1	IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES
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3	ROBERT F. McDONNELL, :
4	Petitioner : No. 15-474
5	v. :
6	UNITED STATES. :
7	x
8	Washington, D.C.
9	Wednesday, April 27, 2016
10	
11	The above-entitled matter came on for oral
12	argument before the Supreme Court of the United States
13	at 10:02 a.m.
14	APPEARANCES:
15	NOEL J. FRANCISCO, ESQ., Washington, D.C.; on behalf
16	of Petitioner.
17	MICHAEL R. DREEBEN, ESQ., Deputy Solicitor General,
18	Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.; on behalf of
19	Respondent.
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1 PROCEEDINGS 2 (10:02 a.m.) 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear argument this morning in Case 15-474, McDonnell v. United States. 4 5 Mr. Francisco. 6 ORAL ARGUMENT OF NOEL J. FRANCISCO 7 ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER 8 MR. FRANCISCO: Mr. Chief Justice, and may 9 it please the Court: 10 The government argues that in quid pro quo bribery, "official action" encompasses anything within 11 12 the range of official duties. In order to reach that 13 conclusion, it asks that you disregard a 9-0 decision of 14 this Court. 15 The government is wrong. In order to engage in "official action," an official must either make a 16 17 government decision or urge someone else to do so. The 18 line is between access to decision-makers on the one 19 hand and trying to influence those decisions on the 20 other. 21 JUSTICE KENNEDY: And that's the Sun-Diamond 22 case, the 9-0 case that you refer to. 23 MR. FRANCISCO: Yes, Your Honor, the 24 Sun-Diamond case, the 9-0 case. And I think what 25 Sun-Diamond confirms is that when an official simply

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1 refers someone to another official, an independent 2 decision-maker for an objective decision, he hasn't 3 crossed that line into prohibited "official action." 4 JUSTICE KENNEDY: I take it all parties 5 concede that the act of the university official to 6 undertake or not to undertake a research study would be 7 an "official action."

8 MR. FRANCISCO: Yes, Your Honor. And the 9 question is: Did the Governor cross the line into 10 influencing officials to undertake that action and was 11 the jury properly instructed?

JUSTICE KENNEDY: Can you tell me the posture of the case with reference to under Virginia law, the government -- the Governor's authority or lack of authority to tell the university, you will engage in this research or you will not engage?

17 MR. FRANCISCO: Sure, Your Honor. He --18 JUSTICE KENNEDY: What is the state of the law, and do -- do the parties agree on this point? 19 MR. FRANCISCO: Your Honor, I think that the 20 21 parties agree that the Governor at least had a bully 22 pulpit authority, but he had very little authority to 23 actually direct any university researcher to do 24 anything. And here I think one of the critical -- there are two critical questions: One, was the jury told that 25

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1 it even had to find that he tried to do that and here it 2 wasn't; and, two, did he in fact do that. And we would 3 assert that he clearly didn't.

JUSTICE GINSBURG: Would it have made a difference if the medical faculties had agreed to the testing?

7 MR. FRANCISCO: Your Honor, if they had agreed to the testing, I still don't think it would have 8 9 made a difference in terms of whether Governor McDonnell tried to influence their decision on that, because he 10 11 didn't. And it still wouldn't have made a -- a 12 difference on the jury instructions because the jury 13 still wasn't instructed that it had to find that 14 Governor McDonnell tried to influence a particular 15 governmental decision, because it wasn't so instructed. 16 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Francisco, could I 17 ask -- the line you're drawing between exercising influence and providing access, just to sort of test 18 that with a hypothetical, suppose that somebody knew 19 20 that there was a -- a contractor who was going to award 21 a very large contract to one of two or three firms that 22 the -- that he was meeting with. And -- and a company 23 paid to make sure that they were on the meet list, to be 24 one of those two or three firms, in other words, 25 bribed --

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1 MR. FRANCISCO: Sure. 2 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- an official in order to 3 become one of those two or three firms from which that 4 was the pool from which --5 MR. FRANCISCO: Right. 6 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- this billion-dollar 7 contract would emerge, would that be sufficient? 8 MR. FRANCISCO: Your Honor, I think that probably would be "official action" because there the 9 10 only way you can even get a decision in your favor is by being one of three people on that list. So being on 11 12 that list is a prerequisite to getting a decision. 13 Being denied -- denied on that list is a denial of the 14 decision, and that's an official governmental action. 15 Here the jury wasn't instructed on any of this. They didn't have to find that Governor McDonnell 16 tried to influence anything. Indeed, it would have been 17 18 required to convict under these instructions if Governor McDonnell had called up a staff member and said, I'd 19 20 like to -- you to meet with this fellow, Johnnie 21 Williams. I don't really trust him. His product is a 22 little hinky, but you're the expert. So meet with the 23 quy and exercise your complete and unfettered judgment. 24 JUSTICE KAGAN: Can I --JUSTICE ALITO: Let me -- let me just change 25

1	the hypothetical a little bit. Suppose that a Governor
2	is going to make a eventually going to make a
3	decision that will help either A or B and hurt either A
4	or B, and the Governor says, you know, I'm going to have
5	a preliminary discussion about this with members of my
6	staff. We're not going to come to any decision, but
7	we're going to talk about it. And whichever of you pays
8	the most money will be able to sit in on this staff
9	meeting. What about that?
10	MR. FRANCISCO: Sure. Well, Your Honor, I
11	think I'd want to know, are there facts suggesting that
12	it really isn't just a payment to sit in on the staff
13	meeting? It's a payment to try to influence the
14	meeting?
15	JUSTICE ALITO: Just a payment to sit in.
16	MR. FRANCISCO: To sit on the I think it
17	would violate a whole lot of other laws, but I don't
18	think, unless there was any kind of indicia that you
19	were trying to influence the outcome, you would cross
20	that line into prohibited "official action" corruption.
21	After all, these laws are not meant to be
22	comprehensive codes of ethical conduct as this Court
23	said in Sun-Diamond. They're meant to target the worst
24	form of ethical misconduct, the corruption of official
25	decision-making.

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1	JUSTICE ALITO: What if it's not just
2	sitting in? Maybe I wasn't I should sharpen this.
3	Supposed the party is allowed to speak and present its
4	point of view.
5	MR. FRANCISCO: Your Honor, again, the more
6	facts that you put on to suggest that it is more of an
7	attempt to influence the decision, it's not just a
8	meeting. I think the more likely you are to get to that
9	"official act"
10	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So tell me, what do we
11	do with the evidence in the case that the university
12	individuals who were assessing whether or not to do
13	these studies themselves felt pressured? There is both
14	testimony and documents in which the pros and cons of
15	accepting these studies was discussed.
16	MR. FRANCISCO: Right.
17	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: And in the pro and con,
18	it was, the Governor really wants us to do this.
19	MR. FRANCISCO: I
20	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: The Governor is
21	pressuring us to do this. We just don't think it's a
22	good idea. They were honorable people, obviously. But
23	the point is, what do we do with the fact that they
24	perceived that he was trying to influence them?
25	MR. FRANCISCO: I have two responses, Your

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1 Honor, a legal one and a factual one. Legally, you 2 still need to instruct the jury that it had to find that 3 Governor McDonnell tried to actually influence a 4 government decision. And here it wasn't instructed, so 5 they could have completely agreed --6 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But why? Isn't this --7 I thought that this crime was taking money knowing that it was being paid to influence an "official act." So 8 9 aren't all of these examples of "official acts" whether 10 they are or they aren't irrelevant? The question is, 11 what was his intent at the moment he took the money? 12 And why couldn't --13 MR. FRANCISCO: Yeah. 14 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- a jury infer at that 15 moment that he took it with the intent to commit an 16 "official act" the way Mr. Williams wanted it committed? 17 MR. FRANCISCO: So again, Your Honor, two responses. Even assuming that the jury could have 18 19 inferred it, you still need to tell them what an "official act" is, that an "official act" is an attempt 20 to influence a governmental decision. 21 22 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Well --23 MR. FRANCISCO: Understand --24 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- to study these dietary supplements. 25

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MR. FRANCISCO: Well, to -- to actually, you know, conduct tobacco commission-funded State studies, but you still need to tell them what that is. But I'll get directly to your question. Why is it that the actual "official acts" are relevant? And that's because both the district court and the courts of appeals' opinions made clear.

