SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE	UNITED STATES
	_
ANDRE MARTELLO BARTON,)
Petitioner,)
v.) No. 18-725
WILLIAM P. BARR, ATTORNEY GENERAL,)
Respondent.)
	_

Pages: 1 through 70

Place: Washington, D.C.

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4	Petitioner,)
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6	WILLIAM P. BARR, ATTORNEY GEN	NERAL,)
7	Respondent.)
8		
9	Washington, D	O.C.
10	Monday, November	4, 2019
11		
12	The above-entitle	ed matter came on
13	for oral argument before the	Supreme Court of
14	the United States at 10:06 a.	.m.
15		
16	APPEARANCES:	
17		
18	ADAM G. UNIKOWSKY, ESQ., Wash	nington, D.C.; on behalf
19	of the Petitioner.	
20	FREDERICK LIU, Assistant to t	the Solicitor General,
21	Department of Justice, Wa	ashington, D.C.; on behalf
22	of the Respondent.	
23		
24		
25		

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1	PROCEEDINGS
2	(10:06 a.m.)
3	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear
4	argument first this morning in Case 18-725,
5	Barton versus Barr.
6	Mr. Unikowsky.
7	ORAL ARGUMENT OF ADAM G. UNIKOWSKY
8	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER
9	MR. UNIKOWSKY: Mr. Chief Justice, and
10	may it please the Court:
11	The question before the Court today
12	is, what does it mean for an offense to render
13	an alien inadmissible for purposes of the
14	stop-time rule? The Court should hold that an
15	offense renders an alien inadmissible if the
16	immigration judge finds that the offense renders
17	the alien inadmissible at the removal hearing
18	that precipitates the need to apply the
19	stop-time rule.
20	If the Court disagrees with that and
21	agrees with the Eleventh Circuit that
22	inadmissible is a status, it should hold that an
23	alien acquires that status when the alien is
24	capable of being charged with inadmissibility.
25	In this case, neither condition is

- 1 satisfied. Petitioner was not found
- 2 inadmissible. He wasn't capable of being found
- 3 inadmissible. Therefore, he was not rendered
- 4 inadmissible.
- 5 So I'd like to begin this morning with
- 6 a concession the government makes at pages 29
- 7 and 30 of its brief which I think narrows the
- 8 issues in this case somewhat. So the government
- 9 concedes that when the words "inadmissible" and
- 10 "removable," which are the crucial words in the
- 11 stop-time rule, when those words are used in a
- 12 statute that has a connection to the alien's own
- removal proceeding, they're a reference to the
- 14 charge against the alien at that proceeding.
- 15 They're not a status.
- 16 So the government agrees that in those
- 17 contexts, its proposed interpretation of the
- 18 words "inadmissible" and "removable" in the
- 19 stop-time rule is incorrect. So, in
- 20 Section 1226, the mandatory detention statute,
- 21 that says that an alien who is inadmissible by
- 22 reason of having committed an offense under
- 23 Section 1182 is subject to mandatory detention,
- the government agrees there that "inadmissible"
- is a reference to inadmissible at the

- 1 proceeding, not just the status of being inadmissible. 2 The government says that's natural in 3 4 that context, and we agree, because that's a 5 statute with the relationship to the alien's removal. 6 Same thing in Section 1252. 7 8 the jurisdiction-stripping statute. That says 9 that courts of appeals don't have jurisdiction 10 to hear petitions for review by an alien who is removable for certain specified reasons. There, 11 12 too, the government agrees removable is not the 13 status; it's a reference to the actual charge at 14 the hearing, and they say that's natural in that 15 context because the statute has a connection to 16 the alien's removal proceeding. 17 So the question in this case boils 18 down to whether the government has put forward a 19 sufficient case for holding that the words "inadmissible" and "removable" in the stop-time 20
- 23 statutes addressing the same subject matter.

 24 And I don't think the government has

 25 put forward that case, because I think that many

rule mean something different from what it

concedes they mean in these adjacent or nearby

21

- of the contextual clues that apply in the nearby
- 2 statutes also apply in the stop-time rule, or at
- 3 least there isn't a sufficient reason for
- 4 construing those statutes differently.
- 5 So, first of all, I think it's
- 6 important to recognize that the stop-time rule
- 7 is applied only in the context of removal
- 8 proceedings after the immigration judge has just
- 9 decided whether an alien is inadmissible or
- 10 removable. So there's like two steps.
- 11 At step one, the immigration judge
- 12 decides whether an offense renders the alien
- inadmissible or removable. And then the
- 14 immigration judge decides eligibility for
- 15 cancellation.
- 16 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: That's not quite
- 17 true, though. Some aliens concede removability
- 18 and are seeking cancellation.
- 19 MR. UNIKOWSKY: Yes, that's correct.
- 20 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: And then there are
- 21 some that are ordered -- who are found
- inadmissible or removable not on the basis of a
- 23 crime at all.
- MR. UNIKOWSKY: So that's true, but
- 25 in --

1	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So you have two
2	classes of people that aren't covered by the way
3	you're reading admissibility now.
4	MR. UNIKOWSKY: No, but there's still
5	a threshold finding of inadmissibility or
6	removability. It's true there might not be a
7	hearing; there might be a concession. But, in
8	the most typical cases, it's based on an
9	offense, and in every case, there's just been a
LO	holding, an adjudication, that for some reason
L1	the alien is inadmissible or removable.
L2	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But
L3	JUSTICE ALITO: Mr. Unikowsky, could I
L 4	could I possibly get an argument off the
L5	table? Do you really want to argue that the
L6	concept of inadmissibility is not a status?
L7	MR. UNIKOWSKY: I think that the word
L8	varies depending on the context in which it's
L9	being used. So I can't
20	JUSTICE ALITO: Okay. Well, that's a
21	different question in but is is or is not
22	the concept of inadmissibility a status?
23	MR. UNIKOWSKY: I think that it can
24	the word can mean two things. I mean, I agree
2.5	with you that the DLE sounds like a status at

- least in some contexts. I can't -- I'm not
- 2 conceding -- I'm not going to argue something
- 3 that's obviously wrong.
- 4 There are certain contexts in which
- 5 the way using that word it sounds like a status.
- 6 So I agree, if you go to your lawyer before the
- 7 hearing and say, hey, I want to go to Niagara
- 8 Falls, am I inadmissible, in that context, it's
- 9 talking about a status. That's clear.
- 10 But I also think it's clear that in
- 11 certain contexts when you're talking about the
- 12 removal proceeding itself --
- JUSTICE ALITO: Give me a -- give me
- 14 an example in ordinary speech where
- inadmissibility is not a status. You just gave
- 16 the example of -- you just gave an example
- 17 yourself where it would be.
- 18 MR. UNIKOWSKY: Yeah.
- 19 JUSTICE ALITO: Somebody is in Europe
- and is going to buy a ticket to come to the
- 21 United States. If that person does not
- 22 satisfy -- that person is inadmissible, that
- 23 person is inadmissible at the time when the
- 24 ticket is purchased --
- 25 MR. UNIKOWSKY: So I --

1	JUSTICE ALITO: or at the time when
2	the person gets on a bus in Central America to
3	come to the southern border, or if evidence is
4	inadmissible, it's inadmissible before the
5	attorney tries to admit it at trial, right?
6	MR. UNIKOWSKY: That so that's
7	true, but it seems to me that when you're using
8	the word in the context of talking about the
9	removal proceeding itself, what you really mean
LO	is inadmissible at that proceeding. So, again,
L1	I think 1226 is a perfect example of this.
L2	JUSTICE ALITO: Okay. So
L3	MR. UNIKOWSKY: Yeah.
L 4	JUSTICE ALITO: that that's the
L5	what I want to get off the table. So it is a
L6	status when you may or may not agree with me,
L7	I gather that you don't. But, if I think it is
L8	a status, then the question is whether is the
L9	context in which this status can be assessed,
20	right?
21	MR. UNIKOWSKY: I mean, I'm
22	comfortable calling it a status if we define the
23	relevant status as status of inadmissible at
24	that proceeding, as opposed to status of
25	theoretically

1 JUSTICE ALITO: Okay. Then you have 2 to show why, in the context of a -- a removal proceeding for an LPR who has not left the 3 country, there cannot be a -- an assessment of 4 5 inadmissibility of the status. You have to show 6 why that is so. MR. UNIKOWSKY: So I think it's for 7 8 many of the same reasons why we agree with the 9 adjacent statute that that is so. So, first of all, just contextually, 10 it seems to me it's quite natural when at step 11 12 one of the proceeding there's an adjudication. Maybe it's conceded, but there's some kind of 13 14 adjudication that the alien is, in fact, inadmissible or removable. 15 16 And then the next step, the 17 immigration judge is asked to decide, does this 18 offense render the alien inadmissible or 19 removable? I just think it's natural to talk 20 about what just happened, rather than this new 21 proceeding that imagines what would have 22 happened if the person had left and tried to 23 come back. 24 I also think that the -- the opening 25 stanza of the cancellation of removal statute is

