1 IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES 2 - - - - - - - - - - - - x : 3 SALMAN KHADE ABUELHAWA, 4 Petitioner : 5 : No. 08-192 v. 6 UNITED STATES. : 7 - - - - - - - - - - - - x 8 Washington, D.C. 9 Wednesday, March 4, 2009 10 11 The above-entitled matter came on for oral 12 argument before the Supreme Court of the United States 13 at 10:07 a.m. 14 APPEARANCES: SRI SRINIVASAN, ESQ., Washington, D.C.; on behalf of 15 16 the Petitioner. 17 ERIC D. MILLER, ESO., Assistant to the Solicitor 18 General, Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.; on 19 behalf of the Respondent. 20 21 22 23 24 25

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1 PROCEEDINGS 2 (10:07 a.m.) CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear argument 3 4 first today in Case 08-192, Abuelhawa v. United States. 5 Mr. Srinivasan. 6 ORAL ARGUMENT OF SRI SRINIVASAN 7 ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER 8 MR. SRINIVASAN: Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice, and may it please the Court: 9 10 A person who purchases a small quantity of 11 drugs for his own personal use commits a misdemeanor, not a felony. The language of section 843(b) does not 12 13 transform that person into a felon if he uses a phone in 14 obtaining his drugs, rather than doing so strictly face 15 to face. 16 I would like to begin with the text of the 17 statute before turning to the textual history and the 18 statutory context. The language of section 843(b) 19 covers the use of the phone in committing, in facilitating, or in causing a drug felony. That 20 21 language presupposes someone who is causing, 22 facilitating, or committing a drug felony, and with 23 respect to such a person, it makes them guilty of an 24 additional offense in the nature of an aggravated 25 offense if they use a phone in their committing,

1 facilitating, or causing a drug felony. 2 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Can you be specific about 3 who those persons would be? You say not a misdemeanant 4 drug user. So who would be caught in the 843(b)? 5 MR. SRINIVASAN: It would depend on which prong you're referring to, Justice Ginsburg. The -- the б 7 committing prong refers to persons who are committing 8 the underlying drug felony. 9 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Yes. 10 MR. SRINIVASAN: And the facilitating prong 11 would refer to persons who are aiding or abetting the 12 underlying drug felony. 13 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, suppose you had the girlfriend phone and say: My boyfriend needs drugs; 14 15 meet him at the corner of 3rd and Main. What crime does 16 the girlfriend commit? It seems to me that it's pretty 17 clear that she's under 843(b) facilitating. 18 MR. SRINIVASAN: She -- she may --19 JUSTICE KENNEDY: It seems to me that she 20 may then have committed a felony, and yet it seems to me 21 that her culpability is certainly no -- no greater, if 22 you're talking about your -- the polity of your statute, 23 than the man who uses the drugs. MR. SRINIVASAN: Well, I think I'm speaking 24 25 first and foremost about the terms of the statute,

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Justice Kennedy. And to the extent she fits within the terms of the statute, it would be because she doesn't benefit from the buyer-seller rule. The buyer-seller rule establishes that buyers of drugs aren't aiders or abettors of the distribution of drugs, and equivalently they wouldn't be treated as facilitators of the distribution of drugs. Now --

8 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Maybe Justice Ginsburg 9 would like some further illustration, but I thought that 10 that was one illustration in answer to her question. 11 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Yes, I would like to --12 who does this target? The girlfriend is a good law 13 school exam type question, but in the real world who is 14 covered?

MR. SRINIVASAN: Well, I think the classic 15 16 case of somebody under the facilitating prong would be 17 the classic aider and abettor, for example a lookout. 18 If there were a lookout on the scene of a drug 19 transaction, and they used the communication facility to communicate with the distributor to let them know that 20 21 buyers were arriving or that law enforcement was in the 22 neighborhood and the person ought to refrain from 23 engaging in the transaction for the time being. That would be the sort of person that comes within 18 U.S.C. 24 25 2 as an aider or abettor of drug distribution and would

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1 come within 843(b) as a facilitator of drug

2 distribution.

3 JUSTICE ALITO: The buyer -- seller rule 4 would prohibit the prosecution of a buyer on the theory 5 that the buyer aided and abetted, aided and abetted the seller. But I don't see why it applies here. This is 6 7 not a situation like that. This is a different crime, using a communications facility in facilitating the 8 commission of a felony. 9 10 MR. SRINIVASAN: Well, it deals with the use 11 of a communication facility only with respect to persons that are committing, facilitating or causing a drug 12 13 felony.

14 JUSTICE SCALIA: What is the purpose -- what 15 is the purpose of saying who uses a communications 16 facility? Is that purely a jurisdictional hook? 17 MR. SRINIVASAN: No, I don't think it's a 18 jurisdictional hook. There would already be Federal 19 jurisdiction by virtue of the underlying felony, and so 20 what Congress was concerned with in penalizing the use 21 of a phone as in the nature of an aggravated offense is 22 that I think Congress thought that phones were being 23 used to make detection of drug trafficking more 24 difficult, and in particular at the level of someone who 25 was at top of the food chain in the architecture of a

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drug distribution chain, that person was able to avoid detection because they never came into physical contact with drugs and they didn't come into physical contact with the persons who were engaging in the transaction on the street.

6 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: You keep talking 7 about phones and you began by saying this covers phones, 8 but this was -- language was added in 1970?

9 MR. SRINIVASAN: Right.

10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, there weren't 11 cell phones of the kind you have now. I think this was 12 directed at the beepers, right, when those were around 13 then, or land-based phones or something like that. And 14 the technology has so expanded that the reach of the 15 statute has so expanded in a way that brings in a lot 16 more casual users than was the case before, and I just 17 don't know how that issue of statutory interpretation is 18 supposed to be resolved. Assuming I'm right that the 19 technology has dramatically expanded the reach of the 20 statute, even if you think it's covered by its terms, 21 how is that issue addressed? What's the right answer 22 there? Is it because the terms still cover it, the 23 breadth has expanded, or because this is something new 24 technologically that the statute shouldn't be construed 25 that broadly?

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1	MR. SRINIVASAN: No, I don't our argument
2	doesn't depend on assuming that cell phone usage was
3	significant in the 1970s. Even in 1970 the statute
4	would exclude from its sweep buyers of drugs.
5	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, I know, but
6	let's assume I don't agree let's assume I agree with
7	that only in the context of the 1970s technology.
8	MR. SRINIVASAN: Uh-huh.
9	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: What's the answer
10	then?
11	MR. SRINIVASAN: Well, if you agree with it
12	
13	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: It reminds me of
14	these old hypotheticals. You know, before you had
15	automobiles, you had to have someone with a lantern walk
16	in front of your carriage, and they don't change the law
17	and it still turns out to be the law when you're driving
18	your car and it doesn't make any sense.
19	Is there a case of ours that says what to do
20	in that case, in such a situation of statutory
21	construction?
22	MR. SRINIVASAN: I'm not aware of a case
23	that speaks directly to that question, Mr. Chief
24	Justice. But our argument doesn't depend on that logic,
25	because even in 1970 certainly land lines were well in

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1 use, and in fact the indications are that that's what 2 Congress was principally concerned with in this statute. 3 And at that time we would make the argument, just as 4 now, a person who used the telephone in buying drugs for 5 personal use wouldn't come within the ambit of the provision because the text of the provision goes to б 7 someone who uses a phone in committing, in facilitating, 8 or in causing the commission of a drug felony. And so if you're not someone who's facilitating the commission 9 10 of a drug felony in the first place, then you can't be 11 charged as using a phone in facilitating a drug felony. 12 The reason that a buyer for personal use, whether we're 13 talking about 1970 or now, wouldn't be considered a 14 person who is using a phone in facilitating a drug 15 felony is because of the buyer-seller rule. Buyers 16 aren't aiders and abetters of the felony distribution, 17 and by the same token they shouldn't be considered 18 facilitators of felony distribution.

