1	IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE	UNITED STATES
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3	MEADWESTVACO CORPORTATION,	:
4	SUCCESSOR IN INTEREST TO	:
5	THE MEAD CORPORATION,	:
6	Petitioner	:
7	v.	: No. 06-1413
8	ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF	:
9	REVENUE, ET AL.	:
10		x
11	Washington, D.C.	
12	Wednesda	ay, January 16, 2008
13		
14	The above-entitled matter came on for oral	
15	argument before the Supreme Cou	art of the United States
16	at 11:17 a.m.	
17	APPEARANCES:	
18	BETH S. BRINKMANN, ESQ., Washir	ngton, D.C.; on behalf
19	of the Petitioner.	
20	BRIAN F. BAROV, ESQ., Assistant	Attorney General,
21	Chicago, Ill.; on behalf of	the Respondents.
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1	PROCEEDINGS
2	(11:17 a.m.)
3	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We will hear
4	argument next in Case 06-1413, MeadWestvaco v. The
5	Illinois Department of Revenue.
6	Ms. Brinkmann.
7	ORAL ARGUMENT OF BETH S. BRINKMANN
8	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER
9	MS. BRINKMANN: Mr. Chief Justice, and may
10	it please the Court:
11	The ruling of the Illinois Appellate Court
12	in this case radically expanded the Court's
13	operational-function tax. The State tax at issue
14	violates the principles of constitutional limitations on
15	state taxing authority for at least two reasons.
16	First, the factors relied on by the appellate court here
17	for functional for operational function would mean
18	that ownership and investment would meet that standard.
19	But that's what this Court rejected in Allied-Signal.
20	A State does not have the authority to reach
21	out to tax all investments owned by a company that does
22	business in the State. The operational function demands
23	more. It applies
24	JUSTICE GINSBURG: You are saying to me, Ms.
25	Brinkmann we talk about an asset, an investment.

- 1 This was one company. This -- it's strange to talk
- 2 about unitary basis or investment. This is a division
- 3 of one company. And we are talking about a sale of
- 4 assets. Not the sale of stock of a subsidiary.
- 5 So what more is there than this is one
- 6 company, it sells some of its assets?
- 7 MS. BRINKMANN: Well, Your Honor, the fact
- 8 that it's a division does not mean that it meets either
- 9 the operational-function test or the unitary-business
- 10 test. A long line of cases from this Court tell us
- 11 that. It --
- 12 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Do we have any cases --
- do we have any decisions that go against the state
- 14 taxing authority that involve divisions as opposed to
- 15 subsidiaries?
- 16 MS. BRINKMANN: No, but the Exxon case
- 17 involved divisions, and it went in favor of the state
- 18 taxing authority. But the Court applied a
- 19 straightforward, unitary business analysis to that.
- 20 And, Your Honor, this dates back to the Adams Express
- 21 case of 1897.
- The Court in that case said it's not
- 23 ownership. It's about the use, the unitariness of use,
- 24 not of ownership. Mobile followed on that. Mobile
- 25 talked about the fact that it's not the corporate form

- 1 that mattered. It pointed out that that could have
- 2 little to do with the underlying determination of
- 3 apportionment, which depends upon whether it's a
- 4 discrete business enterprise.
- 5 And then following on the heels of that
- 6 analysis in Mobil, the Court applied it to the Exxon
- 7 case that involved divisions. That was a vertically
- 8 integrated corporation. It's very different from the
- 9 facts of this case, and it reached a different result.
- 10 Moreover, the Woolworth case involved
- 11 subsidiaries. Three out of the four of them were 100
- 12 percent wholly owned.
- JUSTICE STEVENS: Can I go back to sort of a
- 14 fundamental question I'm not quite sure I know the
- 15 answer to. Supposing we don't have corporations here,
- 16 but an individual resident of New York owned this whole
- 17 business and a big bunch of it was activities in
- 18 Illinois, and he sold the business. Would Illinois have
- 19 the authority to impose any tax on that transaction?
- MS. BRINKMANN: If it was a capital gain,
- 21 Your Honor, on the sale of investment, the Court's
- 22 longstanding cases teach that it is the domicile that
- 23 taxes that commercial gain.
- 24 JUSTICE STEVENS: I'm assuming it's not the
- 25 domicile. The owner lives in New York. The business is

- 1 all over the country, but does millions of dollars of
- 2 business in Illinois. And they sell the whole business.
- 3 Would the owner be subject to any tax of any kind in
- 4 Illinois on that transaction? Could he constitutionally
- 5 be subjected to any tax?
- 6 BRINKMANN: If there was -- the domiciliary
- 7 State generally is the State which has the authority to
- 8 tax an income on a capital gain --
- 9 JUSTICE STEVENS: Assume it's not the
- 10 domiciliary State.
- MS. BRINKMANN: But what the Court explained
- in Mobil, for example, if it is under the unitary
- 13 business principle, then the State in which --
- 14 JUSTICE STEVENS: Could we get an answer
- 15 without reference to cases? Do you think Illinois would
- 16 have the authority to impose a tax on that transaction?
- 17 MS. BRINKMANN: If the -- there was
- 18 sufficient nexus to the company doing business --
- 19 JUSTICE STEVENS: Millions of dollars of
- 20 business in Illinois, that's my assumption.
- 21 MS. BRINKMANN: Yes, they would be able to
- 22 tax the ongoing business activity in that State.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: No.
- JUSTICE STEVENS: Could they tax the sale of
- 25 the business?

1	JUSTICE KENNEDY: I have the same	
2	MS. BRINKMANN: The sale of the business	
3	would be to the domicile of the seller. They would be	
4	able to	
5	JUSTICE STEVENS: You're saying only the	
6	domicile could impose a tax?	
7	MS. BRINKMANN: Yes, unless, as the Court	
8	recognized in Mobil, there is this unitary business	
9	exception, because the State's ability to tax begins at	
10	the starting point at the territorial limitations of the	
11	State. And the Court has	
12	JUSTICE STEVENS: But if they owned a truck	
13	instead of a business, they could tax that transaction,	
14	I suppose?	
15	JUSTICE SCALIA: You can't have a unitary	
16	business a person who is a unitary business. I mean,	
17	a person can't be unitary with Exxon. I mean, when you	
18	speak of a unitary business you're talking about a	
19	corporation which, you know, is unitary with another	
20	corporation.	
21	MS. BRINKMANN: That's the area	
22	JUSTICE SCALIA: Once you put it into a	
23	personal taxation scheme, it seems to me the whole	
24	unitary business notion has no application at all.	
25	MS. BRINKMANN: Well, I agree with you, Your	

- 1 Honor. But it does come back to the taxing, the right
- 2 of the domicile State to tax on a sale --
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: What is -- what does the
- 4 domicile State -- we have Ohio. But you say as a matter
- 5 of constitutional law, not State tax policy, as a matter
- 6 of constitutional law, the only State that has authority
- 7 to tax the capital gain is Ohio?
- 8 MS. BRINKMANN: That's right, Your Honor,
- 9 unless --
- 10 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Does Ohio -- would Ohio
- 11 give credit for the tax that its sister State thinks is
- 12 due? What is, in fact, Ohio's tax law in this respect?
- 13 Does Ohio give credit to taxes paid by other States --
- 14 to other States?
- 15 MS. BRINKMANN: Ohio would allocate the
- 16 entire gain as a capital gain on an intangible that was
- 17 sold in the State of Ohio. That would be allocated in
- 18 its entirety to Illinois.
- 19 Now, what the Court has recognized is that
- 20 default principle sometimes gives way when that gain has
- 21 had enough connection to business activity in another
- 22 jurisdiction. That's where these issues arise, because
- 23 there are States taxing multi- state activities. And
- 24 that's --
- 25 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Can I have an answer to a

- 1 very simple question? If Illinois claimed the tax,
- 2 would Ohio give credit for the tax paid in Illinois?
- 3 MS. BRINKMANN: Not if Ohio had the
- 4 constitutional right to allocate that tax to Ohio, as it
- 5 does.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Do we know what -- what
- 7 Ohio does in these situations?
- 8 MS. BRINKMANN: Yes. It allocates it to the
- 9 State of Ohio. The only exception for that would be in
- 10 a situation, not the facts here, but if that capital
- 11 gain either served an operational function to the
- 12 business activities that were conducted in another
- 13 State, then that State would have a right to apportion
- 14 it and tax its portion of that or if the operational
- 15 function applied. And that is because the activity now
- 16 has transformed from just a capital gain that's
- 17 connected to the domiciliary State of the seller to a
- 18 business income because it is part of this unitary
- 19 business. That's why the other State has a right to
- 20 apportion.
- 21 JUSTICE ALITO: What has Ohio done --
- 22 MS. BRINKMANN: That's not the situation
- 23 here.
- JUSTICE ALITO: What has Ohio done up to
- 25 this point with respect to this transaction?