8 Here in this case, the corrupt agreement 9 turned entirely upon, as the district court case said. 10 It hinged upon whether the five specific acts were, in fact, "official acts," because in the absence of any 11 12 direct evidence of a corrupt agreement, the government's 13 argument was that you could infer one from the pattern of actual "official acts" on the one hand and the 14 15 pattern of gifts and loans on the other and the temporal connection between the two. 16

JUSTICE KENNEDY: And so is it your position at page 60 of the supplemental Joint Appendix -- the instructions aren't numbered, which makes it a little hard, but the judge instructs the jury that "official actions" are set forth in the five paragraphs of the indictment. And is it your position that at least some of those are not "official acts"?

24 MR. FRANCISCO: Yes, Your Honor, and 25 certainly the five things that were proved in this case

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1	are not "official acts." And likewise, I don't think
2	any of those things, as they actually came into
3	evidence, demonstrated "official acts" because in none
4	of them did Governor McDonnell cross that line in trying
5	to influence the outcome of any particular decision.
6	And just as critically, the jury was never told it had
7	to find that. So the jury in this case, Justice
8	Sotomayor, could have completely agreed with our version
9	of the facts. It could have agreed that as we argued
10	very vigorously that the most that Governor McDonnell
11	did here was refer Johnnie
12	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: The matter
13	JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, this gets back
14	somewhat to Justice Alito's hypothetical about arranging
15	the meeting, and we and we can up the ante to see
16	how how close the meeting came to be an an
17	"official act." But I I take it that at some point
18	your position is that a governmental that an
19	"official act" must be the exercise of governmental
20	power. Is that your position?
21	MR. FRANCISCO: Well, Your Honor, it's
22	either making a decision on on an exercise of
23	governmental power, trying to influence it, as in the
24	Birdsall case, where the defendants there were trying to
25	persuade the grant of clemency.

1	But if you're simply setting up a meeting so
2	that somebody can appeal to the independent judgment of
3	an independent decisionmaker and you're not trying to
4	put your thumb on the scale of the outcome of that
5	meeting, then that simple referral can't possibly be
6	official action. After all, government officials refer
7	friends and benefactors to staff members all the time in
8	order to avoid taking official action.
9	JUSTICE GINSBURG: Do you do you concede
10	that there is sufficient evidence in this record
11	let's say we accept your argument about the charge being
12	insufficient. But this could go back, and a jury could
13	be asked: Did the Governor try to influence a decision
14	on the part of the medical faculties?
15	MR. FRANCISCO: Your Honor, we don't concede
16	there was sufficient evidence. But regardless, we we
17	also argue that the jury was improperly instructed on
18	this, which, Justice Sotomayor, goes to the point, I
19	think, you were making. If the jury was improperly
20	instructed, then you don't actually assume all of the
21	evidence in favor of the government. The question then
22	becomes: Could a would a properly-instructed juror
23	have been required to convict?
24	Here, even if the jury completely agreed
25	with us, and they very well may have, under these

1 erroneous instructions they still would have been 2 required to convict, because under these instructions, 3 simply referring somebody to a meeting without trying to influence the outcome of that meeting constitutes 4 5 official governmental action. 6 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, suppose arranging a meeting could be official government action, 7 8 if that were your job. In other words, you're not just 9 a secretary, but your job was to manage the Governor's schedule. You decided who met with him, you decided 10 when, and that -- that's your job. That's -- so 11 12 anything that individual does, I suppose, would be an 13 official act. 14 MR. FRANCISCO: I think that's possible, 15 Chief Justice. Of course, in this case we don't have anything like that. We simply have referrals to 16 17 meetings with other officials so that, at best, the 18 alleged bribe payor here, Jonnie Williams, can try to 19 persuade them to his cause. 20 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, can I follow up on that? Because what you just suggested, right, is that 21 22 you could -- suppose that there were a scheduler for a

24 scheduler was selling meetings. So you would think 25 that's part of her job? And if I just understood you

Governor or for the President or whatever, and that

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1 correctly, that falls within the statute?

2 MR. FRANCISCO: No, Your Honor. I think 3 that would be a very close case. That -- that would be 4 a very close case, because at the end of the day, if you're not actually making a governmental decision or 5 6 influencing the outcome of an actual governmental 7 decision, I think you -- and Chief Justice, you might actually be violating a lot of other laws, including the 8 9 separate provision in Section 201 that prohibits you from undertaking any act in violation of your official 10 duties in exchange for money, or 5 U.S.C. 7353, which 11 12 prohibits you from -- from taking anything from anyone 13 whose interests could be affected by the performance or 14 nonperformance of your duties.

15 But I think that the line has to be, and the only line that comes out through the cases is, you're 16 17 actually either making a decision on because of the government, or you're urging someone else to do so. 18 You're trying to pushing them in a certain direction. 19 20 JUSTICE BREYER: It seems to me when you say "urging" -- now, wait. See, I can go back to a lot of 21 different commission, the Brown Commission, the Senate 22 23 S1, the language of the statute, and I read "official 24 action," something quite similar to the statute here, "A decision, opinion, recommendation, judgment, vote, or 25

1 other conduct" -- perhaps other similar conduct --2 "involving an exercise of discretion." 3 So in this case, the official action we're 4 talking about is giving money to a group of people in 5 the university to conduct a study. 6 Now, the Governor didn't do that. But a person who tries to influence an official action and is 7 8 also in the government is also guilty. But wait. 9 That's the Indian case. 10 MR. FRANCISCO: Yes. You're correct. 11 JUSTICE BREYER: But wait. The word 12 "influence" is too broad, because every day of the week politicians write on behalf of constituents letters to 13 14 different parts of the government, saying, will you 15 please look at the case of Mrs. So-and-so who was 16 evicted last week? And that's so common, you can't pick 17 that up. 18 But then you use the word "urge." That's not exactly a legal word. And what I'm looking for is a 19 20 set of words that will describe in both sides' positions what we should write as the words that describe the 21 22 criminal activity involved in talking to or influencing

23 the person who does create the official act, like give a 24 pardon.

25 MR. FRANCISCO: Right.

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1	JUSTICE BREYER: Like award a contract, like
2	vote, like et cetera. Now, those are the words that
3	I can't find, and I'd appreciate your opinion.
4	MR. FRANCISCO: Sure, Your Honor. And I
5	think that the answer is that what district courts have
6	to do is understand the general rule, which I think at
7	some level has to be an attempt to influence, and then
8	flesh it out in a way that's appropriate to the facts of
9	the case.
10	JUSTICE BREYER: You want to use "attempt to
11	influence"? My goodness. Letters go by the dozens over
12	to the secretary of HUD, to the secretary
13	MR. FRANCISCO: Right.
14	JUSTICE BREYER: of of HHS, to the
15	secretary or the assistant secretaries, and they say, my
16	Constituent Smith has a matter before you that has been
17	pending for 18 months; we would appreciate it if you
18	would review that and take action. And then the elected
19	official says to Smith, I did my best on this. And
20	Smith thinks, good, he's used his influence.
21	MR. FRANCISCO: Right.
22	JUSTICE BREYER: A crime? My goodness.
23	MR. FRANCISCO: Absolutely not, Your Honor.
24	JUSTICE BREYER: All right. Fine.
25	MR. FRANCISCO: Absolutely not.

