

No. 23-525

In The
Supreme Court of the United States

MURPHY COMPANY, ET AL.,

Petitioners,

v.

JOSEPH R. BIDEN, JR., IN HIS OFFICIAL
CAPACITY AS PRESIDENT OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, ET AL.,

Respondents.

**On Petition for Writ of Certiorari
to the United States Court of Appeals
for the Ninth Circuit**

**PACIFIC LEGAL FOUNDATION'S AMICUS
BRIEF IN SUPPORT OF PETITIONERS**

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QUESTION PRESENTED

The Antiquities Act of 1906 authorizes the President, “in [his] discretion,” to declare that “historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest” found on federal land are “national monuments” and to “reserve parcels of land as a part of the national monuments” so long as those parcels are “confined to the smallest area compatible with the proper care and management of the objects to be protected.” 54 U.S.C. § 320301. Three decades after that Act’s passage, in the Oregon and California Railroad and Coos Bay Wagon Road Grant Lands Act of 1937 (O&C Act), Congress reserved certain federal lands in Oregon for “permanent forest production,” mandating that “the timber thereon shall be sold, cut, and removed in conformity with the princip[le] of sustained yield” timber production. 43 U.S.C. § 2601. In 2017, President Obama invoked the Antiquities Act to add O&C Act timberlands to an existing Oregon national monument established to protect biological diversity, see Proclamation 9564, 82 Fed. Reg. 6,145 (Jan. 12, 2017)—despite the fact that lands that are part of that monument may not be used in “provision of a sustained yield of timber,” Proclamation 7318, 65 Fed. Reg. 37,249, 37,250 (June 9, 2000).

The question presented is whether the Antiquities Act authorizes the President to declare federal lands part of a national monument where a separate federal statute reserves those specific federal lands for a specific purpose that is incompatible with national-monument status.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

QUESTION PRESENTED	i
TABLE OF AUTHORITIES	iii
AMICUS CURIAE’S INTEREST	1
INTRODUCTION	2
SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT	5
REASONS FOR GRANTING CERTIORARI.....	8
I. Certiorari is warranted because the Ninth Circuit’s holding raises fundamental separation-of-powers concerns.....	8
A. The Ninth Circuit’s opinion sanctions Executive Branch lawmaking in violation of the Constitution’s Separation of Powers	8
B. The panel majority’s decision implicates the major questions doctrine	10
C. If there is no meaningful limit on the President’s power, then the Antiquities Act violates the nondelegation doctrine	12
II. Under Article III, federal courts have a judicial duty to meaningfully review presidential action.....	13
III. The Ninth Circuit’s opinion further perpetuates presidential abuse of the Antiquities Act with severe consequences for people who depend on public lands.....	15
CONCLUSION.....	21

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

Cases

<i>A.L.A. Schechter Poultry Corp. v. United States</i> , 295 U.S. 495 (1935)	12
<i>Am. Forest Res. Council v. Hammond</i> , 422 F. Supp 3d 184 (D.D.C. 2019)	9
<i>Clinton v. City of New York</i> , 524 U.S. 417 (1998)	9–10
<i>Dep’t of Transp. v. Ass’n of Am. Railroads</i> , 575 U.S. 43 (2015)	8
<i>FDA v. Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp.</i> , 529 U.S. 120 (2000)	10
<i>Gundy v. United States</i> , 139 S. Ct. 2116 (2019)	1, 8–9, 11
<i>Hayburn’s Case</i> , 2 U.S. (2 Dall.) 408 (1792)	4
<i>Marbury v. Madison</i> , 5 U.S. (1 Cranch) 137 (1803)	6
<i>Mass. Lobstermen’s Ass’n v. Raimondo</i> , 141 S. Ct. 979 (2021)	20–21
<i>Mass. Lobstermen’s Ass’n v. Ross</i> , 945 F.3d 535 (D.C. Cir. 2019)	1, 18
<i>Mistretta v. United States</i> , 488 U.S. 361 (1989)	11
<i>Mountain States Legal Found. v. Bush</i> , 306 F.3d 1132 (D.C. Cir. 2002)	6
<i>Myers v. United States</i> , 272 U.S. 52 (1926)	5