- 1 actually quite good for us. It says something
- 2 to the effect of the attorney general may cancel
- 3 removal for an alien who is inadmissible or
- 4 deportable. That's actually quite a lot like
- 5 1226, the mandatory detention statute, in that
- 6 it has removal and then inadmissible and
- 7 deportable sort of in the same breath.
- 8 JUSTICE ALITO: Do you dispute the
- 9 fact that there are other provisions in the
- 10 immigration laws in which inadmissibility is
- 11 assessed at a time other than when an alien is
- seeking admission to the country?
- MR. UNIKOWSKY: So I -- yes, I do.
- 14 And let me walk through all of those because I
- don't -- it's almost like the exception that
- 16 proves the rule in the cases that the government
- 17 addresses. So the primary example is adjustment
- of status or adoption of a temporary status,
- 19 which I think is sort of a constructive
- admission, like you don't have to leave the
- 21 country and come back.
- JUSTICE ALITO: Well, I mean, when you
- 23 say it's a constructive admission,
- 24 "constructive" is a word that lawyers use in an
- 25 effort to show that something that is not

- 1 something else actually is that other thing,
- 2 right?
- 3 MR. UNIKOWSKY: Yeah, but the point is
- 4 you're -- you're trying to get into a new
- 5 status, which is sort of like trying to get into
- 6 a new country, like the status is as if you're
- 7 being admitted into a new -- it's not like a
- 8 latent -- the government says that in 1996 this
- 9 like latent status was conferred on him that
- just stuck with him for all these years, which
- is different from when you're affirmatively
- seeking eligibility for a new status, which is
- 13 kind of like affirmatively seeking eligibility
- 14 to enter the country.
- So I think that's just conceptually
- 16 different. And, by the way, that doesn't apply
- 17 to -- to LPRs like Petitioner. There actually
- is no other concept -- context in which the
- 19 concept of inadmissibility has any relevance to
- an LPR.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: When -- when --
- MR. UNIKOWSKY: The government also
- 23 has --
- 24 JUSTICE GINSBURG: -- when can an LPR
- 25 fit -- fit that status? You say if he leaves

1 the country for more -- more than 180 days. 2 MR. UNIKOWSKY: Yes. JUSTICE GINSBURG: What other sit --3 in what other situations can a lawfully 4 5 permanent resident be subject to the status of 6 ineligibility? MR. UNIKOWSKY: So there's --7 8 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Inadmissibility? 9 MR. UNIKOWSKY: I'm sorry. So there's 10 several enumerated criteria. Probably the one most relevant to this case is that the statute 11 12 provides that if you've committed a crime on the 13 inadmissibility list, under 1182, and then you 14 leave, you need to seek admission again. Now there's one wrinkle on the 15 specific facts of this case, that that statute 16 17 doesn't apply to Petitioner because he committed 18 his crime before the -- IIRARA's enactment. But 19 in the general mine run -- and we're not relying on that as the basis to decide this case. 20 21 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But what else 22 besides leaving the country and coming back? 23 MR. UNIKOWSKY: So leaving for 180 24 days, abandonment of the status. I think one of 25 them is committing a crime in a foreign country,

- 1 and -- and there's a couple of other ones.
- 2 There's like a list of enumerated criteria in
- 3 Section 1101.
- 4 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Could you go back
- 5 and finish your answer to Justice Alito? I
- 6 understand he asked about the other
- 7 provisions --
- 8 MR. UNIKOWSKY: Yes.
- 9 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- that refer just
- 10 to a status.
- MR. UNIKOWSKY: Yeah.
- 12 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: And you mentioned
- 13 the first one, and --
- 14 MR. UNIKOWSKY: Right.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- that seems
- 16 somewhat logical. But how about the others?
- 17 MR. UNIKOWSKY: So I think that the
- only other ones are these two, for these very
- 19 narrow classes for temporary aliens, like
- 20 certain entrance before 1982 and something about
- 21 special agricultural workers.
- 22 And, actually, those provisions in the
- 23 -- in the sections talking about adjustment of
- 24 status for those people, it also says that if
- 25 they're inadmissible, they also have to leave.

- 1 Their status is terminated.
- 2 Those statutes were enacted many
- 3 years -- I think in the '80s, many years before
- 4 IIRARA. So, I mean, it's different subject
- 5 matters. It's not about LPR. They're enacted
- 6 at different times. I think they're less
- 7 relevant in these cluster of statutes about
- 8 removal which were all or almost all enacted in
- 9 IIRARA itself. They all address the same
- 10 subject matter.
- To me, if you're going to look at
- 12 consistent usage, those are the ones to use. I
- 13 actually think that our best argument on
- 14 consistent usage is maybe just the intro to the
- 15 cancellation of removal statute. And I -- I
- mentioned a few minutes ago, but I'd just like
- 17 to elaborate a little bit.
- 18 It says the Attorney General may
- 19 cancel removal for an alien who is inadmissible
- or removable -- or deportable, excuse me, and so
- 21 like that's just like 1226. You're talking
- 22 about removal and inadmissible in the same
- 23 sentence.
- 24 And so it just seems quite natural
- 25 that inadmissible is a reference to inadmissible

- 1 at the hearing, right? And you can't actually
- 2 cancel removable --
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: But the point --
- 4 the point of the overall provision is to allow
- 5 cancellation of removal for those who've been in
- 6 the U.S. for a long time and have had clean
- 7 records. You agree so far?
- 8 MR. UNIKOWSKY: Well, clean -- it
- 9 doesn't have to be completely clean --
- 10 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Right.
- MR. UNIKOWSKY: -- but yes.
- 12 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: But generally
- 13 clean.
- MR. UNIKOWSKY: Yes. Right.
- 15 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Okay. And on the
- 16 clean record point, the statute excludes those
- who have aggravated felonies, right?
- 18 MR. UNIKOWSKY: Yes.
- 19 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: And then it
- 20 excludes, arguably, two more categories, those
- 21 who have the list of crimes that make you
- 22 deportable or the list of crimes that make you
- 23 admissible.
- 24 So those are the three categories that
- 25 seem to suggest if -- if those have been

- 1 committed within the first seven years for those
- 2 latter two, right? The aggravated felony at any
- 3 time, but deportable crimes, seven years, the --
- 4 the inadmissible crimes, seven years.
- Why isn't that the overall structure
- 6 to look at that makes you ineligible for
- 7 cancellation of removal, if you understand the
- 8 structure?
- 9 MR. UNIKOWSKY: Well, I -- I think the
- 10 structure has a different conclusion. I think
- 11 it's -- it's quite relevant that for this
- 12 aggravated assault offense here, Congress has
- actually decided that that's not a basis to
- 14 deport him, period.
- So like it doesn't interrupt his
- 16 continuous residence in the literal sense, that
- 17 ICE can't come to his house and -- and deport
- 18 him for it. He -- Congress has decided he gets
- 19 to stay here, so --
- 20 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Right. But the --
- 21 the point is you're already been determined that
- 22 you're inadmissible or deportable.
- MR. UNIKOWSKY: Yes.
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Now the question,
- 25 are you eligible for cancellation of that

- 1 removal, and the two things that Congress said
- 2 we should -- that IJs should look at are, have
- 3 you been here for a sufficient period of time
- 4 and have you not committed certain crimes:
- 5 aggravated felonies, deportable offenses within
- 6 seven years, inadmissible offenses within seven
- 7 years.
- 8 If you've committed anything within
- 9 those three categories, you're no longer going
- to be eligible for cancellation of removal.
- MR. UNIKOWSKY: See, I'm not sure
- that's the right way to read the statute because
- 13 what it says is, to -- to stop the clock, it's
- 14 got to be a crime referred to in 1182, that's
- the inadmissibility list, and then that renders
- 16 you inadmissible or removable.
- 17 So the way I -- I look at that is that
- 18 the first part of that referred to in 1182,
- 19 that's the category of crimes that's capable of
- 20 stopping the clock.
- 21 And then there's the second part of
- the statute, which has what we see as, okay, not
- only does it have to be on this list of crimes,
- that's the first part, but it has to have this
- 25 particular type of consequence, which is

```
1
     rendering you inadmissible or -- or removable.
 2
               And, in fact, that leads to an
      argument we make about -- about surplusage, that
 3
      it makes more sense to view the statute that way
 4
 5
      than the government's way because, under the
      government's position, at least until it filed
 6
      its brief in this case, it conceded that the
 7
 8
     removable portion of the statute was total
 9
     surplusage.
10
                JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: The only way it
11
      can keep to its current position is by
12
     disavowing a BIA precedent, Garcia, correct?
13
                MR. UNIKOWSKY: That's correct. And
14
     not only does it disavow it, but, I mean, I -- I
15
     don't think that that's a -- it's a -- it's a
16
      very convoluted explanation. It's not very
17
     plausible. I mean, the government's position
18
     depends on this theory that what Congress was
19
      trying to do was distinguish between crimes that
20
      are expressly excepted from 1182 and that are
21
     merely not listed in 1182 and the exceptions,
22
      that's the -- the reason for the removal clause
23
      is to get these exceptions in, right?
24
                So 1182 says something like, all
25
     aliens except juveniles who commit crimes
```

