MR. CLEMENT: With respect,
- 2 Mr. Chief Justice, I wouldn't think so. Now, there are
- 3 some voting rights that are transferable in that sense.
- 4 I mean, if you have a stock -- a proxy in a stock, or
- 5 something like that, that may well come within the
- 6 definition. But when you have these essentially voting
- 7 or autonomy interests that are really -- you know,
- 8 they're -- they're sort of inherently inalienable
- 9 because this recommendation matters because it's the
- 10 general counsel and the comptroller's office
- 11 recommendation. And --
- 12 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, but the
- 13 lawyer's going to make recommendations in many other
- 14 cases as well. And if you have an application coming up
- 15 and you want a favorable recommendation, you can go to
- 16 the -- the individual that has the leverage and say, I
- 17 will pay you this much money if you can get the person
- 18 to give me a favorable recommendation. And that's
- 19 transferable from the person with the -- the leverage
- 20 to -- to someone else.
- 21 MR. CLEMENT: Well, the confident -- I may
- 22 not be understanding the hypothetical. Certainly, the
- 23 confidential information that the potential coercer has
- 24 may be transferable, and under this Court's decision in
- 25 Carpenter, that may be property. But the voting right

- 1 within the State government or the role within the State
- 2 government's internal deliberative process, that really
- 3 belongs to the general counsel, and he can't --
- 4 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, just let me make
- 5 sure that I understand your position. Suppose roughly
- 6 these facts, the general counsel is threatened with
- 7 something very serious, let's say violence, unless he
- 8 makes a favorable recommendation. He does. They act on
- 9 that recommendation, it's -- it's a substantial cause in
- 10 making the investment, and the investment is made and
- 11 they get the money. Violation?
- MR. CLEMENT: I would say no, but I would
- 13 say it's a much more difficult case. And the reason I
- 14 would say no is because the Government -- or I'd say
- 15 potentially no. I would still say that the Government
- 16 has to prove something more, which is that it's an
- 17 investment where there either was not the optimal
- 18 investment or they paid too high a commission. And --
- 19 and I take that from McNally.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, but -- but that's a
- 21 causation argument, not whether or not you received
- 22 property.
- MR. CLEMENT: Right, because -- but my point
- 24 is simply that if the Government --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: But so far as the property

- 1 point in my hypothetical, if the recommendation leads to
- 2 the contract and the contract leads to the commission
- 3 and the commission means money in your pocket, that's
- 4 property.
- 5 MR. CLEMENT: Yes.
- 6 JUSTICE KENNEDY: And so then we just have a
- 7 causation argument, not a property argument.
- 8 MR. CLEMENT: I think that's right. If
- 9 what's obtained is money, and that's what the Government
- 10 focuses its prosecution on, then that is -- that
- 11 satisfies the property requirement of the Hobbs Act.
- 12 JUSTICE BREYER: It has to be more property,
- 13 more money, more money in return for less services or
- 14 something than otherwise. That's what you're saying.
- 15 But I don't think that's -- I mean, right. But the
- 16 answer -- go ahead because I -- that's the qualification
- 17 you're making, the McNally qualification.
- 18 MR. CLEMENT: Right, exactly. Exactly,
- 19 exactly. So you obtained the property, so that box is
- 20 checked, but the -- sorry.
- 21 JUSTICE GINSBURG: What about -- you said
- 22 transfer, sell, but there's also exercise. And the
- 23 theory is that the defendant sought to take away the
- 24 officer's right to make this recommendation, take it
- 25 away from the officer, exercise it himself. So why

- 1 doesn't it fit -- why isn't this an intangible right
- 2 taken from one and exercised by another?
- 3 MR. CLEMENT: Justice Ginsburg, I would say
- 4 that what you've just articulated is exactly the
- 5 Government's theory, and the problem is that I can use
- 6 that same theory to take any autonomy interest and turn
- 7 it into property that can be exercised, it can be
- 8 obtained by somebody and then exercised by them in a way
- 9 different from the way that the person would otherwise
- 10 exercise it.
- 11 And whatever -- I mean, you know, we're
- 12 talking about one word in a three-word phrase in
- 13 Scheidler II. And the first thing I would say is I
- 14 think it's a mistake to read that phrase the way you
- 15 would read a statute.
- 16 But the second thing I would say is the one
- 17 thing the Chief Justice did not mean with respect to the
- 18 word "exercise" is it meant that it opened up a big gap
- 19 so you could take every coercion case and turn it into
- 20 an extortion case.
- 21 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Is this -- there is, I
- 22 take it, no Federal crime that this conduct would fit?
- 23 You said New York State has a coercion crime which you
- 24 say this conduct might fit. But there's no Federal
- 25 crime.

1	MR.	CTEMENT:	There	'S	 tnere	S	no	Federal

- 2 crime and that's the result of a very deliberative
- 3 decision by Congress in 1946 in enacting the Hobbs Act.
- 4 Of course, they had in front of them the model of the
- 5 Anti-Racketeering Act of 1934 that prohibited both
- 6 coercion and extortion. Congress made a conscious
- 7 decision to, in the Hobbs Act, prohibit robbery and
- 8 extortion, but not pick up the prohibition on coercion.
- 9 And so there isn't a Federal crime directly
- 10 on point, but it's a very conscious decision by
- 11 Congress. And, of course, the New York crime on point
- 12 is exquisitely on point because not only is there a
- 13 coercion offense under New York statute, but it is an
- 14 aggravated offense if the victim is a government
- 15 official discharging their public duty.
- 16 And so this is really a situation where the
- 17 State courts have a crime that directly fits. It's
- 18 as -- I mean, it's almost amazing because it's not just
- 19 any State, it's the State of New York. And Congress, in
- 20 passing the Hobbs Act, was looking at New York law. And
- 21 they looked at New York law and they said, New York has
- 22 a coercion prohibition and extortion prohibition.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: And why did -- why did
- 24 New York -- was the New York case dropped and the State
- 25 officials urged the Government, the Federal Government,

- 1 to make this a Federal case?
- 2 MR. CLEMENT: Well, I'd be happy to address
- 3 that. What happened is there were some pretrial
- 4 rulings. And one of the pretrial rulings gave the
- 5 defendant an opportunity to do some discovery on the
- 6 State government to figure out whether this was really
- 7 done in the discharge of public duties or maybe this was
- 8 sort of a political thing that was going on.
- 9 And once that State law discovery happened
- 10 into the government of Albany, all of a sudden the State
- 11 prosecution didn't seem like such a great idea anymore.
- 12 And the Federal prosecutors are just down the street, so
- 13 they were very happy to lateral it to the Federal
- 14 prosecutors and have them take it over. And because the
- 15 Federal offense doesn't have an element of interfering
- 16 with the public duty, they didn't have to worry about
- 17 the discovery.
- 18 And that is just a very concrete
- 19 illustration of the problem of over-federalizing crime
- 20 because this -- we're talking -- this is the opposite of
- 21 the typical public corruption case where you think,
- 22 well, maybe there are people in the State government who
- 23 aren't going to -- State prosecutors won't be willing to
- 24 prosecute one of the bigs in the State government, so we
- 25 need the Federal Government to step in.

1	The one thing a State doesn't need extra
2	incentive to do is to protect the integrity of its
3	internal deliberative process from coercion or
4	extortion, for that matter. But the the real cost
5	then to having these duplicative Federal crimes, and
6	they were front and center in this case if I may
7	reserve the remainder of my time.
8	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
9	Ms. Harrington.
10	ORAL ARGUMENT OF SARAH E. HARRINGTON
11	ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENT
12	MS. HARRINGTON: Thank you,
13	Mr. Chief Justice, and may it please the Court:
14	I'd like to start, if I could, where Justice
15	Kennedy began and ended, which is asking whether there
16	would have been extortion if the jury had found here
17	that what that the property that was obtained was the
18	commissions at the end of the day after the investment.
19	My friend Mr. Clement says no, no, no, McNally says no.
20	But what McNally actually said was the case
21	would have come out differently if the property that had
22	been alleged to be deprived was either money or
23	property, but it also said it would have come out
24	differently if the Commonwealth had been deprived of
25	control over how its money was spent. And that's the

- 1 type of property that's at issue here, control over a
- 2 property right.
- 3 Now --
- 4 JUSTICE KAGAN: Ms. Harrington, just to go
- 5 back to Justice Kennedy's -- I mean, suppose -- was
- 6 there a reason why it wasn't charged in what seems to me
- 7 to be the simpler way, which is a threat was made in
- 8 order to get an investment and in order to get fees to
- 9 put in your pocket and -- and go away with, and that's
- 10 extortion. So why wasn't it -- why wasn't that the
- 11 theory of the case?
- MS. HARRINGTON: Well, he was charged with
- 13 attempting to obtain the commitment, which in most cases
- 14 ends up being the investment itself. That's not what
- 15 the jury found was the property that was obtained, so
- 16 it's not the verdict that we are here defending today.
- 17 JUSTICE KAGAN: Do you think there's an
- 18 obstacle to charging a case that way? Mr. Clement seems
- 19 to think that there's an obstacle, that even though
- 20 there's property in that case, there's some other
- 21 problem with charging the case that way.
- MS. HARRINGTON: No, that's what I'm saying.
- 23 What he's saying is that the obstacle is you'd have to
- 24 prove that the State was out more money than it would
- 25 have been if it had invested in the company it wanted to

- 1 invest in. What I'm saying is no, McNally said the
- 2 result would have been different if the State had been
- 3 deprived of control, of the ability to control its
- 4 money, and that's the property that would have been
- 5 obtained in that kind of a case. Because property and
- 6 control of property are just -- are just different
- 7 aspects of the same property.
- 8 This Court has said repeatedly that
- 9 exclusive control of property is one vital aspect of
- 10 private property. And that's the -- that's the type of
- 11 property that was charged, that was -- that was obtained
- 12 in this case.
- JUSTICE BREYER: The obvious problem, which
- 14 you might want to address at some point, is that -- that
- 15 if you take your definition that this recommendation,
- 16 legal recommendation, is property and the fellow said,
- 17 you know, I'm going to fix you if you don't do it, if
- 18 that's property, we're back to the honest services
- 19 statute because anyone in the government and anyone in
- 20 business, indeed everybody, has a job and those jobs
- 21 always require you to do things.
- So if every time somebody threatens a person
- and says, we don't want you to do the thing you're
- 24 supposed to do, we want you to do the thing like this,
- 25 well, then you're violating this property statute.

- 1 MS. HARRINGTON: But Justice --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Now, that seems very far-
- 3 reaching, hard to reconcile with the abortion case --
- 4 the abortion clinic case, et cetera, and it is easy to
- 5 reconcile with the honest services case.
- 6 MS. HARRINGTON: Well, I guess I would have
- 7 two points. The first is that this is not about honest
- 8 services because the victim here is not the State of New
- 9 York, it wasn't the citizenry of New York. That's the
- 10 kind of --
- 11 JUSTICE BREYER: Well, I mean, that sounds
- 12 technical. You see, the problem I'm interested in is,
- 13 by accepting your definition do we suddenly throw within
- 14 the statute, which speaks of property, any time there is
- 15 an appropriate threat which has as a condition the
- 16 person doing the job differently? That's true of
- 17 whether it's a postman, you know, any public official,
- 18 any private official, anybody.
- MS. HARRINGTON: Whatever --
- JUSTICE BREYER: That seems very
- 21 far-reaching. So what's the answer?
- 22 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Just to add to
- 23 Justice Breyer's question, it's -- suppose the
- 24 secretary/typist is -- the stenographer is charged with
- 25 typing the letter "I do not recommend" and they bribe

- 1 her and she says "I recommend." She has an interest in
- 2 her integrity to give an honest transcription. Under
- 3 your view, and this is what Justice Breyer is getting
- 4 at, I think, that -- that secretary has property that
- 5 you are taking. That's very far-reaching.
- 6 MS. HARRINGTON: Well, I want to separate
- 7 again the question of what is property and when property
- 8 is obtained. Under the Hobbs Act -- the Hobbs Act
- 9 absorbed the New York State extortion law. And in
- 10 that -- in the -- in the cases construing that law, they
- 11 had construed the word "property" to include the running
- 12 of a business, the engagement of a person in their
- 13 occupation, and the doing of a job. People have
- 14 property interests in doing those things because those
- 15 are the source of economic wealth for those people.
- 16 They generate a stream of revenue for people to live
- 17 their lives on.
- 18 Now, it's a different question -- not every
- 19 time you interfere with someone's doing of their job are
- 20 you obtaining that property. Here, what Petitioner was
- 21 trying to do was not keep the general counsel from
- 22 making a recommendation, he was attempting to dictate
- 23 the substance of what the recommendation was.
- 24 JUSTICE BREYER: Yes, I understand that.
- 25 But I still would like an answer to my question, and