- 1 MS. BRINKMANN: Under Ohio's laws this would
- 2 be allocated to that State.
- 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: To Ohio?
- 4 MS. BRINKMANN: Yes, because it's a capital
- 5 gain on a sale of an investment.
- 6 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Ms. Brinkmann, you
- 7 begin your brief by saying this, a paper company, that
- 8 happens to own a data processing company. Why couldn't
- 9 you equally say this is a data processing company that
- 10 happens to own a paper company?
- 11 MS. BRINKMANN: No, Your Honor. This has
- 12 been a paper company since 1846.
- 13 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, and
- 14 Lexis/Nexis has been a data processing company since
- whenever.
- 16 MS. BRINKMANN: But under the Court's
- 17 unitary --
- 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: It's not the
- 19 oldest -- whichever is oldest isn't the one that gets to
- 20 be regarded as the dominant partner, is it?
- 21 MS. BRINKMANN: No. But when you do the
- 22 analysis, you're looking at the taxpayer, which is Mead
- 23 Corporation. And it clearly has a --
- 24 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Is General Electric
- 25 a light bulb company or, since it owns NBC, a media

- 1 company.
- MS. BRINKMANN: I would have to know many
- 3 more facts in order to answer that questions, Your
- 4 Honor. But I -- and I don't mean to be evasive --
- 5 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Why isn't the answer
- 6 both? Why isn't the answer both, just as here it is
- 7 both a paper or office supply company and a Lexis/Nexis,
- 8 electronic data company?
- 9 MS. BRINKMANN: It's an analytical construct
- 10 that we're doing here. We're looking at the taxpayer
- 11 who is being taxed, the Mead Corporation. So you look
- 12 at its business that's being conducted in Illinois.
- 13 They have a unitary paper company that's vertically
- 14 integrated that's doing business activities in Illinois.
- 15 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, that's because
- 16 they sell paper in Illinois?
- 17 MS. BRINKMANN: Yes.
- 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, Lexis sells
- 19 data services in Illinois, too.
- MS. BRINKMANN: Yes. But when you're
- 21 looking -- and for both purposes, Your Honor, for State
- 22 tax on the operating income of both of those businesses,
- 23 Illinois does have a right to apportion those taxes.
- 24 And those taxes were paid without objection by both of
- 25 those businesses.

- 1 We're talking about a tax on a different
- 2 event, on a capital gain on a sale of the business in
- 3 Ohio.
- 4 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, why doesn't --
- 5 I mean, you just said, as I understand it, Illinois has
- 6 the right to tax Lexis under business activities in
- 7 Illinois. Illinois would argue the reason it has a
- 8 capital gain is partly because they were doing business
- 9 in Illinois and so we should be entitled to part of that
- 10 capital gain. Almost -- I mean, it seems to me it would
- 11 be pretty easy if they get to tax 2 percent of Lexis's
- 12 business, well then maybe they should get 2 percent of
- 13 the capital gain when it's sold or tax 2 percent.
- MS. BRINKMANN: Your Honor, that is a
- 15 belated argument that the State of Illinois has raised
- 16 in this Court. It did not present an argument to the
- 17 Illinois appellate court based on Lexis/Nexis's
- 18 connection to Illinois. It raises a host of
- 19 jurisdictional, procedural and substantive bars.
- 20 Under the rules of Illinois, as we point out
- 21 in our reply brief, that argument is waived. This comes
- 22 to the Court from a State court, not a Federal court of
- 23 appeals. Because of that waiver, it's an independent
- 24 and adequate state ground.
- 25 Moreover, that argument wasn't raised in the

- 1 brief in opposition, either.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: They're raising it in --
- 3 in support of the judgment. So if it's novel, but it
- 4 supports the judgment, then at least shouldn't the
- 5 Illinois courts have a chance to look at it and say, oh,
- 6 that's what we really meant, we just got -- explained it
- 7 the wrong way?
- 8 MS. BRINKMANN: Well, that would certainly
- 9 be a matter for the Illinois court rather than for this
- 10 Court, Your Honor. But in addition, I think any
- 11 disposition on the merits of that issue would be a
- 12 ruling by this Court that would be trumping that
- independent and adequate State ground waiver.
- Moreover, this argument wasn't raised in the
- 15 brief in opposition, either. And the Court's precedent,
- 16 of course, and practice would not be to address that.
- 17 Particularly in this case, it denied notice to the amici
- 18 who would be affected by this argument.
- 19 But turning to the substance of it --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: I think this is part of
- 21 the substance. I thought that as part of one of your
- 22 answers you said that Ohio is free to allocate part of
- 23 this capital gains tax to Illinois? Did I hear you say
- 24 that, because I don't understand that?
- 25 MS. BRINKMANN: No, Your Honor, I'm sorry.

- 1 I apologize if I misspoke. Ohio would allocate, I mean,
- 2 take the entire gain for itself as the domicile State of
- 3 the seller --
- 4 JUSTICE KENNEDY: I see.
- 5 MS. BRINKMANN: -- of the investment. In
- 6 other factual scenarios, if it turns out that that asset
- 7 actually was not an investment and in fact had enough
- 8 connection to the business activities in Illinois
- 9 because it was really the supplier of the raw materials,
- 10 or the two examples that this Court has given as
- 11 operational functions is the interest on the bank
- 12 account, which is the working capital, or the -- the
- 13 futures hedging against the raw material of corn.
- 14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, isn't it kind
- 15 of like futures hedging? I mean, you've got a paper
- 16 company and then you've got something that is sort of
- 17 the paperless aspect, and they can look at it and say,
- 18 well, we're kind of hedging our paper business by
- 19 investing heavily in something that's supposedly going
- 20 to take away the need for paper.
- 21 MS. BRINKMANN: No, Your Honor. Under the
- 22 operational function test, it has to be a much closer
- 23 nexus to the operating, the operations of the paper
- 24 company; and short of that operational function -- or if
- 25 it were part of the unitary business, the domiciliary

- 1 State would allocate. And if I could turn --
- 2 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Are you saying this is a
- 3 passive investment?
- 4 MS. BRINKMANN: Yes, Your Honor.
- 5 JUSTICE SOUTER: How can you call it a
- 6 passive investment, not only when there was -- I think
- 7 undisputedly -- as -- as much interest and activity in
- 8 Nexis's business planning by the Mead people? But to my
- 9 mind even more importantly, when in fact Mead, I think a
- 10 couple of times, merged with -- with Nexis -- with Lexis
- 11 -- when that provided a tax advantage, by -- by giving
- 12 them loss carryforwards that reduced their taxes. Why
- isn't it fair to -- to say under the operational
- 14 function test that if -- if the company is -- if Nexis
- 15 is -- is mergeable with Mead when it produces a tax
- 16 advantage and is certainly in a very operational sense
- 17 functional then, because it's saving them a lot of
- 18 money -- and that's, that has nothing to do with passive
- 19 investment. If it's usable in a merger scenario there,
- 20 it ought when the -- when the tide turns be -- be
- 21 regarded as close enough in operational function to be
- 22 taxable when the gain comes in.
- MS. BRINKMANN: Your Honor, that's contrary
- 24 to the Court's long-standing recognition that something
- 25 that enriches the taxpayer is not necessarily part of

- 1 the unitary business's operational function.
- 2 JUSTICE SOUTER: That's -- that's right.
- 3 But weren't the enrichment cases in which income was
- 4 being generated by an investment? The investor, of
- 5 course, was the -- was the taxpayer company, and it
- 6 simply reaped the benefits of a profitable investment.
- 7 That's something very different from merging
- 8 corporations, then unmerging them, and then merging them
- 9 again to provide not merely enrichment, but great tax
- 10 savings; and if they are operationally close enough to
- 11 produce great tax savings, why shouldn't they be treated
- 12 as operationally close enough when in fact they -- they
- 13 produce a capital gain?
- MS. BRINKMANN: Because that isn't the
- 15 operational connection that justifies a State --
- 16 JUSTICE SOUTER: The gain alone certainly is
- 17 not. If they had absolutely done nothing but make their
- 18 investment and wait to see whether the ship came in, I
- 19 would understand your argument. But between the
- 20 investment and the return of the ship, they were merging
- 21 these corporations back and forth for -- for their --
- 22 for Mead's tax advantage. And that seems to me to take
- 23 it out -- take the facts of this case out of the sort of
- 24 the paradigm of the -- the operational or the
- 25 nonoperational function cases.

