

No. _____

IN THE
SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

VICTOR GAVALO,

Petitioner,

-v.-

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Respondent.

ON PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO
THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE SECOND CIRCUIT

PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI

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QUESTION PRESENTED

Whether 18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(1) is unconstitutional because, consistent with the Second Amendment, the federal government may not permanently disarm citizens simply for incurring a felony conviction.

PARTIES TO THE PROCEEDING

The only parties in the courts below were the United States of America and Victor Gavallo.

LIST OF RELEVANT PROCEEDINGS

The proceedings that are directly relevant to the case in this Court are:

1. *United States v. Gavallo*, No. 25-783, 2026 WL 1800683 (2d Cir. June 23, 2026); and
2. *United States v. Gavallo*, No. 24 CR 0080 (MKB) (E.D.N.Y.) (judgment entered April 2, 2025).

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OPINIONS AND ORDERS BELOW

The Second Circuit's decision (Pet. App. 1a–3a) is not published in the Federal Reporter but is available at 2026 WL 1800683. The district court's judgment (Pet. App. 13a–19a) is unreported. The district court's order denying petitioner's motion to dismiss the indictment (Pet. App. 4a–12a) is not reported.

JURISDICTION

The Second Circuit issued its decision and entered judgment on June 23, 2026. This Court has jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1254(1). The Second Circuit had jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1291. The district court had jurisdiction under 18 U.S.C. § 3231.

RELEVANT CONSTITUTIONAL AND STATUTORY PROVISIONS

A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

U.S. Const. amend. II.

It shall be unlawful for any person—(1) who has been convicted in any court of, a crime punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding one year ... to ship or transport in interstate or foreign commerce, or possess in or affecting commerce, any firearm or ammunition; or to receive any firearm or ammunition which has been shipped or transported in interstate or foreign commerce.

18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(1).

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

A. Introduction

This case presents an important constitutional question concerning a statute subject to an entrenched circuit split: whether, consistent with the Second Amendment, the federal government may permanently disarm a United States citizen based exclusively on a prior felony conviction, no matter its nature or age.

This split developed in the wake of the Court’s decision in *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association, Inc. v. Bruen*, 597 U.S. 1 (2022). Following *Bruen*, and this Court’s subsequent decision in *United States v. Rahimi*, 602 U.S. 680 (2024), the Third Circuit holds that 18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(1)—which criminalizes firearm possession by anyone with any sort of prior felony conviction—cannot be constitutionally applied to an individual with only an old, nonviolent prior conviction. *See Range v. Att’y Gen. United States*, 124 F.4th 218, 222 (3d Cir. 2024) (en banc). In so holding, the Third Circuit considered the constitutionality of § 922(g)(1) as applied to an individual with a particular sort of prior conviction.

But other circuits hold the opposite. The Second Circuit holds that § 922(g)(1) is constitutional as applied to all individuals with any sort of prior felony conviction. *See Zherka v. Bondi*, 140 F.4th 68, 95 (2d Cir. 2025), *cert. denied*, 2026 WL 135708 (2026). The circuit refused to permit any “case-by-

case, ‘as applied’ exceptions” to § 922(g)(1)’s prohibitions. *Id.* at 95–96. The panel here invoked *Zherka* to reject petitioner’s appeal. Pet. App. 2a.

The Second Circuit’s position aligns with that of the Fourth, Eighth, Ninth, Tenth, and Eleventh Circuits. See *United States v. Hunt*, 123 F.4th 697, 703–04 (4th Cir. 2024), *cert. denied*, 145 S. Ct. 2756 (2005); *United States v. Jackson*, 110 F.4th 1120, 1125 (8th Cir. 2024), *cert. denied*, 145 S. Ct. 2708 (2005); *United States v. Duarte*, 137 F.4th 743, 748 (9th Cir. 2025), *cert. denied*, 2026 WL 135692 (2026); *Vincent v. Bondi*, 127 F.4th 1263, 1266 (10th Cir. 2025), *cert. denied*, 2026 WL 568283 (2026); *United States v. Dubois*, 139 F.4th 887, 893 (11th Cir. 2025).

Meanwhile, the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Circuits take a different tack. Per the Sixth Circuit, “most applications of § 922(g)(1) are constitutional,” but the statute is susceptible to as-applied challenges by people whose “entire criminal record” shows that they are not “dangerous.” *United States v. Williams*, 113 F.4th 637, 657–58 (6th Cir. 2024). The Fifth and Seventh Circuits similarly hold open the possibility of as-applied constitutional challenges. See *United States v. Seiwert*, 152 F.4th 854, 860–73 (7th Cir. 2025); *United States v. Betancourt*, 139 F.4th 480, 484 (5th Cir. 2025), *cert. denied*, 2026 WL 135617 (2026); *United States v. Diaz*, 116 F.4th 458, 471 (5th Cir. 2024), *cert. denied*, 145 S. Ct. 2822 (2025).

Thus, the circuits are hopelessly divided on § 922(g)(1)'s constitutionality following *Bruen*. The Court should resolve this split, and it should do so promptly: § 922(g)(1) is a commonly charged federal offense and the continued uncertainty as to that law's constitutionality is untenable.