<i>NFIB v. DOL</i> , 595 U.S. 109 (2022)	3
<i>NLRB v. Noel Canning</i> , 573 U.S. 513 (2014)	14
<i>Panama Refin. Co. v. Ryan</i> , 293 U.S. 388 (1935)	9
<i>Perez v. Mortg. Bankers Ass'n</i> , 575 U.S. 92 (2015)	13–14
<i>Sackett v. EPA</i> , 566 U.S. 120 (2012)	1
<i>Sackett v. EPA</i> , 598 U.S. 651 (2023)	1
<i>Tulare Cnty. v. Bush</i> , 306 F.3d 1138 (D.C. Cir. 2002)	16
<i>U.S. Army Corps of Eng'rs v. Hawkes Co., Inc.</i> , 578 U.S. 590 (2016)	1
<i>United States v. California</i> , 436 U.S. 32 (1978)	17
<i>Util. Air Regulatory Grp. v. EPA</i> , 573 U.S. 302 (2014)	10, 14
<i>West Virginia v. EPA</i> , 142 S. Ct. 2587 (2022)	10
<i>Weyerhaeuser Co. v. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Serv.</i> , 139 S. Ct. 361 (2018)	1
<i>Yakus v. United States</i> , 321 U.S. 414 (1944)	11–12
<i>Youngstown Sheet & Tube Co. v. Sawyer</i> , 343 U.S. 579 (1952)	9, 21
<i>Zivotofsky ex rel. Zivotofsky v. Clinton</i> , 566 U.S. 189 (2012)	6

U.S. Constitution

U.S. Const. art. I.....	4, 8
U.S. Const. art. II.....	4
U.S. Const. art. II, § 3.....	5
U.S. Const. art. III.....	4, 6–7, 13
U.S. Const. art. IV, § 3, cl. 2.....	4, 8, 10, 13

Statutes

54 U.S.C. § 320301.....	15, 17
54 U.S.C. §§ 320301–320303.....	10–11
54 U.S.C. § 320301(a).....	9
54 U.S.C. § 320301(b).....	9, 18
Act of Aug. 28, 1937, ch. 876, 50 Stat. 874.....	2
Antiquities Act of 1906, 54 U.S.C. § 320301, <i>et seq.</i>	1

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Cong. Rsch. Serv., R42346, <i>Federal Land Ownership: Overview and Data</i> (updated Feb. 21, 2020), https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R42346.pdf	20

Cong. Rsch. Serv., RL30528, <i>National Monuments and the Antiquities Act: President Clinton’s Designations and Related Issues</i> (June 28, 2001), https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20010628_RL30528_51e7ee36b7368d6934398c5f4f14f92bb11a201a.pdf	16
The Federalist No. 78 (Alexander Hamilton) (J. Cooke ed., 1961).....	13
Lawson, Gary & Seidman, Guy I., “A Great Power of Attorney:” <i>Understanding the Fiduciary Constitution</i> (2017).....	12
National Geographic, <i>Ecosystem</i> , Resource Library: Encyclopedia, https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/ecosystem/	18
Prakash, Saikrishna Bangalore, <i>The Living Presidency: An Originalist Argument Against Its Ever-Expanding Powers</i> (2020).....	15, 19
Presidential Proclamation 9564, 82 Fed. Reg. 6145 (Jan. 12, 2017).....	2
Proclamation No. 5030, 48 Fed. Reg. 10,605 (Mar. 10, 1983), https://archives.federalregister.gov/issue_slice/1983/3/14/10605-10606.pdf#page=1	17
Proclamation No. 8031, 71 Fed. Reg. 36,443 (June 15, 2006), https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2006/06/26/06-5725/establishment-of-the-northwestern-hawaiian-islands-marine-national-monument	17

2 PUBLIC PAPERS OF THE PRESIDENTS (Oct 26, 2011).....	2
Seamon, Richard H., <i>Dismantling Monuments</i> , 70 Fla. L. Rev. 553 (2018)	15–16
Vincent, Carol Hardy, Cong. Rsch. Serv., <i>National Monuments and the Antiquities Act</i> , R41330 (updated May 3, 2023), https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R41330.pdf	18
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AMICUS CURIAE'S INTEREST¹

Founded in 1973, the Pacific Legal Foundation is a nonprofit, tax-exempt California corporation established to litigate matters affecting the public interest and defend American's liberties when threatened by government overreach. PLF is the most experienced public-interest legal nonprofit, both as lead counsel and amicus curiae, in cases involving the role of the Judicial Branch as an independent check on the Executive and Legislative Branches under the Constitution's Separation of Powers.²

The issue here is whether the President has authority under the Antiquities Act to override Congress's clear directives within the Oregon and California Railroad and Coos Bay Wagon Road Grant Lands Act of 1937 (O&C Act). PLF submits this brief because this issue raises significant concerns about the Constitution's Separation of Powers and the judiciary's important role in providing a meaningful check on abuses of executive power.

¹ Rule 37 Statement: All parties received timely notice of Amicus's intent to file this brief. No party's counsel authored any part of this brief. No person or entity, other than Amicus Curiae and its counsel, paid for the brief's preparation or submission.