JUSTICE SCALIA: Your argument sort of assumes -- more than sort of assumes; it assumes -- that facilitating is the same as aiding and abetting. If they meant aiding and abetting, it's a classic criminal law term, they could have said aiding and abetting. They didn't. They used a different term, facilitating. Why should I think facilitating means aiding and

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1 abetting?

2 MR. SRINIVASAN: For several reasons, Your 3 Honor. First, their definitional equivalence. Black's 4 Law Dictionary defines "facilitating" as "an act of 5 aiding or helping or making easier," and it in turn 6 defines "aiding and abetting" as "to facilitate the 7 commission of the crime." So they mean the very same 8 thing. 9 And I don't think there's anything

10 talismanic about the particular formulation "aiding and 11 abetting" and in fact the Court established that in its opinion in Gebardi. That dealt with the Mann Act, which 12 13 barred transporting a woman for purposes of engaging in 14 immoral acts or aiding or assisting in that 15 transportation or causing the transportation. So that statute uses a different formulation --16 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, but I mean 18 it's natural to view the woman in that situation more as 19 a victim than as someone facilitating the crime. 20 MR. SRINIVASAN: Well --21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I'm not sure that 22 would extend to your case. MR. SRINIVASAN: Well, I don't know -- the 23

23 MR. SRINIVASAN: Well, I don't know -- the 24 opinion doesn't stand on the rationale that the woman 25 would be a victim. It stands on the rationale that

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Congress when it defined the primary offense, which is
 transporting --

JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, but that was the
same word. That was "transporting" in both instances.
Here you have "purchase," one, "facilitating" with a
telephone, two. That's different.

7 MR. SRINIVASAN: Well, it doesn't use the 8 word "purchase," with respect, Justice Kennedy. It uses the words "commit, facilitate or cause." Those are the 9 10 three persons who come within section 843(b). And in 11 precisely parallel fashion, under 18 U.S.C. 2, a general aider or abettor provision, that provision applies to 12 13 persons who commit the underlying offense, who aid or 14 abet the underlying offense or who cause the underlying 15 offense. And that precisely parallel structure 16 reinforces that facilitating in 843(b) serves the same 17 purpose and means the same thing as aiding or abetting 18 and the other words that apply in section --

JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, I'll think about it, but I think Gebardi does involve one statute, one act, transportation. This involves two. The underlying felony is the purchase or possession, and the second statute is use of the telephone. So I don't -- I'll think about it, but I don't think Gebardi works. MR. SRINIVASAN: I don't think that's a

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1 distinction that ultimately makes a difference, Justice 2 Kennedy, for the following reason. This statute does deal both with someone who is involved in the underlying 3 4 felony and use of the phone on top of that, but it's in 5 the nature of an aggravated offense. It presupposes somebody who is committing, causing or facilitating the б 7 underlying drug offense, and then it makes them guilty of an aggravated offense if they use a phone in the 8 course of doing so. So the first question you'd have to 9 10 ask is whether the person is committing, facilitating or 11 causing the drug felony in the first place.

12 And if I could use one hypothetical statute 13 to illustrate that. If this statute, instead of saying 14 facilitating, dealt by terms with use of a phone in 15 aiding or abetting a drug felony, you would still have 16 use of the phone in addition to the underlying drug 17 felony. But the first question I think one would ask in 18 looking at that provision is whether the person who's 19 accused of violating the law were aiding or abetting a 20 drug felony.

JUSTICE SCALIA: What -- this statute does not just apply to facilitating a drug offense. It applies to any of the felonies covered by subchapter 2 of the relevant chapter. I agree, it seems a little strange to have what is a misdemeanor by a buyer

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1 converted into a -- into a felony just by use of the 2 phone. What other situations under other felony 3 provisions would arise that create a similar oddity? Do 4 you have any in mind?

5 MR. SRINIVASAN: I don't know that there are other provisions that would create a similar oddity. б Ι 7 think this one is particularly anomalous, the use of a 8 statute to penalize somebody who otherwise would be a 9 misdemeanant, except that they use a phone in the course 10 of the purchase for personal use.

11 The classic situations in which the statute 12 does apply which aren't anomalous because they make 13 sense given what Congress had in mind, would be the use 14 of a phone to facilitate drug distribution, if someone 15 were a lookout again or if someone were a trafficker and 16 they instructed, for example, retail sellers where to go 17 to pick up stock, a stock house of drugs.

18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: This really isn't 19 the transformation of a misdemeanor into a felony. It's 20 a separate, separate activity and an activity that 21 facilitates the commission of a crime. It's much easier 22 to carry out your drug distribution business if people 23 are calling you on their cell phones than if they have 24 to meet you in person or call from a land line. 25

MR. SRINIVASAN: Well, two steps to respond

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1	to that question, Mr. Chief Justice. First, in terms of
2	whether it makes it easier, I think one could say the
3	very same thing in an aiding or abetting prosecution.
4	Aiding or abetting means the same thing as facilitating,
5	and so you could make the argument, I think, that buying
6	drugs and engaging in the sorts of actions that
7	naturally accompany the purchasing enterprise make the
8	sale easier, including directing where the sale is going
9	to occur and things like that. But we know already that
10	buyers of drugs aren't considered aiders and abettors of
11	drugs for purposes of liability under 18 U.S.C. 2. And
12	I think by the same token they shouldn't be considered
13	facilitators of drugs for purposes of section 843(b),
14	and with respect I'm sorry?
15	JUSTICE ALITO: What if the the defendant
16	what if the defendant who is a buyer of of a

17 quantity for personal use does more than simply purchase 18 the drugs? What if information is communicated in the 19 telephone conversation that makes it easier for the transaction to take place or less likely -- less likely 20 21 that there is -- that the person is going to be 22 apprehended? Would that person fall within the statute? 23 MR. SRINIVASAN: I don't think so, Justice 24 Alito. I probably would have to know more about exactly 25 what they did, but if it is a -- if what they did is a

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normal incident of purchasing, then I think it would
 fall within the buyer-seller rule.

3 Otherwise, I think the government under an 4 18 U.S.C. 2 prosecution for aider and abettor liability 5 could make precisely the same sorts of arguments. The government could argue, for example, that this person б 7 didn't just buy drugs. They instigated the purchase 8 because they made the first phone call. They didn't accept the first phone call. They made the first phone 9 10 call, and so that takes them outside the buyer-seller 11 rule.

But I don't that argument would work under 13 18 U.S.C. 2 because making the first phone call is a 14 normal incident of purchasing. And, of course, someone 15 who purchases drugs for personal use is going to want to 16 take measures to make sure that the purchase goes 17 through. Their ultimate objective is to get their hands 18 on the drugs. And so --

JUSTICE GINSBURG: This statute doesn't -it doesn't differentiate between buyer and seller in terms of who makes the call. I gather the purchaser for his or her own use would be just as susceptible to this statute if the dealer called and said: I've got a gram of cocaine; I know you're interested in having it. MR. SRINIVASAN: That's -- that's right,

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Justice Ginsburg. It would apply equally in that
 situation, and from our perspective that points up even
 more of the anomaly in applying it to this factual
 context. And that would equally be the case under 18
 U.S.C. 2.

6 One could draw distinctions between who 7 makes the initial phone call and other sorts of normal 8 incidents of the purchasing enterprise. But I don't think, Justice Alito, that because someone engages in a 9 10 drug -- in -- in a transaction in a way that makes it 11 particularly likely that the purchase is going to be 12 successful, that that alone would take you outside the 13 buyer-seller rule.