1	JUSTICE BREYER: You say "absolutely not."
2	That's what I thought that you would say.
3	MR. FRANCISCO: And I think that
4	JUSTICE BREYER: So I want to know but
5	the words you used were "attempt to influence." And so
6	though I don't think that's the right word, and I
7	want to know what the right words are
8	MR. FRANCISCO: Sure.
9	JUSTICE BREYER: in the instruction that
10	the judge is going to give. Not in your case
11	MR. FRANCISCO: Um-hmm.
12	JUSTICE BREYER: but in general.
13	MR. FRANCISCO: Well, can I give you an
14	example from another case that, although I do think
15	instructions are generally tailored to the case, an
16	example
17	JUSTICE BREYER: Of course they are. But
18	you have to have the standard that will distinguish the
19	urger
20	MR. FRANCISCO: Sure.
21	JUSTICE BREYER: from the one who does it
22	criminally and the one who doesn't.
23	MR. FRANCISCO: And in the Ring case, I
24	thought that Judge Huvelle had some very useful
25	instructions

1 JUSTICE BREYER: Mm-hmm. 2 MR. FRANCISCO: -- where she wrote -- and 3 this is at page 1083 of the Joint Appendix --"Therefore, 'official action' includes the exercise of 4 5 both formal official influence, such as the 6 legislature's vote on legislation, and informal official 7 influence, such as a legislature's behind-the-scenes influence on other public officials in the legislative 8 9 or executive branches." JUSTICE BREYER: Well, there we have it. 10 11 There we have it. All these letters going over, saying, please look at Mrs. Smith's eviction notice. 12 13 MR. FRANCISCO: And --14 JUSTICE BREYER: Mrs. Smith, who, by the 15 way, took me to lunch last week. 16 (Laughter.) 17 MR. FRANCISCO: And I completely agree, Your 18 Honor, which is why in our proposed instruction --19 JUSTICE BREYER: That won't do it. The one 20 you just read won't do it. 21 MR. FRANCISCO: Well -- well, and that's why 22 in our proposed instructions, I think it needs to be 23 tailored further to the facts of the case. So in our 24 case we went on to say -- say merely arranging a 25 meeting, attending an event, hosting a reception, or

1 making a speech are not standing-alone "official acts."
2 Either you use it --

JUSTICE BREYER: All right. So you use 3 4 The key to the word in there is "merely." that. 5 MR. FRANCISCO: Yes, Your Honor. 6 JUSTICE BREYER: Because sometimes it could. 7 MR. FRANCISCO: Yes, Your Honor. 8 JUSTICE BREYER: And somebody might have the 9 embarrassing question, merely when it can or merely when it can't. Give me a little enlightenment. 10 MR. FRANCISCO: Your Honor, I think that the 11 12 answer is, if -- if the evidence shows that there was --13 and I hate to go back to the word that I -- I know you 14 don't like here, but if the evidence shows that there 15 really wasn't attempt -- an attempt to try to push the 16 separate decisionmaker that you're supposedly trying to 17 influence one way or another, but you really are just sending it over for a meeting, and -- and that 18 independent decisionmaker is left to their independent 19 20 judgment, then you haven't crossed that line. But if --21 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. --22 JUSTICE GINSBURG: The word -- the word that 23 Justice Breyer is concerned about comes from Birdsall,

24 with intent to influence their "official action." So we
25 can hardly fault the district judge for using in Ring

1	the same words that this Court used in Birdsall.
2	MR. FRANCISCO: I I agree, Your Honor. I
3	thought that Judge Huvelle did a very good attempt at
4	defining, because she actually went further than what I
5	just read to you, Justice Breyer. She continues along
6	the lines that we proposed in our instructions that,
7	quote, "Mere favoritism as evidenced by a public
8	official's willingness to take a lobbyist's telephone
9	call or to meet with the lobbyist, is not an 'official
10	act.'"
11	So I think that the idea is, Your Honor I
12	understand, Justice Breyer, that influence itself
13	doesn't totally solve the problem. But what district
14	court judges do is they then explain to the jury what
15	they mean by influence, and influence is not
16	JUSTICE KENNEDY: Where can we find the best
17	definition, in your view, of an "official act"?
18	MR. FRANCISCO: Your Honor, I think that the
19	best definition of an "official act" is is
20	essentially the one that I tried to articulate at the
21	outset. You need you need to either make a decision
22	on behalf of the government, or try in some way to use
23	your influence to pressure or urge or persuade or cajole
24	someone else who has governmental power to make a
25	decision on an action.

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1 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, I --2 JUSTICE KAGAN: Can I --3 JUSTICE KENNEDY: I agree with Justice 4 Breyer. I just don't see the limiting principle in the 5 second part. 6 MR. FRANCISCO: Your Honor, I think in many -- in some cases, I think the limiting principle might 7 be difficult; it's not a perfect and precise 8 formulation. But I think in this case it's a 9 10 particularly easy principle, because here the jury 11 wasn't given any instruction on the line at all. 12 So Justice Breyer, in your hypothetical, 13 sending that letter over is an "official act" under the 14 instructions as given and under the theory pushed by the Solicitor General's office in this case because it is 15 the action --16 17 JUSTICE KENNEDY: I'm -- I'm not sure -- I'm not sure that's right. It seemed to me the "official 18 act" is exercise of governmental power to require 19 20 citizens to do or not to do something, or to shape the law that can -- that governs their conduct. 21 22 MR. FRANCISCO: I -- I completely agree with you, Justice Kennedy. 23 24 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Under your view, under the hypotheticals that have been thrown around, the janitor 25

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1 who gets the bottle of beer in order to clean your 2 classroom first, I mean, is that -- is that a 3 governmental act? MR. FRANCISCO: Certainly not in my view, 4 5 but the government --6 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, what's the 7 difference? MR. FRANCISCO: The difference is, one --8 9 one is you're exercising power on behalf of the 10 government as a whole. So the janitor, for example, if he's buying -- if he's using government money to buy 11 12 janitorial supplies and engaging in government 13 contracting, that's an exercise of governmental power. 14 If you're simply cleaning out a classroom, I don't think 15 you're exercising government power. So, too, when you simply send somebody to 16 another official for an independent and objective 17 decision by that official, but you don't try to put your 18 thumb on the scales of that decision, you haven't 19 20 crossed the line. And I think it's very important in a 21 22 criminal statute like this, because if you really do 23 think that a referral, just simply making a referral, is 24 "official action" that crosses the line into bribery, I think you do have some very serious vagueness concerns 25

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with the Hobbs Act and on a services question --JUSTICE KAGAN: Can I ask --CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Sure -- sure. It depends on who's making the referral or the call, right? In Justice Breyer's hypothetical, if it's a congressperson calling somebody and saying, could you look into this matter for my constituent, the person should look at it, I suppose, and then -- and that's one thing. If it's the President who calls and says, I want you to look at this matter for my constituent, that might exercise considerably more influence. MR. FRANCISCO: Two things, Your Honor. First, you still do need to tell the jury that that's what they have to find. And here, the jury was never told in any way, shape or form that they had to find an attempt to influence. So I think that is sufficient, in and of itself, to, at the very least, require a new trial here.

19 Under these instructions, as the government 20 itself seems to agree, any action within the range of 21 official duties constitutes official governmental 22 action.

23 So Justice Kennedy, in the letter being sent 24 over from a senator, since that is within the range of 25 official duties, that counts under the government's

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1 formulation, and under the jury instruction as given, 2 since it is, after all, a settled practice of officials 3 to send these kinds of letters. That's why it was 4 incumbent upon the district court to draw some kind of 5 limit. 6 And here, the jury could well have agreed 7 with us that even though he was the governor of the 8 State, Mr. Chief Justice, he did not try to influence 9 the actual decision. He simply made the same type of referral that he made day in and day out during this 10 11 administration where he simply sent a constituent to the 12 appropriate official --13 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Francisco --14 MR. FRANCISCO: -- to exercise appropriate 15 judgment. JUSTICE KAGAN: -- if -- you said something 16 17 before, and I might have misunderstood you. But do you

18 think that -- of the five listed "official acts," do you 19 think none of them meet the standards that you're 20 suggesting, or do you think some of them do and some of 21 them don't? 22 MR. FRANCISCO: Two answers. First of all, 23 we don't think that any of them meet the standard.