- 1 it's well-phrased with an example by Justice Kennedy.
- 2 Every secretary in the United States who is
- 3 about to write a recommendation for somebody to go to
- 4 college or some other thing then is faced with a threat,
- 5 you put in name such-and-such or put in yes instead of
- 6 no, and is under your definition that person's property,
- 7 that what she does the taking of property? The answer
- 8 is either you think yes, in which case I would like you
- 9 to defend it --
- 10 MS. HARRINGTON: Yes.
- 11 JUSTICE BREYER: Or the -- yes. Okay. Then
- 12 what conceivable ground? I'm not -- I don't want to --
- 13 that sounds a little pejorative, but I say, what
- 14 ground is there for a definition that is so broad that
- 15 it sweeps within it all working people in the United
- 16 States in the performance of their ordinary jobs?
- MS. HARRINGTON: The ground is the general
- 18 particularized meaning that the word "property" has
- 19 obtained in the law, and including in New York cases
- 20 construing the very law on which the Hobbs Act was
- 21 based.
- 22 A person has a property interest in running
- 23 their business. They also have a property interest in
- 24 doing their job. When -- when someone comes along and
- 25 uses threats of harm or threats of force or violence to

- 1 try to get them to do their job in a different way, what
- 2 they are doing is they are taking control of that
- 3 property interest that the person has.
- 4 JUSTICE SCALIA: What -- what is -- I have a
- 5 property interest in doing my job? I don't know what
- 6 that means. I mean, just throwing words around. You
- 7 are calling doing a job a property interest. Normally
- 8 when I think of property, I think of something that can
- 9 be conveyed. Can I convey the -- the doing of my job to
- 10 somebody else?
- MS. HARRINGTON: Well, you can convey your
- 12 labor to your employer in that sense. When you enter an
- 13 employment contract, you are selling your labor to your
- 14 employer. And the -- the extent of your right to do
- 15 that job is then defined by the parameters of your job.
- 16 JUSTICE SCALIA: But I'm not talking about
- 17 my labor. I'm talking about my doing the job that the
- 18 employer has assigned to me.
- 19 MS. HARRINGTON: But that is your labor.
- 20 JUSTICE SCALIA: It's not my -- not my labor
- 21 in the abstract. Nobody is taking my labor away from
- 22 me.
- MS. HARRINGTON: But in this case what
- 24 Petitioner was trying to take was the fruits of the
- 25 general counsel -- counsel's labor. His job was to give

- 1 his recommendation to his client about what was in
- 2 keeping with the client's --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Can you cite one -- one
- 4 extortion case at common law -- or let me put it another
- 5 way. What is the closest extortion case at common law
- 6 that you can allude to?
- 7 MS. HARRINGTON: I can't because at common
- 8 law the person --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: We -- we are using a common
- 10 law term here, "extortion."
- 11 MS. HARRINGTON: Yes, but it was a different
- 12 crime at common law because it only involved public
- 13 officials taking money or other thing of value in
- 14 exchange for doing something --
- 15 JUSTICE SCALIA: Whatever. What's the
- 16 closest that comes to this abstract, "the doing of my
- job is property"?
- 18 MS. HARRINGTON: I don't have an example of
- 19 that, but what I do have are examples from the New York
- 20 cases which were construing the New York State extortion
- 21 law, and this Court has noted again and again that
- 22 that's the basis that the -- for the Hobbs Act.
- 23 Congress was explicitly trying to evoke that law.
- 24 JUSTICE SCALIA: What -- what's the closest
- 25 New York case?

- 1 MS. HARRINGTON: So I think there are two
- 2 cases. The Barondess case and the Short case are the
- 3 best cases. And in the Barondess case, which is from
- 4 1893, I think, the -- the Court said that the running of
- 5 a business was property. And in the Short case the
- 6 Court said that, just the same way that the running of a
- 7 business is property, a person's doing their job is
- 8 property, and that that can be damaged --
- 9 JUSTICE GINSBURG: How was it -- could you
- 10 tell us a little more? How was it taken?
- 11 MS. HARRINGTON: Well, in those cases the
- 12 property wasn't taken. Under the New York extortion
- 13 law, the law used "property" in two different places,
- 14 and this is noted in our brief. First, it was something
- 15 that could be taken, that could be obtained through
- 16 extortion. And second, it was -- one of the means of
- 17 committing extortion was doing violence to property, it
- 18 was harming property. And the court was construing
- 19 property -- in those cases, it was -- it was in the
- 20 latter sense of what qualified as harm to property.
- 21 But the court said in the Short case, which
- 22 is from 1911 -- the court noted that property is used
- 23 in -- in both provisions, Section 850 and Section 851,
- 24 and said it was construing it as it was used in both of
- 25 those sections. And in that -- that was the case that

- 1 said doing a person's job, the person has a property
- 2 interest in doing their job.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Ms. Harrington, go back to
- 4 the Scheidler example because that was a case where we
- 5 said there was not extortion when there were threats of
- 6 violence meant to close down an abortion clinic's
- 7 operations. What you are suggesting is that if those
- 8 threats of violence had been targeted at the abortion
- 9 clinic's lawyer in order to get him to tell the clinic
- 10 to shut down their operations because they were a
- 11 violation of law, that it would be an entirely different
- 12 case. Now, how could that be?
- MS. HARRINGTON: We -- that's absolutely
- 14 what we are saying, in the same way that we said that if
- 15 the target of the -- if the protesters, excuse
- 16 me, had been trying to get the clinics, if they had been
- 17 trying to take over the clinics and get them to provide
- 18 a different type of service, to get them to be a
- 19 restaurant or to provide a different type of medical
- 20 service, then they would have been obtaining the right
- 21 of the -- of the clinic the right to run -- to operate
- 22 their business.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: So -- so you think if -- if
- 24 they targeted the -- the clinic's lawyer or the -- if
- 25 the threats were, Don't shut down the clinic, instead,

- 1 start delivering babies, that that would be extortion,
- 2 whereas in the real case it wasn't?
- 3 MS. HARRINGTON: Yes, because Scheidler came
- 4 out the way it did not because there wasn't property at
- 5 issue, but because there wasn't an obtaining. And I do
- 6 think it's important to try to keep those two things
- 7 separate.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, because there
- 9 wasn't -- and there's nothing obtained either way. I
- 10 mean, you are trying to change what the person is doing,
- 11 but you are not getting anything from it.
- 12 MS. HARRINGTON: But you are dictating the
- 13 substance of what they are doing, and so you are
- 14 obtaining their right to exercise their property right.
- 15 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, that -- that's the
- 16 problem with your New York cases as well. You -- you
- 17 are focusing on property in another context, where the
- 18 property is harmed, not whether property is taken.
- 19 You -- you have neither a New York case nor any other
- 20 common law case involving extortion where the property
- 21 taken consists of somebody's doing his job.
- 22 MS. HARRINGTON: It's true, but the New
- 23 York courses -- the New York cases said that they were
- 24 construing the word "property" to mean the same thing as
- 25 used -- used in both places in the statute.

- 1 And there is no reason to -- to define the
- 2 word "property" to include the concept of being
- 3 obtainable because the statute already separately
- 4 requires that property be obtained before there is
- 5 extortion.
- Just, if I can just note that --
- 7 JUSTICE SCALIA: I'm not sure that
- 8 obtainable property and -- and harmable property are one
- 9 and the same thing, I'm really not.
- 10 MS. HARRINGTON: They might not be, but they
- 11 are both -- but property is property. That's our
- 12 position, that there is a legal meaning of property, it
- includes the right to run a business, the right to -- to
- 14 engage in an occupation. In a particular instance that
- 15 property may not be obtainable and then there won't be a
- 16 Hobbs Act violation. But you don't have to read the
- obtainability into the definition of "property."
- 18 It's the same thing. The Hobbs Act also
- 19 says that you can commit a violation by committing
- 20 physical violence against property. Now, in their
- 21 opening brief, Petitioner said, well, if something can't
- 22 be physically harmed, it can't be property. We are
- 23 happy to see in the reply brief they sort of gave that
- 24 up by saying, "Okay, yeah. Well, business secrets are
- 25 property. A patent is property. Those things can't be

- 1 physically harmed.
- 2 But there is no reason to read "property"
- 3 means different things. If something can't be
- 4 physically harmed, it won't be the basis for liability
- 5 under that provision of the Hobbs Act.
- 6 JUSTICE SCALIA: You are -- you are
- 7 contradicting what you yourself said a little bit
- 8 before, which is that property means the same thing for
- 9 both provisions --
- 10 MS. HARRINGTON: No, that's exactly what I'm
- 11 saying.
- 12 JUSTICE SCALIA: -- for both the obtaining
- 13 and the harming.
- MS. HARRINGTON: That's exactly --
- 15 JUSTICE SCALIA: But it doesn't mean the
- 16 same thing for the harming because there is some
- 17 property that can't be harmed.
- 18 MS. HARRINGTON: Right. But that doesn't
- 19 mean that property means something different. It just
- 20 means if it's property that can't be harmed, then it --
- 21 it won't be a basis for liability under that provision.
- I'm just saying you don't want to give a
- 23 different definition to the same word used different
- 24 times in the same statute, when the concept is -- is --
- 25 where the work is carried by other words in the statute.

- I think if I could point to --
- 2 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I -- I -- going back a
- 3 little bit to Justice Breyer's question, how do you gain
- 4 possession of someone's advice or how they do their job
- 5 when it's not giving you a direct benefit, it's
- 6 something that belongs to someone else?
- 7 MS. HARRINGTON: What you are doing is --
- 8 what happened in this case is Petitioner was attempting
- 9 to obtain control over the fruits of the general
- 10 counsel's labor.
- 11 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: That's the problem, this
- 12 obtaining controlled concept.
- MS. HARRINGTON: Right, so what --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Because you're -- you're
- 15 equating taking control with possession. And that's
- 16 where I'm having difficulty.
- MS. HARRINGTON: Well, this Court has
- 18 repeatedly said that property and exclusive control of
- 19 property are just different aspects of the same thing.
- 20 They're different sticks in the bundle that make up the
- 21 property.
- Here, what Petitioner was trying to do was
- 23 he was trying to dictate the substance of the
- 24 recommendation, and in doing so, he was trying to
- 25 exorcise the General Counsel's right to make the

- 1 recommendation, his right to do his job, and that was
- 2 his property. He wasn't just trying to keep him from
- 3 going to work, he was trying to literally dictate what
- 4 the recommendation was. And that's how it was charged
- 5 in the indictment, that's what the jury found. That was
- 6 where the obtaining came in.
- 7 The -- the concept of property and control
- 8 of property is well illustrated by this Court's decision
- 9 in Carpenter. There the property -- one of the pieces
- 10 of property at issue was confidential business
- 11 information, which was taken from The Wall Street
- 12 Journal.
- But it wasn't -- it wasn't really taken from
- 14 The Wall Street Journal because The Wall Street Journal
- 15 still had the information at the end of the day. What
- 16 the Court found was taken from The Wall Street Journal
- 17 was the ability to control, to have the exclusive
- 18 control over the information.
- 19 JUSTICE BREYER: As I think about it in
- 20 terms of the New York cases, as you write them up here,
- 21 it sounds as if someone was trying to get control of a
- 22 business. So I think business, land, labor, and
- 23 capital. All right. I can see why somebody who's
- 24 trying to get control of a whole business is trying to
- 25 take land, labor, and capital. There may be no land

- 1 there, but so what. And -- but a person's trying to
- 2 take control of another's job by just telling him what
- 3 to do 2 percent of the time seems well across some kind
- 4 of line.
- 5 MS. HARRINGTON: Well, I mean, you might
- 6 have an obtaining question if it's only 2 percent of the
- 7 time.
- 8 JUSTICE BREYER: No, no. No attaining
- 9 question. I'm just thinking is it reasonable to call a
- 10 secretary doing one job which takes 3 percent of her
- 11 time that hour property, in a way is that different from
- 12 taking control of Macy's?
- MS. HARRINGTON: Well, you should --
- JUSTICE BREYER: And -- and it seems to me
- 15 that probably it is.
- MS. HARRINGTON: Well, I guess -- I mean,
- 17 it's sort of two -- two different kinds of responses.
- 18 One is that when you're asking if something is property,
- 19 you want to look at it sort of on a class-wide or
- 20 aggregate basis. If you have one, single unauthorized
- 21 download of a copyrighted song, that's not necessarily
- 22 going to cause harm to the record company --
- JUSTICE BREYER: No, no, I'm not worried
- 24 about copyrights or other intangibles.
- MS. HARRINGTON: No, I understand.