14 JUSTICE ALITO: What would happen in the 15 situation where the person who buys the drug is guilty 16 of -- of a felony? It's an instance of felony 17 possession. Wouldn't the application of your 18 understanding of the buyer-seller rule in that situation 19 lead to the conclusion that even that person could not be convicted under this statute for facilitating the 20 21 commission of the felony of sale? 22 MR. SRINIVASAN: No, I don't think so, 23 because the buyer-seller rule deals with the circumstance in which the way the person is -- is 24 25 associated with a felony is they're associated with the

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1 distributor's felony. And so what the buyer-seller rule 2 says is that a buyer isn't an aider and abettor of the 3 seller's distribution, and I think by the same token 4 shouldn't be associated with the seller's facilitation. 5 But in your hypothetical, where the buyer himself is committing a felony because his possession б 7 because of certain characteristics associated with it 8 make it a felony, the buyer himself would be committing 9 a felony. 10 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, that may -- that may 11 be true, but the buyer there still could not under your theory be convicted of facilitating the seller's felony 12 13 of selling the drugs. 14 MR. SRINIVASAN: Right, couldn't be 15 convicted of facilitating the seller's felony, but would 16 fall within the ambit of section 843(b) in any event 17 because they would have used the phone in connection 18 with their own felony. 19 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Your gloss on this statute makes -- gives rise to some difficult questions 20 21 of proof. What if it's -- I don't know -- ten pounds of 22 something, and the guy says, well, I was just buying in 23 bulk for personal use, like a Costco dealer. 24 (Laughter.) 25 MR. SRINIVASAN: I -- I don't know about

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that, but -- but I think what I do know is it doesn't create any greater problems of application than already exist under Federal drug laws. Because the Federal drug laws bar both possession for personal use under the civil possession statute, section 844, and possession with intent to distribute under 841.

7 And so courts and juries and the government 8 already have to make those sorts of decisions, and I don't know that they've been particularly difficult to 9 10 make. They have to draw a distinction between the sorts 11 of quantities and other aspects of the offense that bring it within the possession with intent to distribute 12 13 plan or whether the possession is of such a small 14 quantity, and there aren't other associated 15 characteristics of the offense that make it possession 16 for purposes of personal use.

17 That distinction is one that's already 18 embedded in the fabric of the drug laws, and we're just 19 applying the same distinction for purposes of this 20 statute. I don't think we're making it any more 21 complicated than it already is.

JUSTICE KENNEDY: If the government were to prevail here, I assume that it would then as a result have a much larger, more expansive discretion in charging and plea bargaining and -- and et cetera.

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1	Other than the rule of lenity, is there anything in our
2	cases that indicates that we should be cautious about
3	giving the government that authority so that that's an
4	aid in our interpretation or is that just all within the
5	rule of lenity?
б	MR. SRINIVASAN: Well, it's it's
7	definitely within the rule of lenity, and I think that's
8	the principal place that it's found.
9	JUSTICE KENNEDY: Other than
10	MR. SRINIVASAN: And I don't I don't I
11	don't know of any background principle that one would
12	bring to bear on that other than the the normal tools
13	of statutory construction that I've already talked about
14	in the first place, which is you look at the text, and
15	you look at the statutory history, and you look at the
16	statutory context.
17	JUSTICE KENNEDY: No background principles
18	either way on granting the prosecutors vast discretion
19	in charging
20	MR. SRINIVASAN: Well, I think as
21	JUSTICE KENNEDY: as it applies to
22	statutory interpretation?
23	MR. SRINIVASAN: Well, I think as a general
24	rule we ought to be circumspect about doing that. My
25	my understanding is that circumspection is given voice

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1 through the rule of lenity. But a background principle 2 of particular applicability here is the statutory 3 history, is the statutory history. And I'm speaking now 4 in terms of the enacted statutory text; not legislative 5 history, but the history of the enacted statutory text. 6 And what that bears on is not the word 7 "facilitating," which is what the buyer-seller rule particularly pertains to, but the word "felony," which 8 is another word in the text of the statute. And so 9 10 Congress could have barred the use of a phone in 11 connection with any drug offense, including a drug 12 misdemeanor, but Congress pointedly didn't do so. It 13 barred the use of a phone in connection only with a drug 14 felony. And because it chose to limit the offense to 15 the use of a phone in connection with a drug felony, the 16 effect is to exclude from the purview of the statute use 17 of a phone in connection with a drug misdemeanor. Now, 18 Petitioners --19 JUSTICE GINSBURG: That was changed in 1970, 20 wasn't it? Wasn't the text "offense" originally, and 21 then Congress changed it to "felony"? 22 MR. SRINIVASAN: That's right, Justice 23 Ginsburg. Before the Controlled Substances Act, the communication facility provision barred the use of a 24

25 phone in connection with any drug offense. And in 1970

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in the Controlled Substances Act Congress narrowed its
 reach to encompass only use of a phone in connection
 with a drug felony.

So it excluded use of a phone in connection with a drug misdemeanor, and that's significant in two respects. One is, even without reference to the statutory context of the 1970 Controlled Substances Act, it's significant because Congress excluded use of a phone in connection with a drug misdemeanor.

Petitioner used a phone in connection with his misdemeanor simple possession. But under the government's argument, the very same conduct by the very same person would be brought back into the fold of the statute. Even though Congress excluded it, it would be brought back into the fold of the statute by recasting it as facilitating the dealer's felony.

And the mode of analysis the Court used in Gebardi and the mode of analysis that underlies the buyer-seller rule to begin with would -- would lead us not to infer that Congress would have intended that result.

But in terms of the history and the statutory context which you were alluding to, Justice Ginsburg, it is significant for that reason, as well, because the context in which Congress narrowed the reach

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of section 843(b) so that it only encompasses
facilitation of a felony and not facilitation of a
misdemeanor is one in which Congress in the 1970 act
sought to extend leniency and afford a chance at
rehabilitation to drug users.

6 And that's manifested not in legislative 7 history but in the statutory text itself, because 8 Congress penalized simple possession for personal use as a misdemeanor, whereas, the receipt of drugs previously 9 10 was a felony, regardless of the purpose of the 11 possession, whether it was for use or for distribution. 12 But Congress did more than that, because in 13 immediately adjacent provisions to the one in which it 14 narrowed simple possession to a misdemeanor, it also 15 enacted a provision which is now found in 18 U.S.C. 16 3607, which allowed a simple possessor who is a 17 first-time offender to avoid any conviction at all if 18 they successfully complete a period of probation. And Congress went further still because it 19 20 also enacted in another adjacent provision further 21 relief for first-time simple possessors under the age of 22 21. With respect to that person, it allowed the person 23 to obtain a complete expungement of the criminal records

24 associated with the arrest.

25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So you would have

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1 lost this case before 1970 because the incongruity on 2 which you rely --3 MR. SRINIVASAN: Well, the basis --4 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: -- didn't exist 5 then? MR. SRINIVASAN: Yes. Before 1970 it would 6 7 have been a very difficult climb because -- not only 8 because the communication facility applied to any drug offense, but because simple possession wasn't a 9 10 misdemeanor. 11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Right. So the scope 12 of this language was changed sub silentio? 13 MR. SRINIVASAN: It -- it wasn't sub 14 silentio. It was explicit. 15 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I know, but this 16 language, "facilitating," covered purchasers using a 17 telephone in the period before 1970, but not after 1970, 18 because of the changes in some other sections? 19 MR. SRINIVASAN: No, well, it's in part 20 because of the changes in this section. This section 21 changed from "any offense" to "felony," so it's the text of this section itself. And the buyer-seller rule 22 23 equally applied in -- before 1970. It's just that 24 before 1970 you wouldn't have had to show that the buyer 25 was associated with the seller's felony, because the

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buyer was associated with his own offense and that was enough, because at that point the buyer's offense was a felony. And then the law, section 843(b), didn't care whether it was a felony because it applied to any drug offense.

