| 1  | IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES              |
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| 3  | VINCENT CULLEN, ACTING WARDEN, :                       |
| 4  | Petitioner :   |
| 5  | v. : No. 09-1088                                       |
| 6  | SCOTT LYNN PINHOLSTER :                                |
| 7  | x  |
| 8  | Washington, D.C.                                       |
| 9  | Tuesday, November 9, 2010                              |
| 10 |  |
| 11 | The above-entitled matter came on for oral             |
| 12 | argument before the Supreme Court of the United States |
| 13 | at 11:04 a.m.  |
| 14 | APPEARANCES:   |
| 15 | JAMES W. BILDERBACK, II, ESQ., Supervising Deputy      |
| 16 | Attorney General, Los Angeles, California; on behalf   |
| 17 | of Petitioner.   |
| 18 | SEAN K. KENNEDY, ESQ., Federal Public Defender, Los    |
| 19 | Angeles, California; on behalf of Respondent.          |
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| 1  | PROCEEDINGS  |
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| 2  | (11:04 a.m.)   |
| 3  | CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear argument               |
| 4  | next in Case 09-1088, Cullen v. Pinholster.              |
| 5  | Mr. Bilderback.  |
| 6  | ORAL ARGUMENT OF JAMES W. BILDERBACK, II,                |
| 7  | ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER                              |
| 8  | MR. BILDERBACK: Mr. Chief Justice, and may               |
| 9  | it please the Court:                                     |
| 10 | There are three main points I wish to                    |
| 11 | emphasize to the Court this morning: First, because the  |
| 12 | California Supreme Court rejected Mr. Pinholster's claim |
| 13 | of ineffective assistance of counsel on its merits,      |
| 14 | Federal habeas corpus relief is unavailable under 28     |
| 15 | U.S.C. section 2254(d)(1) unless Mr. Pinholster first    |
| 16 | met his burden of demonstrating that the State court     |
| 17 | rejection of his claim was unreasonable. He did not do   |
| 18 | that in this case, and thus the lower courts erred in    |
| 19 | granting him habeas corpus relief.                       |
| 20 | Second, because Mr. Pinholster never even                |
| 21 | alleged, let alone proved, that he could not have        |
| 22 | presented the factual basis upon which the Ninth Circuit |
| 23 | predicated its decision to grant relief when he was in   |
| 24 | the State court, 2254(e)(2) should have been a barrier   |
| 25 | to the State court Federal evidentiary hearing.          |

- 1 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Could we just clarify
- what you mean by "factual basis"? To be precise, he
- 3 didn't -- because he didn't present the expert opinion
- 4 with the diagnosis, or because the diagnosis was based
- 5 on a series of facts that, to me, appear to have been
- 6 presented fully to the State court; is that correct?
- 7 MR. BILDERBACK: Yes.
- 8 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: With the exception of
- 9 the fact that the defense attorneys only worked 6 hours,
- 10 the billing records. That -- I think that's the only
- 11 underlying facts to the opinion that appear new; am I
- 12 correct?
- 13 MR. BILDERBACK: No, Your Honor. The
- 14 diagnosis itself is a fact. The --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: All right. So we are
- only talking about the expert opinion facts being new?
- 17 MR. BILDERBACK: We -- there are a number of
- 18 facts that were new in the Federal --
- 19 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: What -- besides the
- 20 opinion, what were they?
- 21 MR. BILDERBACK: Well, as the Court
- 22 adverted, there was also the notion that there was
- 23 somehow a limited amount of time, specifically --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Well, he did allege that
- in his petition before the State court?

- 1 MR. BILDERBACK: He did not allege 6 and a
- 2 half hours, Your Honor.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Not specifically, but he
- 4 said that his counsel didn't prepare.
- 5 MR. BILDERBACK: That's precisely correct,
- 6 Your Honor, but the court --
- 7 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: And he pointed to the
- 8 fact that counsel basically said at the trial, I didn't
- 9 think we were going to have a mitigation hearing, as
- 10 proof of that, correct?
- 11 MR. BILDERBACK: He did point to that, Your
- 12 Honor, but we would note that the 6-and-a-half-hour
- 13 conclusion drawn by the Ninth Circuit and drawn by the
- 14 district court is not fairly supported by the record.
- But, putting that aside, the principal fact
- 16 that we are focusing on that we think is a new and
- 17 significant change in the factual posture of the case
- 18 from the time he was in State court to the time that he
- 19 was in Federal court is the diagnosis of organic brain
- 20 damage by the expert, which is not simply the opinion of
- 21 the expert, but a question of material fact that was
- 22 relied upon by the Ninth Circuit in its decision to
- 23 grant relief.
- 24 The failure to ever tell the California
- 25 Supreme Court that petitioner has organic brain damage

- 1 and the centrality of that factual determination on the
- 2 Ninth Circuit's decision making is -- was a substantial
- 3 difference between the facts upon which the State --
- 4 with which the State court was presented and the facts
- 5 that the Ninth Circuit granted -- rested its decision to
- 6 grant relief.
- 7 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Bilderback, I know that
- 8 that's the principal fact that you rely upon, that
- 9 there's a difference, but could you give us a full
- 10 catalogue of the facts that are different in the Federal
- 11 court record from the facts that are different in the
- 12 State court record? Was there anything other than the
- 13 medical testimony and the billing sheets, or is that the
- 14 extent of it?
- 15 MR. BILDERBACK: Those are -- those are the
- 16 significant facts that we think are -- are relevant to
- 17 -- to the discussion of whether or not the State court
- 18 determination should be or could properly be found to
- 19 have been unreasonable, was -- was the difference in the
- 20 specificity of the -- of the nature of the claim of
- 21 deficient performance in terms of the time sheets and --
- 22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: What about
- 23 Dr. Stalberg's new deposition? Doesn't that count as a
- 24 new fact? I'm looking at your brief on page 11. At a
- 25 deposition just before the evidentiary hearing,