² See, e.g., *Sackett v. EPA (Sackett II)*, 598 U.S. 651 (2023); *Gundy v. United States*, 139 S. Ct. 2116 (2019); *Weyerhaeuser Co. v. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Serv.*, 139 S. Ct. 361 (2018); *U.S. Army Corps of Eng'rs v. Hawkes Co., Inc.*, 578 U.S. 590 (2016); *Sackett v. EPA (Sackett I)*, 566 U.S. 120 (2012). PLF also has represented clients in cases involving the Antiquities Act of 1906, 54 U.S.C. § 320301, *et seq.* See, e.g., *Mass. Lobstermen's Ass'n v. Ross*, 945 F.3d 535 (D.C. Cir. 2019).

INTRODUCTION³

President Obama quipped during his time in office: “I intend to do everything in my power right now to act on behalf of the American people, with or without Congress. We can’t wait for Congress to do its job. So where they won’t act, I will.”⁴ Staying true to his word, he issued Presidential Proclamation 9564, 82 Fed. Reg. 6145 (Jan. 12, 2017). Relying on the Antiquities Act, the Proclamation expanded the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument and withdrew thousands of acres of public land that Congress specifically reserved for timber production under the O&C Act. In other words, the President used the Antiquities Act to unilaterally nullify a direct requirement from Congress that certain lands be available for an explicit use.

Judicial review of the President's Proclamation should have been straightforward. Congress included a non-obstante clause in the O&C Act: “All Acts or parts of Acts in conflict with this Act are hereby repealed to the extent necessary to give full force and effect to this Act.” *See* Act of Aug. 28, 1937, ch. 876, 50 Stat. 874, 876. The critical question is thus whether Proclamation 9564 “conflicts” with the O&C Act. If it does, then the Proclamation cannot stand because the President has no authority to nullify Congress’s legislative directives. And “even a perfunctory review of the plain text of the Proclamation and the O&C Act

³ While the arguments Amicus provides here are materially the same as the arguments made in the amicus brief being filed concurrently in *American Forest Resource Council v. United States*, No. 23-524, this brief focuses on the Ninth Circuit’s reasoning where appropriate.

⁴ 2 PUBLIC PAPERS OF THE PRESIDENTS 1350 (Oct. 26, 2011).

reveals an obvious conflict.” Pet.App. 35a. (Tallman, J., dissenting). On one hand, “the O&C Act requires sustained yield calculation for all O&C timberlands”; on the other, “Proclamation 9564 removes O&C timberlands from the sustained yield calculation.” *Id.* at 36a.

Yet the Ninth Circuit panel majority ignored this clear conflict. Instead, it applied a perverse clear statement principle: presidential action under the Antiquities Act is always within a president’s power unless Congress explicitly lists its inapplicability within a later enacted law. Indeed, in establishing this principle, the panel majority reasoned that the O&C Act’s non-obstante clause was not specific enough—rather than stating that the O&C Act supersedes “all acts in conflict,” the majority would require the O&C Act to say it supersedes “all acts in conflict, including the Antiquities Act.” In essence, the Ninth Circuit’s decision transforms the Antiquities Act from an ordinary delegation of power to execute the law into a super statute allowing Executive Branch amendment of all land management statutes.

The President’s unilateral action and the Ninth Circuit’s decision raise a fundamental and reoccurring question under the Constitution: “Who decides?” *NFIB v. DOL*, 595 U.S. 109, 121 (2022) (Gorsuch, J., concurring). Under the Constitution’s Separation of Powers, does the President have the power to override a congressionally prescribed law—a law passed through the people’s representatives—with the flick of a pen? And under the Constitution’s Separation of Powers, should the judiciary review presidential actions through the lens of boundless discretion

letting the President make rather than enforce the law?

When the American people ratified the Constitution, they answered no to both questions. The people delegated some of their power—as described and delimited in the Constitution’s text and structure—to each federal branch, respectively. See James Wilson, State House Yard Speech (Oct. 6, 1787), *reprinted in 1 Collected Works of James Wilson* 171, 172 (Kermit L. Hall & Mark David Hall eds., Liberty Fund 2011) (The federal government’s power is “collected, not from tacit implication, but from the positive grant expressed in the instrument of union.”). “The legislative, executive and judicial departments are each formed in a separate and independent manner; and [] the ultimate basis of each is the constitution only, within the limits of which each department can alone justify any act of authority.” *Hayburn’s Case*, 2 U.S. (2 Dall.) 408, 410 n.* (1792).

As relevant here, the people vested Congress—and Congress alone—with the power to make all rules and regulations regarding public lands. U.S. Const. art. IV, § 3, cl. 2. Those rules and regulations must go through the democratic process outlined by Article I of the Constitution before becoming law. U.S. Const. art. I. By contrast, the people vested the President with the executive power to enforce those laws if properly enacted. U.S. Const. art. II. And the people vested the judiciary with the judicial power—and the judicial duty—to declare when the other two branches venture outside their constitutional lanes. U.S. Const. art. III.