6 It's only after 1970 that this distinction 7 becomes important, because after 1970 it's clear that 8 the buyer for personal use doesn't use a phone in 9 committing a drug felony. What he's committing is a 10 drug misdemeanor. So you have to find some way, if 11 you're the government, to make him associated with the 12 drug felony. And to say that --

13 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: That question goes14 to whether or not the distribution was a felony.

15 MR. SRINIVASAN: Right, which is the only 16 avenue available after 1970. There was a different 17 avenue available before 1970, because before 1970 a 18 purchaser of drugs would, if they used a phone in 19 connection with their purchase, would have used a phone 20 in connection with a drug offense, and now the statute 21 is different in two respects. One, it only covers use 22 of a phone in connection with a drug felony; and two, in 23 another provision, Congress narrowed the simple 24 possession offense from a mis -- from a felony to a 25 misdemeanor.

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1	And Congress did so with respect to the
2	historical context in immediately adjacent provision.
3	It narrowed 843(b) in an immediately adjacent provision
4	to the one in which it provided that the simple
5	possessor could avoid any conviction at all and the one
6	in which it provided that a youthful offender could
7	obtain a complete expungement of its records. And
8	JUSTICE GINSBURG: You didn't I haven't
9	heard you question so far the government's rationale,
10	the reason Congress did this is it's more difficult to
11	detect a drug deal when it's by telephone than if it
12	were an encounter on the street or in an apartment. You
13	have not questioned that?
14	MR. SRINIVASAN: No, we don't question that,
15	Your Honor, but I would like to make two points with
16	respect to that. First of all, it may be more
17	difficult the use of the telephone may be more
18	difficult, and that may be the animating purpose that
19	Congress sought to address through this provision. But
20	that purpose is substantially served even in the context
21	of this case, because
22	JUSTICE SCALIA: I don't understand what
23	you're saying. The use of a phone may be more
24	difficult?
25	MR. SRINIVASAN: Use of a phone may make

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1	detection more difficult, and that may be the animating
2	purpose excuse me. That may have been the animating
3	purpose behind the enactment of this provision. But
4	that purpose is substantially served, even if you accept
5	our understanding of the statute on the facts of this
6	case, because the seller comes squarely within the terms
7	of section 843(b). So because the seller comes within
8	the terms of section 843(b), the statute is already
9	operating against the seller's use of a telephone.
10	The question in our case is whether the
11	buyer also comes within the ambit of section 843(b).
12	And because section 843(b) presupposes someone who is
13	committing, facilitating or committing a drug felony,
14	the buyer doesn't come within the reach of section
15	843(b) because he's not committing, causing or
16	facilitating a drug felony in the first place. The
17	seller may be, but the buyer is not. The statutory
18	purposes are still served by virtue of penalizing the
19	seller.
20	If the Court has no further questions, I
21	would like to reserve the balance of my time for
22	rebuttal.
23	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
24	Mr. Miller.
25	ORAL ARGUMENT OF ERIC D. MILLER

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1 ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENT 2 MR. MILLER: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it 3 please the Court: 4 Section 843(b) prohibits the use of a 5 communication facility in causing or facilitating the commission of any act constituting a felony under the б 7 Controlled Substances Act. The court of appeals 8 correctly held that the statute is violated when a person uses a communication facility such as a telephone 9 10 to purchase controlled substances unlawfully. A call to 11 order drugs both causes and facilitates a felony 12 distribution of drugs. 13 There's no basis in the statute for creating 14 an exemption for people who facilitate or cause felony 15 distributions by purchasing drugs for their own personal 16 use. 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So two people across 18 the park, they know there's a drug dealer on the other 19 side, the one waves and the dealer comes over, the other calls on the cell phone and the dealer comes over; the 20 21 other gets four more years? The phone user gets four 22 more years? 23 MR. MILLER: The phone -- the phone user is 24 exposed to four more years. There's no mandatory 25 minimum --

1	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Suppose he calls
2	three times. He's exposed to 12 more years, right?
3	MR. MILLER: That's right. Congress I
4	mean, those two cases are different and Congress made
5	the judgment.
6	JUSTICE SCALIA: Not just that, he gets a
7	felony on his record. Before that he would have had
8	just a misdemeanor; right?
9	MR. MILLER: That's right.
10	JUSTICE KENNEDY: The call does the call
11	have to be completed I mean, if he gets an answer
12	saying "Your call is important to us, but we're serving
1 0	
13	someone else"?
14	(Laughter.)
14	(Laughter.)
14 15	(Laughter.) MR. MILLER: If the call the statute
14 15 16	(Laughter.) MR. MILLER: If the call the statute requires that the communication facility be used. And
14 15 16 17	(Laughter.) MR. MILLER: If the call the statute requires that the communication facility be used. And if the call doesn't actually go through, it would be
14 15 16 17 18	(Laughter.) MR. MILLER: If the call the statute requires that the communication facility be used. And if the call doesn't actually go through, it would be difficult to see how you would use the
14 15 16 17 18 19	(Laughter.) MR. MILLER: If the call the statute requires that the communication facility be used. And if the call doesn't actually go through, it would be difficult to see how you would use the JUSTICE GINSBURG: But if he leaves a
14 15 16 17 18 19 20	<pre>(Laughter.) MR. MILLER: If the call the statute requires that the communication facility be used. And if the call doesn't actually go through, it would be difficult to see how you would use the JUSTICE GINSBURG: But if he leaves a message?</pre>
14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21	<pre>(Laughter.) MR. MILLER: If the call the statute requires that the communication facility be used. And if the call doesn't actually go through, it would be difficult to see how you would use the</pre>
14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22	<pre>(Laughter.) MR. MILLER: If the call the statute requires that the communication facility be used. And if the call doesn't actually go through, it would be difficult to see how you would use the</pre>

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1	separate episodes, each involving one gram of cocaine?
2	MR. MILLER: That's correct.
3	JUSTICE GINSBURG: And there were a total of
4	seven phone calls?
5	MR. MILLER: There were six. The government
б	dismissed one of the counts. It was six counts that
7	went to trial, six phone calls.
8	JUSTICE GINSBURG: So that would be an
9	exposure
10	MR. MILLER: Of 24 years.
11	JUSTICE GINSBURG: 24 years for the one gram
12	of cocaine on two occasions.
13	Do you agree that it doesn't make any
14	difference who initiates the call? That is, if the
15	seller says seller calls the buyer, and says, I
16	understand that you are in the market for one gram of
17	cocaine, I'll sell it to you, is the buyer similarly
18	subject to this statute?
19	MR. MILLER: Just getting that call by
20	itself wouldn't subject someone to the statute. But if
21	you get the call and then engage in a conversation
22	JUDGE GINSBURG: Yes.
23	MR. MILLER: with the dealer where you
24	are using the telephone to cause
25	JUSTICE GINSBURG: Yes, we are assuming the

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1 purchase is made in either case.

2 MR. MILLER: Yes. 3 JUSTICE GINSBURG: So what you're saying is 4 it doesn't matter who initiates the call? 5 MR. MILLER: That's right. 6 JUSTICE SCALIA: Counsel, what do you do --7 this case that I find pretty close to what we have here 8 is Rewis v. United States, which involved a statute that prohibited interstate travel with the intent to, quote, 9 10 "promote, manage, establish, carry on or facilitate" 11 certain kinds of illegal activities, one of which would 12 have been gambling. 13 And we said the ordinary meaning of this 14 language suggests that the traveler's purpose must 15 involve more than the desire to patronize the illegal 16 activity. So it wouldn't have been facilitating a 17 gambling operation simply to be engaging in interstate 18 travel for the purpose of playing the tables. 19 MR. MILLER: I think there are a couple answers to that, Your Honor. First, Rewis, as you say, 20 was construing the Travel Act. It didn't focus on the 21 22 word "facilitate," and it certainly didn't set out a 23 general --24 JUSTICE SCALIA: Oh, it certainly focused on 25 the word "facilitate." That was the whole purpose of

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that passage. It said -- it quoted "promote, manage, establish, carry on or facilitate," and the ordinary meaning of this language suggests the traveler's purpose must involve more than the desire to patronize the illegal activity. MR. MILLER: That's right, and -- and as --

7 as indicated by the passage you've just quoted, the 8 focus of the Court there was on the traveler's purpose. 9 The Travel Act requires intent. Section 843(b) is 10 different in that it's satisfied by knowingly or 11 intentionally using the phone.