- 1 MS. BRINKMANN: Your Honor, I think not, if
- 2 we look at Allied-Signal, we look at Woolworth, and we
- 3 look at ASARCO. Allied-Signal was a sales and
- 4 investment -- and getting back to the point about the
- 5 argument really was waived about the connection with
- 6 Lexis/Nexis in Illinois, those were the same facts in
- 7 Allied-Signal. The investment there was --
- 8 JUSTICE GINSBURG: It was a sale of stock in
- 9 that case, wasn't it?
- 10 MS. BRINKMANN: Yes.
- 11 JUSTICE GINSBURG: It was the sale of a
- 12 subsidiary. And here we have a sale of assets of one
- 13 company, and that's why it's so hard for me to see this,
- 14 as, why are we talking about unitary or not? There is
- only one company; it's Mead.
- 16 MS. BRINKMANN: In Allied-Signal, the
- 17 investment there was also doing business within the
- 18 State. In the Exxon case, there were divisions to which
- 19 this Court applied the entire unitary business
- 20 principle, because what the Court has said repeatedly in
- 21 Mobil, in Exxon, in all these cases, it's not the
- 22 corporate form; it is whether there is a discrete
- 23 business enterprise; and ASARCO speaks to this.
- 24 JUSTICE GINSBURG: You told me that there
- 25 was no case that the tax -- taxing authority lost that

- 1 involved divisions of a single company and sale of
- 2 assets, rather than the sale of stock.
- MS. BRINKMANN: That's correct. We have
- 4 four or five cases here. One of them does involve
- 5 divisions, Exxon, but in that case it was a vertically
- 6 integrated corporation, and the State prevailed in that
- 7 case, but it did not change the analysis that applied.
- 8 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Well, we're talking about
- 9 what Due Process permits States to do, and you're asking
- 10 us to declare a restriction that, as far as I know, has
- 11 never been declared in any case.
- 12 MS. BRINKMANN: It has, Your Honor. It goes
- 13 back to principles that ownership do -- does not
- 14 determine; simply because there is a business operating
- 15 in the State, the State does not have the right to tax
- 16 every investment that's owned by that. That dates back
- 17 to 1897.
- 18 JUSTICE GINSBURG: It's not just that it's
- 19 an investment, it's not just that it's holding on to the
- 20 shares in another company. It's both of these are
- 21 ongoing businesses, Lexis/Nexis and Mead, and they are
- 22 both generating income, and all along Illinois has been
- 23 taxing the income of both of them, right?
- MS. BRINKMANN: Yes, the operating income
- 25 within the State's apportioned. But if you look to the

- 1 business activity of the taxpayer Mead, operating in
- 2 Illinois, it is that nexus on which Illinois is claiming
- 3 that they have a right to tax here. And if we look at
- 4 the Woolworth case, for example, I think that is also
- 5 instructive. Those were four subsidiaries. Three of
- 6 them were 100 percent wholly owned, and the Court
- 7 expressly said we recognize they are wholly owned
- 8 subsidiaries. These could be integrated divisions, and
- 9 they said, that is not significant, if they are
- 10 independent, different business enterprises.
- 11 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Weren't those foreign
- 12 corporations?
- MS. BRINKMANN: Yes, Your Honor.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: So running them as -- as
- 15 a single company would have been a little harder.
- 16 MS. BRINKMANN: Well, no, in fact there were
- 17 also some foreign subsidiaries, I believe, involved in
- 18 the ASARCO case, for example, Your Honor, and the same
- 19 analysis applied -- you know, whether it was vertically
- 20 integrated and whether or not it met -- the unitary
- 21 business test goes back to three core principles, and
- 22 this Court has said at least four if not five times that
- 23 the unitary business principle is the linchpin of
- 24 apportionment. That is whether or not there is
- 25 functional integration.

- JUSTICE SOUTER: Don't we start -- I don't
- 2 mean to cut off your argument, but don't we start with
- 3 the assumption that this is not a unitary business?
- 4 Wasn't that the finding of the trial court which was not
- 5 disturbed on appeal?
- 6 MS. BRINKMANN: That's right, Your Honor.
- 7 That's right.
- 8 JUSTICE SOUTER: You can say it if you want,
- 9 but I wanted to make sure --
- 10 MS. BRINKMANN: There is no virtual
- 11 integration; there is no sharing of centralized
- 12 management; there's no economies of scale. We think
- 13 this is unassailable in the stipular record --
- 14 JUSTICE BREYER: Am I thinking about that
- 15 part correctly? I -- I found this difficult. I go back
- 16 to the railroad; that seems the easiest case. You have
- 17 a railroad in 50 States, and Illinois finds it very hard
- 18 to evaluate its -- evaluate its value, its railroad
- 19 property in Illinois, because the value of that depends
- 20 on service everywhere. So the court says that's the
- 21 unitary principle; and really what you're supposed to
- look at is whether when you look at the supposedly
- 23 separate part of the business, does that separate part
- 24 of the business contribute to the whole thing? So that
- 25 if you were in fact trying to say what is Illinois doing

- 1 without considering that separate part, it would be
- 2 tough to do.
- I mean, that's the underlying theme.
- 4 MS. BRINKMANN: We would --
- 5 JUSTICE BREYER: And if that's so, there is
- 6 no second test. I mean, I grant you there is language,
- 7 but really what people have done is they've said, we are
- 8 here in a special situation because we have an interest
- 9 in another company, and that's a special part of our
- 10 business, and has nothing to do with the rest of the
- 11 business. And then the argument is no, it does have
- 12 something to do with the rest of the business. And if
- 13 it does, like it provides you with working capital, it's
- 14 just like the railroad track in California vis-a-vis
- 15 Illinois.
- 16 MS. BRINKMANN: It's contributing to the
- 17 business.
- 18 JUSTICE BREYER: And if it doesn't, it
- 19 doesn't. So now, if that's right, then it's the form of
- 20 analysis rather than the result that's wrong in the
- 21 court below. Because they start talking about two
- 22 separate tests and then people argue whether the second
- 23 should swallow up the first, and at that point I get
- 24 totally lost. It's fairly long, but I'd appreciate your
- 25 evaluating what I've just said.