The Constitution divided powers this way to preserve the people’s freedom to exercise their rights

and liberties without arbitrary government interference. Indeed, the “doctrine of the separation of powers was adopted by the convention of 1787 not to promote efficiency but to preclude the exercise of arbitrary power.” *Myers v. United States*, 272 U.S. 52, 293 (1926) (Brandeis, J., dissenting).

The decision below flouts these first principles. It sets a precedent giving presidents unilateral authority to “suspend the operation of another act of Congress.” Pet.App. 37a (Tallman, J., dissenting). And without this Court’s intervention, this unbounded discretion to override laws regulating public lands will continue to apply to millions of acres throughout the western United States—lands that millions of people depend on for their economic livelihoods. This Court should step in now and provide meaningful limits on this presidential abuse of power.

SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

First, this Court should grant certiorari because the panel majority’s decision sanctioned the President’s violation of the Constitution’s Separation of Powers. The President is not a king. He oversees the Executive Branch and “take[s] Care that the Laws be faithfully executed.” U.S. Const. art. II, § 3. But he lacks the discretion to use old laws to thwart clear congressional directives in later enacted statutes to expand his power and instill his preferred policies—policies that have not gone through the democratic gauntlet outlined in the Constitution. Yet the President has done just that by issuing Proclamation 9564 under the Antiquities Act. Indeed, the President directly contradicted Congress’s clear directives by withdrawing thousands of acres of public lands that Congress mandated be available for timber

production. But nothing in the Antiquities Act nor the Constitution gives the President this unbounded lawmaking power.

Second, certiorari is warranted because the Ninth Circuit panel majority applied a level of deference that cannot be squared with the federal judiciary's constitutional duty to meaningfully check the Executive Branch. Under Article III of the Constitution, the federal judiciary must independently confront questions involving the Constitution's government-structuring provisions. Put another way, it is the solemn responsibility of the Judicial Branch "to say what the law is" under the Constitution's Separation of Powers. *See Zivotofsky ex rel. Zivotofsky v. Clinton*, 566 U.S. 189, 196 (2012) (quoting *Marbury v. Madison*, 5 U.S. (1 Cranch) 137, 177 (1803)); *see also Mountain States Legal Found. v. Bush*, 306 F.3d 1132, 1136 (D.C. Cir. 2002) (finding courts must ensure that presidential proclamations follow constitutional principles and do not exceed the President's statutory authority under the Antiquities Act). Yet the panel majority below took great pains to skirt its duty and sanction near absolute presidential discretion to override a later enacted law passed by Congress.

Third, this Court's review is warranted because the Ninth Circuit's failure to meaningfully scrutinize the President's actions continues the troubling trend of judicial abdication over the Executive Branch's abuse of the Antiquities Act. The President's actions here are not an isolated overreach. In recent years, presidents have declared vast land and ocean areas as "antiquities" to instill their preferred policies—policies not passed through the Constitution's

prescribed procedures. Proclamation 9564 is just the latest example of the Executive Branch's power grab. What is more, the Ninth Circuit's decision sets a precedent that will have severe consequences for not only the communities that depend on the surrounding O&C lands. But for anyone affected by the laws governing public land use in much of the western United States. If left intact, the decision will allow the President to release a "timber rattler poised to strike at any land management law" he dislikes. Pet.App. 42a (Tallman, J., dissenting).

* * * * *

At bottom, the Ninth Circuit's decision lets the President become both a lawmaker and law executor in violation of the Constitution. And the Ninth Circuit's lack of meaningful judicial review over presidential actions under the Antiquities Act fails to provide the essential check on executive overreach demanded by Article III—giving the President almost unfettered discretion to change the laws governing public lands. The consequences of this abdication of the Constitution's mandates for the millions of people who depend on public lands cannot be overstated. This Court should thus grant the petition and clarify that neither the Antiquities Act nor the Constitution lets the Executive Branch subject millions of acres of federal property to the whims of the President's pen.

REASONS FOR GRANTING CERTIORARI

I. Certiorari is warranted because the Ninth Circuit's holding raises fundamental separation-of-powers concerns.

A. The Ninth Circuit's opinion sanctions Executive Branch lawmaking in violation of the Constitution's Separation of Powers.

Under the Constitution's Property Clause, Congress, not the Executive Branch, is vested with the power to make laws regulating federal lands. *See* U.S. Const. art. IV, § 3, cl 2. Like any other law, laws passed under the Property Clause must follow the Constitution's procedures outlined in Article I. *See Dep't of Transp. v. Ass'n of Am. Railroads*, 575 U.S. 43, 68 (2015) (Thomas, J., concurring) ("Article I requires . . . every Bill which shall have passed the House of Representatives and the Senate, shall, before it become a Law, be presented to the President of the United States; If he approve he shall sign it, but if not he shall return it . . .") (cleaned up).