- 1 involving moral turpitude are inadmissible. The
- 2 government's view is that that's like very
- 3 different from just saying all adults, even
- 4 though those mean the same thing, because like
- 5 juveniles are in the exceptions clause and,
- 6 therefore, that stops the clock for purposes of
- 7 cancellation of removal. That's a very
- 8 convoluted scheme.
- 9 And especially -- and it's somewhat
- 10 unlikely that the removable clause, which seems
- 11 to be talking about removable aliens, was
- actually put in to get in those exceptions, it
- 13 seems to me, now that the government has
- 14 abandoned Chevron deference and what we're doing
- is just kind of lining up the two
- interpretations next to each other and seeing
- 17 which one's better.
- I mean, our understanding of why the
- 19 statute's written the way it is, is more
- 20 plausible. We say it's a --
- 21 JUSTICE ALITO: You make a -- before
- you get to that, you make a fleeting reference
- 23 to Chevron in your reply brief. So do you want
- us to defer to something? Do you want us to
- 25 defer to the BIA --

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1
               MR. UNIKOWSKY: On the --
 2
               JUSTICE ALITO: -- on anything --
 3
               MR. UNIKOWSKY: Yes. On --
 4
               JUSTICE ALITO: -- or just on the
 5
     decision that you like?
6
               MR. UNIKOWSKY: Just on the decision
7
     that we like, Your Honor.
8
               (Laughter.)
9
               JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Well, that's what
10
              MR. UNIKOWSKY: So --
11
12
               JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- the government
13
     is doing.
14
              MR. UNIKOWSKY: Yes. So --
15
               JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: It likes this
     decision --
16
17
               MR. UNIKOWSKY: I have a -- I have a
18
19
               JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- but it doesn't
     like Garcia.
20
21
               MR. UNIKOWSKY: -- I have a principal
22
     reason for that, Your Honor. First of all --
23
               JUSTICE ALITO: I'm sure.
24
               (Laughter.)
25
               MR. UNIKOWSKY: -- the government
```

1 expressly waives Chevron deference --2 JUSTICE ALITO: Uh-huh. MR. UNIKOWSKY: -- on the guest -- on 3 this Jurado case, and so that's -- that's good 4 I mean, it makes it much easier for us 5 that now there's no Chevron deference. And we 6 walk through in our brief that the arguments 7 8 given in this Jurado case are clearly wrong. So this Court's cases hold that even if a statute's 9 10 ambiguous, you don't defer to an agency decision 11 that's clearly wrong, which I think is true for 12 this Jurado case. The government doesn't even try to defend it, they bury it in a footnote. 13 14 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Well, what about 15 the simple, but it has a certain appeal, argument the government is making, this is a 16 17 very dense statute, that if we ask why would 18 Congress -- why wouldn't Congress want the clock 19 to stop when an alien has committed a qualifying 20 offense showing that he has abused the 21 hospitality of the United States? 22 MR. UNIKOWSKY: Yeah. So I'd like to 23 turn to purpose actually. It might be a good 24 time to do that. I think that, actually, our 25 interpretation makes sense and we have very good

- 1 reasons for why Congress would have wanted to do
- 2 what it did.
- 3 So, first of all, I think it -- it's
- 4 at least somewhat relevant that Congress made
- 5 the express decision that he shouldn't be
- 6 deported for this offense. It's true that he's
- 7 deportable for other offenses, but Congress has
- 8 also made the express decision that those other
- 9 offenses shouldn't foreclose cancellation of
- 10 removal.
- 11 So, if both of those things are true,
- if you have this one offense which Congress
- didn't even think was serious enough to deport
- 14 him at all, and then the other offenses which do
- make him deportable, Congress has decided to
- leave the door open a crack for cancellation of
- 17 removal, to me, that sounds like Congress kind
- of wanted this person to be eligible for
- 19 discretionary relief. He doesn't have to get
- 20 it, but at least have the door open.
- 21 Rather than the scheme where, as the
- 22 government contends, this conviction, which
- wasn't even serious enough to make him eligible
- for deportation simpliciter, kind of pops back
- into relevance and springs over the crimes for

- 1 which he is deportable and becomes the basis for
- 2 saying that he's subject to -- to mandatory
- 3 deportability.
- 4 And just one other thing about --
- 5 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: I'm not really
- 6 understanding that.
- 7 MR. UNIKOWSKY: Yes.
- 8 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: So there's a
- 9 serious offense that makes you deportable.
- 10 MR. UNIKOWSKY: Yes.
- 11 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Okay. Now the
- 12 question is, are you eligible for
- 13 cancellation --
- MR. UNIKOWSKY: Yes.
- 15 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: -- of removal? And
- in looking at that, any blemish, even if it
- doesn't rise to the level of something that
- 18 might have made you deportable, is a problem,
- 19 Congress suggested, by broadening the list of
- 20 things that could make you ineligible for
- 21 cancellation of removal beyond those things that
- just make you deportable in the first instance.
- 23 Why isn't that a better way to look at
- 24 it?
- MR. UNIKOWSKY: Because it didn't do

- 1 that. The reason that we're all here today is
- 2 that the crimes that made him deportable,
- 3 Congress decided that they actually don't
- 4 foreclose eligibility for -- for discretionary
- 5 relief. That's why we're only looking at this
- 6 crime that didn't make him deportable.
- 7 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: They don't on
- 8 their own --
- 9 MR. UNIKOWSKY: But you don't --
- 10 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: -- but if you have
- 11 something else --
- MR. UNIKOWSKY: No, but the scheme is
- it's not like it's an aggravating characteristic
- based on other things. Like, there's -- you
- apply a test and there's certain convictions
- that apply and then you can certainly use the
- same conviction for both in principle. It's not
- 18 like you take one crime and then you look at
- 19 what other crimes he has.
- 20 And so it just -- the -- the crimes
- 21 that stop the clock just don't include the
- 22 crimes for which he was found deportable. So
- 23 it -- it's just a little bit strange. Like,
- 24 you'd think that -- so he has this firearms
- 25 conviction and the aggravated assault conviction

- 1 and you'd think that, you know, either one is
- 2 worse -- either one's worse than the other or
- 3 they're the same level of bad from the purposes
- 4 of the immigration system.
- 5 But it's hard to imagine why a
- 6 rational legislator and you decide, okay, for
- 7 step one, for just removability, we're going to
- 8 say that the firearms conviction is worse than
- 9 the aggravated assault conviction, but, at step
- 10 two, for the same alien in the same case, the
- 11 sort of rank order of badness is flipped. In
- 12 step two, it's now the aggravated assault that's
- 13 enough to foreclose discretionary relief, but
- 14 not the firearms conviction. That's a pretty
- 15 common --
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Well, it's because
- 17 the timing --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Mister --
- 19 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: -- it was because
- 20 of the timing.
- 21 MR. UNIKOWSKY: No, but that's
- 22 actually not the case because both those
- 23 convictions -- it's the same day and the same
- incident. It's just the firearms conviction
- just -- because it's not in 1182, so it just --

- 1 it's not within the class of convictions that
- 2 stops the clock.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, why do you
- 4 think, Mr. Unikowsky, if -- if -- if you're
- 5 right that this statute is set up to look to the
- 6 proceeding that's just happened, whether it's
- 7 the inadmissibility proceeding or the
- 8 deportability proceeding, why is it that it's --
- 9 that the statute is written just in terms of the
- 10 inadmissibility grounds? Like --
- MR. UNIKOWSKY: So that --
- 12 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- well, why wouldn't
- you have something where the inadmissibility
- 14 people have admissibility grounds and the
- 15 deportability people have deportability grounds
- if there's this basic dichotomy in the statute?
- MR. UNIKOWSKY: It's a little hard to
- 18 explain, Your Honor. I mean, that aspect of the
- 19 statute is something that has puzzled the BIA as
- 20 well because it -- the first part has only one
- and then the second part has both.
- But, I mean, you know, that's -- the
- 23 BIA has said we have to construe that literally.
- 24 Congress did this a -- it was very clear that
- 25 they're asymmetric. The first part is just

- one-half and the second part is both halves.
- 2 They could easily have just put in 1182 or 1227
- 3 in the first part, and then we wouldn't be here
- 4 because you -- the firearms conviction would
- 5 foreclose.
- 6 JUSTICE KAGAN: I guess my -- my