- 1 MS. BRINKMANN: Well, Your Honor, there --
- 2 on this record, there's no question that the Lexis/Nexis
- 3 cannot meet the unitary business test.
- 4 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Yes, there is, Ms.
- 5 Brinkmann. The Illinois appellate court never got to
- 6 that question. Illinois argued all along this is a
- 7 unitary business. The only one who said it wasn't was
- 8 this trial court, and the Illinois intermediate
- 9 appellate court says, well, we don't have to deal with
- 10 that because if you use the other label, operational
- 11 function, that comes out all right, too.
- 12 But this argument was certainly the number
- 13 one argument that Illinois was making. It lost only in
- 14 the trial court on -- on it. And the appellate court
- 15 said we don't have to get to it. So I think your answer
- 16 to Justice Souter really wasn't accurate because it
- 17 isn't --
- 18 MS. BRINKMANN: Well, our position is on the
- 19 record here, Your Honor, the stipulated record, that
- 20 it's unassailable. But we do --
- 21 JUSTICE GINSBURG: All we know is that a
- 22 trial judge said that was so.
- MS. BRINKMANN: And then that's our
- 24 position, obviously, on the record, Your Honor; but we
- 25 agreed this was properly raised in the appellate court,

- 1 as opposed to the other argument which was not. And
- 2 this also was mentioned in the brief in opposition, as
- 3 opposed to their other argument, which was not.
- 4 So we do think the Court could reach this
- 5 argument, and we maintain that on this record the
- 6 linchpin of apportionment giving the right of a State --
- 7 and this is a right to extend beyond its territory.
- 8 The Court has already let it go beyond its
- 9 territory to get to something outside the State if it's
- 10 part of the unitary business -- the railroad case, the
- 11 express case.
- 12 And in that situation there are three
- 13 factors, none of which can be met on this record. There
- 14 was no shared, centralized management, none. There was
- 15 no integrated functions, none. And there were no
- 16 economies of scale. Lexis/Nexis did not even get a
- 17 discount on any paper they bought from Mead. They were,
- 18 you know, minor customers of each other.
- 19 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Maybe when we're talking
- 20 about Due Process and Commerce Clause limitations on
- 21 what States can tax, we ought to ask ourselves if those
- 22 three -- is that it? If we're trying to measure, is
- 23 there a sufficient relationship between Lexis/Nexis,
- 24 Mead, and the State of Illinois to make it fair for them
- 25 to tax?

- 1 And you say, oh, yes. Each year when
- 2 they're making income, when they are a going concern,
- 3 Illinois can get a piece of it. But when the assets are
- 4 sold, assets that would have generated income for
- 5 Illinois year after year, but when those assets are
- 6 sold, Illinois can get nothing to represent -- to
- 7 substitute for that stream of income that it would have
- 8 gotten.
- 9 MS. BRINKMANN: No. It will continue to get
- 10 income tax on an apportioned basis before and after.
- 11 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But Lexis/Nexis is gone.
- MS. BRINKMANN: Well, Lexis/Nexis continues
- 13 to operate. It's now owned by Reed Elsevier. So it
- 14 would continue to pay an apportioned income tax.
- 15 It's a different event here, Your Honor. It
- 16 is the sale of an investment that occurred in Ohio. And
- 17 as the domicile State, Ohio has provided benefits to the
- 18 corporate headquarters, to management --
- 19 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Suppose it had been
- 20 Delaware, and there was nothing there in Delaware except
- 21 it was a Delaware corporation.
- 22 MS. BRINKMANN: That's not the commercial
- 23 domicile, Your Honor. There is a distinction in all of
- 24 these cases between the State of incorporation and the
- 25 commercial domicile. The commercial domicile --

- 1 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Ms. Brinkmann, one
- 2 thing that concerns me is how this will complicate the
- 3 process. I think, with respect to ordinary income, the
- 4 States work this out, and they figure we get 5 percent
- 5 because we have 5 percent of the presence or business,
- 6 whatever.
- Now, they're going to have that, and they're
- 8 going to have an overlay on that. They're going to say,
- 9 well, it's 5 percent; but, you know, we sold this asset
- 10 that doesn't have any connection to Illinois; and that's
- 11 part of the income we've got. So you don't get quite 5
- 12 percent of all.
- 13 And another -- Illinois is going to come
- 14 back and say, well, yes, but you sold this other one;
- 15 and, as to that one, you've got sufficient connection
- 16 with Illinois. It seems to me it's going to be
- 17 impossible to sort this out.
- 18 MS. BRINKMANN: Your Honor, this has been
- 19 going on since at least 1992 in the Allied-Signal case.
- 20 The lower courts, the State courts, except for the court
- 21 in this case, have been able to apply that easily.
- In order to take the expansive view of
- 23 Illinois here, you would be undermining Allied-Signal,
- 24 which had the same facts as in this case, not to mention
- 25 ASARCO, Woolworth.

- 1 And I would just say, before I could reserve
- 2 the remainder of my time, Allied-Signal was the case in
- 3 which this Court was faced with new arguments raised by
- 4 the States, at argument. You went back and had
- 5 resupplemental briefing and reargument, and questioned
- 6 in your questions to those parties whether or not ASARCO
- 7 and Woolworth should be revisited and overruled.
- 8 So the Allied-Signal case took into account
- 9 all of these concerns and came back with a ringing
- 10 affirmation of the linchpin of an apportionability for
- 11 state taxation being the unitary-business test with the
- 12 operational-function aspect.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: I don't like to intrude on
- 14 the white light, but if I could just ask one question.
- 15 If the unitary-tax argument has been
- 16 preserved and is met and if there's a finding that they
- 17 are unitary, does Illinois have the right to tax the
- 18 sale, or to -- to a portion of it?
- 19 MS. BRINKMANN: We think that the finding is
- 20 that it is not unitary.
- 21 JUSTICE KENNEDY: No, no. Assume -- assume
- 22 it is unitary. Can Illinois then, in your view, have a
- 23 part of -- tax part of the gain on the sale?
- MS. BRINKMANN: Yes, if it were unitary, but
- 25 we think there's no way this record could meet the

- 1 standards compared to Woolworth, ASARCO. In all those
- 2 cases, they were much closer. Thank you.
- 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, Ms.
- 4 Brinkmann.
- 5 Mr. Barov.
- 6 ORAL ARGUMENT OF BRIAN F. BAROV
- 7 ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENTS
- 8 MR. BAROV: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it
- 9 please the Court:
- 10 Illinois is not attempting to tax income
- 11 earned outside its borders. To the contrary, the income
- 12 it seeks to tax here is income earned by Mead on its
- 13 electronic publishing business, Lexis, which conducted
- 14 substantial business in Illinois.
- 15 Mead paid taxes on the income that the
- 16 electronic publishing business earned. Yet, it now
- 17 contends that the Constitution bars it from taxing any
- 18 of the gains it realized on the sale of Lexis, even
- 19 though Illinois undeniably contributed --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, if you did not
- 21 proceed on the unitary business there, let's take that
- 22 off the table. It seems to me that Lexis's presence in
- 23 Illinois is quite irrelevant.
- 24 MR. BAROV: No, Your Honor. It's --
- 25 JUSTICE KENNEDY: It seems to me that, under

- 1 your theory, you could tax the sale, even if Lexis were
- 2 not in Illinois at all, just because Mead is.
- 3 MR. BAROV: If this if they were unitary,
- 4 yes, then Lexis's presence in Illinois would be
- 5 irrelevant to this case, if they met the
- 6 unitary-business doctrine.
- 7 JUSTICE BREYER: That's not the question. I
- 8 thought that the -- I agree with the same question
- 9 Justice Kennedy had. Suppose that I'm a Massachusetts
- 10 company that sells tables, and I sell some tables in
- 11 Illinois. And one day I take some of the money, and I
- 12 buy an iron mine in New Mexico. And then I sell the
- iron mine. And Illinois, not Massachusetts, wants to
- 14 impose a tax. And suppose there is no connection
- 15 whatsoever between the iron mine and anything else but
- 16 for four, which are the four listed on page 13a:
- 17 One, that I have contributed capital support
- 18 to the iron mine.
- 19 Two, I approve the major capital
- 20 expenditures of the iron mine, sitting in my office in
- 21 Massachusetts.
- 22 Three, sometimes -- and this is a tougher
- 23 one -- I call the iron mine a division of my table
- 24 company.
- 25 And, four, I sometimes retain tax benefits

- 1 and control over the extra cash of the iron mine, but
- 2 I'm not using it in my day-to-day work.
- Now, are those four things alone sufficient
- 4 for Illinois to tax the sale of my iron mine? That, it
- 5 seems to me, is the way they presented it. Maybe it is
- 6 a unitary business really, but I guess we have to send
- 7 it back for that.
- 8 MR. BAROV: Under -- under those bare facts,
- 9 probably there would be not a sufficient connection.
- 10 JUSTICE BREYER: All right. Then why isn't
- 11 that the end of this case? That's what they said it
- 12 was. That's what they said, perhaps wrongly, that this
- isn't a unitary business. And, therefore, we are left
- 14 with those four facts, and why not send it back and say
- 15 you haven't reached the unitary-business question; go
- 16 reach it?
- MR. BAROV: Because, Your Honor --
- 18 JUSTICE KENNEDY: And if I can just add on
- 19 to that same question: If you're going to have the
- 20 unitary-tax theory, that's -- that's very helpful. But
- 21 if we take the unitary-tax theory off the table, it
- 22 seems to me that you are confusing the law by having
- 23 some midway test. I don't know what your theory is,
- 24 that -- in relation to this part of Justice Breyer's
- 25 question.