- 1 Dr. Stalberg revealed that nothing in the new material
- 2 called into question his original diagnosis.
- 3 MR. BILDERBACK: Oh, certainly, Your Honor.
- 4 I -- I understood the questions from the Court to be
- 5 asking which new facts were relied upon in the decision
- 6 to grant relief. Certainly, there were new facts
- 7 adduced during the Federal proceedings that we think
- 8 inveighed against a grant of relief, and I think that
- 9 the fact that Your Honor points to is precisely one of
- 10 those.
- 11 But, in terms of the new facts -- and let's
- 12 be clear that 2254(d)(1) is a rule that says that relief
- 13 cannot be granted if the State court determination was
- 14 unreasonable. To the extent that relief is denied, the
- 15 inclusion of new facts in the analysis may not run afoul
- 16 of (d)(1) at all. So here, because the Ninth Circuit
- 17 relied so heavily upon the organic brain damage
- 18 diagnosis and because that diagnosis --
- 19 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Could we just be clear?
- MR. BILDERBACK: Yes.
- 21 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I thought that
- 22 Dr. Stalberg's affidavit in the State court said that he
- 23 had brain damage of some sort.
- MR. BILDERBACK: That's not accurate, Your
- 25 Honor.

- 1 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I thought it said that
- 2 he -- the school records show evidence of mental
- 3 disturbances and some degree of brain damage.
- 4 MR. BILDERBACK: I believe that --
- 5 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: What he did say -- I
- 6 think there's a difference between -- because he pointed
- 7 to epilepsy. He pointed to a series of things that
- 8 showed some brain damage. I just want to clarify.
- 9 MR. BILDERBACK: Certainly.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: It's not organic damage;
- 11 the issue is whether the organic damage created a
- 12 dysfunctionality that contributed to the events. That's
- 13 what he didn't know, and he said: It's not -- I would
- 14 have needed more information to figure that out.
- MR. BILDERBACK: Well, he -- he never said
- 16 that if he had had the additional information, that he
- 17 would have diagnosed Mr. Pinholster as suffering from
- 18 organic brain damage. He --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: No, no, no. Organic
- 20 brain damage dysfunctionality. There's a difference
- 21 between the two diagnoses.
- 22 MR. BILDERBACK: Absolutely, Your Honor, but
- 23 I want to be clear that Dr. Stalberg never diagnosed
- 24 Mr. Pinholster with organic brain damage, even at the
- 25 conclusion of the Federal evidentiary hearing, following

- 1 which he had access to all of the facts that habeas
- 2 counsel was -- managed to unearth during the course of
- 3 the Federal proceedings.
- 4 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Your adversary points to
- 5 the difference in language between (d)(1) and (d)(2).
- 6 MR. BILDERBACK: Yes.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: (D)(2) refers to
- 8 unreasonable in light of the facts, unreasonable
- 9 determination of facts in light of the record before the
- 10 court, and subdivision (1) doesn't. It speaks only an
- 11 unreasonable decision.
- 12 Could you address the difference in the
- language and why that difference doesn't suggest that
- 14 the question of an unreasonable legal determination
- 15 should be based on the record before the Federal court,
- 16 which in most instances, the vast majority of instances,
- 17 is just a State court record?
- 18 MR. BILDERBACK: That's correct, Your Honor.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But there are exceptions
- in (e)(2) for hearings.
- MR. BILDERBACK: Yes.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So why shouldn't the
- 23 first subdivision be read to mean unreasonable legal
- 24 determination in light of the record before the court?
- 25 MR. BILDERBACK: Because subdivisions (d)(1)

- 1 and (d)(2) serve very different purposes. Subdivision
- 2 (d)(2) is concerned with determinations of fact, and the
- 3 additional language that the Court points to was an
- 4 attempt to limit the bases upon which a Federal court
- 5 could overturn a State court factual determination.
- 6 Prior to the passage of AEDPA, a Federal
- 7 court could overturn a State court determination of fact
- 8 not simply because the evidence was lacking, which is
- 9 the current state of the law, but also because it found
- 10 some sort of procedural defect or a number of other
- 11 bases that had grown up in the common law. With the
- 12 passage of AEDPA, Congress limited the bases upon which
- 13 a State court factual determination could be rejected to
- 14 only one.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Are you suggesting that
- 16 if a State court gets a proffer of evidence from a State
- 17 petitioner who says, I have a billing record that shows
- 18 that my attorney worked only 6 hours; and the State
- 19 says, we're not admitting that billing record because it
- 20 hasn't been authenticated, so we're not looking at that
- 21 fact; and the Federal habeas looks at what was proffered
- 22 and says, this is authentication under any rule, State
- 23 or Federal -- it was improperly admitted, so their legal
- 24 determination was wrong? Not unreasonable legal
- 25 determination as to the IAC, because in fact -- I used