24 JUSTICE KAGAN: Okay. So let me --

25 MR. FRANCISCO: But secondly --

24

1 JUSTICE KAGAN: Go ahead, please. 2 MR. FRANCISCO: But secondly, the jury could 3 have agreed with us on that, given the evidence we put 4 further. And therefore, the erroneous instruction was 5 critical to this case, because even if they had agreed 6 with us, they would have been required to convict under 7 that erroneous instruction since -- take the healthcare 8 leaders reception. They could have concluded that that 9 was an "official act" and that was the only basis to convict, and they could have agreed with our evidence on 10 11 everything --12 JUSTICE KAGAN: Okay. That -- that might be 13 right. It might be that -- that you still have a -- a 14 winning argument even if some of the five are fine. 15 But -- but if we could just focus on them for a bit. I 16 mean, for example, the third one --JUSTICE KENNEDY: They're -- they're at page 17 60 of the --18 19 JUSTICE KAGAN: The 6091. 20 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Middle of the appendix. JUSTICE KAGAN: Contacting other officials 21 22 to influence Virginia State researchers to initiate 23 clinical studies. So that's the one that seems to me to 24 really fall within your own definition. Do you disagree 25 with that?

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1	MR. FRANCISCO: Your Honor, I don't. And if
2	they had actually proved what was said in the indictment
3	in the case, I think that this would be a we'd be
4	making a different argument here. But the problem is,
5	they didn't prove that Governor McDonnell tried to
6	encourage anybody. The one
7	JUSTICE KAGAN: So on something like that,
8	your argument is a sufficiency argument?
9	MR. FRANCISCO: Yes, Your Honor.
10	JUSTICE KAGAN: Rather than this was this
11	is not an "official act"?
12	MR. FRANCISCO: And and yes, Your
13	Honor. To be clear, we have two separate arguments
14	here. One is on the jury instructions where our
15	argument is that even if they agreed with all of our
16	view of the facts, they still would have been required
17	to convict, given these erroneous jury instructions.
18	And secondly, our second argument is the
19	sufficiency argument. Even a properly instructed jury,
20	in our view, could not have concluded that Governor
21	McDonnell crossed that line.
22	JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, just to be clear,
23	you you said at the outset you don't think any of
24	these are "official acts," but then I thought I heard
25	you say that, third, contacting other government

officials as part of an effort to encourage State 1 research is not an "official act"? 2 3 MR. FRANCISCO: That's the indictment, Your 4 Honor. If they had actually proved what was --5 JUSTICE KENNEDY: What was -- Justice Kagan 6 is asking, is that an "official act"? 7 MR. FRANCISCO: If it actually --JUSTICE KAGAN: If it's true, but --8 9 MR. FRANCISCO: If he had tried to encouraged them to do it, yes. If they had proved that 10 11 he had tried to encourage them to do that, that would 12 have been an "official act." 13 Our argument is that, first, the jury was 14 never properly instructed on that question; and second, he never did in fact urge university researchers to do 15 16 anything. And if I could just conclude, before 17 18 reserving the remainder of my time for rebuttal, at the one event where he actually had direct contact with the 19 20 university researchers, Justice Kagan, this was the luncheon held at the mansion. The -- all of the 21 22 witnesses who were there actually testified as to two 23 things with respect to the Governor. 24 First, he simply asked neutral questions that didn't try to push the researchers' decisions one 25

1 way or another. And secondly, the one time Jonnie 2 Williams asked him for something, support before Tobacco 3 Commission funding, he gave Jonnie Williams a very 4 polite no. 5 Mr. Chief Justice, if I could reserve my 6 time. 7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel. Mr. Dreeben. 8 9 ORAL ARGUMENT OF MICHAEL R. DREEBEN 10 ON BEHALF OF RESPONDENT 11 MR. DREEBEN: Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice, 12 and may it please the Court: 13 Petitioner seeks a categorical carve-out 14 from the concept of an "official act" for things like 15 meetings, phone calls, events, that, in his view, do not 16 further or advance or attempt to influence a particular government action, but simply provide somebody with 17 18 access to the government. 19 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, he's not --20 he's not the only one. One -- there's an extraordinary document in this case, and that's the amicus brief filed 21 22 by former White House counsel to President Obama, former 23 White House counsel to President George W. Bush, former 24 White House counsel to President Clinton, former White House counsel to George H.W. Bush, former White House 25

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1 counsel to President Reagan. And they say, quoting 2 their brief, that "if this decision is upheld, it will 3 cripple the ability of elected officials to fulfill 4 their role in our representative democracy." 5 Now, I think it's extraordinary that those 6 people agree on anything. 7 (Laughter.) 8 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But -- but to agree 9 on something as sensitive as this and to be willing to put their names on something that says this -- this 10 cannot be prosecuted conduct. I think is extraordinary. 11 12 MR. DREEBEN: It may be extraordinary, Mr. 13 Chief Justice, but that doesn't make it correct. I 14 think it rests on several fundamental misconceptions about what government actually does. And I think it's 15 16 important to pause and look at the implications of what Petitioner's pay-to-play theory of government really is; 17 18 that people can pay for access, that they can be charged to have a meeting or have a direction made to another 19 20 government official to take the meeting. 21 It would mean, in effect, that if somebody 22 came to me and said, you know, I know you're having a 23 lot of college tuition issues. We can help you with 24 that. The criminal division is not giving us a meeting on whether to appeal a case. Just call them and see if 25

1 you can get them to take the meeting. And I don't 2 know --3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: You're --4 JUSTICE KENNEDY: I don't know --5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: It's -- it's 6 somebody in the government whose client comes to them 7 and says, we'd really like the Solicitor General's Office to file a brief in our case. And then that 8 9 person calls you up and says, can you meet with so-and-so? All he wants to do is sit down with you and 10 11 persuade you why you should file a brief supporting his 12 case. 13 MR. DREEBEN: But getting in the door, Mr. Chief Justice, is one of the absolutely critical things. 14 15 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So is your answer, yes, that that's a felony? 16 17 MR. DREEBEN: If somebody pays me --18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: No, no. That's the quid -- that's the quid side of it. 19 20 MR. DREEBEN: Yes. 21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I'm talking about 22 the pro side in the quid pro quo. 23 MR. DREEBEN: Taking a meeting, yes, I think taking a meeting is absolutely government action. 24 25 JUSTICE KENNEDY: So if -- so if the

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1 President gives special access to high-dollar donors to 2 have meetings with government officials, that is a 3 felony? 4 MR. DREEBEN: Certainly not, Justice Kennedy. And I --5 6 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Why certainly not? 7 MR. DREEBEN: Because the critical issue 8 there is whether the government can prove a guid pro 9 quo. And now we're moving into the realm of campaign 10 contributions, where this Court has given very strict 11 quidance about when a jury --12 JUSTICE BREYER: It's not a campaign 13 contribution. What it is, is he takes him to lunch, and 14 an expensive lunch at that. Okay? Because the quid 15 side is not limited. The government has argued continuously that in for a penny, in for a pound. Okay? 16 So we don't have the limitation on the guid side. We 17 18 have a possible limitation in frame of mind. 19 And now we're looking to the quo side. And 20 you want to remove any limitation there. Okay? Now, why do I think that's a problem? 21 Two 22 very fundamental reasons. And it's not because I'm in 23 favor of dishonest behavior. I'm against it. And we 24 have just listed some that is dishonest. My problem is the criminal law as the weapon to cure it. And if the 25

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criminal law is the weapon that goes as far as you want, there are two serious problems. One, political figures will not know what they're supposed to do and what they're not supposed to do, and that's a general yagueness problem.

6 And the second is, I'd call it a separation 7 of powers problem. The Department of Justice in the Executive Branch becomes the ultimate arbiter of how 8 9 public officials are behaving in the United States, 10 State, local, and national. And as you describe it, for better or for worse, it puts at risk behavior that is 11 12 common, particularly when the quid is a lunch or a 13 baseball ticket, throughout this country.

Now, suddenly, to give that kind of power to a criminal prosecutor, who is virtually uncontrollable, is dangerous in the separation of powers since. So in my mind -- right in this case, nothing to do with this Petitioner, nothing to do with him, but in this case, is a -- as fundamental a real separation of -- of powers problem as I've seen.

And -- and I'm not quite certain what the words are. They won't be perfect. They will leave some dishonest conduct unprosecuted. They won't be perfect. They will put some politicians at risk. But I'm searching for those words because, as I said, this is a

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1 very basic separation of powers problem for me.