- 7 thinking, though, is that it's -- it's a puzzle.
- 8 It's a puzzle for both sides, but it's a little
- 9 bit more of a puzzle for you because you
- 10 emphasize so much the way the statute separates
- 11 out two different classes of people.
- MR. UNIKOWSKY: Well, that's true,
- but, I mean, the -- it's the second -- I mean,
- 14 the second half of the statute that -- that does
- 15 that. I mean, I -- it's hard to know what to
- 16 make of that statement.
- 17 So there's this BIA decision that
- 18 holds that firearms convictions like
- 19 Petitioner's doesn't trigger the stop-time rule.
- 20 The BIA -- actually, the government in that case
- 21 said that's crazy; it's just clear that's the
- 22 purpose. And then the BIA said, no, look, it's
- 23 not clear exactly how the statute got to be
- 24 written this way, but Congress required this
- 25 asymmetry in which the first part, the referred

- 1 to part, the category of offenses only has some.
- 2 And Congress evidently decided that only some
- 3 offenses, and not all, should even be capable of
- 4 stopping the clock, just like it decided that
- 5 just aggravated felonies should be capable of
- 6 foreclosing cancellation, and then, in the
- 7 second part, it talked -- looked at the effect
- 8 on the alien.
- 9 I just want to say one more thing
- 10 about that. I think it makes a certain kind of
- sense to say that like if you're being deported
- 12 for a particular crime, then that -- you can't
- 13 use the time after that crime to be -- for
- 14 purposes of continuous residence because, in a
- 15 sense, it's just sort of bureaucratic delay,
- 16 right? You've committed the crime, and then
- 17 you're waiting for the conviction, and then
- 18 you're waiting for the deportation proceeding.
- 19 But sort of the die is cast when
- you've committed the crime. And so there's
- 21 certain logic to stopping the clock as of the
- commission of the crime that really doesn't work
- 23 here, where Congress isn't even capable of
- deporting you based on this aggravated assault
- 25 crime. So the delay after the crime has nothing

- 1 to do with bureaucratic delay; it's just
- 2 exclusively based on the fact that Congress has
- 3 decided not to deport the person. So it --
- 4 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Could you tell me
- 5 why you didn't rely on Lara-Terrazas?
- 6 MR. UNIKOWSKY: On what, Your Honor?
- 7 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Lara-Terrazas.
- 8 The Capitol Area Immigration Rights Coalition
- 9 said the BIA read this provision pretty much as
- 10 your second alternative previously.
- 11 MR. UNIKOWSKY: Well, I mean, I think
- 12 that -- so we think the BIA has not decided
- 13 the -- on the second question, so the -- Jurado
- 14 clearly is inconsistent with our -- our -- our
- 15 first --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: No, but
- 17 Lara-Terrazas appears to have held exactly as
- 18 you wanted.
- 19 MR. UNIKOWSKY: I -- I don't
- 20 think that's a published decision that
- 21 specifically resolved the question.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Well, maybe not
- 23 specifically, but the government's relying on
- 24 unpublished opinions too.
- MR. UNIKOWSKY: Yeah, I mean, we -- we

- 1 -- I mean, there's a published decision -- I 2 mean, obviously, in this case, there's an 3 unpublished decision rejecting my -- my client's So I, you know -- and Jurado is the 4 5 primary published decision that -- that's on point. We acknowledge that it's inconsistent 6 with our reading, but we said it just shouldn't 7 8 be deferred to because it's irrational. The 9 government agrees with that. And so that 10 obviously makes this case easier for Petitioner. I will say that if the Court concludes 11 12 the statute is ambiguous but nonetheless construes it our way, then, under the Brand X 13 14 case, the BIA would be capable of reaching the 15 contrary conclusion and the Court would be able to defer to that if it holds that the agency's 16 17 reasoning is -- is reasonable. That's what the 18 Brand X case holds. 19 But, you know, of course, if the Court 20 holds that it's unambiguous, then the agency 21 wouldn't be capable of doing that. But, on the 22 record currently before the Court, when there's
- 25 willing to -- to defend and rely on, it's just

no Chevron -- no precedential decision that the

government is even willing to defer to or is

23

- 1 like a criminal statute or any other statute
- where there's no layer of deference to the
- 3 agency, the Court should just decide what it
- 4 thinks it means in the first instance.
- 5 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: What do you do
- 6 with the government's argument that it would
- 7 have been very easy for Congress to write the
- 8 statute to link the stop-time offense to the
- 9 offense charged in the removal proceeding?
- 10 MR. UNIKOWSKY: I mean, I think the
- 11 statute could have been clearer both ways. I
- mean, just looking at this good moral character
- provision, which is something we talk about in
- our brief, it's like a model of -- of
- draftsmanship and how clearly it could have been
- 16 written our way. I mean, that statute says that
- if you have committed a crime during the
- 18 continuous residence period, that puts you into
- 19 the classes of persons described in 1182, then
- 20 the clock -- then you can't be eligible for
- 21 cancellation, whether inadmissible or not.
- 22 So that's like the clearest
- conceivable way of saying that if you're in the
- 24 category of 11 -- of people under 1182, which
- 25 the government says Petitioner is, regardless of

- 1 whether you're charged with inadmissibility,
- 2 you're not eligible.
- 3 So Congress said that was a
- 4 requirement only for non-LPRs to seek
- 5 cancellation of removal and not LPRs. And this
- 6 isn't just a matter of differently worded
- 7 statutes. It's as differently worded as they
- 8 could conceivably be. You have, like -- for
- 9 non-LPRs, it says in the classes of persons in
- 10 1182, whether inadmissible or not, and then, for
- 11 the stop-time rule, which also applies to LPRs,
- 12 it requires that it renders the alien
- 13 admissible.
- So, just to answer your question, I
- 15 mean, yeah, certainly, you could have written it
- much more clearly our way, and, of course, we
- 17 wish it was, but it seems to me that when -- you
- 18 know, when there's just a crystal-clear statute
- 19 that would have accomplished exactly what the
- 20 government wants, which Congress applied only to
- 21 non-LPRs and not LPRs --
- JUSTICE ALITO: Why would the -- why
- 23 would the good time rule clearly resolve this --
- 24 never mind.
- 25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Finish.

1 JUSTICE ALITO: Oh, why would it clearly resolve this -- this question? It 2 doesn't say whether seeking admission or not. 3 It says whether inadmissible or not. 4 MR. UNIKOWSKY: Yeah, so it doesn't 5 matter -- so we don't think Petitioner is 6 inadmissible. But it applies to the alien 7 8 whether inadmissible or not, as long as he's in 9 the classes of people in 1182, which he clearly 10 is. 11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, 12 counsel. 13 Mr. Liu. 14 ORAL ARGUMENT OF FREDERICK LIU 15 ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENT MR. LIU: Mr. Chief Justice, and may 16 17 it please the Court: The statutory text alone is enough to 18 19 resolve this case. The question is whether Petitioner has committed an offense that renders 20 21 him inadmissible under Section 1182(a)(2). To find the answer, we look to the 22 23 text of Section 1182(a)(2), and it says that any alien who is convicted of a crime involving 24

moral turpitude is inadmissible. There's no

- 1 dispute in this case that Petitioner has -- has
- 2 been convicted of a crime involving moral
- 3 turpitude. Therefore, he has been -- he has
- 4 committed an offense that renders him
- 5 inadmissible under Section 1182(a)(2), and that
- 6 should be the end of the matter.
- Now Petitioner says there's an added
- 8 requirement in the statute, that requirement
- 9 being that he must be seeking admission. But
- 10 that requirement can't be found in the text of
- 11 Section 1182(a)(2). It can't be found in the
- 12 text of the stop-time rule itself. Rather, the
- 13 stop-time rule ties the operation of the rule to
- an alien's status as inadmissible, independent
- of whether he is seeking admission or not.
- And in that respect, the stop-time
- 17 rule operates in the same way as many other
- 18 provisions of the INA. My friend described some
- of those provisions as obscure, but I think
- they're anything but. For example, we cite a
- 21 number of them on pages 17 to 19 of our brief.
- One of them is 8 U.S.C.
- 23 Section 1255(a). This was a major part of the
- 24 Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986; 1.7
- 25 million aliens applied for relief under this

- 1 section. And what that section says is that
- 2 those aliens would be ineligible for relief if
- 3 they had the status of being inadmissible. And
- 4 that's so even if those aliens were already
- 5 admitted and not seeking admission.
- 6 Moreover, that same section says, if,
- 7 after being granted amnesty under that
- 8 provision, those aliens then committed an act
- 9 that made them inadmissible, that amnesty status
- 10 would -- would have been terminated. So it
- 11 works just like the stop-time rule in this case