- 1 the example of 6 hours. The billing record could show 5
- 2 minutes, so that there's no dispute that the person
- 3 spent essentially no time on mitigation, didn't present
- 4 anything. The clearest case you want. You're
- 5 suggesting that a habeas corpus court is no longer
- 6 permitted to look at that new evidence?
- 7 MR. BILDERBACK: Well, what I'm suggesting
- 8 is that the language of (d)(2) was designed to limit the
- 9 bases upon which a Federal court could overturn a State
- 10 court factual finding. Of course, our case doesn't
- 11 really involve (d)(2).
- 12 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: No, but I'm going back
- 13 to (d)(1).
- MR. BILDERBACK: Yes, and the -- the
- 15 symmetrical language in (d)(1) is the language --
- 17 though.
- 18 MR. BILDERBACK: I would -- I would
- 19 disagree, because I believe the symmetrical language in
- 20 (d)(1) is the limitation on the Federal court's reliance
- 21 on lower Federal court authority to overturn State court
- 22 factual determinations.
- 23 Prior to the passage of AEDPA, lower Federal
- 24 courts were free to look to their own prior precedent,
- 25 the prior precedent of the circuit courts, to say that

- 1 the State court determination of a question of law was
- 2 unreasonable. In both statutes -- statute --
- 3 subdivision (d)(1), which has to do with questions of
- 4 law and mixed questions, the additional language
- 5 narrowed the focus to a new and more limited basis for
- 6 Federal review or to find the State court determination
- 7 unreasonable.
- 8 In (d)(2), there is this symmetrical
- 9 limiting language which overturned what had historically
- 10 been several bases for rejecting a State court factual
- 11 determination.
- 12 But, in both sections, the law is clear that
- 13 the the examination is of the application that was
- 14 conducted by the State court. The section itself speaks
- in the past tense, and the very concept of
- 16 reasonableness compels the conclusion that the State
- 17 court determination can only fairly be read in light of
- 18 -- in light of the facts that were squarely presented to
- 19 the State court. Otherwise we could be in a situation
- 20 where all of the facts before the State court are
- 21 entirely removed, an entirely new set of facts are
- 22 proven up in the Federal court, and we're going to say
- 23 that, notwithstanding that wholesale change in the
- 24 factual basis of the claim, that the State court
- 25 determination was not merely wrong, but unreasonable.

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- 2 and it is the primacy of the State court determination
- 3 of the claim that is the central feature of the AEDPA
- 4 reforms to Federal habeas corpus. The point was to make
- 5 State court determinations the primary forum for
- 6 adjudicating Federal constitutional claims, and Federal
- 7 courts were only supposed to interfere in those
- 8 determinations reluctantly. And if you examine the
- 9 language of AEDPA, you'll see that, in -- in many
- 10 respects, it mirrors the language of 2244, the "second
- 11 or successive" language in Federal court.
- 12 The purpose of AEDPA was to enforce upon
- 13 Federal courts the same respect for State court
- 14 determinations of claims that Federal courts showed to
- 15 their own prior State court determinations of claims.
- 16 State court determinations of Federal constitutional
- 17 claims are not lesser creatures deserving of less
- 18 respect than Federal court determinations of claims.
- 19 And here they put very specific language in the statute
- 20 that was designed to ensure that when a Federal court is
- 21 examining a State court determination of a claim, it
- 22 limits itself to only those facts that were before the
- 23 State court. And, indeed, this Court has specifically
- 24 said so in Holland v. Jackson, that the (d)(1)
- 25 determination is done in light of the record before the

- 1 State court. Similarly, in Michael --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Well, there's a
- 3 paragraph right after what you cite that basically says
- 4 unless there's a hearing. So Holland works -- doesn't
- 5 stop at the point that you're quoting. It goes on in
- 6 the very next sentence to say "unless a hearing has been
- 7 held."
- 8 MR. BILDERBACK: And if a hearing is
- 9 appropriately held, that's a very different question.
- 10 But as this Court stated in Michael Williams, if the
- 11 2254(d)(1) question is dispositive, no Federal
- 12 evidentiary hearing is required. And that would be our
- 13 position in this case. Because this claim survived
- 14 2254(d)(1) scrutiny, the Federal evidentiary hearing
- 15 should not have been held, just as, in the Michael
- 16 Williams case, this Court ratified the decision of the
- 17 district court not to hold an evidentiary hearing
- 18 because the claim failed under (d)(1).
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So why don't we start
- 20 the way that you are proposing, which is to start with
- 21 (e)(2): Was the hearing appropriately held, first? And
- 22 if it was, why are we excluding the evidence that was
- 23 developed at that hearing? What you're proposing is the
- 24 reverse, to say we start at (d)(1) --
- MR. BILDERBACK: I am.

- 1 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- and only if the
- 2 petitioner wins under (d)(1), on proving that the
- 3 decision on the facts before that -- the State court
- 4 were reasonable, that you ever get to (e)(2).
- MR. BILDERBACK: And that's why --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Why is that logical?
- 7 Why isn't it logical to start with (e)(2), which is --
- 8 it says in (e)(2) these are the prerequisites to having
- 9 a hearing, you prove you're entitled to it. Why are we
- 10 excluding those facts from the decision makers'
- 11 consideration?
- 12 MR. BILDERBACK: Well, setting aside for the
- 13 moment a point I hope to get to, which is I believe that
- 14 they did fail under (e)(2); but assuming the premise of
- 15 the question, which is that (e)(2) has been satisfied
- 16 and that the Federal evidentiary hearing might be
- 17 appropriate, it makes no more sense to conduct a Federal
- 18 evidentiary hearing before you conduct a (d)(1) analysis
- 19 than it would to conduct a Federal evidentiary hearing
- 20 before you do the 2254(a) analysis of whether there's a
- 21 Federal question, the 2254(b) and (c) analysis of
- whether the claim is properly exhausted, or the 2254(d)
- 23 analysis of whether the State court resolution of the
- 24 claim was reasonable.
- The statute is laid out in a methodical,