This process is essential to uphold the Constitution's promise to preserve people's freedom and ensure overzealous officials do not change their rights with impunity: The Framers "believed the new federal government's most dangerous power was the power to enact laws restricting the people's liberty." *Gundy v. United States*, 139 S. Ct. 2116, 2134 (2019) (Gorsuch, J., dissenting). Excessive lawmaking was "one of the diseases to which our governments are most liable. To address that tendency, the framers went to great lengths to make lawmaking difficult." *Id.* (cleaned up). And if Congress could delegate its lawmaking power to the Executive Branch, the

“vesting clauses” and the “entire structure of the Constitution would make no sense.” *Id.* at 2134–35 (cleaned up).

Executive Branch officials—including presidents—may only act through a validly enacted delegation from Congress prescribing the law’s execution. See *Panama Refin. Co. v. Ryan*, 293 U.S. 388, 420–21 (1935). And actions by the Executive Branch—including presidential actions—exceeding congressional delegations are lawmaking, are ultra vires, and violate the Constitution’s Separation of Powers. See *Youngstown Sheet & Tube Co. v. Sawyer*, 343 U.S. 579, 637 (1952) (Jackson, J., concurring).

Here, the Antiquities Act allows the President only “[to] declare by public proclamation historic landmarks . . . situated on land owned or controlled by the Federal Government to be national monuments.” 54 U.S.C. § 320301(a). The President may also reserve land for a monument’s protection, but that land must “be confined to the smallest area compatible with the proper care and management of the objects to be protected.” *Id.* § 320301(b).

But nowhere in this delegation does Congress authorize the President to amend later enacted statutes like the O&C Act. Indeed, “[t]he Antiquities Act says nothing specific about managing O&C timberland. As such, it cannot be understood to nullify the timber harvest mandates imposed by Congress in the O&C Act.” Pet.App. 38a (Tallman, J. dissenting) (quoting *Am. Forest Res. Council v. Hammond*, 422 F. Supp 3d 184, 193 (D.D.C. 2019)). Nor could “an affirmative act of Congress . . . grant the President the power to indefinitely modify or nullify duly enacted law.” *Id.* at 40a (citing *Clinton v. City of New York*, 524

U.S. 417, 436–47 (1998)). Yet that is what the President sought to accomplish here by withdrawing timber lands from the O&C Act’s purview. This direct amendment of the O&C Act violates the fundamental separation-of-powers principles mandated by our Constitution.

B. The panel majority’s decision implicates the major questions doctrine.

This Court recently held that “both separation of powers principles and a practical understanding of legislative intent” should make courts “reluctant to read into ambiguous statutory text the delegation claimed to be lurking there.” *West Virginia v. EPA*, 142 S. Ct. 2587, 2609 (2022) (cleaned up). There must be “something more than a merely plausible textual basis”—there must be a “clear congressional authorization” before courts presume a broad congressional delegation. *Id.* And courts should be skeptical when the Executive Branch tries to “bring about an enormous and transformative expansion in [its] regulatory authority without clear congressional authorization.” *Util. Air Regulatory Grp. v. EPA*, 573 U.S. 302, 324 (2014); *see also FDA v. Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp.*, 529 U.S. 120, 159 (2000) (rejecting an executive agency’s claim of “jurisdiction to regulate an industry constituting a significant portion of the American economy” without explicit congressional authorization).

This principle applies here. The Constitution delegates Congress the power to manage federal lands under the Property Clause. *See* U.S. Const. art. IV, § 3, cl 2. Congress delegated limited authority to the President to execute the law and establish national monuments through the Antiquities Act. *See* 54

U.S.C. §§ 320301–320303. Properly understood, the Act’s text cabins presidential power and provides meaningful boundaries for courts to gauge whether a president has exceeded his authority. But if presidents can unilaterally nullify provisions of land management statutes like the O&C Act, Congress will have delegated a transformative—and near limitless—power under the Antiquities Act.

Courts should not assume Congress would delegate to the President an unbounded power to later amend federal statutes. Congressional delegations of power to presidents must have some “boundaries” to prevent them from seizing the legislative powers reserved for Congress. *See, e.g., Yakus v. United States*, 321 U.S. 414, 426 (1944); *see also Mistretta v. United States*, 488 U.S. 361, 379 (1989); *Gundy*, 139 S. Ct. at 2136 (Gorsuch, J., dissenting). Yet under the Ninth Circuit’s holding, there is no limiting principle on future expansions of national monuments onto public land reserved for other purposes by Congress. And it will effectively give presidents unlimited authority to regulate federal land how they see fit—despite any uses already designated for the land by statute. Pet.App. 40a–41a (“Indeed, the far-reaching implications of the majority’s interpretive rule are sobering: every federal land management law that does not expressly shield itself from the Antiquities Act is now subject to executive nullification by proclamation. I can find no limiting principle within the majority opinion that counsels otherwise.”).