- and, indeed, mirrors the operation of that rule.
- 13 Another example is Section 1160.
- 14 That's another major part of that same Act.
- 15 That said that -- that gave special temporary
- 16 resident status to a certain group of
- 17 agricultural workers; 1.3 million agricultural
- workers applied for relief under that section.
- 19 It operates the same way.
- 20 Even if those aliens had already been
- 21 admitted and were not seeking admission,
- inadmissibility as a status was a cry -- was a
- 23 criterion for their eligibility for that status.
- 24 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, your --
- your friend on the other side, of course, cites

- 1 statutes that are to the opposite effect in
- 2 terms of how the term is used. So it strikes me
- 3 that this business about this is how they use it
- 4 in other places, it's almost a wash.
- 5 MR. LIU: I don't think so, Mr. Chief
- 6 Justice. In our view, the word "inadmissible"
- 7 means the same thing throughout the INA. Every
- 8 time the word "inadmissible" appears, it is
- 9 referring to an alien's status under
- 10 Section 1182(a)(2).
- 11 What the stat -- what the statute does
- in other provisions is tie different
- 13 consequences to that status. So my friend
- 14 mentions the judicial review provision in
- 15 Section 1252(a)(2)(C).
- 16 What that provision says is, if an
- 17 alien's status is inadmissible, has the
- 18 consequence of leading to a decision about his
- 19 removal, then there's no judicial review in the
- 20 courts of appeals.
- 21 So, in other words, that -- that
- 22 statute does exactly what the stop-time rule
- 23 doesn't. It refers specifically to the decision
- 24 to remove and -- and -- and ties the operation
- of the rule to that.

- 1 Same with the mandatory detention
- 2 provision. This is 8 U.S.C. Section 1226(a) and
- 3 (c). There's an explicit reference there to the
- 4 decision whether the alien is to be removed.
- 5 And what the statute says is, if the alien's
- 6 status as inadmissible would result in that
- 7 particular consequence, then that alien can be
- 8 detained on a mandatory basis.
- 9 JUSTICE BREYER: All right. But, look
- 10 -- look, the -- the main argument as I
- 11 understand it -- and this statute is as obscure
- 12 as any I've seen. All right. Look, let's read
- 13 it.
- When the alien has committed an
- offense referred to in Section 1182(a)(2) of
- this title, so we go look and see. Has he
- 17 committed an offense referred to? Yes.
- Now then what? An offense that, A --
- 19 I put in the A -- renders the alien inadmissible
- or, B, removable under 1227(a). Now, if you're
- 21 right, there was no need for that clause, the
- 22 second clause, because the first thing you do is
- 23 look to 1182.
- 24 1182, if his offense isn't there,
- 25 forget it. It doesn't apply at all. And if his

- offense is there, well, under your view, remove
- 2 him. That's the end of it.
- 3 So what in heaven's name is removable
- 4 from the U.S. under 1227(a) doing there? Now he
- 5 has an answer to that question. He says, I'll
- 6 tell you what, the history of immigration law is
- 7 that we treat differently applications for
- 8 admission, even people we found in the United
- 9 States, by the way, who never applied for
- 10 admission, okay? Those are the inadmissible
- ones. And those are the ones that what I called
- 12 A applies to.
- And now what B applies to is everybody
- 14 else. They were properly admitted, yes, yes,
- and then they committed a crime deportable
- 16 under. Now he happens to fall, his client,
- 17 within what seems to me is a tremendous fluke,
- that is, somebody who actually did something
- 19 that is listed in 82(a) and yet, at least in his
- view, is not listed in 1227.
- 21 I didn't know there was such a person.
- 22 But, lo and behold, he comes up with this
- 23 exceptions clause, et cetera, and says his
- 24 client is there.
- Okay. Now what do you say to that

- 1 main argument, that there is A and there is B,
- and on your view, B serves next to no purpose?
- 3 MR. LIU: When Congress wanted to make
- 4 A and B an either/or, it said so expressly in
- 5 the Act, so --
- JUSTICE BREYER: I know, but I can't
- 7 think -- that isn't going to be an answer
- 8 because they'd say, sometimes they do say A/B,
- 9 sometimes they don't say A/B, it wasn't a genius
- 10 who drafted this and he forgot the A and the B
- and he -- but he did put in the or. And so, all
- 12 right, I've got that point. What's your next
- 13 point?
- MR. LIU: My next point is I think --
- 15 well, I guess two points. One is we don't think
- 16 the renders removable clause is superfluous when
- 17 the referred to in Section 1182(a)(2) clause is
- given its proper meaning, but -- and I'm happy
- 19 to get into that. Even if you don't buy that
- 20 and you think there's some sort of question left
- 21 --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Well, you're talking
- about the ones who are the -- the under
- 18 and the -- and the -- there's an -- I -- I
- 25 think I got that argument.

1 MR. LIU: Okay. 2 JUSTICE BREYER: And I can think that if -- I think I have it. You're right about it. 3 JUSTICE KAGAN: Okay. Even if we 4 don't buy that? 5 6 MR. LIU: Even if you don't buy that, I don't think surplusage should be the be all, 7 8 end all in interpreting this statute. Even 9 under Petitioner's reading, the cross-reference 10 to Section 1227(a)(4) was pure surplusage from 11 19 --12 JUSTICE KAGAN: But, Mr. -- Mr. Liu, 13 this is more than your typical case of 14 surplusage. I mean, obviously, surplusage 15 sometimes gives way to other things. But this whole statute, like the structure and the 16 content of this statute, is all written to -- to 17 18 refer to this essential dichotomy that Justice 19 Breyer just set out. I mean, basically, the back two-thirds of the statute is all about, 20 21 well, the people who have been rendered 22 inadmissible, and, on the other hand, the people 23 who have been rendered deportable. 24 And -- and you have to think that they 25 wrote it that way because they were thinking of

- 1 these two groups of people, each of which would
- 2 be subject to different consequences and each of
- 3 which should be looked to separately.
- 4 MR. LIU: I -- I don't think so,
- 5 Justice Kagan. And I'll just re-emphasize the
- 6 point I made to Justice Breyer, which is, when
- 7 Congress did want to create that dichotomy, it
- 8 wrote that dichotomy into the statute. So --
- 9 JUSTICE KAGAN: But by doing what?
- 10 You said by saying either/or. I mean, this
- 11 statute says or. You know, any writer would
- tell you, sometimes you put in an "either,"
- 13 sometimes you just use an "or." Either way,
- 14 it's disjunctive.
- MR. LIU: It's much more explicit than
- 16 that. If you look at the page -- top of page
- 17 35A of our statutory appendix, you have Congress
- defining the meaning of the word "removable."
- 19 And we acknowledge decisions to remove are the
- 20 main con -- well, I think the only context in
- 21 which Congress wrote into the statute this
- 22 either/or.
- 23 And how did it do it? It did so by
- 24 defining "removable" as "in the case of an alien
- 25 not admitted to the United States, that the

1 alien is inadmissible, or, B, in the case of an 2 alien admitted to the United States, that the alien is deportable." That's how explicit 3 Congress is. It's not just --4 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, it's how --5 MR. LIU: -- either/or. 6 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- explicit Congress 7 8 could be, and, sure, that might be a model of 9 legislative drafting which we can all assume 10 this statute is not. But this statute does very clearly use 11 12 the disjunctive as to two large clauses, one of which talks about inadmissible aliens and the 13 14 other of which talks about removable or deportable, whatever word you want, aliens. 15 MR. LIU: And I think Congress was 16 17 also clear in the cross-reference to -- to 18 Section 1182(a)(2) and the renders inadmissible 19 clause that any alien who is convicted of a 20 crime involving moral turpitude is inadmissible. 21 There are many ways Congress could 22 have written that provision to get to the result 23 Petitioner would like us to get to. There are

other provisions in 1182 that tie the status of

inadmissible to an alien who is at that time

24

- 1 applying for admission or seeking admission.
- But, in 1182(a)(2) itself, Congress
- 3 left those words out. And I think usually this
- 4 Court presumes that Congress acts intentionally
- 5 and purposefully when it does something like
- 6 that.
- 7 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Go back to the
- 8 point that the Chief Justice made. You're
- 9 cherry-picking. What Congress has not been is
- 10 very consistent, except in what your adversary
- 11 points to in the basic structure, that
- inadmissibility applies to people who have not
- been admitted, deportability applies to people
- 14 who have been admitted.
- 15 And each side is given a different set
- of rights. Each side is given a different set
- of burdens. Each side is given a different set
- 18 of benefits or lack thereof.
- 19 And I don't see what's illogical to
- 20 say that what Congress was thinking about is, if
- 21 you're in removal proceedings, you're eligible
- 22 for cancellation of removal for those crimes
- that make you eligible, meaning, if you have to
- 24 be mandatorily deported, you have to be