12 So the Court in Rewis said, quite 13 reasonably, that someone whose only purpose is to be a 14 customer of an unlawful enterprise doesn't have the 15 intent to facilitate -- and significantly, although the 16 Court's quotation of the statute ends at "facilitate," 17 it's not just to facilitate any unlawful activity; it's 18 to facilitate the promotion, management --

JUSTICE SCALIA: Don't you think that the whowingly in this statute also requires that you are knowingly facilitating?

22 MR. MILLER: It does require.

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JUSTICE SCALIA: Okay. So this is the samething here.

MR. MILLER: But it doesn't have to be -- it

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1	doesn't have to be that you have the purpose of
2	facilitating the seller. It's sufficient that you know
3	that the seller's
4	JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, this didn't
5	mention this statute didn't mention purpose, either,
6	did it?
7	MR. MILLER: It it said "intent." It
8	does not include the word "knowledge," and the Court in
9	the passage you just read construed that to require an
10	inquiry into the traveler's purpose.
11	It's also significant
12	JUSTICE SCALIA: I find it pretty close, I
13	really do.
14	MR. MILLER: Well, one other difference,
15	then, Your Honor, is that the facilitation that has to
16	take place under the Travel Act is facilitation of the
17	promotion, management, establishment or carrying on of
18	unlawful activity, which is defined not as a discrete
19	crime but as a business enterprise involving gambling.
20	So you have a statute that's focused on sort of
21	management or direction of an ongoing enterprise,
22	whereas here under 843(b), it's sufficient to facilitate
23	a discrete act.
24	JUSTICE BREYER: Why are you going through
25	all this sort of parsing, I mean, looking at the

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legislative history as well as the statute in 1970?
What is your answer to the last point that they made,
that what Congress wanted to do was to make simple
possession a misdemeanor, that's why they changed the
word, which -- "offense" to "felony." That's why they
changed the word "felony" to "misdemeanor."

7 And I can't imagine why else they amended 8 the statute, and just because I was curious I looked it 9 up, and that's why they amended it, right. So -- so the 10 legislative history makes that clear.

So what you've done is figure out a way -the government's figured out a way to do the opposite of what they want, to take people who simply possess and transform it into a felony. Now, what justification is there in the law for doing that?

MR. MILLER: Well, I think there are a 16 17 couple of answers to that. First is that section 843(b) 18 doesn't apply to people who simply possess. It applies 19 to people who possess by using a phone to facilitate a 20 felony distribution. And Congress -- I mean, the very 21 existence of the statute demonstrates that Congress 22 thought that the use of a phone is a separate element 23 that introduces a distinct evil that Congress wanted to 24 combat. And as to the change in the felony language --25 JUSTICE BREYER: As to the first, I said

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1	subset. I didn't say you undermined the entire statute.
2	I said you took a subset of people who simply possessed
3	and that subset you transformed into felons. Now, your
4	response I guess is just what you said.
5	MR. MILLER: Well, yes
6	JUSTICE BREYER: second.
7	MR. MILLER: and also that the reason for
8	the as you know, as you know, the predecessor to
9	843(b), which was section 1403, referred to causing or
10	facilitating any offense. All of the enumerated
11	offenses were felonies. In 1970 they changed the word
12	"offense" to the word "felony." But that's part of the
13	reason for that. There is no legislative history
14	specifically addressing the reason for that change. But
15	part of the reason we can infer is that the 1970 statute
16	created a whole host of misdemeanors, of misdemeanor
17	regulatory offenses under the Controlled Substances Act.
18	So one good example is section 829, which prohibits
19	distributing a controlled substance without a
20	prescription, and that's an offense that's a
21	misdemeanor, and that could easily be caused or
22	facilitated over the phone, if somebody called a
23	pharmacist.
24	And so, where both parties to the
<u> </u>	

25 transaction are only engaging in a misdemeanor, that's

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1	something that 843(b) would not apply to.
2	JUSTICE GINSBURG: But we do know that
3	that Congress drew a line it hadn't drawn before between
4	the own-purpose users and people who were in the
5	trafficking business, and it expressed sympathy for
6	the or leniency, a policy of leniency.
7	But the difference between the
8	classification felony and misdemeanor is huge in terms
9	of consequences for a person's life. So let's take the
10	defendant in this case. If he becomes a felon rather
11	than a misdemeanant, even if it's his first time and
12	it's only one gram, he loses a lot of rights, doesn't
13	he?
14	MR. MILLER: Yes. Yes, that's right. But I
15	and I think but one other change that Congress
16	
	made to 843(b) in 1970 that's significant is that it
17	made to 843(b) in 1970 that's significant is that it eliminated the mandatory minimum. There was under the
	eliminated the mandatory minimum. There was under the
18	eliminated the mandatory minimum. There was under the predecessor
18 19	eliminated the mandatory minimum. There was under the predecessor JUSTICE GINSBURG: Yes, but I'm speaking
18 19 20	eliminated the mandatory minimum. There was under the predecessor JUSTICE GINSBURG: Yes, but I'm speaking about the post consequences.
18 19 20 21	eliminated the mandatory minimum. There was under the predecessor JUSTICE GINSBURG: Yes, but I'm speaking about the post consequences. MR. MILLER: Yes. Yes. It
18 19 20 21 22	eliminated the mandatory minimum. There was under the predecessor JUSTICE GINSBURG: Yes, but I'm speaking about the post consequences. MR. MILLER: Yes. Yes. It JUSTICE GINSBURG: Like let's take a

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1 JUSTICE GINSBURG: And it may be that in 2 certain States voting rights are removed, and there is 3 on this person's record forever that he is a felon. Ιt 4 just seems odd that Congress would have at one and the 5 same time, the same statute, say, we want these -- to give these people a chance and if they are in a б 7 rehabilitation program and they make it they won't even 8 get any charge, not even a misdemeanor charge, and then say, but a whole group of them are going to be treated 9 10 just like traffickers if they use a telephone.

It's hard -- these two would seem to be 11 working at odds with each other. So mustn't the Court 12 13 then try to reach some accommodation, some harmonization 14 of these two provisions? And it's suggested that we do 15 that by saying facilitation, causing in this context 16 means the same thing as aiding and abetting, then we 17 have the buyer-seller rule for the aider and abettor, 18 and then we have made these two provisions harmonious. 19 MR. MILLER: I think the buyer-seller

20 principle and the limitation on aiding and abetting and 21 accessory liability, as this Court recognized in 22 Gebardi, doesn't apply here; because the principle that 23 the Court set out in that case, and it has been 24 recognized in subsequent cases, is that -- is that when 25 Congress criminalizes or punishes one party to a

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transaction, that inevitably involves a second party.
The second party who is left unpunished by the statute
doesn't get swept back in under section 2 as an aider
and abettor.