- 1 calculated, and logical manner. And if the court just
- 2 adheres to the calculated, methodical, and logical
- 3 manner of the statute --
- 4 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Counsel, I can tell you
- 5 the one thing you've said that makes no sense: There's
- 6 nothing logical about this statute, or clear about this
- 7 statute, as the legion of cases that the lower courts
- 8 have addressed in trying to interpret it and as the
- 9 legion of Supreme Court cases that have dealt with this
- 10 statute --
- 11 MR. BILDERBACK: Well, I would submit that
- 12 we could bring some much-needed clarity to some of the
- 13 confusion on these issues if the -- I think the plain
- language of 2254(d)(1), which is retrospective and
- 15 contextual, is -- was -- is given its full force and
- 16 effect.
- 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: How does that
- 18 work --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Have you thought about --
- 20 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: How does that work,
- 21 counsel, if you have new evidence? My claim was
- decided, it was reasonable under (d)(1) based on what
- 23 they knew, but I've come up with new evidence that I
- think could not have been reasonably discovered before
- 25 the (d)(1) hearing? What happens to that? It seems to

- 1 me you determine whether that evidence can come in under
- 2 (e)(2).
- 3 MR. BILDERBACK: Well, the -- the question
- 4 -- and I think the question the Court's asked seems to
- 5 implicate the ACLU's hypothetical in their amicus brief.
- 6 But the problem with doing the (e)(2) analysis before we
- 7 examine the reasonableness of the State court
- 8 determination is those new facts that were never
- 9 presented to the State court are going to, as it did in
- 10 this case, confound the court's analysis of whether the
- 11 State court determination was reasonable.
- 12 If new facts arise which call into question
- 13 some factual determination by the State court, or let's
- 14 say new evidence arises which calls into question a
- 15 State court factual determination, of course that
- 16 implicates subdivision (d)(2) and that -- that
- implicates subdivision (e)(1), neither of which are in
- 18 play in our case. But, under those circumstances, we
- 19 might find ourselves asking the question, depending upon
- 20 the nature of the new evidence, whether or not that
- 21 evidence is of such a caliber that it's going to
- 22 transform the claim. And if it so transforms the claim
- 23 that we're no longer going to consider it the same claim
- 24 that was adjudicated by the State court --
- 25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So -- so you

- 1 think -- and I have trouble understanding the parties'
- 2 position on this. When you talk about claims, you don't
- 3 mean totally different legal bases; you mean different
- 4 evidentiary support. The claim that it's ineffective
- 5 assistance of counsel based on organic -- the failure to
- 6 discover the organic brain damage you say might or might
- 7 not be considered a new claim, and, therefore, (d)(1)
- 8 would not be a bar to that.
- 9 MR. BILDERBACK: Oh, it's our position that
- 10 the introduction of the organic brain damage evidence
- 11 fundamentally changes the nature of this claim. So that
- 12 this -- the claim upon which the Ninth Circuit granted
- 13 relief is a claim that was never presented to the State
- 14 court. It is not simply a matter of -- of additional
- 15 evidence that tends to support. And the best
- 16 evidence --
- 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So then -- and the
- 18 reason that doesn't undermine your position is because
- 19 you think it's evidence that could have been discovered
- and presented earlier?
- 21 MR. BILDERBACK: Well, indeed, the very
- 22 nature of their claim compels the conclusion that it
- 23 could have been presented.
- 24 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I understand that.
- 25 But if it were evidence that could not have been

- 1 discovered previously, then (d)(1) does not bar looking
- 2 at (e)(2)?
- 3 MR. BILDERBACK: Depending upon the nature
- 4 of the new evidence.
- 5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: If it's really a new
- 6 claim?
- 7 MR. BILDERBACK: And, again, I think we have
- 8 a pretty well-settled body of jurisprudence that's
- 9 instructive on that, and that is the 2244(b)(2)(B)(ii)
- 10 analyses of when a claim that was previously adjudicated
- 11 on the merits by a Federal court can be revisited in a
- 12 subsequent petition that is filed in the Federal court.
- 13 If the nature of the claim is so fundamentally changed
- 14 that we're going to consider it a new claim, then it is
- 15 not the same claim that was presented to the State
- 16 court.
- However, because it wasn't presented to the
- 18 State court, depending upon the availability of a State
- 19 remedy or any State procedural bars, those sort of
- 20 traditional habeas corpus limitations --
- 21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I suppose -- I
- 22 suppose the Federal court can send it back to the State
- 23 court for exhaustion.
- MR. BILDERBACK: If -- if that's -- if
- 25 that's an appropriate remedy. But the -- the problem

- 1 with the procedure that was used in this case, and --
- 2 and some of this I acknowledge is idiosyncratic to this
- 3 case because the district court was unaware that AEDPA
- 4 applied until very late in the proceedings.
- 5 But the problem with following a procedure
- 6 that allows the development of evidence notwithstanding
- 7 the reasonableness of the State court determination is
- 8 you are very often, if not typically, going to find a
- 9 situation where, even if the State court determination
- 10 of the claim was wholly reasonable, the claim has
- 11 changed based upon these new facts developed for the
- 12 very first time in Federal court, and then that's going
- 13 to mean that it's a substantially transformed claim.
- JUSTICE ALITO: What happens to the --
- 15 JUSTICE KENNEDY: I'll -- I'll think it
- 16 through, but it seems to me that it's not consistent
- 17 with what I thought the theory of your brief was for you
- 18 to tell the Chief Justice that this is -- the
- 19 hypothetical was a new claim.
- 20 Take -- take the ACLU hypothetical that you
- 21 discuss in your reply brief. Is -- is that a new claim?
- MR. BILDERBACK: I don't think that the ACLU
- 23 hypothetical states a new claim. I was speaking of in
- 24 our case --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Okay.