- 1 JUSTICE BREYER: That's not the issue.
- MS. HARRINGTON: But I'm just saying you
- 3 want to look at something in the aggregate on a
- 4 class-wide basis, and persons doing their job on a
- 5 class-wide basis is something that is economically
- 6 valuable to them. And therefore, it's property.
- 7 I lost track of what my second response was
- 8 going to be.
- 9 So anyway, the -- the Hobbs Act clearly was
- 10 targeted -- was trying to get at racketeering activity.
- 11 It was trying to get at organized crime families. And
- 12 Congress knew that one of the main means that organized
- 13 crime families use was taking control of businesses.
- Now, those cases might seem easier because
- 15 taking control of a brick and mortar business may seem
- 16 more obviously like property than taking control of a
- 17 person's occupation or their job. But a person's right
- 18 to labor is economically valuable to them and is
- 19 property to them in the same way that the running of a
- 20 business is.
- 21 Now, Petitioner's view would -- if it -- I
- 22 mean, his real view is that he'd want to wipe out the
- 23 heartland of Hobbs Act organized crime prosecutions, but
- 24 I think his fallback position is that he would want to
- 25 wipe out any extortion of a business that provides

- 1 services instead of providing a tangible good. But that
- 2 doesn't make sense either.
- 3 If Petitioner had threatened harm to a
- 4 plumber if the plumber didn't come and -- and fix his
- 5 leaky faucet, he would have been extorting that
- 6 plumber's labor, and the same thing for a gardener, if
- 7 he tried to get a gardener to come and mow his lawn.
- 8 Now, he wouldn't end up with anything tangible at -- at
- 9 the back end, but what he would have taken from those
- 10 laborers would be their right to labor, their right
- 11 to --
- 12 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, yes, he would have
- 13 ended up with something intangible in those
- 14 hypotheticals. He would have ended up with the mowed
- 15 lawn. He would have ended up with the thing that the
- 16 service was providing them.
- MS. HARRINGTON: But he wouldn't --
- 18 JUSTICE KAGAN: The -- the problem here is
- 19 that there is no obtaining of anything that the person
- 20 is getting in your theory.
- 21 MS. HARRINGTON: It's the same kind of
- 22 obtaining here because he wouldn't take the mowed lawn
- 23 from the -- from the gardener, he wouldn't take a lack
- 24 of leaking from the plumber. What he's taking from them
- 25 is their services in order to get a particular result.

- 1 It's the same thing here, he's trying to
- 2 take from the General Counsel his service of making a
- 3 recommendation that's in his client's best interest and
- 4 he's trying to dictate the substance of the
- 5 recommendation to try to get him to give a particular
- 6 recommendation, a positive recommendation.
- 7 JUSTICE SCALIA: Why is that valuable to me?
- 8 Why is it valuable to me -- I can see how the job is
- 9 valuable to me. I get paid to do the job. But why
- 10 making one recommendation rather than another is
- 11 valuable to me? I don't think it's valuable to me.
- MS. HARRINGTON: Well, that's why I'm
- 13 saying --
- 14 JUSTICE SCALIA: It's only because I'm an
- 15 honest person that I want to make the proper
- 16 recommendation, but to say that it has any economic
- 17 value that I recommend A rather than B? It's -- it's
- 18 totally neutral whether one is -- is more economically
- 19 valuable than the other.
- 20 MS. HARRINGTON: It has economic value
- 21 because the lawyer's job is to give his advice in
- 22 keeping with his client's best interest. It's the same
- 23 thing as the record company. A single unauthorized
- 24 download --
- 25 JUSTICE SCALIA: That's all very true and an

- 1 honest lawyer should do that, but that doesn't prove
- 2 that it's economically valuable for the lawyer to give
- 3 the right advice rather than the wrong advice.
- 4 MS. HARRINGTON: It is. If Petitioner had
- 5 tried to blackmail the General Counsel every week to
- 6 give a different recommendation than what he wanted, the
- 7 result would have been the General Counsel would have
- 8 lost his job. He would have lost his stream of revenue.
- 9 He might have been disbarred.
- 10 JUSTICE SCALIA: Oh, I see. I see.
- 11 MS. HARRINGTON: That's economically
- 12 valuable to him. It's the same thing as a single
- 13 download of a -- of a record that might not cause
- 14 economic harm to a record company, but it's still taking
- 15 property because in the aggregate, the rights of that
- 16 copyright or trademark have -- the property right has
- 17 value to the record company.
- 18 It's important to keep in mind the factual
- 19 scenario here. Here, Petitioner was trying to use
- 20 blackmail to coerce a State agent into doing something
- 21 that was against his -- his will in order to get a
- 22 \$35 million investment from the State. Now, again, this
- 23 might seem like a harder case than if he was trying to
- 24 coopt the running of a brick and mortar business, but
- 25 what he was trying to do is coopt an individual's doing

- of his job. He's trying to dictate the substance of the
- 2 recommendation. In doing that, he's obtaining property
- 3 from the victim.
- 4 JUSTICE KAGAN: Ms. Harrington, I guess I'm
- 5 just confused, and this goes back again to
- 6 Justice Kennedy's initial question, why it wasn't
- 7 charged in a much simpler way where the property is not
- 8 a right by a lawyer to do his job, which seems no other
- 9 person can get, but where the property was the contract,
- 10 was the -- was the investment and the fees, and the
- 11 theory was that a threat was used in order to get that
- 12 investment and fees.
- And why wasn't -- why isn't that just -- you
- 14 know, I look at the facts here and I say extortion, but
- 15 not on your theory, on my theory. And why wasn't that
- 16 simple theory used?
- 17 MS. HARRINGTON: Well, it was charged on
- 18 several different theories, and one of the theories was
- 19 that he was trying to gain the commitment to the
- 20 investment. Now, the jury was given choices. The jury
- 21 circled the lawyer's positive recommendation as the
- 22 property that was obtained. I assume that's because the
- 23 evidence in the case, the e-mails from Petitioner to
- 24 General Counsel talked about the recommendation and so
- 25 that was a tangible thing in the jury's mind.

Official

1	Ιt	was	sort	of	that	there	was	а	really

- 2 direct connection between what Petitioner was saying,
- 3 what he was trying to do, and the recommendation.
- 4 JUSTICE SCALIA: Is what --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: But you don't think that
- 6 there's any reason why it, in a future case, it couldn't
- 7 be charged just the way I said it?
- 8 MS. HARRINGTON: I don't think -- I think it
- 9 could have been charged that he was trying to get the
- 10 money here.
- 11 JUSTICE SCALIA: Was that one of the choices
- 12 the jury had?
- MS. HARRINGTON: That he was trying to get
- 14 the commitment, that was one of the choices. What they
- 15 circled was the recommendation. Now, who knows why a
- 16 jury does anything. I assume, like I said, it's because
- 17 that was what the e-mails were about, they were about
- 18 the recommendation.
- 19 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I didn't think they
- 20 circled recommendation. They circled his honest advice,
- 21 didn't they?
- 22 MS. HARRINGTON: No, they circled -- it says
- 23 the General Counsel's recommendation -- this is on the
- 24 JA 142. That's where it starts --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I'm sorry.

- 1 MS. HARRINGTON: JA 142. What they circled
- 2 was the General Counsel's recommendation to approve the
- 3 commitment. And I think that wording is very helpful to
- 4 us because it's not just that he's trying to obtain a
- 5 recommendation from the General Counsel. He's trying to
- 6 obtain a particular recommendation, the recommendation
- 7 to approve the commitment. I think that encapsulates
- 8 both the property and the obtaining that is the theory
- 9 of our case.
- 10 The General Counsel's job was to give his
- 11 legal advice. The Petitioner was trying to dictate the
- 12 substance of that legal advice. His property interest
- 13 was in doing his job. The General Counsel -- the
- 14 Petitioner was trying to take control of the doing of
- 15 the job, and therefore trying to take the General
- 16 Counsel's property.
- 17 JUSTICE KENNEDY: It -- it does seem to me
- 18 important that you can't give us a common law case
- 19 because common law is extortion -- at common law is
- 20 extortion, it's usually the other way around. It's
- 21 usually the official who's doing the extorting.
- MS. HARRINGTON: It was always the official
- 23 who was doing the extorting.
- 24 JUSTICE KENNEDY: At -- at common law, could
- 25 anyone ever extort an official, or we just don't have

- 1 those cases?
- 2 MS. HARRINGTON: No. At common law, it was
- 3 only limited to acts by an official. There was no --
- 4 and -- and the Court has recognized that when Congress
- 5 enacted the Hobbs Act, it expanded the -- the reach of
- 6 extortion in that sense, in the same way that New York
- 7 did when it enacted the State extortion law.
- And I do think it's important to keep in
- 9 mind that the -- the Hobbs Act is based on the New York
- 10 law and we don't want to just ignore the New York cases
- 11 that construe the word "property" to mean the running of
- 12 a business and the doing of a job.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: But not the obtaining of
- 14 property.
- 15 MS. HARRINGTON: But it wasn't -- I mean,
- 16 it's true there weren't cases --
- 17 JUSTICE SCALIA: That's true. Not the
- 18 obtaining the property, right?
- 19 MS. HARRINGTON: I concede that point. I
- 20 concede that point. But it was -- it was defining the
- 21 word "property" and that property is used twice. And so
- 22 again, it's a separate question here whether the
- 23 property was obtained. We think it's clear that there
- 24 was property. We think it's clear the property was
- 25 obtained as well, but those are two separate questions.

- 1 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: You -- you point
- 2 out, of course, that it was based on the New York law,
- 3 but what do you do with the point that they did not
- 4 carry forward the separate crime of coercion, which was
- 5 in the New York law but not in the Hobbs Act?
- 6 MS. HARRINGTON: That's true -- I mean, it
- 7 was a separate crime of coercion. There was a separate
- 8 crime of coercion under New York law. I think, you
- 9 know, the Congress conceived of the Hobbs Act as a
- 10 property -- as a crime of -- against property, and so it
- 11 didn't want to include coercion. It included extortion
- 12 and robbery.
- Of course, every extortion crime --
- 14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: What do you do with
- 15 the fact that the State authorities did charge it under
- 16 coercion?
- 17 MS. HARRINGTON: In this case. Well, I
- 18 think it's important to note, and Petitioner doesn't
- 19 mention this, that the attempted extortion charge he was
- 20 initially charged with was a misdemeanor and the
- 21 attempted coercion charge he ultimately ended up being
- 22 charged with in State law was a felony. So I think that
- 23 explains what was going on there.
- 24 And it's a good example -- it's a good
- 25 illustration of why it's hard to judge ex-post what

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- 1 happened, you know, what was motivating different
- 2 charging decisions.
- 3 JUSTICE SCALIA: What do you think would be
- 4 covered by coercion that wouldn't be covered by the
- 5 Government's extortion theory here?
- Give me an example of -- of coercion?
- 7 MS. HARRINGTON: So anything that doesn't
- 8 involve property. So if you're trying to coerce --
- 9 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, for example --
- 10 MS. HARRINGTON: So trying to coerce someone
- 11 to marry someone they don't want.
- 12 I think, in the Scheidler case --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Why -- why isn't that
- 14 property? Why? You know, my -- my choice of marrying
- 15 whom I want, why isn't that as much property as -- as my
- 16 ability to -- to perform my job the way I want?
- MS. HARRINGTON: Because it's -- I think
- 18 it's more properly viewed as a liberty interest. It's
- 19 not a source of economic value in the sort of
- 20 traditional sense. I think if you take the Scheidler
- 21 case --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: A lot of people marry for
- money.
- 24 (Laughter.)
- 25 MS. HARRINGTON: It's true. I walked into

- 1 that one.
- 2 I think -- so let's take the Scheidler case
- 3 for an example. There were different types of property
- 4 that were initially alleged in that case. One of them
- 5 was the right of women to access the services of the
- 6 clinics.
- 7 This Court -- this Court distinguished that
- 8 from the other alleged property interests, which were
- 9 the running of the business that was the clinic. And
- 10 the Court said that the right of women to access the
- 11 services of the clinics was really more of a liberty
- 12 interest and the running of a business was really more
- of -- it didn't say it was property because it didn't
- 14 have to decide that, but it said that's really more in
- 15 the nature of property. That was the property
- 16 right alleged.
- 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: It seems to me you
- 18 could characterize the right to work as more of a
- 19 liberty interest than a property interest.
- 20 MS. HARRINGTON: I think it's both. And
- 21 so someone -- the general counsel could have been
- 22 coerced in this case if he had been prevented from going
- 23 to jobs, to his job. But here what Petitioner was
- 24 trying to do again was to -- to take the substance of
- 25 the job, where he was trying to take the fruits of the

- 1 labor of the general counsel by trying to dictate the
- 2 substance of the recommendation.
- 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So you draw a
- 4 distinction between extorting someone not to go to work
- 5 and extorting him how to do his job once he's at work?
- 6 MS. HARRINGTON: Not on the basis of
- 7 property, but on the basis of obtaining. The former
- 8 is -- there's no obtaining and in the latter there's
- 9 obtaining because what you're doing is you are
- 10 exercising the person's right to do their job.
- 11 And the Court has said again and again that
- 12 exclusive control of property is an essential element of
- 13 all personal property, of all private property.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Why -- why, just as long as
- 15 we are idly speculating, didn't you use 18 U.S.C. 875,
- 16 "Whoever with intent to extort from any person," you
- 17 know, "anything of value"?
- 18 MS. HARRINGTON: Well, we did use it, and he
- 19 was -- I mean, there are five convictions under 875.
- 20 What happened is in this case we conceded that Section
- 21 875 uses the word "extort." We conceded in the court of
- 22 appeals that "extort" has the same meaning as
- 23 "extortion" under the Hobbs Act.
- 24 And so if there wasn't extortion under the
- 25 Hobbs Act, there wouldn't be --