C. If there is no meaningful limit on the President’s power, then the Antiquities Act violates the nondelegation doctrine.

A limitation on the President’s Antiquities Act authority that forbids unilaterally altering congressionally prescribed land uses would avoid the constitutional problems outlined above. But if the Ninth Circuit’s opinion stands, and the Antiquities Act is read to create a sweeping delegation of power to presidents to manage federal land under the Property Clause, it will represent an improper delegation of power. *See, e.g., Yakus*, 321 U.S. at 426.

Indeed, if Proclamation 9456 is lawful, Congress effectively delegated its power to legislate federal land use under the Property Clause to the President—creating a “delegation running riot.” *See A.L.A. Schechter Poultry Corp. v. United States*, 295 U.S. 495, 552–53 (1935) (Cardozo, J., concurring). Put differently, under the panel majority’s reasoning, the Antiquities Act is essentially a blank check through which the President may fill in his preferred policy and Congress will have effectively enacted a law that is “nothing except a raw delegation to enact rules.”⁵ It will have “designated a lawmaker, not a law interpreter.”⁶

In sum, courts should not interpret the Antiquities Act to let the President wield Congress’s Property Clause power whenever he pleases. Instead, it should be read with a clear limiting principle—the presidents act *ultra vires* and outside of their

⁵ Gary Lawson & Guy I. Seidman, “A Great Power of Attorney:” *Understanding the Fiduciary Constitution* 126 (2017).

⁶ *Id.*

constitutional authority to enforce the law when they seek to expand a national monument onto lands already reserved for another purpose by Congress. Under the Constitution, the people delegated Congress the power to manage federal lands. U.S. Const. art. IV, § 3, cl 2. No interpretation of the Antiquities Act should obliterate that constitutional mandate.

II. Under Article III, federal courts have a judicial duty to meaningfully review presidential action.

The Ninth Circuit correctly found that the federal courts have jurisdiction to determine when presidents exceed their statutory and constitutional authority under the Antiquities Act. Pet.App. 13a–19a. That ruling is not extraordinary—it is required by the Constitution’s mandate that the federal courts provide a vital check on the political branches’ excesses of power. Yet the panel majority’s decision quickly went off the rails by applying deference to the President’s actions that made its review toothless.

The Framers envisioned that the judiciary—not the Executive Branch—would determine a law’s meaning. *Perez v. Mortg. Bankers Ass’n*, 575 U.S. 92, 125 (2015) (“The Framers expected Article III judges to engage . . . by applying the law as a ‘check’ on the excesses of both the Legislative and Executive Branches.”) (Thomas, J., concurring). Federal judges are constitutionally charged with exercising independent judgment under Article III. *See* The Federalist No. 78 (Alexander Hamilton) (J. Cooke ed., 1961) (The judicial duty entails the “interpretation of the laws,” which is the “proper and peculiar province of the courts.”).

This constitutional principle mandates that courts not “defer to the other branches’ resolution” of separation of powers issues. *See NLRB v. Noel Canning*, 573 U.S. 513, 571–72 (2014) (Scalia, J., concurring). And the judiciary’s “role is in no way lessened because it might be said that the two political branches are adjusting their own powers between themselves.” *Id.* at 571 (cleaned up). With executive overreach, the federal courts must look to “the compatibility of [executive] actions with enabling statutes.” *Perez*, 575 U.S. at 1221 (Thomas, J., concurring) (citing *Util. Air Regulatory Grp.*, 573 U.S. at 313–16).

Yet here, the Ninth Circuit’s panel majority turned the judiciary’s duty to check executive excesses on its head. Rather than provide meaningful judicial review, it “appears to have fashioned its own rule that where Congress wishes to restrict the President’s Antiquities Act authority, it must do so expressly.” Pet.App. 39a. But this “argument belies foundational principles of constitutional law and misconstrues the role of courts in our tripartite system of government.” *Id.* Indeed, the “majority’s deference to the political branches of government in this case is contrary to [courts] commitment to the rule of law.” *Id.* at 40a.

At bottom, Congress could not have intended the President to have a veto power over later enacted statutes under such a cryptic delegation as that found in the sparse language of the Antiquities Act. And there is no basis for courts assuming Congress would do so. The Court should grant certiorari and ensure that judicial review by lower courts reflects the foundational constitutional principle that the

judiciary is bound to provide a meaningful check on the Executive Branch.

III. The Ninth Circuit’s opinion further perpetuates presidential abuse of the Antiquities Act with severe consequences for people who depend on public lands.