Petitioner has fully preserved his challenge to § 922(g)(1)'s constitutionality and presents a good vehicle to decide this question.

B. Petitioner's Conviction and Appeal

On or about January 27, 2024, petitioner knowingly possessed a gun. Because petitioner had prior felony convictions, he was charged in the Eastern District of New York with one count of violating § 922(g)(1) for possessing the firearm. Under this statute, petitioner is guilty regardless of the nature or age of his convictions.

Petitioner moved to dismiss the indictment, contending that § 922(g)(1) is unconstitutional. ECF No. 23, 24 CR 80. He argued that those convicted of felonies are part of “the people” protected by the Second Amendment and that there was no founding-era tradition of disarmament resembling the categorical and lifelong ban imposed by § 922(g)(1).

On September 9, 2024, the district court issued a written order denying the motion to dismiss, citing Second Circuit precedent upholding the constitutionality of § 922(g)(1). Pet. App. 4a-12a.

Petitioner then pleaded guilty, without a plea agreement, to violating § 922(g)(1). He was sentenced to 96 months' imprisonment, plus two years' supervised release. Pet. App. 13a-19a. He is incarcerated pursuant to the judgment.

Petitioner appealed his conviction to the Second Circuit, again arguing *inter alia* that § 922(g)(1) is unconstitutional on its face and as applied to him. While his appeal was pending, the Second Circuit issued a precedential opinion in *Zherka*, 140 F.4th 68, holding that § 922(g)(1) is constitutional, facially and as applied even to people with long-ago convictions for nonviolent felonies. *Id.* at 93. Based on *Zherka*, the Second Circuit rejected petitioner's claims and affirmed his § 922(g)(1) conviction. Pet. App. 1a–3a.

REASONS FOR GRANTING THE PETITION

The Court should grant this petition for three reasons. First, the petition presents an important and recurring question concerning the constitutionality of a federal criminal statute, over which the circuits are hopelessly divided.

Second, this case is a good vehicle to address the question because the issue is cleanly presented and fully preserved.

Third and finally, the Second Circuit's holding is wrong: § 922(g)(1) is unconstitutional under the Second Amendment.

I. The circuits are hopelessly divided over the important and recurring question of § 922(g)(1)’s constitutionality.

The circuits are intractably divided over the constitutionality of § 922(g)(1). The circuits are also divided as to whether individuals may bring as-applied constitutional challenges to § 922(g)(1).

Sitting en banc, the Third Circuit applied this Court’s decisions in *Bruen* and *Rahimi* to hold that § 922(g)(1) cannot constitutionally bar gun possession by certain individuals with nonviolent criminal records. *See Range v. Att’y Gen. United States*, 124 F.4th 218 (3d Cir. 2024) (en banc). According to the Third Circuit, “*Bruen* abrogated our Second Amendment jurisprudence,” such that courts “no longer conduct means-end scrutiny”; individuals convicted of felonies “remain[] among ‘the people’” protected by the Second Amendment; and “the Government has not shown that the principles underlying the Nation’s historical tradition of firearms regulation support depriving” certain nonviolent felons of the “Second Amendment right to possess a firearm.” *Id.* at 222, 232. In *Range*, the Third Circuit specifically held that an individual with a prior conviction for felony food stamp fraud could not be constitutionally prevented from obtaining a firearm. *See id.* at 223.

Like the Third Circuit, the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Circuits have recognized the possibility of as-applied challenges to § 922(g)(1) for

individuals with nonviolent prior felony convictions. In *Diaz*, the Fifth Circuit held that *Bruen* and *Rahimi* abrogated the circuit’s prior precedent deeming § 922(g)(1) constitutional. 116 F.4th at 465. *Diaz* rejected the defendant’s challenge to § 922(g)(1) but did not foreclose “future as-applied challenges by defendants with different predicate convictions,” emphasizing that “[s]imply classifying a crime as a felony does not meet the level of historical rigor required by *Bruen* and its progeny.” *Id.* at 469–70 & n.4.

The Sixth Circuit similarly holds that “*Bruen* requires a history-and-tradition analysis” different from that previously employed by courts and that, under this analysis, there may be as-applied Second Amendment challenges to § 922(g)(1). *Williams*, 113 F.4th at 657–58. The circuit opined that “most applications of § 922(g)(1)” will be constitutional, but that “individuals could demonstrate that their particular possession of a weapon posed no danger to peace.” *Id.* at 657. Indeed, without the opportunity for such as-applied challenges, the Sixth Circuit ruled that § 922(g)(1) “would abridge non-dangerous felons’ Second Amendment rights.” *Id.* at 661.

The Seventh Circuit has also likewise recognized (or at least assumed) that defendants may mount as-applied constitutional challenges to § 922(g). *See Seiwert*, 152 F.4th at 860–73.