- 1 JUSTICE BREYER: You don't have -- you don't
- 2 have property in there. You have a thing of value --
- MS. HARRINGTON: That's --
- 4 JUSTICE BREYER: -- is there some -- I mean,
- 5 it just seems obvious you'd be in a much stronger
- 6 position when you say that the recommendation not to buy
- 7 or to buy a particular service from somebody is a thing
- 8 of value.
- 9 MS. HARRINGTON: That's true. In this case,
- 10 again, we have treated them as the same. But I think
- 11 you would want to reserve for another case the question
- 12 whether Section 875 --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Have they in the Court been
- 14 treated as a thing of value means property?
- MS. HARRINGTON: I think "thing of value" is
- 16 a broader term than "property."
- 17 JUSTICE BREYER: So no.
- 18 MS. HARRINGTON: Right. So we haven't made
- 19 an argument about 875 here. We've conceded that
- 20 whatever the result is as to the Hobbs Act would control
- 21 as to 875. But I do think that's a question for another
- 22 case if we don't prevail in this case.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, it -- it at least
- 24 makes available the argument that you don't have to go
- 25 this far, that there are other provisions that would

- 1 enable you to get to this person.
- 2 MS. HARRINGTON: Well, again, I don't think
- 3 we are going too far --
- 4 JUSTICE SCALIA: So why -- instead of
- 5 inducing us to define property so broadly that it's
- 6 unrecognizable, as far as I am concerned --
- 7 MS. HARRINGTON: But, Justice Scalia, you
- 8 have already defined it this broadly in cases dealing
- 9 with Section 20 of the Clayton Act, the Due Process
- 10 Clause, the scope of a court's equity jurisdiction. The
- 11 Court has said that the running of a business is
- 12 property. The Court has also said that pursuit of an
- 13 occupation is property.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: We're talking about
- 15 property for purposes of extortion, the common law crime
- 16 of extortion.
- MS. HARRINGTON: I hear what you're saying.
- 18 But what I am saying is that property is property. And
- 19 it's true that in extortion the property has to be
- 20 obtained for there to be a crime. That work is done by
- 21 the word "obtained."
- JUSTICE SCALIA: I don't think property is
- 23 property. I think property can -- can have a -- a
- 24 different meaning with -- with regard to various
- 25 provisions of the law. And -- and the provision of the

- 1 law defining extortion brings with it a whole baggage
- 2 of -- of common law cases. And that may well be
- 3 different from the word "property" used in some other
- 4 Federal statute that does not invoke the common law of
- 5 extortion.
- 6 MS. HARRINGTON: But this Federal crime of
- 7 extortion brings with -- brings with it the baggage of
- 8 the New York State extortion law, and the New York cases
- 9 said in that law the word "property" includes the
- 10 running of a business and doing a job.
- 11 It's true that that wasn't the property
- 12 being extorted in those cases, but that's what they said
- 13 property means. And if you are worried that those
- 14 things can't be obtained, you don't need to worry -- you
- 15 don't need to have a special definition of property to
- 16 take care of that because the Hobbs Act already requires
- 17 that property be obtained before there is extortion, so
- 18 there is no need to have a redundancy built in for that.
- 19 Again, I can understand how -- how the main
- 20 Hobbs Act, sort of heartland cases which involve the
- 21 co-opting of a brick and mortar business, seem like
- 22 easier cases. And you might want to draw a line between
- 23 the running of a business and the doing of labor.
- 24 But a person has a -- has a property
- 25 interest in doing their job the same way that they have

- 1 a property interest in running a business. The fact
- 2 that they work for someone else shouldn't mean that they
- 3 have less of an interest in doing their job than if they
- 4 run their own business.
- 5 Doing a job is a source of economic value to
- 6 a person and the Court should construe it as property,
- 7 and the right to exercise control over doing their job
- 8 is also property.
- 9 If the Court has no questions?
- 10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
- 11 Mr. Clement, 5 minutes.
- 12 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF PAUL D. CLEMENT
- 13 ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER
- 14 MR. CLEMENT: Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice.
- 15 A couple of points in rebuttal.
- 16 Ms. Harrington started by pointing to the
- 17 language in McNally. And she is absolutely correct that
- 18 at the same time that McNally got rid of the honest
- 19 services prosecution that was brought there, they
- 20 reserved two possible prosecutions. One would be the
- 21 obtaining of money, where there was a difference in what
- 22 the government paid for and what the government got.
- 23 The other thing that she alludes to is
- 24 there -- the Court did say, well, maybe there's a
- 25 possibility that you could prosecute based on the

- 1 government's loss of control over its allocation of
- 2 these workman's comp policies.
- The problem is, of course, that McNally
- 4 precedes Cleveland. And in Cleveland, the government
- 5 seized on that language and said, well, even if the
- 6 video poker license isn't property, the right to control
- 7 who gets it is property, and that got exactly zero votes
- 8 from this Court. So I think that argument is no longer
- 9 viable.
- 10 Ms. Harrington also points to these New York
- 11 cases about the scope of property for purposes of 851 of
- 12 the New York Penal Code. But of course, what we're
- 13 talking about is 850 of the New York Penal Code, the
- 14 kind of property that can be obtained. I think it's
- 15 common ground that -- they are not co-extensive. There
- 16 are -- there is property that you can obtain that you
- 17 can't threaten.
- 18 Indeed, the classic thing you obtained in --
- in an extortion case is money, and I'm not sure how you
- 20 really threaten money. You can threaten to take money
- 21 from someone, but you don't really threaten the money.
- 22 So these are different terms.
- So relying on the Barondess case, which is
- 24 the same case that Justice Stevens relied on in dissent
- 25 in Scheidler II just doesn't work.

- 1 Now, she's also absolutely correct that
- 2 extortion at common law only involved official
- 3 extortion, but that doesn't mean that there aren't
- 4 common law places to look for a relevant definition of
- 5 property. Because the same basic concept was in the
- 6 larceny statutes, the -- not statutes, the common law
- 7 crime of burglary, larceny, and embezzlement.
- 8 And indeed to this very day, New York refers
- 9 to extortion as larceny by extortion. And if you go to
- 10 those New York cases, the place I would point you to is
- 11 the Ashworth case, which is cited in both of our briefs.
- 12 This is a case that makes very clear that under New York
- 13 law, they didn't even think that services at all were
- 14 property.
- This is a case where the foreman of a mill
- 16 gets the bright idea that he's going to do some work for
- 17 his own company using the mill's facilities. And he's
- 18 charged with larceny.
- 19 And the court in that case says, no, that's
- 20 not larceny, you didn't obtain any goods. Classic sort
- 21 of common law property is in order to be the kind of
- 22 property that you can steal or extort it has to be
- 23 moveable. One of the elements of the common law crime
- 24 is asportation, literally moving it --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Mr. Clement, when you

- 1 finish --
- 2 MR. CLEMENT: And if I can just sort of put
- 3 the point, they say all of that and they reject that
- 4 argument. And they use a line which I think really
- 5 captures what's going on here. They say, well, maybe
- 6 you can conceive of such a conception of property, but
- 7 they say to conceive this requires a certain
- 8 intellectual flexibility which is probably not possessed
- 9 by the average person. And I would simply submit it
- 10 also is not the kind of flexibility that should be
- 11 possessed by the average judge in a criminal case.
- 12 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Let -- look, I think if
- 13 we take your argument to its logical conclusion, what
- 14 you are telling us is, do away with the Second Circuit's
- 15 Tropiano decision, and the large progeny of cases that
- 16 come from it.
- 17 The most common is the threat to a business
- 18 that says pull out of this market because we don't want
- 19 you in it. And we want all the customers. And courts
- 20 routinely have said that is a Hobbs Act violation.
- 21 You're using the threat of force to tell people to keep
- 22 out of a particular market.
- 23 Today you are telling us that under your
- 24 theory of the Hobbs Act and your definition of property,
- 25 that doesn't count as a Hobbs Act violation.

- 1 MR. CLEMENT: Well, a couple of things,
- 2 Justice Sotomayor. I went back to the Tropiano case
- 3 because it is sort of the pro genitor of this whole line
- 4 of Second Circuit cases, and I noticed two things.
- 5 One, I noticed it was written by a district
- 6 court sitting by designation. So I mean, I -- I don't
- 7 mean anything by that other than this is not Marbury.
- 8 Second, I would say that the second thing I
- 9 noticed is that the debt --
- 10 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Oh, I think when I sat
- 11 as a district court judge, I would have been insulted by
- 12 that.
- 13 (Laughter.)
- MR. CLEMENT: Well, it's not -- it's a good
- 15 thing you're no longer sitting in that capacity, Your
- 16 Honor --
- 17 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Okay. It's really is,
- 18 for you.
- 19 MR. CLEMENT: -- because I -- I certainly
- 20 mean you no offense. You could write Marbury here.
- 21 So the -- the difference is, Your Honor,
- 22 that that could have also been, I think, actually
- 23 prosecuted as a property crime because in that case,
- 24 there were customer accounts that were obtained, and
- 25 those customer accounts, as the facts of Tropiano

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Τ	discussed it, actually had value, they could have been
2	transferred from one business to another.
3	So I think what would happen in the Second
4	Circuit, if you decide this case the way we would like
5	you to, is the Government's going to have to be careful
6	They're going to have to write their indictments to
7	focus on things like money or obtainable property, and
8	they can't get sloppy and put together these autonomy
9	interests and call them property.
10	Thank you, Your Honor.
11	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
12	The case is submitted.
13	(Whereupon, at 11:09 a.m., the case in the
14	above-entitled matter was submitted.)
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A	42:3 45:15	21:21 22:7,7	46:5 61:2	54:13,17
ability 28:3	ahead 22:16	26:10 54:19,24	baggage 56:1,7	breyers 29:23
40:17 51:16	albany 25:10	57:12 58:8	bank 12:2,4	39:3
able 12:4	alienable 10:12	60:4,13	barondess 34:2	bribe 29:25
abortion 17:3	10:14 18:1	arguments 4:4	34:3 58:23	brick 42:15
29:3,4 35:6,8	alito 10:4 15:1	articulated 23:4	based 17:10	45:24 56:21
aboveentitled	alleged 26:22	ashworth 59:11	31:21 49:9	brief 10:5 15:18
1:11 62:14	52:4,8,16	asking 26:15	50:2 57:25	34:14 37:21,23
absent 7:24	allocation 58:1	41:18	basic 3:16 18:22	briefs 59:11
absolutely 35:13	allude 33:6	aspect 28:9	59:5	bright 59:16
57:17 59:1	alluded 14:17	aspects 28:7	basically 11:23	brings 8:20 56:1
absorbed 30:9	alludes 57:23	39:19	12:17 13:3,7	56:7,7
abstract 32:21	alter 18:7	asportation	basis 33:22 38:4	broad 16:12
33:16	amazing 24:18	59:24	38:21 41:20	17:17 31:14
accepting 29:13	ambit 16:14	assent 19:14	42:4,5 53:6,7	broader 54:16
access 52:5,10	amount 19:21	assigned 32:18	began 19:17	broadest 16:8
accounts 61:24	analogize 5:2	assistant 1:17	26:15	broadly 55:5,8
61:25	analogous 13:16	12:1	behalf 1:15,19	brought 57:19
act 3:11,15,22	anothers 9:5	association	2:4,7,10 3:8	built 56:18
9:11,15 10:11	41:2	19:22	26:11 57:13	bundle 39:20
11:1,7,11	answer 5:18	assume 4:4	believe 9:7	burglary 3:12
16:10 17:10	12:9,12 17:15	16:19 46:22	belongs 21:3	17:22 59:7
18:1 21:8	22:16 29:21	47:16	39:6	business 10:2
22:11 24:3,5,7	30:25 31:7	assumption	benefit 19:1	17:4 28:20
24:20 30:8,8	answered 14:25	12:19	39:5	30:12 31:23
31:20 33:22	antiracketeeri	attaining 41:8	best 5:25 8:19	34:5,7 35:22
37:16,18 38:5	9:15 24:5	attempt 4:2	8:20 34:3 44:3	37:13,24 40:10
42:9,23 49:5,9	anybody 29:18	attempted 50:19	44:22	40:22,22,24
50:5,9 53:23	anymore 25:11	50:21	bids 18:5	42:15,20,25
53:25 54:20	anyway 42:9	attempting	big 23:18	45:24 49:12
55:9 56:16,20	appeal 16:20	27:13 30:22	bigs 25:24	52:9,12 55:11
60:20,24,25	appeals 53:22	39:8	bit 38:7 39:3	56:10,21,23
activity 42:10	appearances	auction 18:21	blackmail 45:5	57:1,4 60:17
acts 49:3	1:14	19:23	45:20	62:2
actual 13:13	application	authorities 9:10	bottom 3:13	businesses 42:13
add 29:22	20:14	50:15	19:10	buy 54:6,7
address 25:2	appropriate	autonomy 10:2	box 22:19	
28:14	29:15	17:4,24 20:7	break 18:11	C
advice 39:4	approve 48:2,7	23:6 62:8	breyer 10:21	c 1:3,8,15,18 2:1
44:21 45:3,3	april 1:9	available 54:24	11:3,8,25	3:1 53:15
47:20 48:11,12	arent 25:23 59:3	average 60:9,11	12:15,21 14:3	call 17:9 41:9
agent 13:8,10	arguing 10:6		22:12 28:13	62:9
45:20	argument 1:12	B	29:2,11,20	calling 32:7
agents 14:2	2:2,5,8 3:3,7	b 44:17	30:3,24 31:11	cant 5:17 12:6
aggravated	4:4,8 6:14	babies 36:1	40:19 41:8,14	17:17,23 21:3
24:14	15:11,17 16:20	back 27:5 28:18	41:23 42:1	33:7 37:21,22
aggregate 41:20	16:23 17:2	35:3 39:2 43:9	53:14 54:1,4	37:25 38:3,17
uggi cgatt 41.20			,	
	·		•	•