2 MR. DREEBEN: So --

3 JUSTICE BREYER: I appreciate your help on 4 what the right words are, and I'll tell you right now if 5 those words are going to say when a person has lunch and 6 then writes over to the antitrust division and says, I'd 7 like you to meet with my constituent who has just been evicted from her house, you know, if that's going to 8 9 criminalize that behavior, I'm not buying into that, I 10 don't think.

11 So -- so I want some words that will help 12 with what I see as as knotty and complicated and 13 difficult and basic a problem as I can think of. 14 MR. DREEBEN: Justice Breyer, let me first 15 argue the position that I came here to argue, which is that "official action" is not limited by some arbitrary 16 17 litmus test that was proposed by Petitioner that would exclude things that he calls "access." I don't think 18 that that's the right way to look at it. I think that 19 20 the right way to look at this statute is to recognize that it has multiple elements. We're talking about 21 22 multiple statutes. But the bribery offense has very 23 similar elements.

24 You first have to decide whether someone is25 engaging in an "official act." Merely going to lunch is

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not engaging in an "official act." There are 1 2 opportunities to engage --3 JUSTICE BREYER: No, no one said it is. The 4 lunch with the Chateau Lafite wine happens to be the 5 quid, and -- and that's worth, like, a thousand dollars, 6 or 500, anyway. I don't go to those restaurants 7 anymore. 8 (Laughter.) 9 MR. DREEBEN: Justice Breyer --JUSTICE BREYER: But -- but you understand 10 11 that --12 MR. DREEBEN: -- I -- I don't -- I don't 13 qo --JUSTICE BREYER: -- side. It's the other 14 15 side of the equation. 16 MR. DREEBEN: I understand, Justice Breyer. But what -- I would think it would be helpful for the 17 18 Court if I could lay out the multiple elements that are at issue here because "official act" does not have to do 19 20 all the work. You do have to have somebody engaged in their official capacity. You then have to have 21 22 something that they do within their range of official 23 duties, which going to lunch is not going to be. 24 Third, you need a quid pro quo, which means that the government is going to have to show that the 25

1 person allowed themselves to be influenced in their 2 conduct by the thing of value that they received, which 3 is to say that somebody is basically saying, I'm going 4 to make a referral over to another agency for you only 5 if you buy me lunch. That is not honorable behavior, 6 and there are --

7 JUSTICE BREYER: Of course it isn't. 8 MR. DREEBEN: -- many regulations that carve 9 out permissible gift situations and create the fourth 10 element issue that I think is an important protection, which is mens rea. 11

12 JUSTICE KENNEDY: But the problem is, and as 13 you set forth in your brief correctly, you can imply an 14 agreement over time. You can imply a contract over 15 time. And if the lunch takes place first and there's -there's no precondition on the lunch, but after the 16 lunch there is wink-wink, nod-nod, and the contact takes 17 place, it's clear in the standard criminal law that 18 19 there is a conspiracy there.

20 MR. DREEBEN: So I agree with you --21 JUSTICE KENNEDY: We're in agreement. 22 MR. DREEBEN: I do agree with you, Justice 23 Kennedy. I think that's exactly the position that Your 24 Honor's opinion in Evans, the separate concurrence, explained as a proper means of administering the quid

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1 pro quo requirement as an intent to issue in a criminal 2 case. There is a very critical protection here. It's a 3 requirement of showing something beyond a reasonable 4 doubt to a jury. And if you have ordinary conduct 5 that's fully disclosed and in accordance with 6 regulations which do strictly limit when people can 7 receive lunches --8 JUSTICE ALITO: I don't see what the 9 relevance of those regulations is. You say -- you say there were certain safe harbors created by Federal 10 11 regulations. Those apply to Federal employees and

12 Federal officers. What do they have to do with a

13 Governor of a State or a State employee?

14 MR. DREEBEN: Well, they don't, Justice 15 Alito. This case has been litigated on the submission that Section 201 informed the meeting of "official 16 17 action" for purposes of the Hobbs Act and the honest 18 services statute. And as a result, the parties have engaged very heavily on the effect on Federal officials. 19 20 And I think that Justice Breyer's question was primarily directed at them. 21

I do think that there are different issues that arise with respect to State officials, but the mens rea requirements that I've been talking about are going to be fully applicable --

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1 JUSTICE BREYER: Yeah, but how -- but you're 2 asking --3 JUSTICE KENNEDY: But then this -- this 4 doesn't answer Justice Breyer's basic question and ours. 5 You're going to tell the Senators, the officials with 6 the lunches, that, don't worry. The jury has to be 7 convinced beyond a reasonable doubt, and that's tough. 8 (Laughter.) 9 MR. DREEBEN: Well --10 JUSTICE KENNEDY: That was your answer. 11 That was your answer. 12 MR. DREEBEN: Justice Kennedy, I do think 13 that the requirements of the criminal law in proving 14 something by beyond a reasonable doubt are a substantial 15 _ _ 16 JUSTICE BREYER: What is it they're trying to prove? Now, of course, this is a State case, not a 17 Federal case. It's a State official -- it's a Federal 18 law but a State official. I don't know. I've only been 19 20 peripherally involved in political campaigns, but my peripheral convinces me that a candidate will go out and 21 22 he'll have lunch with hundreds of people, hundreds. 23 Everybody wants to give him lunch. Great. And -- and 24 he wants to meet as many people as possible. He wants to be friendly. He might receive a raincoat. He might 25

receive all kinds of things. And at some point, it
 becomes very dishonest.

3 MR. DREEBEN: So --

4 JUSTICE BREYER: But that's a matter for 5 campaign laws.

6 Wait. Now, I've also been involved in the 7 Justice Department. And we would receive many, many 8 letters in the antitrust division. Have you looked into 9 such and such? I know perfectly well that that Senator 10 just wants to go back to the constituent and say, see, I 11 did my best. That's all.

12 Now, you're saying to the jury, take those 13 facts I just gave you, and you look into the state of 14 mind -- the state of mind of which the amounts being 15 given will be somewhat indicative, of which the nature 16 of the letter will be somewhat indicative, of whether he 17 writes in personal writing at the bottom will be somewhat indicative, and we're going to let you 12 18 people work out what was really in that Senator's mind. 19 20 I say that is a recipe for giving the Department of 21 Justice and the prosecutors enormous power over elected 22 officials who are not necessarily behaving honestly. 23 And I am looking for the line. I am looking 24 for the line that will control the shift of power that I fear without allowing too much honesty through this law. 25

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1 You know, other laws exist on the other side. MR. DREEBEN: Well, Justice --2 3 JUSTICE BREYER: That -- that's what I want 4 your view on. 5 MR. DREEBEN: Justice Breyer, I'm going to 6 push back, because I think that the line that Petitioner 7 has urged is one that is a recipe for corruption, not a 8 recipe for drawing a safe harbor for public officials. 9 What he has basically urged the Court to 10 hold is that paying for access, if somebody does not put a thumb on the scale of decision -- if I, for example, 11 12 tell the criminal division, take the meeting, make 13 whatever recommendation is in your best judgment, just 14 take the meeting, I can take money for that. And I 15 think the message that would be sent, if this Court put 16 its imprimatur on a scheme of government in which public 17 officials were not committing bribery when all they did was arrange meetings with other governmental officials, 18 without putting, in his metaphorical way, a thumb on the 19 20 scales of the ultimate decision, would send a terrible 21 message to citizens. What --22 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, what I think we're 23 looking for is some limiting principle. Now, you -- you started to say something about campaign contributions --24

25 MR. DREEBEN: Correct.

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1 JUSTICE ALITO: -- and I know that this case 2 doesn't involve campaign contributions. But certainly a 3 campaign contribution can be the quid, can it not? 4 MR. DREEBEN: Certainly. 5 JUSTICE ALITO: All right. Well, gaining 6 access by making campaign contributions is an everyday 7 occurrence. And maybe it's a bad thing, but it's very widespread. How does it -- how does that play out? 8 9 MR. DREEBEN: So, Justice Alito, gaining 10 access and ingratiation and gratitude as a result of campaign contributions is not a crime. When it's done 11 12 as a quid pro quo, it is. And that is not the --13 JUSTICE BREYER: That's --14 MR. DREEBEN: That is not the --15 JUSTICE BREYER: That's what I want, your 16 view. 17 MR. DREEBEN: That is not my view, Justice 18 Breyer. 19 JUSTICE BREYER: But, I mean --20 JUSTICE ALITO: Mr. Dreeben, if I could just 21 follow up on that. 22 If a -- a Senator writes to a Federal agency 23 and says, this union or this company is, you know, 24 critical to the economy of my State, and, by the way -he doesn't say this, but, by the way, they are the 25

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biggest contributors to his campaign -- would you please meet with them? What would not make that a crime? The fact that the jury might not find beyond a reasonable doubt that the reason why he was urging this meeting was because these people, this entity, happened to be a very big supporter? That would be the only thing separating lawful from unlawful conduct there?