- 1 MR. BILDERBACK: -- with the addition of the
- 2 organic brain damage evidence. So I think that in -- in
- 3 the hypothetical that the ACLU --
- 4 JUSTICE KENNEDY: But if it's a new claim,
- 5 then if -- we don't look to (d) because it wasn't
- 6 adjudicated on the merits.
- 7 MR. BILDERBACK: Right.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: -- and so you go to (e).
- 9 MR. BILDERBACK: Well, if it was -- yes,
- 10 that's -- that's absolutely correct, Your Honor. If you
- 11 have a claim presented to the Federal court that was
- 12 never adjudicated on its merits by the State court, and
- 13 if we're further -- further positing that there's no
- 14 available State court remedy --
- 15 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well then, now it seems to
- 16 me that you're saying that this is an (e) claim and that
- 17 you'll just fight the battle on whether or not it could
- 18 have been discovered through the exercise of due
- 19 diligence. You're -- and you're out of the
- (d)(1)/(d)(2) framework that you've been arguing up to
- 21 this point, based on the Chief Justice's question and
- 22 your response.
- 23 MR. BILDERBACK: If we assume that the claim
- 24 is a new claim, if we assume --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, I thought you said

- 1 you agreed that it was.
- 2 MR. BILDERBACK: In my case, I agree that
- 3 the facts presented to the Federal court were never
- 4 presented to the State court, and those facts
- 5 fundamentally transformed the claim such that the claim
- 6 upon which the Ninth Circuit granted relief was never
- 7 presented to California.
- 8 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Okay. So then this is an
- 9 (e)(2) case.
- MR. BILDERBACK: No, Your Honor, because you
- only can leap to (e)(2) if the State court never had the
- 12 opportunity to examine the facts of the claim and if the
- 13 petitioner can show that he could not have previously
- 14 presented the claim to the State court.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: No --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Then it's a procedural
- 17 bar? Is that --
- 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Just a second.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Then it's a procedural bar
- 20 case?
- 21 MR. BILDERBACK: Well, depending on how the
- 22 State court reacts to the new evidence. Yes, if the
- 23 State court erects a procedural bar then, yes, this
- 24 Court's well-settled jurisprudence on the question of
- 25 procedural bars is going to control whether or not we

- 1 can reach the merits of the claim in Federal court.
- 2 That's absolutely correct.
- 3 But here part of the problem in the instant
- 4 case is that the very nature of the claim that they have
- 5 presented precludes the conclusion that they could not
- 6 have presented this evidence to the State court in the
- 7 exercise of reasonable diligence. They have asserted
- 8 that any reasonable attorney in 1984 at the time of the
- 9 trial had to discover the organic brain damage diagnosis
- 10 that Dr. Vinogradov offered in Federal court, but the --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, Mr. Bilderback, going
- 12 back to your question of what's a claim. So the claim
- 13 here could be ineffective assistance at the penalty
- 14 stage. Or you could be saying, no, the claim is
- 15 ineffective -- ineffective assistance for failing to
- 16 present evidence of organic brain damage. That would be
- 17 a narrower understanding of the claim. Or still
- 18 narrower, it might be ineffective assistance for failing
- 19 to present evidence of a particular kind of brain
- 20 damage, frontal lobe brain damage, which is what the new
- 21 doctor said, as opposed to what the old doctor said,
- 22 which was bipolar disorder.
- 23 So how do we choose the level of generality,
- 24 if you will, when we try to figure out what the claim
- 25 is?

| 1 | MR. | BILDERBACK: | Well. | οf | course. | а | claim | i s |
|---|-----|-------------|-------|----|---------|---|-------|-----|
|   |     |             |       |    |         |   |       |     |

- 2 made up of two components, and one of them is -- is the
- 3 legal theory of the claim, and the other is the factual
- 4 landscape that we're asking that legal theory to be
- 5 applied to. So, for example, if someone were to present
- 6 to a State court or, frankly, to a Federal court, a
- 7 claim as general as the first statement that you made,
- 8 Justice Kagan, that my trial attorney gave me
- 9 ineffective assistance of counsel at the penalty phase,
- 10 that's a claim that's void for vagueness.
- 11 Rule 2 requires that you specifically
- 12 identify the factual bases of your claim to the Federal
- 13 court in your Federal petition. And California has a
- 14 similar rule that requires you to communicate the
- 15 factual bases of the claim. If we utterly change the
- 16 factual basis of the claim, then it is in essence a new
- 17 claim.
- I see that I'm almost out of time. I'd like
- 19 to reserve the balance for rebuttal.
- 20 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
- MR. BILDERBACK: Thank you.
- 22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Mr. Kennedy.
- 23 ORAL ARGUMENT OF SEAN K. KENNEDY
- ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENT
- 25 MR. KENNEDY: Good morning, Mr. Chief