- 25 mandatorily deported.

- But you've been here a long time.
- 2 Whether a piece of it was in -- in BIA custody
- 3 or not is irrelevant. You get the same benefits
- 4 for being a long-time resident as you do in all
- 5 parts of the INA.
- 6 You have to prove certain things in
- 7 LPR status. There are certain benefits given to
- 8 LPR. Why is that incongruous here?
- 9 MR. LIU: Well, I -- I -- I --
- 10 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Especially when
- 11 the structure of the very next provision, the
- 12 mandatory detention section, is talking also
- 13 about removability?
- 14 MR. LIU: I -- I want to be very
- 15 clear. I do not think we're cherry-picking at
- 16 all. We are giving the word "inadmissible" the
- same consistent meaning throughout the INA. We
- 18 are then reading the -- the language around that
- 19 provision and sometimes that language points to
- 20 a specific circum- -- a specific consequence of
- 21 that status.
- 22 This provision --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: There is a
- 24 consequence.
- 25 MR. LIU: -- attaches some

- 1 additionals.
- 2 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: There is a
- 3 consequence. Both of them are tied around
- 4 removability. There is a consequence.
- 5 You're -- or at least the ability to ask for
- 6 cancellation.
- 7 MR. LIU: But the -- but the
- 8 consequence here, which is termination of the
- 9 period of continuous residence, is tied only to
- 10 the status of inadmissibility. Congress could
- 11 have written even the stop-time provision itself
- in many different ways that would have captured
- 13 Petitioner's reading.
- In fact, the predecessor version of
- this statute, former Section 1244(a), said, if
- the alien commits an act constituting a ground
- of deportation, that person is eligible for --
- 18 JUSTICE BREYER: I -- I accept that
- 19 you can read the word "inadmissible" -- I'm not
- 20 saying you have to, but you could say this
- 21 individual in front of us, he's not
- 22 inadmissible.
- 23 It's -- he's been admitted. How could
- he be inadmissible? They admitted him. Ahh,
- 25 you mean he would have been inadmissible had he

- 1 not been admitted. Okay?
- 2 (Laughter.)
- JUSTICE BREYER: Now that's a possible
- 4 reading of it. And that's why just looking at
- 5 the word "inadmissible" doesn't tell us whether
- 6 we should read it with a "he would have been" or
- 7 whether we should read it as "would be now" or
- 8 -- there are 15 -- not 15, okay, got that.
- Now, once we're into that bog, we then
- 10 go back to the original question of, why, in
- 11 heaven's name, if all you had to do was first
- 12 you look at 1182 and see if his crime fits
- 13 there, and then you see if it made him
- inadmissible, for everybody. Well, of course,
- 15 it did. It -- I mean, you know, there we are.
- 16 And -- and what's this second part
- 17 doing there? Unless it picks up --
- 18 MR. LIU: Yeah.
- 19 JUSTICE BREYER: -- that traditional
- 20 history. Now that's the same question I asked
- 21 before, same question Justice Kagan asked, and
- 22 -- and that's, I think --
- MR. LIU: This --
- 24 JUSTICE BREYER: -- what's bothering
- 25 me.

1 MR. LIU: -- this is what we think 2 Congress was thinking. Everyone agrees that Congress began with the universe of offenses 3 referred to in Section 1182(a)(2). Everyone 4 5 agrees that's -- that's text in the statute, you 6 can't have a 1227 offense unless -- that stops 7 the time, unless it's referred to in 8 Section 1182(a)(2). 9 And we think what Congress was trying 10 to do was it looked across the INA and it said, look, we have identified in Section 1182(a)(2) a 11 12 set of criminal and related offenses. We think, 13 in general, those are the offenses that rise to 14 the level of being an abuse of the country's 15 hospitality such that the alien's time would 16 stop. 17 And then Congress thought: Well, 18 certainly, if those offenses are serious enough 19 to render the alien inadmissible, those should 20 be given stop-time effect. 21 JUSTICE KAGAN: But --22 MR. LIU: And so --23 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- why wouldn't you 24 just say, you know, a person convicted of an 25 offense listed in the following sections? You

- don't need all this hullabaloo about people
 being rendered inadmissible -
 JUSTICE BREYER: That's the point.
- 4 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- and people being
- 5 rendered deportable unless you're talking about
- 6 some kind of proceeding in which people have
- 7 been rendered inadmissible or people have been
- 8 rendered deportable. Otherwise, you could just
- 9 say offenses listed in whatever statutes you
- 10 wanted to say.
- MR. LIU: Well, because I think, as --
- 12 as I was saying, Congress -- Congress did start
- out with the set of offenses it thought would
- 14 generally be serious enough. Those are the
- offenses referred to in Section 1182.
- 16 Congress thought, well, if they're
- serious enough to render the alien inadmissible,
- 18 they should certainly qualify as stop-time
- 19 effect. But, at the same time, Congress
- 20 recognized that there were exceptions in
- 21 Section 1182, juvenile offenses --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Yeah, but the
- 23 exceptions --
- MR. LIU: -- petty offenses, that
- 25 wouldn't be --

1	JUSTICE KAGAN: I mean, the idea
2	that the exceptions would be picked up somehow
3	if you just said listed in the it doesn't
4	transform an exception. An exception would
5	remain the exception. It's just the actual
6	offenses that are listed in that statute.
7	MR. LIU: Well, I think that is what
8	the "referred to" clause. The "referred to"
9	clause refers to just the offenses, some of the
10	generic elements-based understanding of the
11	offenses in the statute.
12	The problem is I think Congress
13	realized Section 1182(a)(2) contains a bunch of
14	circumstance-specific exceptions to those
15	JUSTICE KAGAN: Yeah, and
16	MR. LIU: to those provisions.
17	JUSTICE KAGAN: I guess it seems
18	really counterintuitive to me that Congress
19	could have could have sort of looked down the
20	road and said some insane judge is going to pick
21	up these exceptions and transform them into
22	actual grounds for disqualifying somebody from
23	removal. So the exceptions would remain the
24	exceptions. You don't need
25	MR. LIU: No

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1
                JUSTICE KAGAN: -- all this statutory
 2
      language to do that.
                MR. LIU: No, that -- that's my point,
 3
 4
      Justice Kagan, is that because of those
 5
      exceptions, that's why you need the renders --
 6
                JUSTICE KAGAN: Yes, that's your --
                JUSTICE BREYER: If you --
 7
 8
               JUSTICE KAGAN: -- point --
 9
                JUSTICE BREYER: Look, if --
10
                JUSTICE ALITO: Can I take you back to
     Justice Breyer's intriguing question about the
11
12
     meaning of inadmissibility? The -- the Eleventh
13
     Circuit had some very colorful examples about
14
      status and words that end in a-b-l-e or i-b-l-e,
15
      and one of them had to do with rotten fish. So,
      if a fish rots and it is inedible, they say,
16
17
     well, it was inedible before the person ate it.
18
               But, under Justice Breyer's
19
      interpretation of admissibility, suppose this
20
     person eats the fish and then goes to the
21
     emergency room to have his stomach pumped, would
22
      the doctor say, well, the fish wasn't actually
23
      inedible because he ate it?
24
                (Laughter.)
25
                MR. LIU: No, no, you wouldn't,
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- 1 because the fish has the status of being
- 2 inedible, whether someone has --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: No --
- 4 MR. LIU: -- eaten it --
- 5 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- but, Mr. Liu --
- 6 MR. LIU: -- or is trying to eat it or
- 7 not.
- 8 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- this -- this really
- 9 is dependent on context because you wouldn't say
- is car is immovable if the car has just been
- 11 moved. And so too here, it's not clear that you
- would say an alien is inadmissible if the alien
- 13 has just been admitted.
- So, you know, it could; it couldn't.
- 15 The -- the -- the real question is not what
- 16 "inadmissible" means in the abstract. The real
- 17 question is look at this statute and say, why
- does anybody write a statute that looks like
- 19 this, unless what the drafter is doing is to try
- 20 to refer to two different categories of people
- 21 who have just gone through two different kinds
- of removal proceedings?
- MR. LIU: And I -- and I don't think
- it's an embarrassment for our position that,
- under our view, the "renders removable" clause

- 1 has only a modest role to play. Again, if you
- 2 read the -- the text of the stop-time rule, you
- 3 begin only with offenses referred to in
- 4 Section 1182(a)(2).
- If Congress had wanted Section 1227 to
- 6 play a sort of major role in the stop-time rule,
- 7 it could have said offenses referred to in
- 8 Section 1182(a)(2) or referred to in
- 9 Section 1227.
- 10 But already Congress is cutting off
- 11 the application of 1227. This is an
- inadmissibility-focused provision. Two of the
- three provisions are about Section 1182(a)(2).