38:20 48:18	56:22 58:11	circle 14:18	35:21,25 52:9	4:10 5:23,25
56:14 58:17	59:10 60:15	circled 14:20	clinics 17:5 35:6	6:2 7:7 13:16
62:8	61:4	46:21 47:15,20	35:9,16,17,24	13:20 27:13
capacity 61:15	cash 13:14,20,20	47:20,22 48:1	52:6,11	46:19 47:14
capital 40:23,25	causation 4:3	circuit 61:4 62:4	close 13:11 35:6	48:3,7
captures 60:5	21:21 22:7	circuits 60:14	closed 17:6	committee
care 19:9 56:16	cause 21:9 41:22	cite 33:3	closest 33:5,16	19:13
careful 62:5	45:13	cited 59:11	33:24	committing
carpenter 20:25	center 26:6	citizenry 29:9	clue 16:7,11	34:17 37:19
40:9	certain 12:3	classic 17:18	code 9:16 58:12	common 17:11
carried 38:25	19:20 60:7	58:18 59:20	58:13	17:15,18 33:4
carry 50:4	certainly 4:11	classwide 41:19	coerce 11:13	33:5,7,9,12
case 3:4 4:17 5:3	9:19 20:22	42:4,5	19:8 45:20	36:20 48:18,19
5:3 7:5,16	61:19	clause 55:10	51:8,10	48:19,24 49:2
13:12,15,17	cetera 29:4	clayton 16:9	coerced 11:15	55:15 56:2,4
14:15 18:7,15	chamber 12:10	55:9	12:7 18:4	58:15 59:2,4,6
18:24 19:9,12	change 18:17	clear 17:1 49:23	52:22	59:21,23 60:17
21:13 23:19,20	36:10	49:24 59:12	coercer 20:23	commonwealth
24:24 25:1,21	changes 18:22	clearly 42:9	coerces 11:17	26:24
26:6,20 27:11	characteristics	clement 1:15 2:3	coercion 3:24	comp 8:6,9 58:2
27:18,20,21	10:19	2:9 3:6,7,9 4:6	8:23,24 9:4,10	company 6:1,18
28:5,12 29:3,4	characterize	4:21 5:21 6:6	9:12,13,14,16	27:25 41:22
29:5 31:8	52:18	6:12,15 7:3,15	9:22 10:3 11:7	44:23 45:14,17
32:23 33:4,5	charge 5:19,22	8:1 9:7 10:10	23:19,23 24:6	59:17
33:25 34:2,2,3	7:2,7 50:15,19	11:2,5,21	24:8,13,22	compensation
34:5,21,25	50:21	12:12,18,22	26:3 50:4,7,8	5:6
35:4,12 36:2	charged 4:18	13:3,25 14:10	50:11,16,21	competitors
36:19,20 39:8	9:9,12 27:6,12	14:14,22 15:21	51:4,6	11:23 14:5
45:23 46:23	28:11 29:24	15:24 16:17,22	coextensive	completely
47:6 48:9,18	40:4 46:7,17	16:25 18:8,13	58:15	19:18
50:17 51:12,21	47:7,9 50:20	20:1,21 21:12	college 31:4	comptrollers
52:2,4,22	50:22 59:18	21:23 22:5,8	come 5:7 6:19	20:10
53:20 54:9,11	charging 27:18	22:18 23:3	7:12 10:11,20	concede 49:19
54:22,22 58:19	27:21 51:2	24:1 25:2	20:5 26:21,23	49:20
58:23,24 59:11	check 14:9,13	26:19 27:18	43:4,7 60:16	conceded 53:20
59:12,15,19	checked 22:20	57:11,12,14	comes 18:10	53:21 54:19
60:11 61:2,23	cheerios 10:23	59:25 60:2	31:24 33:16	conceivable
62:4,12,13	11:4	61:1,14,19	coming 20:14	31:12
cases 8:3 12:19	chief 3:3,9 19:16	cleveland 4:9	commission	conceive 60:6,7
20:14 27:13	20:2,12 23:17	7:10 8:3 13:17	7:20 21:18	conceived 50:9
30:10 31:19	26:8,13 50:1	18:15 58:4,4	22:2,3	concept 37:2
33:20 34:2,3	50:14 52:17	client 15:13,15	commissions	38:24 39:12
34:11,19 36:16	53:3 57:10,14	15:25 19:4	4:19 5:1,5,8,16	40:7 59:5
36:23 40:20	62:11	33:1	8:5,14 26:18	conception
42:14 49:1,10	choice 51:14	clients 6:17 33:2	commit 5:17	16:12 60:6
49:16 55:8	choices 46:20	44:3,22	37:19	conceptual
56:2,8,12,20	47:11,14	clinic 29:4 35:9	commitment 4:3	16:20
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

concerned 55:6	57:7 58:1,6	34:4,6,18,21	debt 61:9	48:11 53:1
conclusion	controlled 39:12	34:22 39:17	decide 6:21	dictating 36:12
60:13	convey 32:9,11	40:16 49:4	52:14 62:4	dictum 17:9
concrete 25:18	conveyed 32:9	52:7,7,10	deciding 3:15	didnt 5:19,22
condition 29:15	conviction 8:11	53:11,21 54:13	17:5	6:10 7:2 9:11
conduct 23:22	convictions	55:11,12 57:6	decision 3:22	15:16 25:11,16
23:24	53:19	57:9,24 58:8	4:9 8:8 20:24	43:4 47:19,21
confident 20:21	coopt 45:24,25	59:19 61:6,11	24:3,7,10 40:8	50:11 52:13,13
confidential	coopting 56:21	courts 3:21 4:9	60:15	53:15 59:13,20
20:23 40:10	copyright 45:16	8:2 12:23	decisions 8:3	difference 9:21
confused 46:5	copyrighted	20:24 24:17	51:2	18:24 57:21
congress 9:11	41:21	40:8 55:10	defend 31:9	61:21
16:11 24:3,6	copyrights	60:19	defendant 19:24	different 4:7
24:11,19 33:23	41:24	covered 51:4,4	22:23 25:5	8:12 12:1
42:12 49:4	corporation	covers 9:18	defending 27:16	13:14 19:13
50:9	13:9,10	crime 3:11,13	define 15:2 37:1	23:9 28:2,6
congresss 3:21	correct 9:8	3:23,24 8:23	55:5	30:18 32:1
conjunction	57:17 59:1	8:25 9:4,5,10	defined 32:15	33:11 34:13
16:13	corrupt 18:4,15	9:12,13,22,22	55:8	35:11,18,19
connected 10:25	18:20	23:22,23,25	defining 49:20	38:3,19,23,23
connection 47:2	corruption	24:2,9,11,17	56:1	39:19,20 41:11
conscious 3:21	25:21	25:19 33:12	definition 3:17	41:17 45:6
24:6,10	cost 26:4	42:11,13,23	3:20 8:25 9:16	46:18 51:1
consists 36:21	couldnt 47:6	50:4,7,8,10,13	9:25 10:1,4,20	52:3 55:24
construe 49:11	counsel 13:23	55:15,20 56:6	15:5,19 16:16	56:3 58:22
57:6	20:10 21:3,6	59:7,23 61:23	17:16,19,21	differently
construed 16:4	26:8 30:21	crimes 3:12	20:6 28:15	26:21,24 29:16
30:11	32:25 44:2	17:19 26:5	29:13 31:6,14	difficult 21:13
construing	45:5,7 46:24	criminal 3:16	37:17 38:23	difficulty 39:16
30:10 31:20	48:5,13 52:21	60:11	56:15 59:4	direct 11:15
33:20 34:18,24	53:1 57:10	criminalize 3:22	60:24	39:5 47:2
36:24	62:11	critical 3:15	definitive 12:14	directly 24:9,17
context 36:17	counsels 32:25	10:13	deliberative	disagree 13:25
contract 13:20	39:10,25 47:23	customer 61:24	21:2 24:2 26:3	disbarred 45:9
22:2,2 32:13	48:2,10,16	61:25	delivering 36:1	discharge 25:7
46:9	count 6:25 60:25	customers 60:19	demonstrates	discharging
contradicting	couple 7:4 57:15		16:1	24:15
38:7	61:1	D	department	disclose 9:20
contrast 16:9	course 8:4 13:15	d 1:8,15,15,18	1:18	discovery 25:5,9
control 26:25	24:4,11 50:2	2:3,9 3:1,7	depends 12:13	25:17
27:1 28:3,3,6,9	50:13 58:3,12	57:12	deprived 5:13	discussed 62:1
32:2 39:9,15	courses 36:23	damaged 34:8	17:12 26:22,24	disjunctively
39:18 40:7,17	court 1:1,12	day 26:18 40:15	28:3	16:10
40:18,21,24	3:10 4:12 5:6	59:8	designation 61:6	dissent 58:24
41:2,12 42:13	8:11 17:1,3,7	dead 10:22	dictate 30:22	distinct 11:24
42:15,16 48:14	18:18 26:13	dealing 14:7	39:23 40:3	distinction
53:12 54:20	28:8 33:21	55:8	44:4 46:1	10:14 53:4
	20.0 00.21			20.2100.1
	I	I .	I .	I

distinguished	duty 24:15	ongago 27.14	ovnost 50.25	families 42:11
distinguished 52:7	25:16	engage 37:14	expost 50:25 exposure 9:1	42:13
district 61:5,11	23.10	engagement 30:12	exposure 9.1 exquisitely	far 21:25 29:2
doesnt 23:1	E	enter 32:12	24:12	54:25 55:3,6
25:15 26:1	e 1:17 2:1,6 3:1	entirely 35:11	extent 13:6	farreaching
	3:1 26:10	•	32:14	29:21 30:5
38:15,18 43:2	earlier 9:14	entity 13:7		
45:1 50:18	easier 42:14	equating 39:15	extort 4:2,2	faucet 43:5
51:7 58:25 59:3 60:25	56:22	equity 55:10	12:25,25 48:25	favor 15:25 favorable 20:15
doing 8:16,21	easy 11:14 12:5	esq 1:15,17 2:3,6 2:9	53:16,21,22 59:22	20:18 21:8
11:9 29:16	29:4	essential 53:12	extorted 56:12	federal 9:4
	economic 3:19			
30:13,14,19	30:15 44:16,20	essentially 10:1 19:1 20:6	extorting 43:5	23:22,24 24:1
31:24 32:2,5,7	45:14 51:19	et 29:4	48:21,23 53:4 53:5	24:9,25 25:1
32:9,17 33:14	57:5		extortion 3:11	25:12,13,15,25 26:5 56:4,6
33:16 34:7,17	economically	everybody 19:22 28:20		· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
35:1,2 36:10	42:5,18 44:18		3:23 5:17 6:17	fee 7:21
36:13,21 39:7 39:24 41:10	45:2,11	evidence 5:25 46:23	7:1,6 9:17,22 11:7 14:8	fees 6:9,19,22 7:12,24 27:8
42:4 45:20,25	either 21:17	evoke 33:23	17:11,18,20	
46:2 48:13,14	26:22 31:8		, ,	46:10,12 fellow 28:16
·	36:9 43:2	exactly 14:14	18:12 23:20 24:6,8,22 26:4	
48:21,23 49:12	element 25:15	22:18,18,19	, ,	felony 50:22
53:9 56:10,23	53:12	23:4 38:10,14 58:7	26:16 27:10	figure 12:6
56:25 57:3,5,7	elements 59:23		30:9 33:4,5,10	14:23 25:6
dont 4:6,15,15	emails 46:23	example 31:1	33:20 34:12,16	final 13:23
4:25 7:6 9:7	47:17	33:18 35:4	34:17 35:5	findings 14:16
12:13 13:1,17	embarrassing	50:24 51:6,9	36:1,20 37:5	finish 60:1
13:25 15:4,18	9:2	52:3	42:25 46:14	first 3:4 4:8
18:8,11,17,21	embezzlement	examples 33:19	48:19,20 49:6	23:13 29:7 34:14
19:12 22:15	3:13 17:21	exception 13:5	49:7 50:11,13	
28:17,23 31:12	59:7	excessive 6:9	50:19 51:5	fit 23:1,22,24
32:5 33:18	eminent 15:17	7:20,20	53:23,24 55:15	fits 24:17
35:25 37:16	employee 12:2	exchange 33:14	55:16,19 56:1	five 53:19
38:22 44:11	employees 8:18	exclusive 28:9	56:5,7,8,17	fix 28:17 43:4
47:5,8 48:25	employees 8.18 employer 15:14	39:18 40:17	58:19 59:2,3,9	flexibility 60:8
49:10 51:11	32:12,14,18	53:12	59:9	60:10
54:1,1,22,24	employment	excuse 35:15 exercise 22:22	extra 26:1	flows 7:8
55:2,22 56:14	32:13		$oxed{\mathbf{F}}$	focus 62:7
56:15 58:21	enable 55:1	22:25 23:10,18	faced 31:4	focused 6:10
60:18 61:6	enable 33.1 enacted 49:5,7	36:14 57:7	facilities 59:17	19:17
download 41:21	enacting 24:3	exercised 17:13	fact 9:2 11:8	focuses 22:10
44:24 45:13	encapsulates	23:2,7,8	18:19,22 50:15	focusing 36:17
draw 10:9 53:3	48:7	exercising 53:10	57:1	follow 8:2
56:22	ended 26:15	exorcise 39:25	facts 21:6 46:14	following 13:6
dropped 24:24	43:13,14,15	expanded 49:5	61:25	force 7:24 9:1,5
due 55:9	50:21	expensive 19:7	factual 45:18	31:25 60:21
duplicative 26:5	ends 27:14	explains 50:23	fallback 42:24	foreman 59:15
duties 25:7		explicitly 33:23	iaiivack 72.27	foremost 4:8