8 MR. DREEBEN: Well, let -- let me say two 9 things in response to that. First, this Court has 10 addressed that very issue in the McCormick case. And it 11 is established that merely taking favorable action at or 12 around the time of the receipt of campaign contributions 13 is not sufficient to show a quid pro quo and is not a 14 crime.

15 Nobody doubts that if there's a quid pro quo for a vote, something that I think Mr. Francisco is 16 prepared to concede is "official action," although I'm 17 18 not sure why since it doesn't personally exercise sovereign power if a legislator casts vote as a 19 20 dissenting vote from a majority action. But nobody disputes that that is a crime. Therefore, this Court 21 22 has already carved out evidentiary and instructional 23 safequards that prevent against a jury inferring a quid 24 pro quo merely from the coincidence of timing. 25 But I want to come back to something that is

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1 even more fundamental, and that is the role of the First 2 Amendment in this case. Because Petitioner has sought 3 to wrap himself in the mantle of the First Amendment, 4 probably because the gifts that he received have nothing to do with the First Amendment; they have to do with 5 6 personal loans and luxury goods. 7 This is not a case about campaign 8 contributions. But when campaign contributions are at 9 issue, he relies very heavily on Citizens United while ignoring a critical piece of Citizens United. 10 11 This Court, in Citizens United, looked back 12 to the circumstances that prompted the Federal Election 13 Campaign Act in 1972, and those involve circumstances 14 that were delineated in the Buckley decision in the 15 court of appeals. 16 And the Court specifically cited to those 17 practices. And what were those practices? They involved the American milk producers paying \$2 million 18 in campaign contributions, spread out among a variety of 19 20 committees, to get a meeting at the White House. That's all they did. They said, in order to gain a meeting 21 22 with White House officials on price supports, they paid 23 that money. 24 Other corporate executives testified that

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paying money was a calling card, something that would

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1 get us in the door and make our point of view heard. 2 And this Court said, on page 356 of the Citizens United 3 opinion, "The practices Buckley noted would be covered 4 by the bribery laws, CEG 18 U.S.C. 201, if a quid pro 5 quo arrangement were proved." 6 Now, of course, it's very difficult to prove a quid pro quo arrangement, and that's why there are 7 8 campaign finance limitations on contributions to 9 candidates. But the Court had no doubt that paying for access was a criminal violation. And so --10 11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So --12 MR. DREEBEN: And that's what --13 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: -- if you have a 14 governor whose priority is jobs for his State, and 15 there's a CEO who's thinking about locating a plant in 16 his State, but he can only do it, he says, if he gets tax credits from the State. 17 18 So the governor is talking to him, and he 19 says, look, why don't you come down to my, you know, 20 trout stream and we'll go fishing and we'll talk about 21 this. And the governor does that. He has a nice day 22 fishing for trout, and they talk about whether they can 23 get tax credits, deferred taxes if the CEO opens his 24 plant in the State. Now, is that a felony, because 25 he's --

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1 MR. DREEBEN: I --2 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: -- accepted an afternoon of trout fishing, and he discussed official 3 4 business at that time? 5 MR. DREEBEN: I don't think so, Mr. Chief 6 Justice, but if you change the hypothetical and said 7 instead of an afternoon of trout fitting -- fishing, 8 I'll fly you out to Hawaii and you and your family can 9 have a vacation, and during that time we can go over my policy --10 11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But I thought -- I didn't think the government put any weight on the amount 12 13 of the quid; in other words, you know -- okay. I don't 14 know how much an afternoon of trout fishing is worth, 15 but I -- I gather you get -- you can be charged for that 16 and -- and pay for it. 17 I thought that didn't matter. I thought it was whether he was engaged in an "official act" under 18 circumstances in which a jury could find he did it 19 20 because of the gift. 21 MR. DREEBEN: Yes. 22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: And -- and so if all 23 he's doing is talking about ways to get jobs for 24 Virginia, and he's talking with the person who's going to make that decision from the private sector, based in 25

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1 part on whether or not he gets, you know, tax credits, 2 it would seem to me that under your definition, that 3 governor is guilty of a felony.

MR. DREEBEN: I'm not sure that he is guilty 4 5 of a felony. But the reason why I changed the 6 hypothetical to involve a larger quid is because the 7 implications of carving something out from "official action" mean that it can be sold, and that it's lawful 8 9 to be sold. And when you change the trout fishing to a 10 trip to Hawaii, it becomes more nefarious, and the 11 message that it sends to citizens is --

12 JUSTICE BREYER: But that's the point. You 13 see, what -- exactly what the Chief Justice asked. 14 What's the lower limit, in the government's opinion, on 15 the quid? What? Tell me right now. What -- if you're 16 going to say \$10,000, okay, I feel quite differently 17 about this. If you will say an afternoon of trout fishing or et cetera, then I feel quite differently. 18 It's pretty hard to see the conduct being honest if you 19 exempt the campaign contributions and put it up 20 somewhere. But I didn't think that was the government's 21 22 position.

23 MR. DREEBEN: It's not the government's --24 JUSTICE BREYER: What is the government's 25 position -- what -- you tell me I'm wrong, in for a

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1 penny, in for a pound. You tell me right now it is not 2 the government's position that the trout fishing 3 afternoon is sufficient to be a -- a quid. If you say 4 that, I'll feel differently about the case. 5 (Laughter.) 6 MR. DREEBEN: It's tempting, Justice Breyer, but I'm not going to --7 8 JUSTICE BREYER: Exactly. 9 MR. DREEBEN: -- exempt from the corruption 10 laws --11 JUSTICE BREYER: Okay. 12 MR. DREEBEN: -- certain types of quids. 13 But --14 JUSTICE BREYER: But now --15 MR. DREEBEN: -- Justice Breyer, you do need 16 to run this through all the elements of the offense. I think what Petitioner is -- is saying, and I think some 17 of the Court's hypotheticals are suggesting the only 18 thing that really you could possibly do to remedy this 19 20 issue is to shrink the definition of "official action" with no textual basis in 201, nor really, I think, any 21 22 common sense basis in the way that government actually 23 operates --24 JUSTICE BREYER: You tell me -- that's why I asked you at the beginning. And you -- in order to 25

1	be you say you're going to push back, and then you
2	complained about their definition. If I thought their
3	definition was so perfect, I wouldn't have asked you.
4	And and it's it's exactly you do you tell me
5	how to do this. And I'm not you say it sends a
6	terrible message. I'm not in the business of sending
7	messages in a case like this. I'm in the business of
8	trying to figure out the structure of the government.
9	And that's part of Separation of Powers, and I expressed
10	my concern.
11	MR. DREEBEN: So I think
12	JUSTICE BREYER: I dissented in in
13	Citizens United, so whatever that said there, but
14	(Laughter.)
15	JUSTICE BREYER: The the but the point
16	is the one I raised at the beginning that every single
17	one of us has raised. We're worried about because
18	like any other organization, the prosecutors too can be
19	overly zealous. That can happen. And so we need some
20	protection on both sides, even though the line won't be
21	perfect. And it will fail to catch some crooks. And it
22	will I mean, I understand that. And and I want to
23	know your view. And it doesn't even it helps a
24	little, but not a lot, to say, well, meetings.
25	MR. DREEBEN: So

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1 JUSTICE BREYER: That's too specific. I 2 want to know what your view is as to the language we 3 write in discussing the line. MR. DREEBEN: Well, I don't think you and I 4 5 agree on where the line should be, Justice Breyer. So 6 I -- I can't write language that is going to satisfy you. You weren't even satisfied with Petitioner's 7 8 language, which requires that there be influence on some 9 other governmental decision. You suggested you thought 10 that was too broad. 11 JUSTICE BREYER: No, no, no. Well, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. 12 13 MR. DREEBEN: You did suggest it. 14 JUSTICE BREYER: I did --15 (Laughter.) 16 MR. DREEBEN: I think that it's too narrow. 17 I think that if the Court is going to reject the government's submission, which is that when the governor 18 calls his Secretary of Health and says, take the meeting 19 20 with my benefactor, he doesn't disclose it's his 21 benefactor. Take the meeting so that that person can 22 have the preferential opportunity that other citizens 23 who do not pay will have to make his case before you. I think that is "official action." 24 25 Petitioner says it's not "official action"

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unless he further sends the message, which I think on the facts of this case was sent, he's trying to

3 influence the ultimate outcome.