The Ninth Circuit’s lack of meaningful judicial review flouts basic constitutional principles and expands an already profoundly troubling trend of Antiquities Act abuses. It is thus vital that this Court grant certiorari and clarify the limits of presidential authority under the Antiquities Act.

Presidents rarely gain power through grand usurpations. Presidents usually engage in “creative destruction”—unchecked violations of the law that expand their power over time. *See* Saikrishna Bangalore Prakash, *The Living Presidency: An Originalist Argument Against Its Ever-Expanding Powers* 8 (2020). This is essentially a “practice-makes-perfect” form of executive lawmaking in which Presidents “claim to have the authority to change federal law via repeated violations.” *Id.* at 9. This abuse is partly enabled by “a judicial system that acts as only a partial, fitful check on the executive, and the weakness of the check has consequences for the actions the executive is willing to take.” *Id.* at 73.

The Antiquities Act and judicial review of presidential actions provide a perfect example. Under the Act, presidents may designate “National Monuments” on certain public lands. 54 U.S.C. § 320301. Congress intended the Act to be a quick way to protect archaeological artifacts from vandalism and looting. *See* Richard H. Seamon, *Dismantling*

Monuments, 70 Fla. L. Rev. 553, 561–67 (2018) (discussing the Antiquities Act’s legislative purpose). Yet since at least the 1990s, presidents have slowly swallowed more power through the Antiquities Act’s implementation with little to no judicial check.

For example, during President Clinton’s tenure, the statute’s scope broadened from protecting specific “objects” to regulating nebulous “ecosystems.”⁷ According to the Clinton administration, these unnamed ecosystems were themselves “objects” presidents could designate as a “monument.” See *Tulare Cnty. v. Bush*, 306 F.3d 1138, 1142 (D.C. Cir. 2002) (explaining the President’s reasoning). All told, President Clinton established 19 monuments and expanded three others, totaling 5.9 million acres.⁸

⁷ Bruce Babbitt, Secretary, Department of Interior, Address at the Sturm College of Law of the University of Denver, *From Grand Staircase to Grand Canyon Parashant: Is There a Monumental Future for the BLM?*, 3 U. Denv. Water L. Rev. 223, 229 (2000) (describing the evolution of presidential regulation under the Antiquities Act, starting with the designation of “curiosit[ies]” and, during the Clinton administration, expanding to the protection of entire ecosystem), <https://core.tdar.org/document/374192/from-grand-staircase-to-grand-canyon-parashant-is-there-a-monumental-future-for-the-blm>.

⁸ Cong. Rsch. Serv., RL30528, *National Monuments and the Antiquities Act: President Clinton’s Designations and Related Issues* 4 (June 28, 2001), https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20010628_RL30528_51e7ee36b7368d6934398c5f4f14f92bb11a201a.pdf.

And the expansion of presidential power under the Act is not a partisan affair. President George W. Bush expanded on his predecessor's innovation in executive authority by taking ecosystem monuments to new domains. A president's regulatory reach is textually limited to property on "land" "owned or controlled" by the federal government. 54 U.S.C. § 320301. And during the law's first 100 years, courts understood that limitation meant only those land areas subject to U.S. sovereignty, such as public lands or the "land" within the territorial seas. *See United States v. California*, 436 U.S. 32, 35–36 (1978) (recognizing that presidents only designated monuments in areas where the federal government exercised "full dominion and power"). But in 2006, President Bush adopted a broader reading of Act's reach. He established the 89-million-acre Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument in the Pacific Ocean.⁹ Under President Bush's interpretation of "land" that is "owned or controlled" by the federal government, a president's authority extends to the Oceans' seabed in the "exclusive economic zone"—an area between the territorial sea and 200 miles from the Nation's coast, over which nations exercise concurrent authority that falls far short of sovereign dominion.¹⁰

⁹ Proclamation No. 8031, 71 Fed. Reg. 36,443 (June 15, 2006), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2006/06/26/06-5725/establishment-of-the-northwestern-hawaiian-islands-marine-national-monument>.

¹⁰ *See* Proclamation No. 5030, 48 Fed. Reg. 10,605 (Mar. 10, 1983) (establishing the EEZ), https://archives.federalregister.gov/issue_slice/1983/3/14/10605-10606.pdf#page=1.

Not to be outdone, President Obama expanded three of President Bush’s marine monuments and created the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts National Monument—which designated millions of acres of the Atlantic Ocean as a national monument and banned commercial fishing within the area. *See Mass. Lobstermen’s Ass’n*, 945 F.3d at 538–39.¹¹ These two Ocean monuments now encompass almost 750 million acres of seabed. That is nearly ten times the area of total acreage regulated during the first 100 years of the Antiquities Act.¹² And these monuments have severely limited the people’s ability to ply their trade and earn a living within the designations.