- 1 MR. BAROV: There's a two-part answer to
- 2 that question -- those questions, Your Honor.
- First, there's a second avenue of State
- 4 taxation that's been well recognized by this Court for
- 5 at least 80 years, which is that if a business conducts
- 6 business in a State, a State has a tax -- has the right
- 7 to tax a share of that business. And that's all
- 8 Illinois did here. When it apportioned the income in
- 9 this case, it apportioned the income only based on
- 10 Lexis's in-State Illinois presence. So under that
- 11 avenue alone, the tax is constitutional.
- 12 The second --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: But Mead didn't receive --
- 14 pardon me -- Lexis didn't receive the money for the
- 15 sale, Mead did.
- MR. BAROV: Right.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Unless, again, if Mead's
- 18 presence or nonpresence is simply irrelevant to what
- 19 happened here, absent a unitary theory.
- 20 MR. BAROV: No, Your Honor. Mead received
- 21 the tax -- the gain for the sale because Lexis was a
- 22 division of Mead, and the only tax-paying -- the only --
- 23 there is no -- there was no legal entity known as
- 24 "Lexis" at the time that Lexis was sold. It was assets
- 25 -- it was assets owned by the Mead Corporation.

- 1 Now, Mead received the benefit -- the gain
- 2 on the sale because Mead was the only tax-paying entity
- 3 in this case. So Mead was conducting a business in
- 4 Illinois called "Lexis," and, therefore, Illinois could
- 5 tax at least --
- 6 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Do you think that if there
- 7 had been a separate corporation and that Lexis was a
- 8 subsidiary corporation and the subsidiary was -- it was
- 9 sold, that, again, absent a finding of unitary, Illinois
- 10 then could have had a tax?
- 11 MR. BAROV: Yes. Illinois could have taxed
- 12 based on the --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: All right. So, then, the
- 14 asset stock doesn't make any difference?
- 15 MR. BAROV: But the -- but the point, Your
- 16 Honor, is that Lexis had a presence in Illinois. It was
- 17 conducting business in Illinois. That, alone, gave
- 18 Illinois the power to tax a share of the income --
- 19 JUSTICE KENNEDY: That gets back to Justice
- 20 Stevens's initial hypothetical. If you live in New York
- 21 and you have an investment in a company that does a lot
- 22 of business in Illinois and you in New York, a resident
- 23 individual, sell that stock, under your theory Illinois
- 24 could tax it.
- 25 MR. BAROV: No. Illinois can't tax that

- 1 State because there is no relationship -- there has to
- 2 be some relationship, you know, between Illinois and the
- 3 tax-paying activity and the taxpayer.
- In Justice Breyer's hypothetical there was
- 5 none. But there is a -- but let me, if I can, address
- 6 that prong of the analysis, also.
- 7 Here there was a much closer connection
- 8 between Lexis and Mead than simply that of a passive
- 9 investment. It wasn't just that Mead helped Lexis buy,
- 10 make, handle acquisitions. They were involved in the
- 11 actual acquisitions themselves, in purchasing and
- 12 contracting to make those acquisitions.
- 13 Mead was involved in many of the -- in
- 14 controlling lots of their capital investment, its -- and
- 15 its -- it was also involved in manipulating excess -- in
- 16 their excess cash. And there is a whole -- there was a
- 17 host of facts that supported a closer relationship
- 18 between Mead and Lexis than simply that, that passive
- 19 investment.
- 20 So whether -- even if you are looking at it
- 21 from the operational-function point of view, there was
- 22 -- there was a -- a sufficient connection between Lexis
- 23 and Mead beyond that of Justice Breyer's hypothetical.
- JUSTICE ALITO: If you traded places with
- 25 Ohio, how would you have treated this transaction under

- 1 your tax laws?
- 2 MR. BAROV: Under our tax laws --
- JUSTICE ALITO: Say that Mead was domiciled
- 4 in Illinois but Lexis/Nexis operated in Ohio, would you
- 5 have just taken -- would you have allocated or would you
- 6 have claimed that -- the right to tax the entire capital
- 7 qain?
- 8 MR. BAROV: This would have probably, I
- 9 think, Your Honor -- I believe this would have been
- 10 apportioned as business income under Illinois law.
- 11 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Do you know what -- or
- 12 did you know what Ohio did in the --
- 13 MR. BAROV: I don't know what Ohio did.
- 14 They -- Mead has never cited anything in the record to
- 15 support the contention that it has been -- that it was
- 16 allocated all to Ohio. My understanding of Ohio law at
- 17 the time was they -- they have the same business-income
- 18 test, basically, that Illinois does.
- 19 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Well, what would you say
- 20 -- I mean, we talk about apportioning income and
- 21 allocating income, allocating to the commercial
- 22 headquarters.
- What in an enterprise like this would you
- 24 say is allocated to the commercial headquarters as
- 25 opposed to being apportioned among all the States?

- 1 MR. BAROV: Different States have different
- 2 rules, Your Honor, and these are State-law rules, not
- 3 constitutional rules, about allocation and
- 4 apportionment. Some States will allocate an intangible
- 5 capital gain like this to their own domicile State.
- 6 Other States will apportion it based on the
- 7 share of income that is done in the State.
- 8 Again, I don't know what Ohio did. But the
- 9 point is that's a rule -- that's a State-law rule of
- 10 choice, not a rule of -- a constitutional rule. I think
- 11 this Court has been pretty clear in the Mobil Oil case
- 12 that these -- those -- that doesn't have a
- 13 constitutional significance.
- 14 That when a State, a domicile State, and a
- 15 State where a source -- which is the source of income,
- 16 when those conflict, in fact, this Court has signaled
- 17 that apportionment is the default rule. And that the
- 18 source State actually would have -- the source State
- 19 would win that confrontation.
- JUSTICE SOUTER: Mr. Barov, I just want to
- 21 go back to an earlier answer to see how far you would go
- 22 with the position that you took.
- 23 Assume that, exclusive of Nexis, Mead is the
- 24 same kind of unitary corporation as under -- under
- 25 everybody's understanding now. Assume, also, as you

- 1 suggested in a hypo, that Lexis was doing business in
- 2 Illinois. So that at least a -- a portion of its own
- 3 activity could be taxed in Illinois. And assume, third,
- 4 that the relationship between Mead and Lexis is simply
- 5 one of passive investment. Mead simply bought a lot of
- 6 stock, maybe 100 percent of the stock at the right time;
- 7 and, otherwise, it kept hands off. And at this point
- 8 Mead now -- now sells.
- 9 On -- on your theory, would -- would the
- 10 State of Illinois be able to tax a portion of the
- 11 capital gain?
- 12 MR. BAROV: Yes, they would, Your Honor.
- 13 But they would be limited in how much of that capital
- 14 gain they could apportion. They would apportion it
- 15 limited to the amount of income that arose in Illinois.
- 16 And that's what the auditor did in this case.
- 17 JUSTICE SOUTER: Well, but that would be, in
- 18 effect, the portion of the Nexis business, total
- 19 business that took place in Illinois, total sales, total
- 20 payroll, however you do it.
- 21 MR. BAROV: Right, and then that would be
- 22 put -- that would be put into --
- JUSTICE SOUTER: Okay. But the only point I
- 24 wanted to be clear on to understand your position is
- 25 that purely passive investment would be enough to