- 1 Justice, and may it please the Court:
- There has been a lot of discussion about
- 3 changes from State to Federal court, but if we limit
- 4 ourselves, even to the evidence that was only presented
- 5 in State court, the mitigation evidence demonstrates an
- 6 objectively unreasonable application of Strickland, and
- 7 the judgment of the Ninth Circuit should be affirmed on
- 8 that basis alone.
- 9 We presented a substantial amount of legal
- 10 specificity and factual specificity in support of our
- 11 claim. We alleged in State court that his mom had run
- 12 over his head, that -- at age 2 and a half, and a year
- 13 later his head had propelled through the windshield in a
- 14 car accident, and that it caused mental and organic
- 15 impairments that affect intent and culpability.
- And Justice Kagan asked, what is the rule
- 17 for the generality of the claim? I believe it is that
- 18 which focuses on what is legally relevant in the habeas
- 19 hearing.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Yes, but, look, you say
- 21 that, even on the basis of the facts before the
- 22 California court, your client deserved relief. That may
- 23 well be, but that's not what the -- what the Ninth
- 24 Circuit said. The Ninth Circuit said that your client
- 25 deserved relief in light of the facts before the

- 1 California court plus other facts.
- Now, I'm not going to go back and answer a
- 3 hypothetical question of whether, if the Ninth Circuit
- 4 said on the basis of those facts alone that were before
- 5 the California court, if -- if the Ninth Circuit had
- 6 said that, would that opinion be affirmed? That's not
- 7 the opinion they came up with. They added facts. So it
- 8 seems to me that you have to live with what they wrote.
- 9 And the basis of their decision included additional
- 10 facts.
- 11 MR. KENNEDY: We do have to live with the
- 12 basis that the Ninth Circuit wrote, and the Ninth
- 13 Circuit majority en banc said that there were alternate
- 14 bases for granting relief. It felt that the (e)(2)
- 15 Federal hearing was compelling, but it specifically
- 16 stated that if you set aside the new mental health
- 17 theories that were introduced in Federal court and
- 18 focused only on the historical upbringing and childhood,
- 19 and the mental health facts alleged in State court, that
- 20 basis and that basis alone would support a finding. And
- 21 the dissent mentions this as well.
- 22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: A finding under --
- 23 under the standards that we've applied under AEDPA?
- MR. KENNEDY: Yes, an objectively
- 25 unreasonable application of Strickland. And --

- 1 JUSTICE BREYER: That in this case presents
- 2 no -- no issue. I mean, the -- if their holding is that
- 3 in the -- in your habeas hearing in State court, the
- 4 evidence presented in State court at that hearing was
- 5 sufficient and was required -- required that State court
- 6 to find that you win on this issue, the State court in
- 7 holding to the contrary is objectively unreasonable,
- 8 then you win. And why are we all here?
- 9 MR. KENNEDY: Yes, and --
- 10 (Laughter.)
- 11 JUSTICE SCALIA: That's your very point,
- 12 isn't it?
- 13 MR. KENNEDY: In -- in our opposition for
- 14 cert, we said this, that we thought it should not be
- 15 granted because of the presentation in State court --
- 16 JUSTICE BREYER: I mention it not because it
- 17 wouldn't --
- 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We have to determine
- 19 under AEDPA that it was objectively unreasonable for
- 20 this lawyer to get a psychiatrist, or whatever his
- 21 status was; to get a report, which he did, and which he
- 22 looked at, in which the psychiatrist or psychologist
- 23 said, look, there's nothing here, and he went through
- 24 all the stuff that was there; and, in fact, after the
- 25 Federal evidentiary hearing, he said, well, in light of

- 1 this new evidence, I'm still correct; and objectively
- 2 unreasonable for this lawyer to say, look, my best bet
- 3 is to put his mother on the stand, that that might
- 4 engender sympathy and portray him as not as bad a guy as
- 5 everybody says, as opposed to putting on all this
- 6 evidence that explains why he's such a bad guy. Those
- 7 are two -- we've said those are reasonable choices.
- If you're relying on that basis, we have to
- 9 decide that it is objectively unreasonable for a lawyer
- 10 to proceed on that basis.
- 11 MR. KENNEDY: Yes, and it is in the facts of
- 12 this case, Mr. Chief Justice. First, counsel didn't
- 13 make a reasoned strategic decision to -- to put forward
- 14 a certain mitigation strategy based on the mother.
- 15 Counsel didn't think the case was proceeding to penalty
- 16 phase.
- 17 JUSTICE GINSBURG: What about the argument
- 18 that a good deal of mitigation evidence came out during
- 19 the trial on the guilt?
- 20 MR. KENNEDY: It did not come out, Justice
- 21 Ginsburg. A few little pieces of information were given
- 22 by Mrs. Brashear, Mr. Pinholster's mom. But there was
- 23 no relationship of how his traumatic head injuries then
- 24 affected him and caused him damage. And so the -- the
- 25 presentation was incomplete. And even the State's own

- 1 expert, Dr. Stalberg, after he had actually seen all the
- 2 documents that he would have wanted to receive if he was
- 3 doing a mitigation mental health phase, he said it was
- 4 profoundly misleading. And it was.
- 5 JUSTICE KENNEDY: All right. And this goes
- 6 back to Justice Scalia's question. The question which
- 7 we granted -- question 1 is whether the Federal court
- 8 may reject a State court adjudication of a petitioner's
- 9 claim as unreasonable based on a factual predicate for
- 10 the claim that petitioner could have presented in the
- 11 State court but did not. And that describes what you're
- 12 talking about in response to Justice Ginsburg.
- Now, the Petitioner, unaccountably, has told
- 14 us a few minutes ago that this is a new claim, which I
- 15 think changes the whole question. But it seems to me
- 16 the claim is whether there's ineffective assistance of
- 17 counsel by reason of the mitigation evidence. And in
- 18 that case, we go back to Justice Scalia's opening
- 19 question to you: Was it the court relied on different
- 20 evidence, evidence that was not in the State hearing?
- 21 And that's the question, whether or not they can do
- that, if this evidence could have been presented.
- 23 And certainly it could have been presented.
- MR. KENNEDY: Well, Justice Kennedy, the
- 25 Ninth Circuit did make alternative rulings, but turning