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4 If the Court is going to reject the 5 government's position in this case, then I think that a 6 fallback position for the government is when you have an 7 indisputed "official action," such as will the universities of Virginia study a particular product, or 8 9 will the Tobacco Commission fund it, then when a public official takes action to direct that decision, to 10 influence that decision, or to advance his benefactor's 11 12 interests with respect to that decision, that 13 constitutes the crime of bribery. 14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: There -- there is --15 MR. DREEBEN: Now --16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Given the difficulty 17 that we're having in settling on what these words in the statute mean, there is a -- an argument in the 18 Petitioner's brief that you have responded to in yours 19 20 that the statute is unconstitutionally vague.

21 MR. DREEBEN: I -- I do not think it is 22 unconstitutionally vague. First of all, we're talking 23 here about multiple statutes. We're talking about Hobbs 24 Act extortion, which this Court previously construed in 25 both McCormick and Evans to be perfectly valid upon the

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1 proof of a quid pro quo when the official asserts that 2 his action will be controlled by a -- a thing of value 3 that he has received.

And now we're talking about the question of what constitutes "official action" for the purposes of a common law crime that goes back centuries and was incorporated into the Hobbs Act.

8 We're also talking about the honest-services 9 statute, which this Court in Skilling just six years ago 10 determined could be construed --

CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, yeah. "Could 11 12 be construed." I mean, there were, what, three votes to 13 find it unconstitutional? And the others say, well, no, 14 because you can narrow it in this way to the core 15 definition of bribery. And now maybe the -- the 16 experience we've had here, and the difficulty of coming 17 up with clear enough instructions suggests that the 18 caution the Court showed at that point was ill-advised. 19 MR. DREEBEN: Well, I think it would be 20 absolutely stunning if this Court said that bribery and corruption laws, which have been on the books since the 21 22 beginning of this nation, and have been consistently 23 enacted by Congress to combat both Federal, State, and 24 local corruption --

25 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Would it be --

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1 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: And --2 JUSTICE KENNEDY: -- absolutely stunning to 3 say that the government has given us no workable 4 standard?

5 MR. DREEBEN: Well, we have given you a 6 workable standard. It's the standard that comes from 7 this Court's 1914 decision in Birdsall, where the Court 8 said that things that government officials do under a 9 bribery statute much like this are covered as official 10 action, and they're not limited to things that --

JUSTICE KENNEDY: Perhaps what you're talking about is how evil the conspiracy is. It's not evil to -- to fish or to have a bottle of wine, but it is evil if you up the ante. Is that -- is that what you're saying?

16 MR. DREEBEN: I think what I'm trying to 17 say, Justice Kennedy, is that it's going to be extremely difficult for anyone to really believe that you could 18 buy a Governor's position on a multimillion-dollar tax 19 20 support for an afternoon of trout fishing. And that's why those cases don't get brought. No one thinks about 21 22 them. It's not really even clear there is a quid pro 23 quo for --

24 JUSTICE KAGAN: Can I ask you a narrower 25 question, Mr. Dreeben?

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1	So one of the "official acts" here I'll
2	just read it to you. It's allowing Jonnie Williams to
3	invite individuals important to Star Scientific's
4	business to exclusive events at the Governor's Mansion.
5	MR. DREEBEN: Yes.
6	JUSTICE KAGAN: So that's essentially
7	hosting a party and allowing Mr. Williams to invite some
8	people. And why does that why is that an "official
9	act," in your view?
10	MR. DREEBEN: So, Justice Kagan, it wasn't
11	hosting an official party. We're talking about here two
12	events. One was a product launch hosted at the
13	Governor's Mansion where the Governor is basically
14	giving his credibility to a brand-new product. And the
15	invitations were critical to Jonnie Williams' plan to
16	sign up the universities to do the studies. He got to
17	pick
18	JUSTICE KAGAN: So here's, I guess I
19	mean, I guess, my question is this: The the
20	"official act," the statute, the definition, I mean,
21	requires that there be some particular matter, cause,
22	suit, proceeding, or controversy, correct?
23	MR. DREEBEN: Yes.
24	JUSTICE KAGAN: And if I understand the
25	theory of this case, the matter, suit, cause,

1 proceeding, or controversy here is the attempt to get 2 the University of Virginia to do clinical studies of 3 this product; is that correct?

4 MR. DREEBEN: It's narrower than our whole 5 scope of the charge, but it's essentially correct.

6 JUSTICE KAGAN: That's the gravamen of the 7 thing?

8 MR. DREEBEN: Correct.

9 JUSTICE KAGAN: So if you had just -- if --10 if the indictment, and then the instructions that were based on the indictment, had said the "official act" is 11 12 getting the University of Virginia to do clinical 13 studies, right, that reads very differently from the way 14 this indictment was structured. Because what this 15 indictment does is it takes a lot of different pieces of 16 evidence that might relate to that "official act" and 17 charges them as "official acts" themselves, so that the party becomes an "official act" or calling somebody just 18 to talk about the product becomes an "official act." Do 19 20 you see what I mean?

I mean, you know, this might have been perfectly chargeable and instructable, but I guess I'm -- I'm troubled by these particular charges and instructions, which seems to make every piece of evidence that you had an "official act," rather than

1 just saying the "official act" was the -- was the 2 attempt to get the University of Virginia to do 3 something that they wouldn't have done otherwise. 4 MR. DREEBEN: So, Justice Kagan, what the 5 crime was here was the Governor accepting things of 6 value in return for being influenced and taking 7 "official actions" to legitimize, promote, and secure research studies for Anatabloc and Star's products. 8 9 That's at Supplemental JA 14. It then alleges that he would do this as 10 opportunities arose in the course of his official 11 12 actions. And because he's the Governor and he has a 13 tremendous amount of influence throughout the 14 government, he appoints all the board of visitors of VCU 15 and UVA. He sets the budget. They know that he's an important guy. He has lots of opportunities to do this 16 in different ways over time. 17 18 And if you look at the pattern of what he 19 did, directing people to meet with Star's 20 representatives, arranging events at the mansion in which Star could bring together its chosen guest list, 21 22 the doctors who it wanted to influence with the Star 23 people who were trying to influence it, the Governor is 24 taking every step he can do short of saying to UVA, do the studies, which his chief counsel told him would be 25

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1 inappropriate and wasn't going to do.