1 trigger your theory? 2 MR. BAROV: Yes, it would be. 3 JUSTICE SOUTER: Okay. 4 It is, Your Honor. MR. BAROV: 5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Counsel, why isn't your friend correct that you have waived any argument 6 7 based on the presence of Lexis in Illinois? 8 MR. BAROV: Your Honor, two reasons: 9 First, under the -- they have cited 10 basically two basis grounds for waiver, one under 11 Illinois law and under this Court's rules. But they misstate Illinois law in the -- on the waiver regard. 12 13 The cases and rules they cite to stand for a 14 simple proposition that a point not raised in a brief 15 before a particular court can't be raised on oral 16 argument. But what the Illinois Supreme Court has been 17 clear on "otherwise" is that an argument, even if it's 18 not raised in the appellate court, as long as it's 19 raised in the trial court in support of a judgment, may 20 be raised in a reviewing court on further review. 21 I can provide a couple of cites, Your Honor. JUSTICE GINSBURG: And -- and I'm not 22 23 following your argument, because I thought that the 24 argument that this was a unitary enterprise was made in 25 the Illinois appellate court, and the appellate court

- 1 recognizes that it was made, and said we are not going
- 2 to reach it because we have this operational-function
- 3 test?
- 4 MR. BAROV: Yes, Your Honor. That's --
- 5 that's correct.
- 6 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, but that's --
- 7 they are very different from your current argument,
- 8 which you emphasize that whether they are unitary or
- 9 not, Lexis/Nexis was in Illinois.
- 10 MR. BAROV: That's correct, Your Honor.
- 11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Okay. Now, as to
- 12 that argument, at least I am very reluctant to overturn
- 13 a State court on an argument that they didn't have an
- 14 opportunity to consider. And whether it's technically
- 15 waived because you raised it in the trial court or not,
- 16 it certainly was not an argument you made to the
- 17 Illinois appellate courts.
- 18 MR. BAROV: That's correct, Your Honor. And
- 19 -- but I think, as this Court set forth in Caterpillar
- 20 v. Lewis, it is a predicate to the intelligent
- 21 resolution of this case.
- 22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, it wasn't in
- 23 Allied-Signal. In Allied-Signal the asset that was sold
- 24 was in New Jersey, and that was totally irrelevant to
- 25 how we treated the issue in that case.

- 1 MR. BAROV: Certainly, Your Honor. But New
- 2 Jersey was taking a very different position in that
- 3 case. They were making a much broader argument than we
- 4 are making here. They were trying to overturn the
- 5 entire unitary doctrine.
- And so they may have -- they may have chosen
- 7 not to make that argument. It may very well have been
- 8 in that case that ASARCO's apportionment factors in that
- 9 case were so minimal that it wasn't worth their making
- 10 that argument.
- 11 But, for whatever reason, they weren't
- 12 interested in taxing based on the source alone.
- But here, as the facts show, Illinois did
- 14 tax. We taxed Lexis, or the gain on Lexis, pursuant to
- 15 Lexis' in-state apportionment factors.
- 16 JUSTICE STEVENS: May I ask this question
- 17 just -- it shows my ignorance, but if the
- 18 unitary-business approach to taxation was not applied in
- 19 this case, how did you compute the amount of the tax?
- 20 MR. BAROV: It was computed -- what the
- 21 department did in this case is it -- it took the entire
- 22 gain that put -- that went into Mead's apportionable tax
- 23 base. But, then, in order to find the Illinois-Lexis
- 24 share of the gain, he looked at the -- he looked at
- 25 Lexis's Illinois sales and Illinois's -- Lexis's

- 1 Illinois payroll and pulled that amount out, which was
- 2 about four percent of the gain, and put that into Mead's
- 3 --
- 4 JUSTICE STEVENS: So you use a different
- 5 formula from the normal three-factor formula to compute
- 6 the tax?
- 7 MR. BAROV: Right. You use a different
- 8 formula. You use a two-factor formula, but it was just
- 9 related to Mead's sales, not to --
- 10 JUSTICE KENNEDY: But it seems to me that
- 11 those factors are wholly irrelevant to the fact of sale.
- 12 It's just whimsical. It has nothing to do with the
- 13 sale.
- 14 The reason we use apportionment in other
- 15 cases is, just as in Justice Breyer's railroad example,
- 16 there is no other way to tell, and so forth.
- 17 But here the presence of Lexis in Illinois
- 18 is wholly accidental with reference to what went on in
- 19 the sale.
- 20 MR. BAROV: No, Your Honor, it wasn't. I
- 21 mean Lexis did considerable business in Illinois, and
- the auditor was isolating Illinois's business in
- 23 attempting to accurately value the amount of gain that
- 24 should be attributable to Mead based on Lexis's Illinois
- 25 presence.

- 1 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, that's why
- 2 it's even more dramatic to me that you didn't raise the
- 3 argument based on the Lexis connection to Illinois.
- 4 That's the basis on which your auditor is claiming these
- 5 taxes; and, yet, you don't even raise it before the
- 6 Illinois appellate court as a ground for being able to
- 7 reach the Lexis/Nexis income.
- 8 MR. BAROV: -- the trial court -- actually
- 9 the appellate court ruled on whether the State law tests
- 10 had been met at the time. And when it went up on appeal
- 11 we -- we prevailed in the appellate court based on
- 12 operational -- I'm sorry, in the trial court, based on
- 13 the court's finding the operational function had been
- 14 met. That's how the appellant framed the issue, and the
- 15 case sort of turned on really Illinois State law's
- 16 interpretation of Allied-Signal. But, you know, at this
- 17 point the -- the facts and the law are clear and a
- 18 decision --
- 19 JUSTICE STEVENS: In the Illinois courts,
- 20 they did argue that as a matter of Federal
- 21 constitutional law the tax is impermissible, didn't
- 22 they?
- MR. BAROV: Correct, yes. Yes, they did.
- 24 At this point, Your Honor, I mean, to render a decision
- 25 that doesn't take into account the facts of the case,

- 1 the economic reality, accordingly would be artificial.
- 2 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We couldn't do
- anything more if we said you haven't waived it, we
- 4 couldn't do anything more than send it back. You're
- 5 telling us Lexis has this presence in Illinois, but we
- 6 have nothing in the record about that.
- 7 MR. BAROV: Yes, it is in the record. The
- 8 auditor's -- I mean, the stipulation itself shows that
- 9 Lexis was in Illinois. And the Illinois appellate court
- 10 made a finding that the presence of Lexis -- Mead to tax
- 11 Nexis with Illinois was undisputed. So the Illinois
- 12 appellate court recognized that Lexis had a taxing --
- 13 adequate taxing connection with Illinois.
- 14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Where is that?
- 15 MR. BAROV: That is -- I don't have the page
- 16 cite handy, Your Honor, but the appellate court did make
- 17 a finding that it was undisputed that the --
- 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I just -- usually
- 19 appellate courts don't make findings. That's why I'm
- 20 curious --
- 21 MR. BAROV: I'm sorry. Made a statement.
- 22 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Was there any sort of
- 23 stipulation between the parties to say what each, what
- 24 Lexis/Nexis was doing in Illinois, what Mead was doing
- 25 in Illinois?