- I think it's only logical to read the third
- provision, which doesn't mention
- 16 Section 1182(a)(2), as doing the relatively
- modest role, admittedly, of just picking up the
- things that aren't referred to or render an
- 19 alien inadmissible.
- 20 JUSTICE BREYER: I -- I -- before you
- 21 leave this -- I -- I'll think about the fish.
- 22 I'm not sure I got the fish, but I'll -- I'll
- 23 think about the fish.
- 24 (Laughter.)
- JUSTICE BREYER: But -- but I'm back

- in what in heaven's name is that clause doing
- 2 there? You know, the second clause.
- 3 MR. LIU: Right.
- 4 JUSTICE BREYER: If you're right,
- 5 okay. So you've had very brilliant people going
- 6 over this, and the best they've come up with, it
- 7 seems to me -- tell me -- is, well, you see,
- 8 there are exceptions in 1182, and there are --
- 9 those exceptions are not in 1227. And they put
- 10 1227 in to be sure those exceptions didn't stop
- 11 the person from being deported.
- 12 Okay. So I look at the exceptions.
- 13 The only exceptions I can find that are relevant
- 14 are those contained in (a)(1), (a)(2),
- 15 (a)(ii)(I)(2). Those are the ones you're
- 16 talking about. And, by the way, it took me five
- 17 seconds to put all those numbers in, but it
- 18 takes a Congressman or a drafter only three
- 19 seconds to read them.
- 20 And I would have said "including those
- 21 listed in" and then I would have put in that
- 22 number. You see? That would have done it.
- 23 Including those listed in. And I would have put
- that number in. And then there would have been
- 25 no problem, and then you would have thought of

- 1 no reason at all.
- Now I've never seen a statute drafted,
- 3 so many words, to cover removing so small an
- 4 exception.
- 5 MR. LIU: But we know Congress wasn't
- 6 working at that level of granularity, because
- 7 when it came to 1227(a)(4), there was nothing in
- 8 20 -- 1227(a)(4) that's referred to in
- 9 Section 1182.
- 10 I think the only way to understand
- 11 what Congress was thinking is to think of what
- 12 Congress was thinking at a more general level.
- 13 And the more general level is we have these
- offenses referred to in 1182(a)(2). These are
- bad offenses. If they're serious enough to
- 16 render you inadmissible, that is, confer that
- 17 status, then they stop the time. But, if they
- 18 also happen to be serious enough to render you
- 19 removable, those will stop the time too.
- 20 That doesn't mean that you -- you
- 21 don't apply the Section 1182 "renders
- inadmissible" language even in cases when aliens
- 23 are admitted because Congress had written
- 24 provisions in many other places of the INA where
- inadmissibility is indeed relevant, even when

- 1 the alien is admitted.
- 2 So Congress did not think there was
- 3 some sort of disjunct between saying an alien
- 4 was already admitted and yet he's inadmissible.
- 5 It wrote the statute in exactly that way.
- 6 That's confirmed by the language of 1182, which
- 7 says any alien convicted of "a crime involving
- 8 moral turpitude" is inadmissible. It doesn't
- 9 say any alien who is convicted and then seeks
- 10 admission.
- 11 It's clear from the other provisions,
- 12 adjustment of status, temporary protected
- 13 status, the two major parts of the Immigration
- 14 Reform Act of 1986 that I mentioned at the
- 15 outset. It's even clear if you look at a
- 16 provision of 1227. 1227(2)(a) -- (2)(a) --
- 17 1227(a)(1)(A), deportable aliens, this is at 20a
- of our petition appendix, talks about aliens who
- 19 at the time of entry or adjustment of status
- 20 were within one of the classes of aliens
- 21 inadmissible.
- There's no adjudication of
- 23 admissibility at that point. The whole point of
- 24 this deportability provision is that the
- 25 immigration officer failed to adjudicate that

- 1 person as inadmissible.
- 2 And yet, the statute refers to that
- 3 person as having that status of inadmissible
- 4 such that another consequence can be attached to
- 5 it later on, in this case, deportability.
- 6 We think the stop-time rule works in
- 7 the same way.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I know that
- 9 everybody -- I think Justice Kavanaugh and you
- 10 seem to think that these minor offenses, like a
- 11 person who possesses a small amount of
- 12 marijuana, can -- that can make you inadmissible
- but not deportable because there's an exception
- 14 under deportability. If it's a juvenile
- offense, you can't be deported.
- But what you're now saying is that
- these minor offenses stop you from getting the
- benefits, potential benefits, of cancellation of
- 19 removal and that that was clearly Congress's
- 20 intent.
- I don't know why I should think that
- is clearly Congress's intent, given that the LP
- 23 -- that the INA throughout gives more solicitude
- 24 to long-time -- to permanent residents.
- I mean, I -- I just don't see how we

- 1 can turn the presumption on its head and say 2 that they weren't intending to limit the stop-time rule to those who were in an 3 admissibility status; covers small numbers of 4 5 LPRs, the ones that have left the country and are seeking re-admission, and others, but I --6 I'm -- I'm just not quite sure I understand why 7 8 your reading is consistent with the solicitude 9 that Congress has shown LPRs throughout the INA. 10 MR. LIU: I think it has to do with the very narrow issue in front of this Court. 11 12 No one -- no one thinks that a marijuana 13 possession conviction alone can render an LPR 14 removable. No one thinks a mere marijuana 15 conviction alone can even render an LPR categorically ineligible for cancellation of 16 17 removal. 18 The only question here is a question of the operation of how long after having
- of the operation of how long after having
 convicted that offense can that -- can that
 alien continue to claim credit for being in the

United States. That's a very narrow question.

23 And --

- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But --
- 25 MR. LIU: -- and our answer is simply

1 2 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- the -- the problem really is, no, it's not so simple 3 4 because they didn't or wouldn't have to worry 5 about a small amount of marijuana generally, 6 even an admission of it without a criminal 7 conviction, and so why should the time stop 8 under those circumstances? 9 MR. LIU: Well, there --10 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Other than your strange reading of -- of this provision. 11 12 MR. LIU: Well, I think the text does favor us. But if you look at the cancellation 13 14 of removal --JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: If it doesn't, 15 where do we end up? If it's ambiguous --16 17 MR. LIU: If it --JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- where do we end 18 19 up? 20 If it's ambiguous, I think MR. LIU: 21 there would have to be some grievous ambiguity 22 for the Court even -- to even care about that. 23 I think the traditional tools of construction 24 continue --25 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: How about --

1 MR. LIU: -- continue to apply. 2 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- if it's in 3 equipoise? MR. LIU: If it's in equipoise, I 4 5 still think the Court's duty should be to reach 6 what it believes to be the best reading of the statute. I don't think --7 8 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: And so by ignoring 9 surplusage completely? 10 MR. LIU: No. I think surplusage is a problem for both of our interpretations. I 11 12 mean, even under --13 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: He is a lot less. 14 He gives meaning to everything except the 15 reference to 1227(a)(4). But doesn't 1227 -- it wasn't -- it was an empty category back then? 16 17 MR. LIU: Yes. It's --18 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I forgot that. Ιt 19 was an earlier version. MR. LIU: Well, since the stop-time 20 rule was enacted in 1996, all the way until 21

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2004, 1227(a)(4) was an empty category. And

even today, it's a largely redundant category

because Congress has said in cases of certain

permanent residents and non-LPRs under

22

23

24

- 1 1229(b)(A) and (b)(1), if you have a conviction
- 2 under (a)(4), you're just categorically
- 3 ineligible. It's not -- it's not even a matter
- 4 of stopping time. If you have an (a)(4)
- 5 conviction, you can't get cancellation right off
- 6 the bat. So, even today, that provision is not
- 7 doing a ton of work.
- 8 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Liu, could you
- 9 make sense of the verb tenses for me? Because I
- 10 would think that you would have an extremely
- 11 good argument if the tenses were subjunctive,
- 12 you know, if it said -- if it would render the
- alien inadmissible. But it doesn't say that.
- 14 It says renders the alien inadmissible, which
- seems not to refer to something that could
- happen in the future if the alien, again, tried
- 17 to gain admission.
- 18 MR. LIU: Right. And I -- I -- I
- think the "renders inadmissible," the present
- 20 tense, just reinforces our interpretation
- 21 because, if you look at the text of 1182 itself,
- 22 it says any alien convicted of "a crime
- involving moral turpitude" is inadmissible.
- So, for the tenses to match, the
- 25 present tense in 1182 itself to match with the