2	So I I think that if you look at the
3	indictment the way that it's actually structured, it
4	talks about a person who, as opportunities arose, was
5	going to engage in "official acts." This is a theory of
6	corruption that Justice Sotomayor's opinion in Ganim in
7	the Second Circuit validated, and it was cited in
8	Skilling as a perfectly valid theory of corruption.
9	And, therefore, the individual "official
10	acts" really form a composite window into Petitioner's
11	mind. Did he intend to allow his official conduct to be
12	controlled by the things of value that he received? And
13	taking them all together, even if the Court has trouble
14	with any individual one, they allowed a rational jury to
15	inference that, indeed, he did.
16	And the only way that Petitioner could win,
17	if you agree with me on the sufficiency issue, is if you
18	conclude that jury instructions must exempt certain
19	types of official actions, like directing your Secretary
20	of Health to take a meeting, which is a very kind of
21	significant event in the life of a cabinet member and a
22	governor, or hosting an event at the mansion, can't
23	possibly count, because it somehow should be viewed as
24	social, when, in fact, what the Governor is doing is

25 allowing his benefactor to get all the people in the

1	room who he wants to influence to do the studies.
2	So in my view, there was nothing wrong if
3	I can complete the sentence in the way that the
4	indictment structured the crime in this case. The
5	"official acts" were exemplary. They were proved, and
6	the jury could properly find them.
7	Thank you.
8	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
9	Mr. Francisco, five minutes remaining.
10	REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF NOEL J. FRANCISCO
11	ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER
12	MR. FRANCISCO: Thank you, Mr. Chief
13	Justice.
14	I have three basic points I would like to
15	make.
16	First, I'd like to start out with the
17	government's argument that a lot of the problems with
18	its theory are solved by the quid pro quo requirement.
19	Well, in fact, the gratuity statute, the Federal
20	gratuity statute, has the exact same "official act"
21	requirement, but no quid pro quo requirement at all.
22	So what that means is that if you take
23	somebody to a fancy lunch with a I can't remember the
24	name of the bottle of wine you mentioned, Justice
25	Breyer, but if you took them to that fancy lunch to

thank them for referring you to a meeting with a mid-level staffer, even if there was no suggestion at all that you were going to do anything other than call that staffer and say, hey, can you take a meeting with this guy, hear him out, and exercise your independent judgment, that would be a violation of the Federal gratuity statute.

8 And, indeed, under the government's broad 9 theory that anything within the range of official duties 10 counts, that means that if you took the person out to 11 that lunch as thanks for giving you a tour of the 12 Capitol Building, you would likewise have violated the 13 Federal gratuity statute, because there, there is no 14 quid pro quo requirement at all.

15 Point two, Justice Breyer --

JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: There is a difference between someone saying, thank you for a decision you made independent of the gift -- that's the Sun Growers case -- and someone buying you an expensive lunch and saying, I'm paying for this lunch, but make sure I get a tour. You don't see the difference?

22 MR. FRANCISCO: Not under the Federal 23 gratuity statute, Your Honor, because the Federal 24 gratuity statute is meant to prohibit thanking somebody 25 for giving you an "official act." And so if an

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1 "official act" is, in fact, a tour of the Capitol 2 Building or a meeting with a staffer, then you have, in 3 fact, violated the Federal gratuity statute when you 4 take them to lunch as a thanks for that particular act. 5 Second point, Justice Breyer, in trying to 6 figure out the right verbal formulation, the first point 7 I'd like to make is, if we can't figure out a proper verbal formulation, then I think there are some ver 8 9 serious vagueness problems with the statute --10 JUSTICE BREYER: It's Birdsall. 11 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: You --12 JUSTICE BREYER: It's Birdsall. Look, I 13 can -- I've read the Brown Commission Report. I've read 14 the Model Penal Code. I've read all these efforts to 15 get language. And I've looked at the present statute. And I think I can limit that because the statute, 16 17 itself, seems to cover things like voting and contracts, et cetera. But it's also true that a person who tries 18 to influence those things has committed bribery. I 19 20 think that's correct. 21 MR. FRANCISCO: And --22 JUSTICE BREYER: Now, my problem is with 23 Birdsall and how do we write those words so that they do 24 catch people who are doing this dishonest thing without, as I've said five times, allowing the government the 25

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1 freedom to go and do these ridiculous cases.

2 MR. FRANCISCO: And -- and I think the D.C. 3 Circuit's en banc decision --

4 JUSTICE BREYER: Not saying this is a 5 ridiculous one, by the way.

6 MR. FRANCISCO: Understood, Your Honor. I 7 think that the right answer, you start out with the D.C. 8 Circuit's decision in Valdes. You look at that listing 9 of words --

10 JUSTICE BREYER: Uh-huh.

11 MR. FRANCISCO: -- question, matter, suit, 12 cause proceeding. And those are actual decisions that 13 the government makes, the government as a whole, as a 14 sovereign. And then you say, are you making a decision 15 on that, if you're the final decisionmaker, or if you're not the final decisionmaker, but because of your 16 17 official power, you have the -- the ability and the authority to influence other decision-makers, then 18 19 you're -- are you doing that? Here are two 20 fundamental --

JUSTICE GINSBURG: What do you say to Mr. Dreeben's argument that if we read this statute as you are urging, then every government official can say, you want to have a meeting? Pay me a thousand dollars. The corruption that's inherent in the position that says

1	it's okay to facilitate a meeting, it's okay to say,
2	I'll do it for you if you pay me a thousand dollars.
3	That's your view, that that would be okay?
4	MR. FRANCISCO: Your Honor, and, frankly,
5	this was leading to my third point, which is, if there
6	is absolutely no way that if there's no indicia that
7	you're actually trying to influence the outcome, and it
8	really is just a meeting, yes. But that reflects the
9	fact that these broad and vague statutes are not
10	comprehensive codes of ethical conduct. There are lots
11	of other statutes that would prohibit precisely what you
12	are suggesting, Justice O'Connor, and you don't have to
13	interpret
14	JUSTICE GINSBURG: That hasn't happened in
15	quite some time.
16	(Laughter.)
17	MR. FRANCISCO: Justice Ginsburg. I am
18	very, very, very sorry.
19	(Laughter.)
20	MR. FRANCISCO: Justice Ginsburg, my
21	apologies.
22	There are lots of other statutes that would
23	prohibit that precise conduct, and you don't need to
24	take statutes like the Hobbs Act and honest-services
25	statute.

1	JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, what would
2	Mr. Francisco, just take Mr. Dreeben's own example,
3	which is the example of somebody he's running a
4	business, and he's taking \$5,000 at a pop every time he
5	arranges a meeting with the criminal division for
6	somebody.
7	MR. FRANCISCO: Sure. There is a statute
8	that prohibits supplementing your public salary with
9	private money. So if you're essentially taking outside
10	money for the performance of your official duties,
11	that's illegal. That was discussed in the Sun-Diamond
12	case.
13	There is another statute that that
14	prohibits you from doing any taking anything from
15	anybody whose interests could be substantially affected
16	by the performance or nonperformance of your duties. So
17	that's another one. It would prohibit that would
18	prohibit it.

19There is another provision of this bribery20statute that prohibits you from taking any action, not21just "official action" but any action in violation of22your official duties. So I think that might --23JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Why aren't they any less24vague?

25 MR. FRANCISCO: Excuse me?

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1 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Why aren't they any less 2 vague? And what you're saying is that holding a 3 meeting, taking a phone call, having a party is not illegal, that that is something that you're entitled to 4 So why would all those statutes be any less --5 do. 6 MR. FRANCISCO: They may well be in certain 7 circumstances, but I think that the ones that are simply saying -- for example, the civil service statutes that 8 9 simply say, you can't take anything from anybody who is a covered person. That's not vague. It just says that 10 you can't take anything from anybody who is in your job. 11 12 Most Federal government officials are very 13 familiar with that. That's why you really just don't 14 take gifts from anyone. The problem here is that we had 15 a State regime that was much less stringent than the Federal regime, and the government wanted to use the 16 17 open-ended Hobbs Act and honest-services statute to fill 18 that gap in what they perceived is the State law. 19 I would respectfully submit that that is an inappropriate use of Federal power. 20 21 Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice. 22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel. 23 Mr. Dreeben, could I invite you to return to 24 the lectern? Our records reflect that this was your one-hundredth oral argument before the Court. You are 25

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1 the second person to reach that rare milestone this 2 century. I distinctly recall your first argument in 3 4 January of 1989. Throughout your career, you have 5 consistently advocated positions on behalf of the 6 United States in an exemplary manner. 7 On behalf of the Court, I extend to you our 8 appreciation for the many years of advocacy and 9 dedicated service during your tenure in the Solicitor General's Office and as an officer of this Court. 10 11 We look forward to hearing from you many 12 more times. Thank you. 13 The case is submitted. 14 MR. DREEBEN: Thank you. 15 (Whereupon, at 11:04 a.m., the case in the above-entitled matter was submitted.) 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 2.4 25

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