- 1 MR. BAROV: There was, there was a long
- 2 stipulation, yes, Your Honor, and plus there was
- 3 exhibits attached to the stipulation, which are
- 4 reflected in our briefs, that discuss in detail what
- 5 Mead and Lexis were both doing, at least their
- 6 relationship to each other.
- 7 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Let me ask you about the
- 8 theory that both the trial court and the intermediate
- 9 appellate court went on, this operational function test,
- 10 which has been brought up in a few of our cases, but I
- 11 don't know any that was decided. Did we ever have any
- 12 case that turned on the operational function test to
- 13 hold for the State taxing authority?
- MR. BAROV: No, Your Honor. But in
- 15 Allied-Signal there was -- examples were given of
- 16 certain --
- 17 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Yes. But one of the
- 18 problems with applying it as you urge here is that that
- 19 would just override -- why would anyone go to the
- 20 trouble of making a case under the so-called unitary
- 21 business test, because the operational function test
- 22 would be much easier to meet? So --
- MR. BAROV: I guess on that point I would
- 24 disagree with you a bit, Your Honor. I think there are
- 25 very -- they're different types that look at different

- 1 relationships. So one doesn't -- while the same facts
- 2 can support them in instances, you can have situations
- 3 where a business is unitary but not operational or --
- 4 I'm sorry, an asset is operational, but isn't
- 5 necessarily --
- 6 JUSTICE BREYER: What? What could it
- 7 be? That is -- as I read this, I thought, well, there
- 8 is no separate test. It's just there's a certain
- 9 situation that comes up fairly commonly where someone
- 10 claims that an asset of a company was really quite
- 11 separate, and therefore when they get income from it or
- 12 they sell it it has nothing to do with my business. And
- 13 the answer is: It did have something to do with your
- 14 business, you used the working capital and so forth, in
- 15 which case it's part of the business. So how -- how is
- 16 it -- how is it different from that?
- 17 MR. BAROV: I agree, Your Honor.
- 18 JUSTICE BREYER: Well, if you agree with
- 19 that, do you really agree, because if you agree with
- 20 that there's no such separate test, this court was wrong
- 21 to consider it separately, the lower court, and they
- 22 should have reached the question they didn't reach,
- 23 which was is this whole thing one single business, which
- 24 is normally called the unitary business test?
- MR. BAROV: Your Honor, on that point I

- 1 disagree.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Good. All right.
- 3 MR. BAROV: I think there is -- I mean,
- 4 they're both ways of reaching the overall unitary
- 5 principle, whether you can show the intangible flow of
- 6 assets -- of value between a company -- I can give you
- 7 an example, say, of a company that would be unitary but
- 8 where the operational function analysis wouldn't apply
- 9 is the Container Corp. Type fact pattern, where you have
- 10 a domestic -- a domestic parent providing value out to
- 11 the foreign subsidiaries, but there is nothing sort of
- 12 flowing back to the domestic parent. They're not really
- 13 using those subsidiaries in the domestic business. But
- 14 nevertheless, there is enough value being thrown out
- 15 that it passed the unitary threshold.
- 16 The unitary -- the unitary -- I'm sorry.
- 17 The operational function analysis or test or principle,
- 18 whatever you want to call it, arises in the examples
- 19 given in Allied-Signal. As you said, you've got
- 20 something which isn't really part of the rest of your
- 21 business, but you're using it in that business to
- 22 support it way beyond just a passive investment.
- 23 And this -- in this case, that's how Mead
- 24 was using Lexis. They were using it to support their,
- 25 the value of their multiple, their multi-state business,

- 1 by manipulating -- by making capital contributions,
- 2 manipulating corporate structures, and bringing back
- 3 that tax and net loss carryforwards, which increased the
- 4 value, which increased their business activities.
- 5 So this case actually is that -- is that --
- 6 falls within that paradigm also. It's not unlike any --
- 7 like either of those hypotheticals in Allied-Signal, not
- 8 unlike the use of working -- investment of working
- 9 capital.
- 10 So, yes, both -- the test, while there are
- 11 facts that overlap them, they can show that there are
- 12 different relationships.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: So say you -- but you
- 14 would be asking us, if you were going to go on that
- 15 operational function, to take two examples that were
- 16 given in Allied-Signal that are quite different from
- 17 what's involved here, and to make that a doctrine when
- 18 you recognize that we have never used that theory to
- 19 hold for a State taxing authority in the context of a
- 20 multi-state enterprise?
- 21 MR. BAROV: Your Honor, I don't think you
- 22 have to create a separate doctrine again. I think these
- 23 are both considered different ways of showing the
- 24 intangible flow of value, the significant links between
- 25 a business that give rise to constitutional

- 1 apportionment. And whether they're considered separate
- 2 analyses -- they have been described by some academics
- 3 as corollaries of each other. It's certainly, given
- 4 this Court's signals in Allied-Signal, I think it's
- 5 certainly appropriate where the facts arise to make the
- 6 constitutional finding based on the operational function
- 7 that an asset serves in a business.
- 8 JUSTICE STEVENS: May I ask this question.
- 9 Does the record tell us whether other States have sought
- 10 to tax the capital gain on this transaction?
- 11 MR. BAROV: No, it does not, Your Honor.
- 12 JUSTICE STEVENS: As far as we know,
- 13 Illinois is out on its own here?
- MR. BAROV: I don't know, Your -- I don't
- 15 know the answer to that, Your Honor. I hope not.
- In any event, Your Honor --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: You'd not wager, however,
- 18 right?
- MR. BAROV: In any case, Your Honor, as you
- 20 said, as I've said, there are two possible ways that --
- 21 two different constitutional paths or theories that we
- 22 can go down in this case to meet the -- that allows
- 23 Illinois to apportion.
- Independent of the operational links, Mead
- 25 can tax the gain on Lexis simply because Lexis conducted

- 1 business in Illinois. A state may tax a nonresident's
- 2 investment income based on its investment in a separate
- 3 business, and that's exactly what Illinois -- that's
- 4 another way to uphold the Illinois appellate court's
- 5 decision.
- 6 JUSTICE GINSBURG: If Illinois -- if Ohio
- 7 is, in fact, taxing the whole gain at its full rate on
- 8 the theory that this entire income should be allocated
- 9 to Ohio, then you do have an element of double taxation,
- 10 right?
- 11 MR. BAROV: That's possible, Your Honor, but
- 12 it's -- first, there is no -- there's no evidence that
- 13 Ohio in fact did that. But I think the Mobil Oil case
- 14 should have disposed of that, that contention, because
- 15 this Court rejected a similar argument that the mere
- 16 possibility of taxation by a domiciliary State
- 17 foreclosed taxation by a State where the business was
- 18 present.
- 19 And under Mobil Oil, when a resident State's
- 20 claim and a source State's claim conflict, this Court
- 21 indicated that the resident State's claim must yield to
- 22 that of the source State. So there should be no issue
- 23 of multiple taxation in this case.
- Just -- Chief Justice Roberts, just to go
- 25 back to your question, it's page 11A of the pet. app.

- 1 where the appellate court said: "Mead does not dispute
- 2 that Lexis/Nexis had the requisite connection or nexus
- 3 with Illinois."
- 4 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I thought -- I've
- 5 been looking, too. I thought 18A does say that they had
- 6 \$46 million of sales attributable to Lexis/Nexis.
- 7 MR. BAROV: Right. Certainly. There was
- 8 hundreds of millions of dollars of sales in Illinois.
- 9 So that's really not an issue in this case.
- 10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: No, only 46 million.
- MR. BAROV: I'm sorry.
- 12 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: It said 46, not
- 13 hundreds of millions.
- MR. BAROV: I'm sorry. In 1994, yes, that's
- 15 correct.
- 16 The -- and again there's -- both Mead and
- 17 Lexis -- as both Mead and Lexis had adequate
- 18 constitutional connection here, there is no basis not to
- 19 sustain --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: You're taxing Mead, not
- 21 Nexis/Lexis?
- MR. BAROV: Correct. That's correct.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: So what relevance is it
- 24 that Nexis/Lexis has business in Illinois?
- MR. BAROV: It's --

- 1 JUSTICE SCALIA: I mean that's fine if
- 2 that's who you're taxing.
- MR. BAROV: Well, it's relevant if, only if,
- 4 this Court finds that there was no operational
- 5 relationship between Lexis and Mead. Then Lexis's
- 6 presence in Illinois becomes relevant because in that
- 7 case, whether you look at this as a separate business
- 8 conducted by Mead or whether it was even a passive
- 9 investment of Mead's, Illinois can still tax it in the
- 10 manner that it did by -- by isolating the values of
- 11 Lexis's -- that Lexis earned in Illinois.
- 12 JUSTICE KENNEDY: And that is different --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: I might say that I don't
- 14 follow that. It seems to me what you can establish from
- 15 the fact that it did a lot of business in Illinois is
- 16 that can you tax it and -- but I don't see how.
- 17 JUSTICE GINSBURG: There was no "it" to tax,
- 18 right?
- 19 MR. BAROV: That 's correct. There was no
- 20 "it" to tax and under this court's well-established case
- 21 law, International Harvester, J.C. Penney, a State can
- 22 tax a nonresident on an investment in that State as well
- 23 as the tax is properly prorated to the amount of income
- 24 that rose within that State.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: At the time of this sale