The Second, Fourth, Eighth, Ninth, Tenth, and Eleventh Circuits have all reached the opposite conclusion. According to these circuits, § 922(g)(1) is

constitutional in all its applications. *See Zherka*, 140 F.4th at 95; *Hunt*, 123 F.4th at 703–04; *Jackson*, 110 F.4th at 1125; *Duarte*, 137 F.4th at 748; *Vincent*, 127 F.4th at 1266; *Dubois*, 139 F.4th at 893. These circuits do not allow any as-applied challenges based on the nature of an individual’s prior felony, or any other circumstance.

* * *

In sum, following *Bruen* and *Rahimi*, at least ten circuits have addressed § 922(g)(1)’s constitutionality in precedential or en banc decisions, and the circuits remain divided. Four circuits allow as-applied challenges based on the defendant’s specific record and characteristics, while six circuits categorically reject such challenges. This split has proven intractable and should be resolved by this Court.

II. This case presents a good vehicle to address the issue.

This case provides a clean opportunity to resolve this circuit conflict. Petitioner preserved his constitutional challenge to § 922(g)(1) before the district court and the Second Circuit. And although his case was decided by summary order, the Second Circuit explicitly relied on its recent (post-*Rahimi* and *Bruen*) precedential decision in *Zherka*. Pet. App. 2a.

III. The Second Circuit’s decision is wrong.

Finally, the Court should grant this petition because the Second Circuit is wrong. For the reasons persuasively explained by the en banc Third Circuit

in *Range*, § 922(g)(1) violates petitioner’s Second Amendment rights: petitioner is among “the people” protected by the Second Amendment, and the government cannot establish the necessary historical tradition of permanently disarming citizens simply for incurring a felony, no matter its age or character.

To start, American citizens with prior felony convictions, like petitioner, are among “the people” protected by the Constitution—including the Second Amendment. The phrase “the people” appears several times in the Constitution, including in the First, Fourth, Ninth, and Tenth Amendments. It “unambiguously refers to all members of the political community, not an unspecified subset.” *District of Columbia v. Heller*, 554 U.S. 570, 579 (2008). The phrase thus includes those previously convicted of a crime. *See, e.g., Range*, 124 F.4th at 226.

Therefore, for § 922(g)(1)’s restrictions on these citizens’ Second Amendment rights to be lawful, the government must provide evidence of analogous regulations from the Founding Era to show that § 922(g)(1) comports with our nation’s history and tradition of firearms regulation. *See Bruen*, 597 U.S. at 29. Here, however, the government cannot show a relevant Founding Era analogue as to either the “why” or the “how” of § 922(g)(1).

As to the “why,” there is no evidence of any significant Founding-era firearms restrictions on citizens for sustaining a felony conviction. *See* Joseph G.S. Greenlee, *The Historical Justification for Prohibiting Dangerous Persons from Possessing Arms*, 20 Wyo. L. Rev. 249, 283 (2020). While the historical record suggests that dangerousness sometimes supported disarmament, conviction status alone did not connote dangerousness to the Founding generation. *See id.* At the Founding, “[p]eople considered dangerous lost their arms. But being a criminal had little to do with it.” *United States v. Jackson*, 85 F.4th 468, 472 (8th Cir. 2023) (Stras, J., dissenting from the denial of rehearing en banc) (surveying historical disarmament laws).

As to the “how,” the government cannot marshal Founding-era evidence of class-wide, lifetime bans on firearms possession merely because of conviction status. Bans based on felony convictions were an invention of the twentieth century. *See* C. Kevin Marshall, *Why Can’t Martha Stewart Have a Gun?*, 32 Harv. J.L. & Pub. Pol’y 695, 708 (2009). As then-Judge Barrett explained: “The best historical support for a legislative power to permanently dispossess all felons would be founding-era laws explicitly imposing—or explicitly authorizing the legislature to impose—such a ban. But at least thus far, scholars have not been able to identify any such laws.” *Kanter v. Barr*, 919 F.3d 437, 454 (7th Cir. 2019) (Barrett, J., dissenting).

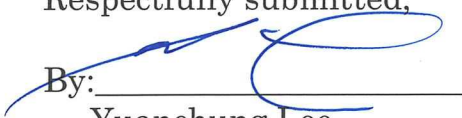
Founding-era surety and forfeiture laws are not sufficiently analogous to § 922(g)(1) to survive Second Amendment scrutiny. Unlike § 922(g)(1), Founding era surety laws at most temporarily deprived an owner of his arms if he was found to pose a unique danger to others. *See Bruen*, 597 U.S. at 55–59. By contrast, § 922(g)(1) imposes a permanent ban on a class-wide basis, regardless of any dangerousness finding.

“Founding-era laws that forfeited felons’ weapons or estates are not sufficient analogues either. Such laws often prescribed the forfeiture of the specific weapon used to commit a firearms-related offense without affecting the perpetrator’s right to keep and bear arms generally.” *Range*, 124 F.4th at 231. Thus, the government cannot identify a sufficient historical analogue to render § 922(g)(1) constitutional as applied to individuals like petitioner.

CONCLUSION

The Court should grant this petition for a writ of certiorari.

Respectfully submitted,

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