- 1 stop-time rule, I think the present tense makes
- 2 a lot of sense. And I think this -- this is in
- 3 partial response to Justice Breyer's question.
- 4 Our -- our position is not a
- 5 hypothetical alien would be inadmissible and,
- 6 therefore, time stops for this alien. Our
- 7 position very much is, for this particular
- 8 alien, this offense renders him inadmissible.
- 9 And that just follows --
- 10 JUSTICE KAGAN: I mean, it --
- 11 MR. LIU: -- from the text --
- 12 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- just is a kind of
- odd thing to say when we know the alien has been
- 14 admitted and could be -- you know, could live
- 15 here indefinitely if he hadn't gotten into other
- 16 trouble, right?
- 17 MR. LIU: I don't --
- 18 JUSTICE KAGAN: Nobody walks around
- 19 going, oh, you've been admitted, but, you know
- 20 -- you know, let's -- let's -- let's
- 21 try to figure out whether you're inadmissible if
- 22 you try to -- if you try to gain admission the
- 23 next time around?
- MR. LIU: I mean, I -- I don't think
- 25 that's right. If I were a lawyer representing a

- 1 client who had already been admitted, I would
- 2 definitely describe the consequences of his
- 3 status as inadmissible after he had committed a
- 4 crime like this.
- 5 And I would use the present tense to
- 6 be exceptionally clear about those consequences.
- 7 I think there is a different verb tense change
- 8 here between "alien has committed" and "renders
- 9 inadmissible, but that -- that just, I think,
- 10 dovetails with our understanding as well,
- 11 because the "rendering inadmissible" always has
- 12 to occur after the alien has committed the
- 13 offense.
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Is your point
- about (a)(4) because it's an aggravated felony?
- MR. LIU: No, no.
- 17 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: What was your
- 18 (a)(4) point?
- 19 MR. LIU: 1227(a)(4) covers
- 20 security-related grounds --
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Yeah.
- MR. LIU: -- for deportability. So,
- 23 if someone has engaged in terrorist activity,
- for example, he would come within the scope of
- 25 (a)(4). If you look at 1229b(c)(4), this is on

- 1 page 37 of our petition appendix, it says an
- 2 alien who is ... deportable under Section
- 3 1227(a)(4) is simply categorically ineligible
- 4 for cancellation of removal. And that applies
- 5 to two types of cancellation, not all the types,
- 6 but the two types that we have been discussing
- 7 here today.
- 8 Thank you.
- 9 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
- 10 counsel.
- 11 Five minutes, Mr. Unikowsky.
- 12 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF ADAM G. UNIKOWSKY
- 13 ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER
- MR. UNIKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Chief
- 15 Justice.
- I'd like to begin by a comment that my
- 17 colleague made that they are giving the word
- 18 "inadmissible" the same consistent meaning
- 19 across the statute. That's just not accurate.
- So, in the mandatory detention
- 21 statute, it says that an alien who is
- inadmissible by reason of having committed an
- offense under 1182 is subject to mandatory
- 24 detention.
- 25 Giving that meaning -- word the same

- 1 consistent meaning, it would apply to any alien
- who merely has the status of inadmissible even
- 3 if you've already been admitted. That's what
- 4 they say "inadmissible" means in the stop-time
- 5 rule.
- 6 They conceded that can't be right. An
- 7 already admitted alien can't be inadmissible for
- 8 purposes of that statute. So they are giving it
- 9 a different meaning.
- 10 Now the Chief Justice posed a question
- 11 saying that, well, it seems to be on both sides
- and so it's a wash. I think if it is a wash,
- that it's very good for us because there's all
- 14 the other stuff. There's the surplusage,
- there's the comparison to good moral character,
- 16 and there's the structure of the INA and
- 17 everything else.
- 18 But I'd just like to push back a
- 19 little bit on the idea that it's a wash because
- it seems to me that the statutes we're comparing
- it to are more relevant than the ones they are.
- 22 So like this mandatory detention statute, it's
- 23 covering removal procedures. It was enacted in
- 24 IRRARA along with the stop-time rule just a
- 25 couple sections over. That strikes me as more

- 1 relevant than provisions that were enacted many
- years earlier that don't apply to LPRs at all,
- 3 which is what the government is relying upon.
- 4 So I actually think that the
- 5 consistent usage canon favors us, especially
- 6 when you look at just the intro to the
- 7 cancellation of removal statute that says the
- 8 attorney general may cancel removal for an alien
- 9 who is inadmissible or removable. Like, that's
- 10 using "inadmissible" in the way we say and it's
- 11 the same statute. In fact, like the stop-time
- 12 rule is just a definitional provision under that
- 13 umbrella.
- 14 So the second thing I'd like to turn
- 15 to is this question about the fish, which was a
- 16 colorful question by -- by Justice Alito that
- 17 the Eleventh Circuit relied on similar
- 18 arguments.
- 19 Look, we're not denying that it's --
- 20 that you can -- b-l-e words sometimes sound like
- 21 a status. Clearly, that's true, but it's just
- 22 as clear that sometimes it's obvious that when
- 23 you're talking about the removal proceeding
- itself, the word "inadmissible" refers to what
- 25 happened at the removal proceeding.

1 So I just think it's -- it's just inescapable that you have to look at the context 2 3 in which the word appears. I don't think that the Eleventh Circuit's comparison to undrinkable 4 5 really can answer the question presented. 6 in the context of the statute, which applies only during removal proceedings in which all the 7 8 surrounding provisions seem to conceptualize 9 this dichotomy between inadmissible and 10 deportable, I think the context which you -- you 11 just kind of have to look at ultimately favors 12 our position. 13 I'd also like just to say a word about 14 surplusage, which I understand occupied a 15 portion of the -- of the -- of my colleague's argument. So, first, on this narrow issue of 16 17 1227(a)(4), just to be clear, it's not as though 18 the government's interpretation gives that 19 meaning that ours doesn't, right? So 1227(a)(4) 20 was really an empty category at the time because 21 it didn't have any cross-references to 1182. 22 That's true on both sides. So it's 23 not -- it's not one of those cases where both 24 sides give one word meaning that the other side 25 doesn't. Like for both sides, it's not clear

- 1 why Congress included that, except for the
- 2 purpose of subsequent amendments which actually
- 3 did ultimately materialize. But the surplusage
- 4 on the government side is a lot more significant
- 5 in the hope that the removal clause isn't there.
- 6 It's not just a matter that there's
- 7 surplusage. I mean, surplusage is generally
- 8 bad. But I think here it's more than that. You
- 9 see the words "inadmissible" and "removable"
- 10 paired with each other. And I think that just
- implies that Congress is thinking that those are
- 12 the two things that can happen to you. And if
- you're inadmissible, you fall in one bucket, and
- if you're removable, you're in another bucket.
- 15 And we see all over the adjacent statutes this
- 16 concept of inadmissibility and deportability
- 17 together with an "or" in between. And it's --
- 18 it's clear in all those contexts that that's why
- 19 that's -- that's why they're there, because
- 20 those are the -- the two true outcomes.
- 21 So just in -- in the intro of the
- 22 cancellation of removal statute, where it says
- 23 the attorney general may cancel removal of an
- 24 alien who is inadmissible or deportable.
- 25 Clearly, the reason those two things are paired

- 1 together is that those are the two things that
- 2 can happen to you. And so that's why they're
- 3 both there.
- 4 And the same in just the general
- 5 statute governing removal procedures, 1229a,
- 6 that says that the immigration judge shall
- 7 decide the inadmissibility or deportability of
- 8 an alien, it's clear why those two words are
- 9 there with the "or" in between, because those
- 10 are the two things that can happen.
- So you go to the stop-time rule,
- 12 which, after all, is just like a buried
- definitional provision in the cancellation of
- 14 removal statute itself, and you have
- 15 "inadmissible" or "removable." And the natural
- 16 inference is that the reason those are there is
- 17 that those are the two things that can happen.
- 18 That fits our interpretation perfectly
- 19 because, if you're found inadmissible, then
- 20 you're in the admissible category. And if
- 21 you're found deportable, then you're in the
- deportable category, or removal category.
- 23 Excuse me. I think that's a lot more persuasive
- than this rather convoluted argument from the
- 25 government which apparently the government

Т	didn't even think of until its brief in this
2	case because it explicitly did did not make
3	this argument in an en banc petition filed less
4	than a year ago.
5	Thank you.
6	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
7	counsel. The case is submitted.
8	(Whereupon, at 11:06 a.m., the case
9	was submitted.)
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