5 That principle doesn't apply here because although the existence of a purchaser or a receiver of б 7 drugs is an inevitable incident of a distribution, the existence of a purchaser who uses a phone is not. 8 The whole point of this statute is that the use of a phone 9 10 is a separate and distinct element that introduces a 11 different evil and that Congress wanted to combat that. 12 The other -- the other reason that aiding and abetting --13

14 JUSTICE SCALIA: Except that the use of a 15 phone in this statute is applied to the seller as well 16 as to the buyer. I mean, it seems to me it is parallel: 17 use of a phone to commit the offense by the seller, and 18 you want us to similarly sweep in the facilitating of 19 the offense by the use of the phone by the buyer. It 20 seems to me pretty parallel to what we've done in the 21 buyer-seller rule.

22 MR. MILLER: The -- the statute -- but by 23 its terms makes clear that the person using the phone 24 and the person committing the felony don't have to be 25 the same person, and I think -- I understood Petitioner

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1 to acknowledge that. The statute doesn't say knowingly 2 or intentionally use a communication facility in causing 3 or facilitating his or her commission of a felony. 4 JUSTICE BREYER: Is there another example in 5 the law, anywhere in the law, where -- and there may be, I'm asking -- which you've come across, where we have an б illegal business and there is a customer; and all the 7 8 customer does is be a customer; and is there an example where just because he's a customer in a statutory 9 10 provision that normally has a lesser penalty -- all 11 right; imagine those circumstances -- you still can 12 punish him as if he -- as if he ran the business? 13 MR. MILLER: I'm not aware of any, and I 14 don't think --15 JUSTICE BREYER: I'm not aware, and why 16 should this be the first? 17 MR. MILLER: But this -- this isn't one, 18 Because this isn't a case that punishes people just for 19 being a customer. It's a case -- it's a statute that 20 punishes people for being a customer -- and using a 21 phone. 22 JUSTICE BREYER: The way they're a customer 23 -- the way they're a customer is they use the telephone, and I guess one side thinks that's not a big deal, and 24 25 the other side thinks that, anyway, in terms of what

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1 Congress thought, it's a tremendously big deal because 2 Congress was really worried about telephones. Okay, 3 that's possible. 4 So can you get a parallel that's like that? 5 MR. MILLER: There are -- there's a whole host of statutes that punish --6 7 JUSTICE BREYER: What one comes to mind? 8 MR. MILLER: I mean, the wire fraud statute punishes conduct that might not be a Federal offense at 9 10 all, but for the fact that somebody used --11 JUSTICE BREYER: That's jurisdictional. 12 What I'm looking for is there's a business and a 13 customer, the statute punishes the business worse than 14 the customer. Now, we get the customer as if he were a 15 business participant. That's what I'm looking for, 16 where it's the way he does it -- i.e., whether he uses a 17 telephone or whether he uses a telegram or semaphore 18 signals or -- where the -- where the means of 19 communication here or something like that suddenly 20 transform him? 21 Anything else that comes to mind? I didn't 22 expect there to be, but I just thought maybe you would 23 think of an analogy, which would be helpful. 24 MR. MILLER: Well, I mean, if -- we identified on page 25 of our brief, a number of statutes 25

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where the use of a communication facility is an element
 of the offense, and the conduct covered by those
 statutes in many cases might not be a Federal offense at
 all.

5 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Carry -- carrying a 6 weapon. A lot of statutes punish more severely for 7 carrying weapons.

8 MR. MILLER: Right. And I think, to be 9 clear, this is not -- this is not a statute that 10 punishes people, punishes customers as if they were 11 distributors or that aggravates an underlying felony. 12 This is a separate offense; it has its own penalty; it 13 put the --

14 JUSTICE KENNEDY: But it -- can you tell me, how does it work? The district -- the United States 15 16 Attorney in one State, one district, has a case like 17 this where there are four different phone calls; and he 18 doesn't like the looks of the defendant, or for some 19 reason he can charge him, and in the neighboring jurisdiction the United States Attorney does not. 20 Are 21 there guidelines? Does the Department of Justice control this in each case? Is there some manual where 22 23 we could see what the rules are for charging? Is it all 24 at the discretion of the United States Attorney? 25 MR. MILLER: Yeah. I'm not aware of

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1	anything in the U.S. Attorney's Manual that specifically
2	addresses this statute, but of course the Court
3	recognized in Batchelder that prosecutors legitimately
4	have discretion when there are different criminal
5	statutes that cover the conduct, and
6	JUSTICE GINSBURG: What about the the
7	statement that in the manual maybe this is
8	incorrect but that the charging policy of the
9	Department of Justice instructs prosecutors to charge
10	the most serious offense supported by the facts? And if
11	that's true, then the Assistant U.S. Attorney would have
12	no choice. The most serious offense is not misdemeanor
13	simple possession, but it is the violation of 843(b).
14	MR. MILLER: That's if they bring charges at
15	all, and of course that policy doesn't require
16	prosecutors to to bring charges.
17	JUSTICE GINSBURG: Ordinarily
18	JUSTICE SOUTER: I think we know from this
19	case they're likely to bring charges.
20	MR. MILLER: Well, I mean
21	JUSTICE GINSBURG: Is that the policy, first
22	of all? It says that they're supposed to charge the
23	most serious offense supported by the facts?
24	MR. MILLER: Yes, and and a
25	JUSTICE GINSBURG: So that means in every

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1 one of these cases, whether the dealer picks up the 2 phone or the buyer picks up the phone for a transaction 3 for one gram of cocaine, the prosecutor has no choice 4 but to indict under 843(b)? 5 MR. MILLER: Well, again, if -- if there is to be an indictment at all. There's no requirement that 6 7 \_ \_ 8 JUSTICE GINSBURG: I'm talking about the 9 choice between misdemeanor, simple possession 10 misdemeanor, or 843 -- adding on this 843(b). The 11 prosecutor -- if what I read is correct -- has no 12 discretion, has to if he makes the charge. He cannot 13 make a simple misdemeanor charge. He has to charge the 14 felony. 15 MR. MILLER: That's my understanding of the policy, but, you know, this Court has recognized that, 16 17 you know, that sort of charging decision is a legitimate 18 aspect of the system as long as it's not exercised for 19 unconstitutional reasons. JUSTICE SOUTER: No, but there's -- there's 20 21 a difference here, and that is, as these cases 22 illustrate, three phone calls for one trifling sale, two 23 for another, this gives a kind of multiplier effect 24 which it's -- it's hard to find a parallel for in the 25 law. We go from a misdemeanor to 12 years, depending on

1 the fact that there were -- there were a couple of cell 2 phone calls. 3 That is -- maybe -- maybe that is exactly 4 what Congress intended, and maybe that's good law 5 enforcement policy, but those are not sort of two intuitively obvious positions. 6 7 MR. MILLER: I think the -- the text of the statute and the fact that it covers any act constituting 8 9 a felony does demonstrate that that's what Congress 10 intended as well --11 JUSTICE SOUTER: Well, what about the 12 question? 13 JUSTICE SCALIA: Let's feel sorry for this -- for the felon who is selling this stuff, too. I 14 15 mean, the same thing is true of him, isn't it? Every time he makes another phone call he gets socked with 16 17 another how many years? 18 MR. MILLER: The -- the statutory maximum is 19 four, but again --20 JUSTICE SCALIA: Yes, so four times four 21 times four every time he makes a phone call. 22 MR. MILLER: Right, and I think that --23 JUSTICE SCALIA: We should feel sorry for him, too. 24 25 JUSTICE SOUTER: He knows -- the difference,

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1 that -- he knows that he's committing a felony, and the 2 possessor of a gram or less doesn't.

3 MR. MILLER: The possessor who purchases the 4 drugs using his phone knows that he is causing the 5 felony. The reason he calls the drug dealer is because 6 he wants to cause the dealer to send him drugs.