	ī	•	•	•
former 53:7	23:21 24:23	governments	38:18 39:7,13	honestly 8:18
forms 10:7	34:9	8:7,8 9:25	39:17 41:5,13	honor 14:14
forth 11:16	giridhar 1:3	12:10 16:15	41:16,25 42:2	61:16,21 62:10
forward 50:4	give 8:9 12:13	21:2 23:5 51:5	43:17,21 44:12	horrible 12:10
found 12:15	20:18 30:2	58:1 62:5	44:20 45:4,11	horribles 12:10
14:19 26:16	32:25 38:22	great 25:11	46:4,17 47:8	hour 41:11
27:15 40:5,16	44:5,21 45:2,6	grocer 10:22,24	47:13,22 48:1	house 17:23
fraud 8:11	48:10,18 51:6	11:10	48:22 49:2,15	hypothetical
fraudulent 8:5	given 11:6 15:13	ground 31:12,14	49:19 50:6,17	11:6,22 18:24
free 10:3	15:14 46:20	31:17 58:15	51:7,10,17,25	20:22 22:1
freedom 9:6	gives 11:19 12:8	guess 16:2 17:9	52:20 53:6,18	hypotheticals
friend 26:19	giving 39:5	29:6 41:16	54:3,9,15,18	43:14
friends 5:4	go 17:23 20:15	46:4	55:2,7,17 56:6	
front 14:18 24:4	22:16 27:4,9		57:16 58:10	I
26:6	31:3 35:3 53:4	H	havent 12:15	id 21:14 25:2
fruits 32:24 39:9	54:24 59:9	hands 4:14	54:18	26:14
52:25	goes 6:20,22 7:8	18:19	hear 3:3 55:17	idea 5:19 25:11
fund 6:1	10:22 46:5	happen 62:3	heartland 42:23	59:16
fundamentally	going 8:17 11:4	happened 5:13	56:20	idly 53:15
3:20	18:10 19:8	25:3,9 39:8	hed 42:22	ignore 49:10
future 47:6	20:13 25:8,23	51:1 53:20	helpful 48:3	ii 16:1 17:1
	28:17 39:2	happening 6:24	hes 11:4,4 27:23	23:13 58:25
G	40:3 41:22	happens 11:17	43:24 44:1,4	ill 18:6,6,11,11
g 3:1	42:8 50:23	happy 15:24	46:1,2 48:4,5	illogically 15:7
gain 39:3 46:19	52:22 55:3	25:2,13 37:23	53:5 59:16,17	illustrated 40:8
gap 23:18	59:16 60:5	hard 29:3 50:25	high 5:9 8:14	illustration
gardener 43:6,7	62:5,6	harder 7:5	21:18	25:19 50:25
43:23	good 8:22 14:13	45:23	hobbs 3:11,15	im 14:2,23 15:24
general 1:18	43:1 50:24,24	harm 31:25	3:22 9:11	18:10 19:8
9:23 13:23	61:14	34:20 41:22	10:11 11:1,7	27:22 28:1,17
20:10 21:3,6	goods 59:20	43:3 45:14	17:10 18:1	29:12 31:12
30:21 31:17	gotten 7:23,24	harmable 37:8	22:11 24:3,7	32:16,17 37:7
32:25 39:9,25	government	harmed 36:18	24:20 30:8,8	37:9 38:10,22
44:2 45:5,7	3:17 4:15,23	37:22 38:1,4	31:20 33:22	39:16 41:9,23
46:24 47:23	4:25 5:4,7,8,9	38:17,20	37:16,18 38:5	42:2 44:12,14
48:2,5,10,13	5:11,13,18 7:1	harming 34:18	42:9,23 49:5,9	46:4 47:25
48:15 52:21	7:8,16,18 8:13	38:13,16	50:5,9 53:23	58:19
53:1	8:15,18 13:7	harrington 1:17	53:25 54:20	imagine 11:14
generally 15:3	13:14 17:17	2:6 26:9,10,12	56:16,20 60:20	important 18:23
generate 30:16	18:18,19 19:2	27:4,12,22	60:24,25	36:6 45:18
generated 4:20	19:9,14 21:1	29:1,6,19 30:6	holdout 19:15	48:18 49:8
genitor 61:3	21:14,15,24	31:10,17 32:11	honest 5:14 8:21	50:18
getting 5:5 8:5	22:9 24:14,25	32:19,23 33:7	15:12 17:24	inadequate 8:15
30:3 36:11	24:25 25:6,10	33:11,18 34:1	28:18 29:5,7	inalienable
43:20	25:22,24,25	34:11 35:3,13	30:2 44:15	10:15,16 20:8
ginsburg 8:24	28:19 57:22,22	36:3,12,22	45:1 47:20	incentive 26:2
9:8 22:21 23:3	58:4	37:10 38:10,14	57:18	include 9:20
= 1.21 25.5	J0. 4		37.10	
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

				1
30:11 37:2	44:3,22 48:12	ja142 4:1	26:14 27:4,5	48:17,24
50:11	51:18 52:12,19	job 28:20 29:16	27:17 28:13	kennedys 27:5
included 50:11	52:19 56:25	30:13,19 31:24	29:1,2,11,20	46:6
includes 10:2,7	57:1,3	32:1,5,7,9,15	29:22,23 30:3	kind 7:16 16:2
37:13 56:9	interested 29:12	32:15,17,25	30:24 31:1,11	17:12,25 18:1
including 31:19	interests 17:24	33:17 34:7	32:4,16,20	18:18,25 19:7
incompatible	20:7 30:14	35:1,2 36:21	33:3,9,15,24	28:5 29:10
3:20	52:8 62:9	39:4 40:1 41:2	34:9 35:3,23	41:3 43:21
incorporate	interfere 30:19	41:10 42:4,17	36:8,15 37:7	58:14 59:21
9:11 19:6	interference	44:8,9,21 45:8	38:6,12,15	60:10
indicted 4:18	8:10	46:1,8 48:10	39:2,3,11,14	kinds 41:17
indictment 40:5	interfering 8:8	48:13,15 49:12	40:19 41:8,14	knees 18:11
indictments	25:15	51:16 52:23,25	41:23 42:1	knew 42:12
62:6	internal 21:2	53:5,10 56:10	43:12,18 44:7	know 5:3 10:22
individual 11:12	26:3	56:25 57:3,5,7	44:14,25 45:10	12:3,5 14:15
11:15 13:13	interpreted 9:19	jobs 28:20 31:16	46:4,6 47:4,5	15:18 18:6,20
20:16	invest 28:1	52:23	47:11,19,25	19:5,22 20:7
individuals	invested 27:25	journal 40:12,14	48:17,24 49:13	23:11 28:17
45:25	investment 6:3	40:14,16	49:17 50:1,14	29:17 32:5
inducing 55:5	6:18,19,20,22	judge 50:25	51:3,9,13,22	46:14 50:9
inferior 5:9	7:12,13,23	60:11 61:11	52:17 53:3,14	51:1,14 53:17
information	19:13,15,20	jurisdiction	54:1,4,13,17	knows 47:15
9:20 20:23	21:10,10,17,18	55:10	54:23 55:4,7	
40:11,15,18	26:18 27:8,14	jury 3:25 14:16	55:14,22 57:10	L
inherently 20:8	45:22 46:10,12	14:18 26:16	57:14 58:24	labor 32:12,13
initial 46:6	46:20	27:15 40:5	59:25 60:12	32:17,19,20,21
initially 50:20	invited 14:18	46:20,20 47:12	61:2,10,17	32:25 39:10
52:4	invoke 56:4	47:16	62:11	40:22,25 42:18
instance 37:14	involve 51:8	jurys 46:25		43:6,10 53:1
insulted 61:11	56:20	justice 1:18 3:3	K	56:23
insurance 5:10	involved 33:12	3:9,25 4:7,17	kagan 6:12,15	laborers 43:10
8:15	59:2	4:21 5:15 6:5	7:11,22 13:19	lack 43:23
intangible 3:19	involving 36:20	6:12,13,15	14:1,6,11 27:4	land 40:22,25,25
6:14 10:8,17	irrelevant 4:5,7	7:11,22 8:24	27:17 35:3,23	language 57:17
23:1 43:13	isnt 12:24 13:24	9:8 10:4,21	36:8 43:12,18	58:5
intangibles	15:22 16:24	11:3,8,25	46:4 47:5	larceny 3:12
41:24	19:16,18 23:1	12:15,21,24	keep 30:21 36:6	17:21 59:6,7,9
integrity 26:2	24:9 46:13	13:4,19 14:1,3	40:2 45:18	59:18,20
30:2	51:13,15 58:6	14:6,11,16,22	49:8 60:21	large 60:15
intellectual 60:8	issue 4:11 19:2	15:1,22,24	keeping 33:2	lateral 25:13
intent 53:16	27:1 36:5	16:15,18,23	44:22	laughter 51:24
interest 5:14	40:10 42:1	18:3,9,13	kennedy 3:25	61:13
7:18 8:17,19	issued 4:14	19:16 20:2,12	4:7,17,21 5:15	law 5:23 8:23
8:20 10:2 17:4	13:24	21:4,20,25	6:5,13 14:16	9:23 17:11,15
23:6 30:1		22:6,12,21	21:4,20,25	17:18 24:20,21
31:22,23 32:3	J	23:3,17,21	22:6 26:15	25:9 30:9,10
32:5,7 35:2	ja 47:24 48:1	24:23 26:8,13	29:22 31:1	31:19,20 33:4
ĺ		<u> </u>		
	1	1	1	•