- 1 to the question of the new evidence, we believe the new
- 2 evidence was properly considered, although the court
- 3 made it clear that it would affirm based only on what
- 4 was on State court, because that showing was so
- 5 substantial in and of itself.
- But, turning to the new evidence, there is a
- 7 reason things like this happen. In California, the
- 8 claim was denied without any hearing and without any
- 9 explanation. And then the -- the case moves to Federal
- 10 court. And for the first time, it's the State that
- 11 starts bringing forth its mental health theory to rebut
- 12 the offered theory and starts to question whether or not
- 13 Dr. Stalberg, who is our expert, has a neurology license
- 14 and can opine on how epilepsy affects intent and
- 15 culpability.
- 16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Just to pause for a
- 17 moment, you said there was no hearing in the State
- 18 court. Well, that was because the State court, pursuant
- 19 to the established procedures, assumed everything you
- 20 wanted to show was true. It's a little bit much. I
- 21 mean, you were not going to be in any better position
- 22 after a hearing than you were before the State court.
- MR. KENNEDY: Mr. Chief Justice, the
- 24 California Supreme Court didn't tell us what I -- what
- 25 they did. It is true that there is a procedure for

- 1 provisionally assuming facts are true. They didn't say
- 2 that they did that here.
- 3 And the backdrop against how this case
- 4 happened in State court is we presented all of the
- 5 allegations with affidavits in support of them, and the
- 6 California Supreme Court issued an OSC, which normally
- 7 means they think if the showing is true, it's got to be
- 8 granted, and there has to be a hearing and a ruling that
- 9 describes the reasoning.
- 10 Then the State filed in State court
- 11 documents, fairly conclusory, saying: You shouldn't
- 12 believe Dr. Woods. He came into this evaluation 10
- 13 years after the fact. You shouldn't believe him. You
- 14 shouldn't believe trial counsel. Trial counsel was
- 15 disbarred.
- And after that, the State Supreme Court
- 17 withdraws the OSC and issues a postcard denial. That
- 18 suggests that we didn't get the procedures that are
- 19 referred to, at least from the State's perspective.
- 20 JUSTICE ALITO: But isn't it the California
- 21 rule that a hearing had to have been conducted unless
- 22 they concluded that the petitioner was not entitled to
- 23 relief based on the facts alleged in the petition?
- 24 MR. KENNEDY: I think that's the rule,
- 25 Justice Alito, but if that is what was done here,

- 1 because it is the most commonly invoked rule, it was
- 2 objectively unreasonable, because in light of the
- 3 presentation that was made in State court -- and I've
- 4 given the Court some of it -- that was definitely a
- 5 showing of an unreasonable application of Strickland,
- 6 because --
- 7 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, to get back to the
- 8 question the Chief Justice asked before, trial counsel
- 9 did consult a psychiatrist, Dr. Stalberg, and his report
- 10 was very unfavorable.
- Now, it's your -- it's your argument that it
- 12 was ineffective for them not to continue their search
- 13 for a helpful expert and come upon Drs. Vinogradov and
- 14 Olson or someone like them during that period of time?
- 15 Is that -- is that the claim?
- MR. KENNEDY: I'm sorry, Justice Alito,
- 17 that's not my argument. I think there are many times
- 18 where it would be perfectly acceptable for trial counsel
- 19 to hire a mental health expert, receive a report, and
- 20 say, based on what we have, we're not going to use this
- 21 route.
- But it wasn't acceptable here, because what
- 23 happened here is they hired a mental health expert in
- 24 the middle of the guilt phase who went down on a Sunday
- 25 for 1 to 2 hours without any of the documents that he

- 1 said -- he said -- that he needed to do a proper
- 2 mitigation investigation. And he gave them a letter
- 3 that they had to have known on its face showed
- 4 Dr. Stalberg did not have enough information to render a
- 5 competent psychiatric opinion.
- 6 JUSTICE BREYER: That's -- again, it would
- 7 be helpful -- maybe you can't do this from the top of
- 8 your head, but when I looked at the Ninth Circuit en
- 9 banc decision, I found a long discussion on page 79
- 10 following by Chief Judge Kozinski in dissent, from which
- 11 I got the impression that the majority was not saying:
- 12 We think the State court decision here was unreasonable
- or violated clearly established law, based on the record
- 14 before the State court on habeas, State habeas.
- Now, you've just told me in the 70-page
- opinion by Judge Smith, there's a paragraph or something
- 17 that says: Even were all this issue out of it, the
- 18 extra evidence, we still think that looking just at the
- 19 evidence before the State court habeas, and just at
- 20 their decision, we think in light of all these things
- 21 you now are bringing up that that was a -- was an
- 22 unreasonable application of clearly established Federal
- 23 law, or at least was based on an unreasonable
- 24 determination of the facts; in other words, satisfied
- 25 (d).