JUSTICE BREYER: Well, what about the 7 8 legislative history? Because I would read it -- and in fact what it seems to me that you're suggesting, when 9 10 you read the statute, is using a telephone is -- because 11 Justice Kennedy came up with a good example of what I 12 was thinking of. If the buyer sits there with a gun, 13 well, that's different, he shouldn't have the gun, and 14 it's not surprising that he gets a higher sentence. And 15 you're saying by reading the text you've discovered 16 Congress thinks that cell phones are sort of like guns. 17 Okay. I grant you somebody might have thought that. 18 Justice Souter thinks it's not intuitively obvious, but 19 is there any legislative history that suggests that that 20 indeed is what people in Congress thought when they passed this statute? I'll read it if there is. 21 22 MR. MILLER: Yes, and it --23 JUSTICE BREYER: And what should I read and 24 where exactly --

MR. MILLER: I mean, beyond -- first of all,

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1 the -- the Congress has a traditional interest in 2 keeping the channels of commerce and communication free 3 from --

4 JUSTICE BREYER: Normally, where that is 5 involved, I've learned, it's called what Justice Scalia called it "a jurisdictional hook." They don't think the б 7 underlying behavior is worse, but they believe there has 8 to be a basis and should be a basis for federal prosecution. I started out where he was. I thought 9 10 this is just a jurisdictional hook, but now you say no, 11 it isn't; it's much worse than that. It's like carrying a gun, not quite as bad as that, but on that -- in that 12 13 direction. So I'm asking you what would I read in this 14 history to show that what you're claiming is right? 15 MR. MILLER: The legislative history of the 16 1956 act, which is the -- where the predecessor statute, 17 1403, was enacted, shows that Congress was concerned 18 with the ability of drug traffickers and people engaging 19 in drug transactions to avoid detection by using the 20 phone --

JUSTICE BREYER: And that's what -- you've cited that in the brief so I can find it? MR. MILLER: Yes. And the initial proposal in the initial Senate bill would have allowed wiretapping in connection with drug investigations of

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1 certain enumerated offenses that covered both purchasers 2 and sellers. That was replaced with the provision that 3 became 1403, which also -- which applied "causing or 4 facilitating" enumerated offenses, and again applied to 5 both buyers and sellers. And that statute was applied to buyers in a number of reported decisions before 1970, 6 7 and there is nothing in the 1970 legislative history that Congress intended to change that aspect. 8

9 JUSTICE GINSBURG: How does it work? Т 10 mean, I know your overall rationale about the ease of 11 detection -- easier to detect face to face encounter on the streets. But here, I mean, we know that the 12 13 government tapped the dealer's phone, and that's how the 14 government got the list of the people who bought from 15 the dealer. How common is it that -- the either the 16 buyer or the seller is the subject of a telephone tap? 17 MR. MILLER: I don't -- I don't know the 18 statistics on that, but certainly a wiretap is only 19 possible when demanding standards under Title III are 20 met, and -- whereas a face-to-face meeting can be 21 observed by anybody who happens to be there. JUSTICE GINSBURG: But what had to be met in 22 23 this case in order to put this tap on the dealer's phone? 24

MR. MILLER: Well, among other things, I

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1 believe the statute requires some showing that it's not 2 possible to obtain evidence in some other less intrusive 3 way. So in this case there was a wiretap on the 4 dealer's phone, but in a lot of cases there's not going 5 to be that. And certainly Congress, when it enacted the statute, viewed keeping people from using the phones to б 7 conceal their drug transactions as one way of minimizing 8 the need for more intrusive measures like wiretapping.

JUSTICE GINSBURG: Well, you would interpret 9 10 Congress -- now we're getting away from '56, when simple 11 possession was a felony, to '70, when simple possession 12 becomes a misdemeanor. And you're saying that Congress 13 meant to relegate the simple possessor to misdemeanor 14 status, but only if the encounter was face to face. So 15 you're reading into the -- what Congress did to sharply 16 distinguish between traffickers and users, and say but 17 that was only taking 843(b) into account. That benefit 18 -- that you're not going to be a felon; you're going to 19 be a misdemeanant -- is only for face-to-face 20 transactions.

21 MR. MILLER: For -- it's -- I mean, it 22 doesn't apply when -- when a communication facility is 23 used. It also doesn't apply, I mean, in a number of 24 other contexts that Petitioner acknowledges. But --25 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But I'm talking about

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1 this context, the purchase of one gram of cocaine on one 2 occasion, nothing more.

3 MR. MILLER: As a first offense. I mean,
4 that --

5 JUSTICE GINSBURG: So Congress's design was we treat as a less grave offender the buyer for his own б 7 use, but only if he buys in a face-to-face encounter. 8 That's what -- what you would have to read -- you would 9 have to limit the line Congress drew between 10 traffickers, on the one hand, and possessors for their 11 own use, on the other, that it applies only to drugs 12 purchased in face-to-face encounters.

MR. MILLER: Yes, although I wouldn't describe it as an issue of a less grave offense or a more grave offense in the sense that the use of the phone aggravates the offense of possession.

17 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But I mean, practically 18 --

MR. MILLER: But the use of a phone is the difference --

JUSTICE GINSBURG: -- the difference between being labeled a misdemeanant and being labeled a felon is an enormous difference.

24 MR. MILLER: That -- that's right. But 25 Congress, again, did recognize that there could be a

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1 range of levels of culpability associated with the 2 843(b) offense, which is part of the reason that it 3 eliminated the mandatory minimum when it amended the 4 statute in 1970, suggesting that there could be 5 different kinds of conduct that would satisfy it. 6 JUSTICE SOUTER: Mr. Miller, in answer to 7 one of Justice Breyer's earlier questions, he -- the 8 premise of his question was the effect of the twin amendments from offense to felony and from felony to 9 10 misdemeanor for possession of small quantities. And he 11 said, well, in effect, is that combination of amendments 12 really being rendered nugatory by the view that you take 13 of the statute? And you said not necessarily, and you 14 said there may be some drug transactions in which it is 15 a misdemeanor on both sides, so that the statute would 16 apply there. 17 Are there any other -- are there many 18 examples of that? I thought not. And are there any 19 other examples of misdemeanor-misdemeanor cases that the 20 -- that the statute would apply to so that -- so that 21 the anomaly wouldn't be quite so obvious? MR. MILLER: Well, I mean, if you're asking 22 23 other misdemeanor offenses under the Controlled Substances Act --24 25 JUSTICE SOUTER: Yes.

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1	MR. MILLER: I mean there is the
2	JUSTICE SOUTER: In other words, how
3	important is this? It looks to us I mean, I think it
4	was the premise of the question and it was it was my
5	assumption coming in that your view of the statute
б	largely renders those two amendments, or the combined
7	effect of those two amendments, virtually nugatory.
8	And you said, well, not necessarily because
9	there may be misdemeanor cases. And I want to know how
10	many of them there are. Is that really a significant
11	area for the application or nonapplication of this
12	statute?
13	MR. MILLER: I I don't know how many
14	prosecutions are brought under those statutes. I
15	imagine that, in part because they are misdemeanors, not
16	a lot of prosecutions.
17	JUSTICE SOUTER: How many separate how
18	many misdemeanor-misdemeanor combined offenses are there
19	under the under the code?
20	MR. MILLER: 842, section 842, enumerates I
21	think it is on the order of a dozen or so, and then we
22	cite a couple of them in our brief. So distributing a
23	a controlled a prescription drug without a
24	prescription would probably be one of the most common
25	that someone would engage in.