	ı	1	ı	1
33:5,8,10,12	61:15	42:22 49:11,15	45:24 56:21	27:13 39:9
33:21,23 34:13	look 41:19 42:3	50:6 53:19	motivating 51:1	48:4,6 58:16
34:13 35:11	46:14 59:4	54:4 57:2 59:3	moveable 10:13	59:20
36:20 48:18,19	60:12	61:6,7,20	18:2 59:23	obtainability
48:19,24 49:2	looked 24:21	meaning 31:18	moving 59:24	37:17
49:7,10 50:2,5	looking 24:20	37:12 53:22	mow 43:7	obtainable 3:14
50:8,22 55:15	loss 58:1	55:24	mowed 43:14,22	10:18 37:3,8
55:25 56:1,2,4	lost 42:7 45:8,8	means 11:10	,	37:15 62:7
56:8,9 59:2,4,6	lot 51:22	12:25 13:1	N	obtained 4:22
59:13,21,23	louisiana 18:14	15:3 16:12	n 2:1,1 3:1	9:24 13:13
lawn 43:7,15,22	love 3:18	22:3 32:6	name 31:5	15:15,25 16:3
lawyer 35:9,24		34:16 38:3,8	narrower 16:14	16:7,13 17:4
45:1,2 46:8	M	38:19,20 42:12	nature 52:15	22:9,19 23:8
lawyers 19:7	m 1:13 3:2 62:13	54:14 56:13	necessarily	26:17 27:15
20:13 44:21	macys 41:12	meant 23:18	41:21	28:5,11 30:8
46:21	main 42:12	35:6	need 25:25 26:1	31:19 34:15
lead 12:4	56:19	medical 35:19	56:14,15,18	36:9 37:4
leads 22:1,2	making 12:16	mention 50:19	neither 36:19	46:22 49:23,25
leaking 43:24	21:10 22:17	metaphysical	neutral 44:18	55:20,21 56:14
leaky 43:5	30:22 44:2,10	17:2	new 3:23,23	56:17 58:14,18
legal 28:16	management	mill 59:15	5:23 8:25 9:9	61:24
37:12 48:11,12	6:1,9 7:21	million 45:22	9:11,13,23	obtaining 7:19
letter 29:25	manifestation	mills 59:17	19:6 23:23	10:12 16:24
leverage 19:18	16:8	mind 15:2,6	24:11,13,19,20	17:1,2,8 30:20
20:16,19	marbury 61:7	16:14 45:18	24:21,21,24,24	35:20 36:5,14
liability 38:4,21	61:20	46:25 49:9	29:8,9 30:9	38:12 39:12
liberty 51:18	marked 4:2	minutes 57:11	31:19 33:19,20	40:6 41:6
52:11,19	market 60:18,22	misdemeanor	33:25 34:12	43:19,22 46:2
license 4:11	married 16:2	50:20	36:16,19,22,23	48:8 49:13,18
13:17 58:6	marry 51:11,22	mistake 23:14	40:20 49:6,9	53:7,8,9 57:21
licenses 18:16	marrying 51:14	mob 10:22 11:17	49:10 50:2,5,8	obvious 28:13
limited 49:3	matter 1:11 9:23	model 9:16 24:4	56:8,8 58:10	54:5
line 10:9 19:10	13:21 26:4	money 4:23 5:18	58:12,13 59:8	obviously 17:10
41:4 56:22	62:14	7:7,18 11:9,9	59:10,12	42:16
60:4 61:3	matters 20:9	11:16 13:9,24	nobodys 8:21	occupation
lines 6:16	mcnally 5:2,3	18:7,11 19:21	normally 32:7	30:13 37:14
literally 40:3	6:8 7:16 8:3,4	20:17 21:11	note 37:6 50:18	42:17 55:13
59:24	21:19 22:17	22:3,9,13,13	noted 17:9 33:21	offense 24:13,14
little 18:21	26:19,20 28:1	26:22,25 27:24	34:14,22	25:15 61:20
31:13 34:10	57:17,18 58:3	28:4 33:13	noticed 61:4,5,9	offered 3:17
38:7 39:3	mean 10:16 12:5	47:10 51:23	0	offering 12:22
live 30:16	15:8 17:2 20:4	57:21 58:19,20	$\frac{0}{0.2:1.3:1}$	office 8:22 20:10
lives 30:17	22:15 23:11,17	58:20,21 62:7	obstacle 27:18	officer 22:25
logical 15:10	24:18 27:5	monopoly 10:24	27:19,23	officers 22:24
60:13	29:11 32:6	10:25	obtain 14:24	official 18:15
long 53:14	36:10,24 38:15	morning 3:4	15:1,23 17:25	19:2,9,19
longer 58:8	38:19 41:5,16	mortar 42:15	13.1,23 17.23	24:15 29:17,18

	Ī	I	I	I
48:21,22,25	17:14	56:24 57:6	58:2	program 8:6
49:3 59:2	particular 6:1	60:9	policy 5:6	prohibit 24:7
officials 5:5	13:13 37:14	personal 53:13	political 25:8	prohibited 24:5
24:25 33:13	43:25 44:5	persons 31:6	position 6:18 8:2	prohibition 3:16
oh 45:10 61:10	48:6 54:7	34:7 35:1 41:1	21:5 37:12	10:11 24:8,22
okay 15:3 18:5	60:22	42:4,17,17	42:24 54:6	24:22
31:11 37:24	particularized	53:10	positive 44:6	proper 44:15
61:17	31:18	petitioner 1:4,16	46:21	properly 51:18
once 4:14 25:9	parties 11:23	2:4,10 3:8 5:16	possessed 60:8	property 3:13
53:5	party 13:2	30:20 32:24	60:11	3:15,18 4:4,16
open 13:6 17:6	partys 8:20	37:21 39:8,22	possession 39:4	6:14 7:17 9:19
opened 23:18	passing 24:20	43:3 45:4,19	39:15	9:24 10:1,5,7,8
opening 37:21	patent 4:12	46:23 47:2	possibility 57:25	10:10,12,17
operate 10:2	10:16,17 37:25	48:11,14 50:18	possible 4:22	11:12,18,19,20
35:21	paul 1:15 2:3,9	52:23 57:13	57:20	12:9,23 13:21
operations 35:7	3:7 57:12	petitioners	postman 29:17	14:17,24 15:2
35:10	pay 6:22 18:10	42:21	potential 20:23	15:3,19 16:1,4
opinion 19:5	19:20 20:17	phrase 23:12,14	potentially	16:6,8,10,11
opportunity	paying 7:18	physical 37:20	21:15	16:16 17:12,17
25:5	pays 18:6	physically 37:22	practically 5:22	17:19,19,21,25
opposite 25:20	pejorative 31:13	38:1,4	practice 5:23	18:2 20:25
optimal 21:17	penal 9:16 58:12	pick 24:8	precedence 3:21	21:22,25 22:4
oral 1:11 2:2,5	58:13	piece 15:11	precedes 58:4	22:7,11,12,19
3:7 26:10	people 8:4 25:22	pieces 40:9	pressure 12:20	23:7 26:17,21
order 5:17 27:8	30:13,15,16	place 8:9 59:10	13:8,12	26:23 27:1,2
27:8 35:9	31:15 51:22	places 34:13	pretrial 25:3,4	27:15,20 28:4
43:25 45:21	60:21	36:25 59:4	prevail 54:22	28:5,6,7,9,10
46:11 59:21	percent 41:3,6	plead 5:12	prevented 52:22	28:11,16,18,25
ordinary 31:16	41:10	please 3:10	principal 14:2	29:14 30:4,7,7
organization	perfectly 19:24	26:13	principally 17:8	30:11,14,20
14:7	perform 51:16	plumber 43:4,4	private 19:7	31:6,7,18,22
organized 42:11	performance	43:24	28:10 29:18	31:23 32:3,5,7
42:12,23	31:16	plumbers 43:6	53:13	32:8 33:17
ought 17:20	person 6:21,23	pocket 22:3 27:9	pro 61:3	34:5,7,8,12,13
overfederalizi	6:23 7:14,19	point 5:1 21:23	probably 5:22	34:17,18,19,20
25:19	9:18 11:16,17	22:1 24:10,11	13:10 41:15	34:22 35:1
P	11:19 12:7,8,8	24:12 28:14	60:8	36:4,14,17,18
p 3:1	12:20,22 13:24	39:1 49:19,20	problem 23:5 25:19 27:21	36:18,20,24
page 2:2	14:8,11,12	50:1,3 59:10 60:3	28:13 29:12	37:2,4,8,8,11
paid 4:25 5:8	18:4,4 20:17 20:19 23:9		36:16 39:11	37:11,12,15,17 37:20,22,25,25
8:14 21:18	28:22 29:16	pointing 57:16 points 29:7	43:18 58:3	38:2,8,17,19
44:9 57:22	30:12 31:22	57:15 58:10	problematic	38:20 39:18,19
parameters	32:3 33:8 35:1	poker 4:11	9:25	39:21 40:2,7,8
32:15	36:10 43:19	13:17 18:16	9:23 process 21:2	40:9,10 41:11
part 6:6 8:4 9:17	44:15 46:9	58:6	26:3 55:9	41:18 42:6,16
14:25 15:7,23	53:16 55:1	policies 8:10	progeny 60:15	42:19 45:15,16
120 10.7,20	JJ.1U JJ.1	Puncies 0.10	progeny 00.13	74.17 43.13,10
		l ————————————————————————————————————	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

			1	1
46:2,7,9,22	38:9 54:25	24:16 25:6	reject 60:3	27:2 32:14
48:8,12,16	55:25	37:9 40:13	related 3:12	35:20,21 36:14
49:11,14,18,21	proxy 20:4	47:1 52:11,12	relationship	36:14 37:13,13
49:21,23,24,24	public 24:15	52:14 58:20,21	11:15,22	38:18 39:13,25
50:10,10 51:8	25:7,16,21	60:4 61:17	relationships	40:1,23 42:17
51:14,15 52:3	29:17 33:12	reason 5:21 7:1	11:24	43:10,10 45:3
52:8,13,15,15	pull 60:18	7:9 10:23 16:3	relevant 59:4	45:16 46:8
52:19 53:7,12	purposes 17:20	21:13 27:6	relied 58:24	49:18 52:5,10
53:13,13 54:2	17:25 55:15	37:1 38:2 47:6	relying 58:23	52:16,18 53:10
54:14,16 55:5	58:11	reasonable 41:9	remainder 26:7	54:18 57:7
55:12,13,15,18	pursuit 55:12	rebuttal 2:8	repeatedly 28:8	58:6
55:18,19,22,23	put 13:8,12	57:12,15	39:18	rights 16:11
55:23 56:3,9	14:18 18:5	received 5:9	reply 10:5 37:23	20:3 45:15
56:11,13,15,17	27:9 31:5,5	13:15 21:21	require 28:21	road 6:4
56:24 57:1,6,8	33:4 60:2 62:8	recognized 4:10	requirement	rob 12:4
58:6,7,11,14	putting 18:16	4:13 49:4	12:7 22:11	robbery 24:7
58:16 59:5,14		recommend	requires 8:25	50:12
59:21,22 60:6	Q	18:6,12 19:19	9:5 37:4 56:16	roberts 3:3
60:24 61:23	qualification	29:25 30:1	60:7	19:16 20:12
62:7,9	22:16,17	44:17	reserve 26:7	26:8 50:1,14
prosecute 25:24	qualified 34:20	recommendat	54:11	52:17 53:3
57:25	qualify 4:16	6:11 14:12,21	reserved 57:20	57:10 62:11
prosecuted 4:24	quality 5:10	15:12,12 18:5	respect 20:1	role 21:1
61:23	question 29:23	19:11 20:9,11	23:17	roots 17:11,16
prosecution	30:7,18,25	20:15,18 21:8	respondent 1:19	roughly 21:5
22:10 25:11	39:3 41:6,9	21:9 22:1,24	2:7 26:11	routinely 60:20
57:19	46:6 49:22	28:15,16 30:22	response 42:7	rule 15:25
prosecutions	54:11,21	30:23 31:3	responses 41:17	rulings 25:4,4
42:23 57:20	questions 49:25	33:1 39:24	restaurant	run 14:4 35:21
prosecutor 3:18	57:9	40:1,4 44:3,5,6	35:19	37:13 57:4
prosecutors	quite 5:24	44:6,10,16	restrict 9:5	running 30:11
25:12,14,23		45:6 46:2,21	result 18:17	31:22 34:4,6
protect 26:2	<u>R</u>	46:24 47:3,15	24:2 28:2	42:19 45:24
protesters 17:3	r 3:1	47:18,20,23	43:25 45:7	49:11 52:9,12
35:15	racketeer 9:14	48:2,5,6,6 53:2	54:20	55:11 56:10,23
prove 4:24 6:8	racketeering	54:6	return 22:13	57:1
7:17 21:16	42:10	recommendat	returned 4:1	runs 6:18
27:24 45:1	reach 49:5	20:13	revenue 30:16	
proved 8:13	reaching 29:3	reconcile 29:3,5	45:8	S
provide 35:17	read 23:14,15	record 41:22	rid 57:18	s 2:1 3:1 53:15
35:19	37:16 38:2	44:23 45:13,14	right 3:19 7:15	sale 18:16
provides 42:25	real 5:18 9:21	45:17	9:3 10:17 11:5	sarah 1:17 2:6
providing 43:1	13:20,20,20,21	redundancy	11:25 13:4,21	26:10
43:16	14:15,16 26:4	56:18	13:24 14:6	sat 61:10
provision 38:5	36:2 42:22	referenced 4:12	16:17,18 20:25	satisfied 14:20
38:21 55:25	really 5:24 16:2	refers 59:8	21:23 22:8,15	satisfies 22:11
provisions 34:23	20:7 21:2	regard 55:24	22:18,24 23:1	saying 6:16,25
———				