- 1 of Lexis/Nexis assets, there was only one taxpayer; it
- 2 was Mead.
- 3 MR. BAROV: That's correct, Your Honor.
- 4 There was one taxpayer and it was Mead. That was the
- 5 only party that could have been taxed. That's correct.
- 6 So here, in this case, Mead is taking an
- 7 all-or-nothing approach to taxation but this could --
- 8 this disregards the connections between Mead's
- 9 electronic publishing business in Illinois. And the
- 10 Court should decline to rule in their favor. In fact --
- 11 JUSTICE SCALIA: Do you have any case like
- 12 that where your ability to tax a surviving corporation
- 13 has to do with, not whether the surviving corporation
- 14 itself has sufficient contacts with the State, but
- 15 whether some other corporation that has disappeared now
- 16 but that merged into it had sufficient -- it seems to me
- 17 you have to establish connection with the taxpayer. Not
- 18 -- not with somebody from whom the taxpayer made some
- 19 money.
- MR. BAROV: You have to establish a
- 21 connection with the taxpayer's activities in the taxing
- 22 State. That's the constitutional touchstone. So if
- 23 Mead -- whether Mead was running a business in Illinois
- 24 or investing in Illinois or had a unitary business that
- 25 operated in Illinois, those -- that's the -- that

- 1 provides a sufficient link.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: That's fine.
- 3 MR. BAROV: So that provides the taxing --
- 4 the ability --
- 5 JUSTICE SCALIA: But that isn't established
- 6 by the mere fact that Lexis/Nexis did business there.
- 7 Ultimately you have to come down to connecting it to
- 8 Mead, either by your unitary business doctrine or by
- 9 this functional doctrine that you're relying on.
- 10 MR. BAROV: No, Your Honor. Under
- 11 International Harvester, I think that the Court made it
- 12 very clear that even a passive investment can be taxed
- 13 by a State. If Mead -- Mead can be taxed -- even if
- 14 LEXIS was a passive investor and Mead was only investing
- 15 in Illinois, Illinois could still tax Mead on the value
- 16 of its investment that arose in Illinois. And so Mead
- 17 realized the gain. Mead is the taxpayer. Mead can be
- 18 taxed as long as the tax is properly prorated to the
- 19 Illinois presence, which it was in this case.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: But the proration, it
- 21 seems to me -- that should have nothing to do with the
- 22 extent of Lexis in Illinois --
- MR. BAROV: Exactly.
- 24 JUSTICE KENNEDY: -- nor does it have to do
- 25 with the extent of Mead in Illinois.

- 1 MR. BAROV: Well, no, Your Honor. It's --
- 2 under this -- then under this Court's precedent, that
- 3 you're looking for the source State, the activity of the
- 4 business was conducted in the source State. Now, in
- 5 this case it happened that the amounts are fairly close
- 6 to each other. So if there is any question about it,
- 7 there's no -- you know, there is no constitutional
- 8 problem that arises out of that. But clearly this -- I
- 9 mean it's settled precedent that a State can tax based
- 10 on income -- the income that arose in that State and
- 11 that's what happened here.
- 12 Indeed, to accept Mead's contention which
- 13 also would create a constitutional loophole that for
- 14 income in ae State's marketplace helped create but which
- 15 a State cannot recover, the Illinois court's decision
- 16 permitting Illinois to tax a fraction of the gain should
- 17 be affirmed.
- 18 And if the Court has no other questions --
- 19 JUSTICE SCALIA: Can you tax me on stock --
- 20 on stock that I own on companies that do business in
- 21 Illinois?
- MR. BAROV: In the abstract, yes, you could,
- 23 Your Honor.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Do you know any State that
- 25 tries to do it.

1	MR. BAROV: No, Your Honor, but again, Your
2	Honor
3	JUSTICE SCALIA: That's extraordinary. I
4	don't know of any tax that a State could possibly
5	impose, that no State has imposed.
6	(Laughter.)
7	MR. BAROV: Your Honor, this is but Your
8	Honor, International Harvester is the perfectly precise
9	fact pattern where this Court upheld a tax on a on
10	investors, on the shareholder's investment in a State in
11	which they were not present, so but in this case Mead
12	had an independent tax presence also in Illinois. So
13	that issue just doesn't arise in this case.
14	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, Counsel.
15	Ms. Brinkmann, you have three minutes.
16	REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF BETH S. BRINKMANN
17	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER
18	MS. BRINKMANN: I have four very quick
19	points, Your Honor. Two go into this new, very
20	breathtaking argument that the State is making based on
21	Lexis/Nexis's presence to the State. Concerning
22	Illinois law, if you look Repondents' brief in
23	opposition, on page 12 at note 4, they cite the same
24	Illinois law we do, trying to argue that we had waived
25	arguments in the brief in op, so we are on pretty solid

- 1 ground there. I think it's their cert page, they were
- 2 agreeing with us on what the Illinois law meant.
- 3 On the substance of it, I think Justice
- 4 Scalia and Justice Kennedy brought out the weaknesses.
- 5 Their position would lead to taxes on all stock sales.
- 6 Any State where an investment was doing business could
- 7 then reach out and apportion the gain on that. And as
- 8 far as International Harvester and J.C. Penney, those
- 9 were tax on the investment, not the investor. And the
- 10 dissent -- that was the dispute -- the majority. It was
- 11 the incident of the tax fell on the invest -- the
- 12 investment that was doing business in the State.
- The State concedes, Your Honor, on Justice
- 14 Ginsburg's, the distinction between -- the sale of
- 15 assets and the sale of stocks that you were concerned
- 16 about. On page 43, they concede and I think it's very
- 17 well recognized through Mobil and Exxon and Woolworth
- 18 that "apportionment has nothing to do with the form a
- 19 business organization takes."
- 20 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Ms. Brinkmann, your
- 21 final point.
- MS. BRINKMANN: Finally I would point out,
- 23 on the question you asked -- I think it was Justice
- 24 Ginsburg -- what Illinois would do in this.
- 25 Interestingly --

1	JUSTICE GINSBURG: Ohio.
2	MS. BRINKMANN: the record in this case
3	at it's not in the joint appendix, but it's at C-851.
4	It's Exhibit 1, to the stipulation of facts. It
5	indicates that interest and dividends allocable are
6	allocable to Illinois if the commercial domicile is in
7	Illinois.
8	JUSTICE SCALIA: Illinois or Ohio, were you
9	talking about?
10	MS. BRINKMANN: This is the Illinois return
11	and the question was what Illinois would do? And they
12	say commercial domicile, we get your interest and
13	dividends.
14	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Ms. Brinkmann, on
15	the waiver point I'm looking at page 18a it not
16	only says that Lexis/Nexis contributed \$46 million from
17	its presence in Illinois; it begins the sentence by
18	saying "as the Department notes, \$46 million of Mead's
19	income came from Lexis/Nexis activities in Illinois."
20	So that doesn't sound like a waiver of that point to me
21	MS. BRINKMANN: At one point, after they got
22	through the unitary business and operational functional
23	analysis, there was an argument about whether it was
24	grossly disproportionate, and that's where some of that

information came. It was never in the context of this

25

1	legal
2	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Initially, it's
3	about the context in which what I regard as an
4	important fact was raised, whether it was raised in
5	the context of an argument on unitary business or
6	whether or not they went too far, but the stubborn fact
7	is still there.
8	MS. BRINKMANN: There are facts, Your Honor,
9	but the Illinois law is very clear; it's rule 341(h)(7)
10	and (i) which applies to applee. If you don't raise a
11	point in the appellate court, it is waived. That's an
12	independent and adequate State ground. And it's a very
13	breathtaking argument, as Justice Scalia pointed out,
14	that also wasn't brought forth in the brief in
15	opposition. Thank you, Your Honor.
16	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you. The case
17	is submitted.
18	(Whereupon, at 12:18 p.m., the case in the
19	above-entitled matter was submitted.)
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