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JUSTICE SOUTER: You -- you don't have any figures on the number of actual prosecutions under -under the -- in the misdemeanor-misdemeanor combination cases? MR. MILLER: No. I mean, again, because -because they're misdemeanors and prosecutorial resources

8 violations of the Controlled Substances Act, I suspect9 there aren't a lot of prosecutions.

are probably concentrated on the more serious felony

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10 JUSTICE SOUTER: So -- well, then, I guess 11 that leads to my last question, and that is: Isn't it 12 probably true that if we accept your view of the 13 statute, then the effect of those two combined 14 amendments, offense to -- to felony, felony to 15 misdemeanor for small quantities, the -- the combined 16 effect of -- of those two statutes is, in effect, 17 rendered worthless in -- in most cases? In a 18 substantial number of cases to which the -- the 19 communication facility statute would be applied, it --20 it would render those -- those two amendments, in 21 effect, worthless? MR. MILLER: Well, I think the -- the 22 23 relevant inquiry is: What -- what did Congress intend 24 in 1970 when it changed the statute?

JUSTICE SOUTER: That may be a legitimate

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1	inquiry, but what about my irrelevant inquiry?
2	MR. MILLER: Well, I
3	(Laughter.)
4	JUSTICE SOUTER: It's going to your
5	your view of the statute is going to render those two
6	amendments virtually dead letters?
7	MR. MILLER: I mean I I think I think
8	from the perspective of of Congress, that there was
9	no they wouldn't have anticipated that the amendment
10	would not have any consequence. I mean the fact that
11	that they created this whole set of misdemeanors, the
12	fact that they aren't violated very often
13	JUSTICE SOUTER: As you said, you you
14	don't have figures on the number of prosecutions. And
15	the number of prosecutions under those misdemeanors, as
16	distinct from the number of applications of the
17	communications statute to conventional buyer/seller
18	transactions is probably the difference between a very
19	small set and a very large set of cases. And in the
20	very large set of cases the two amendments are being
21	rendered, in effect, worthless; isn't that true?
22	MR. MILLER: If I if I may answer, my
23	understanding is that the number of prosecutions under
24	843(b) is is also relatively small, but I don't have
25	precise figures on on the comparative numbers.

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1	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
2	Four minutes, Mr. Srinivasan.
3	REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF SRI SRINIVASAN
4	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER
5	MR. SRINIVASAN: Thank you, Mr. Chief
6	Justice.
7	The only point I would make in closing,
8	unless the Court has further questions for us, is that
9	we think the statutory text, the statutory history, and
10	the context all weigh in favor of our reading. But even
11	if there is any ambiguity on the matter, principles of
12	lenity would squarely apply in foreclosing an
13	interpretation that converts someone who is a
14	misdemeanant into someone who is exposed to multiple
15	felony counts carrying substantial criminal
16	consequences.
17	JUSTICE STEVENS: May I ask this question as
18	just a matter of history? Is it perfectly clear? I
19	think you said that the the presence of the use of
20	the telephone was not just a jurisdictional hook.
21	Because back in 1970 the Federal Government really
22	wasn't in the criminal law business the way it has
23	become in the last 30 or 40 years.
24	At that time there was a lot of concern, the
25	Travel Act and other statutes, about exactly what the

Federal justification for -- justification for Federal participation existed. And I -- I always had the impression that that was really what was behind the telephone aspect of this statute.

5 MR. SRINIVASAN: I don't think so, Justice 6 Stevens, because as of 1970 there were already 7 underlying drug laws that barred distribution, that 8 barred receipt of drugs, and that barred most of the 9 activities that are now prohibited under the drug laws. 10 And the telephone law presupposes that one of those 11 underlying acts is already going on.

And so to the extent that there was jurisdiction over those underlying acts, which presumably there was since the statutes are on the books, the Telephone Act wasn't necessary to create jurisdiction.

17 JUSTICE ALITO: Could I ask you this 18 question? I -- I understand your argument regarding 19 statutory history and the harsh consequences of this. 20 But as far as the buyer/seller rule -- Gebardi and Rewis 21 are concerned, what if the statute said -- made it a 22 crime for -- for a person to use a machine gun in 23 facilitating the commission of a felony? Would you say -- you would have to say that the buyer/seller rule and 24 25 those authorities would mean that that person could not

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be prosecuted if they were using the machine gun to facilitate a -- a purchase for personal use; would you not?

4 MR. SRINIVASAN: Well, I think the -- the 5 use of the machine gun wouldn't come within the buyer/seller rule because what the buyer/seller rule б 7 deals with is a substantive prohibition on distribution. 8 And the -- the presumption is that when Congress prohibits distribution, it knows that there is also a 9 10 receiver of the banned substance. And by virtue of 11 excluding that receiver from the distribution 12 prohibition, it wouldn't have wanted to bring that 13 receiver back within the fold of the statute.

14 JUSTICE ALITO: Right, but --

MR. SRINIVASAN: That wouldn't apply -JUSTICE ALITO: I'm sorry. Go ahead.

17 MR. SRINIVASAN: I was just going to say I 18 don't think that would apply with somebody who is using 19 a machine qun because the person who is using a machine 20 qun isn't necessarily part of the distribution offense 21 to begin with. And so the buyer/seller principle would 22 apply with respect to the underlying purchase of drugs 23 if that were at issue. But if you tack on use of a machine gun, I don't think the buyer/seller principle 24 25 would speak directly to that.

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1	JUSTICE ALITO: Well, I don't I don't see
2	the difference between use of a phone to facilitate
3	use of a phone in facilitating, use of of a firearm
4	in facilitating, unless you can say that the the use
5	of a communication facility in effecting the purchase is
6	such a a virtually indispensable element of the
7	purchase that it it it's swept up within it.
8	MR. SRINIVASAN: Oh, no, I'm sorry, Justice
9	Alito. If the hypothetical statute barred use of a
10	phone in facilitating a drug felony, if it was precisely
11	parallel to this one, then we make the same argument.
12	But it's not because the use of a machine gun falls
13	within the buyer/seller principle. It's because the
14	underlying act of purchasing drugs falls within the
15	buyer/seller principle. And if the prohibition is on
16	use of a machine gun in some underlying act, then you
17	have to look at the underlying act. And the underlying
18	act is governed by the buyer/ seller principle, and
19	buyers fall outside of it. And so the use of a machine
20	gun by someone who is already outside of the act
21	wouldn't bring the buyer back into the fold of the
22	statute.
23	JUSTICE ALITO: So the answer is that this
24	it would be the same.

MR. SRINIVASAN: It would be the same --

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1	JUSTICE ALITO: The buyer/seller rule would
2	apply in your view in exactly the same way.
3	MR. SRINIVASAN: If the if the statute
4	if I understand your hypothetical correctly, if the
5	statute were use of a phone in facilitating a drug
б	felony, then the
7	JUSTICE GINSBURG: But it could be a a
8	separate crime, the use of a machine gun in facilitating
9	in facilitating a crime, any crime. That could be
10	MR. SRINIVASAN: Sure. If that were the
11	case, then it would be different. My if I could just
12	finish for a minute, Mr. Chief Justice.
13	My my only point is that if the theory of
14	prosecution were that a person comes within the fold of
15	the statute because they're buying drugs and that buying
16	of dwyge forilitator the colo of dwyge and therefore
	of drugs facilitates the sale of drugs and, therefore,
17	they are someone who uses a machine gun in facilitating
17 18	
	they are someone who uses a machine gun in facilitating
18	they are someone who uses a machine gun in facilitating the sale of drugs, well, then the buyer/seller rule
18 19	they are someone who uses a machine gun in facilitating the sale of drugs, well, then the buyer/seller rule would kick in. Because the initial predicate of that
18 19 20	they are someone who uses a machine gun in facilitating the sale of drugs, well, then the buyer/seller rule would kick in. Because the initial predicate of that theory, which is that the person is facilitating the
18 19 20 21	they are someone who uses a machine gun in facilitating the sale of drugs, well, then the buyer/seller rule would kick in. Because the initial predicate of that theory, which is that the person is facilitating the sale by buying, wouldn't work. They would fall outside

25 (Whereupon, at 11:08 a.m., the case in the

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1	above-entitled	matter	was	submitted.)
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