8:16,21 10:6	29:12 37:23	sitting 61:6,15	53:15	subsequent 6:4
22:14 27:22,23	40:23 44:8	situation 24:16	spent 26:25	substance 30:23
28:1 35:14	45:10,10	situations 11:14	squarely 8:20	36:13 39:23
37:24 38:11,22	seized 58:5	sloppy 62:8	stand 4:8	44:4 46:1
42:2 44:13	sekhar 1:3 3:4	sly 18:17	start 26:14 36:1	48:12 52:24
47:2 55:17,18	sell 10:23 11:4	sold 17:13	started 57:16	53:2
says 10:22 11:11	22:22	solicitor 1:17	starts 47:24	substantial 21:9
18:10 26:19,19	sellable 10:18	somebody 6:17	state 3:22,23 6:2	suchandsuch
28:23 30:1	selling 32:13	18:9,20 23:8	8:23 9:4,9	31:5
37:19 47:22	sense 15:10,17	28:22 31:3	18:14 19:6,14	sudden 25:10
59:19 60:18	20:3 32:12	32:10 40:23	21:1,1 23:23	suddenly 29:13
scalia 12:24 13:4	34:20 43:2	54:7	24:17,19,19,24	suggesting 14:4
18:3,9,13 32:4	49:6 51:20	somebodys	25:6,9,10,22	35:7
32:16,20 33:3	separate 30:6	17:23 18:25	25:23,24 26:1	suggests 17:17
33:9,15,24	36:7 49:22,25	36:21	27:24 28:2	support 8:10
36:15 37:7	50:4,7,7	someones 30:19	29:8 30:9	suppose 18:3,3
38:6,12,15	separately 37:3	39:4	33:20 45:20,22	21:5 27:5
44:7,14,25	serious 21:7	song 41:21	49:7 50:15,22	29:23
45:10 47:4,11	serve 8:18 17:5	sorry 22:20	56:8	supposed 28:24
49:13,17 51:3	17:6	47:25	states 1:1,6,12	supreme 1:1,12
51:9,13,22	service 35:18,20	sort 5:4,12 7:20	3:5 31:2,16	sure 14:3 21:5
54:23 55:4,7	43:16 44:2	7:20 8:17 13:8	statute 14:25	37:7 58:19
55:14,22	54:7	14:2,4,23 15:2	15:8 16:5,6	sweeps 31:15
scenario 45:19	services 5:14	15:4 16:3,20	23:15 24:13	
scheidler 16:1	8:21 15:13	18:20 20:8	28:19,25 29:14	T
17:1 23:13	17:24 22:13	25:8 37:23	36:25 37:3	t 2:1,1
35:4 36:3	28:18 29:5,8	41:17,19 47:1	38:24,25 56:4	take 5:12 16:15
51:12,20 52:2	43:1,25 52:5	51:19 56:20	statutes 59:6,6	21:19 22:23,24
58:25	52:11 57:19	59:20 60:2	steal 17:23	23:6,19,22
scheme 5:4 8:5	59:13	61:3	59:22	25:14 28:15
scope 3:14,16	shes 59:1	sotomayor	stenographer	32:24 35:17
55:10 58:11	short 34:2,5,21	14:22 15:22,24	29:24	40:25 41:2
second 15:7,11	shortcut 5:12	16:15,18,23	step 6:4 25:25	43:22,23 44:2
17:14 23:16	shouldnt 57:2	39:2,11,14	stevens 58:24	48:14,15 51:20
34:16 42:7	shout 12:3	47:19,25 59:25	sticks 39:20	52:2,24,25
60:14 61:4,8,8	shouting 12:4	60:12 61:2,10	stock 20:4,4	56:16 58:20
62:3	show 7:19	61:17	strange 15:2	60:13
secretary 29:24	shut 35:10,25	sought 22:23	stream 30:16	taken 11:12 23:2
30:4 31:2	side 18:21	sounds 5:24	45:8	34:10,12,15
41:10	simple 46:16	29:11 31:13	street 25:12	36:18,21 40:11
secrets 37:24	simpler 27:7	40:21	40:11,14,14,16	40:13,16 43:9
section 34:23,23	46:7	source 30:15	stronger 54:5	takes 41:10
53:20 54:12	simply 21:24	51:19 57:5	structurally	talked 46:24
55:9	60:9	speaks 29:14	16:5	talking 16:6,7
sections 34:25	single 6:20	special 11:15	submit 60:9	16:12 17:11
sector 19:8	41:20 44:23	56:15	submitted 62:12	23:12 25:20
see 6:5,5 17:16	45:12	speculating	62:14	32:16,17 55:14

			_	
58:13	theories 14:17	13:3,5,6,16,17	19:10	42:10,11 44:1
talks 16:10	46:18,18	13:19 14:1	time 12:3 26:7	44:4 45:19,23
tangible 10:7	theory 4:24 8:7	16:3,7,13	28:22 29:14	45:25 46:1,19
43:1,8 46:25	22:23 23:5,6	17:14 18:17,22	30:19 41:3,7	47:3,9,13 48:4
target 35:15	27:11 43:20	19:12 20:2	41:11 57:18	48:5,11,14,15
targeted 35:8,24	46:11,15,15,16	22:8,15 23:14	times 38:24	51:8,10 52:24
42:10	48:8 51:5	25:21 27:17,19	today 7:5 27:16	52:25 53:1
tease 15:18	60:24	30:4 31:8 32:8	60:23	tuesday 1:9
technical 29:12	theres 6:4,20 7:1	32:8 34:1,4	totally 44:18	turn 23:6,19
tell 12:19 34:10	7:19 12:11	35:23 36:6	track 42:7	twice 49:21
35:9 60:21	13:5 18:23	39:1 40:19,22	trademark	two 11:23,24
telling 41:2	22:22 23:24	42:24 44:11	45:16	29:7 34:1,13
60:14,23	24:1,1 27:17	47:5,8,8,19	traditional 8:22	36:6 41:17,17
term 33:10	27:19,20,20	48:3,7 49:8,23	9:15 10:20	49:25 57:20
54:16	36:9 47:6 53:8	49:24 50:8,18	51:20	61:4
terms 10:11	53:8 57:24	50:22 51:3,12	transcription	twofold 5:22
15:1 16:2	theyre 4:14 7:13	51:17,20 52:2	30:2	16:4
40:20 58:22	8:16 11:9 14:1	52:20 54:10,15	transfer 19:21	type 27:1 28:10
terrible 6:23	20:8,8 39:20	54:21 55:2,22	22:22	35:18,19
thank 26:8,12	62:6	55:23 58:8,14	transferability	types 52:3
57:10,14 62:10	thing 5:7 6:7	59:13 60:4,12	19:17	typical 25:21
62:11	8:22 10:13	61:10,22 62:3	transferable	typing 29:25
thats 5:17 6:6	11:18 12:2	thinking 41:9	10:13,18 18:1	typist 29:24
7:4,6,13 8:21	23:13,16,17	third 8:19 13:2	19:18,24 20:3	
9:7,24 10:13	25:8 26:1	thought 19:6	20:19,24	U
11:24 12:9	28:23,24 31:4	threat 7:24 9:1,5	transferred	u 53:15
13:3,10,18	33:13 36:24	9:17,18 13:22	15:16 17:13	ultimate 6:3
14:1,13 16:5,7	37:9,18 38:8	27:7 29:15	62:2	ultimately 4:20
17:8 19:2	38:16 39:19	31:4 46:11	treated 54:10,14	5:16 9:24
20:18 21:20	43:6,15 44:1	60:17,21	tried 43:7 45:5	50:21
22:3,8,9,14,15	44:23 45:12	threaten 10:25	tropiano 60:15	unanimous
22:16 24:2	46:25 54:2,7	12:2 14:8,11	61:2,25	19:14
26:25 27:1,9	54:14,15 57:23	58:17,20,20,21	true 29:16 36:22	unauthorized
27:14,22 28:4	58:18 61:8,15	threatened 21:6	44:25 49:16,17	41:20 44:23
28:10,10,18	things 4:13 7:4	43:3	50:6 51:25	understand
29:9,16 30:5	8:12 10:19	threatening	54:9 55:19	11:22 15:10
33:22 35:13	15:3 18:18	7:13	56:11	21:5 30:24
36:15 37:11	28:21 30:14	threatens 6:23	try 32:1 36:6	41:25 56:19
38:10,14 39:11	36:6 37:25	28:22	44:5	understanding
39:15 40:4,5	38:3 56:14	threats 9:20	trying 14:23,23	3:14 9:13
41:21 42:1	61:1,4 62:7	31:25,25 35:5	15:19 18:25	20:22
44:3,12,25	think 4:6,8,10	35:8,25	19:4 30:21	unissued 4:12
45:11 46:22	4:23 5:1,21 6:6	threeword	32:24 33:23	united 1:1,6,12
47:24 49:17	6:8 7:6 8:2	23:12	35:16,17 36:10	3:4 31:2,15
50:6 52:14	9:21 10:19	throw 29:13	39:22,23,24	unrecognizable
54:3,9,21	11:2,21 12:5	throwing 32:6	40:2,3,21,24	55:6
56:12 59:19	12:12,13,19	thumbs 19:10	40:24 41:1	urged 24:25
	l			

use 15:4 23:5	walked 51:25	12:22 19:4	Y	2
42:13 45:19	wall 40:11,14,14	40:23 48:21	yeah 37:24	2 41:3,6
53:15,18 60:4	40:16	willing 25:23	york 3:23,23	20 55:9
uses 31:25 53:21	want 7:11,17	wipe 42:22,25	5:23 8:25 9:9	2013 1:9
usually 48:20,21	19:19 20:15	women 52:5,10	9:12,13,23	23 1:9
	28:14,23,24	wont 25:23	19:6 23:23	26 2:7
V	30:6 31:12	37:15 38:4,21	24:11,13,19,20	
v 1:5 3:4	38:22 41:19	word 12:24	24:21,21,24,24	3
valuable 42:6,18	42:3,22,24	14:24 23:12,18	29:9,9 30:9	3 2:4 41:10
44:7,8,9,11,11	44:15 49:10	30:11 31:18	31:19 33:19,20	35 45:22
44:19 45:2,12	50:11 51:11,15	36:24 37:2	33:25 34:12	
value 3:19 4:14	51:16 54:11	38:23 49:11,21	36:16,19,23,23	4
4:15 15:3,9,15	56:22 60:18,19	53:21 55:21	40:20 49:6,9	
16:16 18:19	wanted 5:16	56:3,9	49:10 50:2,5,8	5
33:13 44:17,20	19:5 27:25	wording 48:3	56:8,8 58:10	5 57:11
45:17 51:19	45:6	words 11:11	58:12,13 59:8	57 2:10
53:17 54:2,8	wants 6:18,19	15:4 32:6	59:10,12	
54:14,15 57:5	washington 1:8	38:25	youd 12:16 17:9	6
62:1	1:15,18	work 14:24 15:8	27:23 54:5	7
variety 14:17	wasnt 15:13	15:20,22 19:1	youre 4:4 6:16	
various 5:4	27:6,10,10	38:25 40:3	6:25 10:6,22	8
55:24	29:9 34:12	52:18 53:4,5	14:23 15:6,9	850 34:23 58:13
verdict 4:1	36:2,4,5,9 40:2	55:20 57:2	15:19 16:6,7	851 34:23 58:11
27:16	40:13,13 46:6	58:25 59:16	22:14,17 28:23	875 53:15,19,21
version 9:14	46:13,15 49:15	working 31:15	28:25 39:14,14	54:12,19,21
viable 58:9	53:24 56:11	workmans 58:2	41:18 51:8	
victim 24:14	way 12:11 14:3	workmen 8:6,9	53:9 55:17	9
29:8 46:3	15:3 23:8,9,14	workmens 5:5	60:21 61:15	
video 4:11 13:16	27:7,18,21	8:9	youve 11:6	
18:16 58:6	32:1 33:5 34:6	worried 41:23	19:21 23:4	
view 30:3 42:21	35:14 36:4,9	56:13		
42:22	41:11 42:19	worry 25:16	Z	
viewed 51:18	46:7 47:7	56:14	zero 58:7	
violate 11:1	48:20 49:6	wouldnt 7:23,23		
violating 28:25	51:16 56:25	13:21 14:6	0	
violation 21:11	62:4	20:2 43:8,17	09 62:13	
35:11 37:16,19	wealth 30:15	43:22,23 51:4		
60:20,25	week 45:5	53:25	1	
violence 7:25	wellphrased	write 31:3 40:20	10 1:13,13 3:2,2	
21:7 31:25	31:1	61:20 62:6	11 62:13	
34:17 35:6,8	went 8:13 61:2	writes 14:8,12	12357 1:4 3:4	
37:20	weve 54:19	written 61:5	142 47:24 48:1	
vital 28:9	whats 8:17 9:24	wrong 45:3	18 53:15	
votes 58:7	19:2 22:9	T 7	1893 34:4	
voting 20:3,6,25	29:21 33:15,24	<u>X</u>	1911 34:22	
\mathbf{W}	60:5	x 1:2,7	1934 9:15 24:5	
	whos 10:24		1946 24:3	
L				