Of course, the inherent problem with ecosystem monuments is that there’s no limiting principle. This is so because every square inch of the earth has or is part of an ecosystem—all public “lands” or Oceans’ seabed are designable “monuments” under this reading of the law.¹³ In this way, ecosystem monuments obviate the Antiquity Act’s primary constraint on executive authority—that a designation must be limited to the “smallest area compatible” with a monument’s preservation. 54 U.S.C. § 320301(b). Indeed, this limitation becomes meaningless when

¹¹ President Obama also expanded the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument by 261.3 million acres and the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument by 283.4 million acres.

¹² Carol Hardy Vincent, Cong. Rsch. Serv., *National Monuments and the Antiquities Act*, R41330, Appendix B (updated May 3, 2023), <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R41330.pdf>.

¹³ *See* National Geographic, *Ecosystem*, Resource Library: Encyclopedia (“The whole surface of Earth is a series of connected ecosystems.”), <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/ecosystem/>.

courts let presidents merely draw shapes on a map and designate an entire ecosystem as a “national monument.”

In essence, these continual transgressions of power through several presidential proclamations—with little to no judicial scrutiny of presidential authority when they happen—have let presidents become a constitutional “pickpocket” of Congress’s power under the Property Clause. *See* Prakash, *The Living Presidency* 9. It should thus be no surprise that the President is now seeking to expand his power even further by claiming the authority to override clear statutory mandates. But that extraordinary power must be checked. As Judge Tallman explained below, the President’s actions—and the panel majority’s sanction of that action—not only contribute to the “economic impact” on local communities that depend on the O&C Act for part of their economic livelihood, but also extends to “every federal land management law” that does not explicitly forbid the President’s use of the Antiquities Act.

Indeed, in the states covered by the Ninth Circuit alone, the panel majority’s opinion and the precedent it sets may affect a significant intrusion by presidents into millions of acres of federal land. Unlike in other areas of the country, where federal property ownership is comparatively *de minimis*, in the nine states that comprise the Ninth Circuit, the Federal

Government owns 53% of all land—nearly 500 million acres.¹⁴

Table 1. Total Federal Land in the United States Administered by Five Agencies, by State, 2018—Selected States

	Total Federal Acreage	Total Acreage in State	Federal Acreage's % of State
Alaska	222,666,580	365,481,600	60.90%
Arizona	28,077,992	72,688,000	38.60%
California	45,493,133	100,206,720	45.40%
Hawaii	829,830	4,105,600	20.20%
Idaho	32,789,648	52,933,120	61.90%
Montana	27,082,401	93,271,040	29.00%
Nevada	56,262,610	70,264,320	80.10%
Oregon	32,244,257	61,598,720	52.30%
Wash.	12,192,855	42,693,760	28.60%
9th Circuit Total	457,639,306	863,242,880	53.014%

Now is the time for this Court to step in and put a stop to this troubling trend. As the Chief Justice of this Court observed, the Antiquities Act's limited delegation has not yet been meaningfully delineated by courts, resulting in increasingly absurd interpretations of the Act. *Mass. Lobstermen's Ass'n v. Raimondo*, 141 S. Ct. 979, 980–81 (2021) (Mem) (noting that past presidents' interpretations of the

¹⁴ 457,639,306 out of 863,242,880 to be exact. Cong. Rsch. Serv., R42346, *Federal Land Ownership: Overview and Data* 7–8 (updated Feb. 21, 2020), <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R42346.pdf>.

Antiquities Act strain the bounds of “ordinary English”). And as the Chief Justice tacitly acknowledged, the Antiquities Act has morphed into limitless power never envisioned by Congress when it passed the statute over 100 years ago. *See id.* at 981.

This case is the latest example of the pathology that has allowed these constitutional transgressions to fester for decades. But this Court now has a chance to once and for all provide a meaningful limiting principle on presidential power under the Antiquities Act. And in doing so, the Court can provide the lower courts with guidance to ensure they act as the judicial check the Constitution requires. The Court should thus grant the petition and clarify that the Antiquities Act is not, and constitutionally cannot be, a delegation of power that allows presidents to ignore Congress’s clear legal directives.

CONCLUSION

Since the birth of the Republic, courts have engaged in judicial review and provided a “check” on executive officials’—including presidents’—*ultra vires* and unconstitutional actions. As Justice Jackson eloquently explained: “With all its defects, delays and inconveniences, men have discovered no technique for long preserving free government except that the Executive be under the law, and that the law be made by parliamentary deliberations.” *Youngstown Sheet & Tube Co.*, 343 U.S. at 655 (Jackson, J., concurring). To date, this first principle has not been applied to presidential actions under the Antiquities Act. This Court should thus grant the petition for writ of certiorari and make clear that presidents are not

above the law and cannot amend congressional statutes.

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Respectfully submitted,

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