- 1 Where does it say that? That would save me
- 2 a lot of time if you know that off the top of your head.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Page 35. I've spent all
- 4 that time.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Well, that's very good.
- 6 (Laughter.)
- 7 MR. KENNEDY: Justice Breyer, the Ninth
- 8 Circuit said: "Although Pinholster substituted experts
- 9 during the proceeding who ultimately developed different
- 10 mental impairment theories, these experts nonetheless
- 11 relied on the same background facts that Pinholster" --
- 12 "Pinholster presented to the State court. Accordingly,
- if 2254(e)(2) were to limit the scope of the evidence
- 14 before us, it would exclude only the new mental
- 15 impairment theories introduced in federal court, and
- 16 their exclusion would not affect our result."
- 17 JUSTICE BREYER: Well, there you are, and I
- 18 should have asked Justice Scalia beforehand.
- 19 (Laughter.)
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Kennedy --
- 21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So you're putting
- 22 your eggs in the basket that, under AEDPA, what happened
- 23 here was objectively unreasonable?
- MR. KENNEDY: Well --
- 25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Or do you want to go

- on and look at the question on which we granted cert and
- 2 argue that we should look at the new evidence or that
- 3 the State court should look at the new evidence?
- 4 MR. KENNEDY: Well, we think what happened
- 5 here was perfectly appropriate for the court to hold a
- 6 hearing. No hearing had been held in State court, and
- 7 the Federal court determined that a hearing was
- 8 appropriate because Pinholster had been diligent in
- 9 attempting to develop the facts, and that is the test
- 10 that this Court has set forth in Michael Williams.
- 11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, this -- your
- 12 friend pointed it out, and I have to say it's a logical
- 13 conundrum for me, too -- you have to show under (e)(2)
- 14 that the factual predicate could not have been
- 15 previously discovered, and your claim is that his lawyer
- 16 should have discovered this. They both can't be true.
- 17 And if the former is not true, you don't get a hearing;
- 18 and if the latter is not true, you don't get relief.
- MR. KENNEDY: Well, I guess it depends on
- 20 how one interprets the term "factual predicate," because
- 21 if we focus on mental health impairments and how
- 22 impairments affect intent and culpability and how it
- 23 plays out on the specific facts of the crime, Pinholster
- 24 did discover those, even though he didn't have discovery
- 25 or an evidentiary hearing. He did allege them, and he

- 1 should have been given a hearing where he would have
- 2 then further developed those facts, just as he did in
- 3 Federal court, when he received the hearing that he
- 4 should have received in State court but did not.
- 5 There's nothing wrong with that. But we
- 6 don't need that view --
- 7 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Could you go back to
- 8 Justice Kagan's earlier question of how we draw the
- 9 line? At what level of generality is sufficient to say
- 10 that a factual basis of a claim has been developed?
- MR. KENNEDY: I think we draw the line by
- 12 focusing on what is legally relevant, not a DSM opinion.
- I have to say, as a long-time public
- 14 defender, my experience is that the mental health
- 15 professionals often speak about the legally relevant
- 16 facts in different ways based on the DSM, but to focus
- 17 on what matters: What was his impairment? How did it
- 18 affect him?
- 19 He was, right before the homicides, at the
- 20 house of a friend in an erratic state, saying he had a
- 21 message from God, brandishing a knife and putting it
- 22 into the door. Dr. Stalberg, who did this mid-trial
- 23 evaluation, said that that was extraordinarily important
- 24 to him, because it showed that this was not a cold and
- 25 calculated murderer, as he thought when he didn't have

- 1 the information, but it showed we had a severely
- 2 impaired person. And he thought, because of his
- 3 epilepsy and mental health condition, he was
- 4 hypersensitive.
- 5 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, suppose a petitioner
- 6 in the State post-conviction proceeding proffers an
- 7 affidavit from one mental health expert alleging one
- 8 type of mental disorder, and then after relief is denied
- 9 in the State court, the petitioner files in Federal
- 10 court and asks for an evidentiary hearing at which the
- 11 petitioner is going to call a dozen highly distinguished
- 12 mental health experts who will testify to a very
- 13 different mental disorder. Now, has the petitioner
- 14 developed the factual predicate for that claim in the
- 15 State proceeding?
- MR. KENNEDY: I think it's going to depend
- on the facts of the case, but he's going to have a very
- 18 difficult time. And that's the reason why there's --
- 19 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But why? Explain why
- 20 that -- the opinion is not a fact that's different.
- 21 MR. KENNEDY: Because the opinion is based
- 22 on facts. So the more differently the cases look, the
- 23 more they focus on different underlying facts, different
- 24 reasons and how they affect conduct differently, the
- 25 more it's going to be difficult, because under this

- 1 Court's doctrines, you have to -- a petitioner who wants
- 2 to go to Federal court with new experts, he's got to
- 3 show first that he's exhausted, and, you know, that's
- 4 going to be a problem. And, second, that if he's
- 5 exhausted, that he was diligent in trying to develop the
- 6 facts in State court --
- JUSTICE ALITO: Well, that's very
- 8 complicated, just as your opponent's idea of what
- 9 constitutes a claim is very complicated and
- 10 fact-dependent. What -- would it not be better to say
- 11 that the petitioner in the example that I gave did
- 12 not -- was not diligent in developing all of the
- 13 additional evidence that could have been brought forward
- 14 at the State proceeding, assuming that it could have
- 15 been, but was not brought forward until the Federal
- 16 proceeding?
- 17 MR. KENNEDY: I --
- 18 JUSTICE ALITO: The factual predicate of the
- 19 claim is the new evidence that's brought forward in --
- 20 in the Federal proceeding, and unless there is a good
- 21 reason why that wasn't brought forward in the State
- 22 proceeding, it shouldn't be considered.
- 23 MR. KENNEDY: Justice Alito, I think that
- 24 can and should be a part of analyzing diligence, and in
- 25 the particular hypothetical that Your Honor has posed,

- 1 it seems like it's going to be tough to show diligence.
- 2 In this case, he does have good reasons. The State sat
- 3 back in State court and didn't really address the
- 4 allegations of mental health mitigation that weren't
- 5 developed. They just simply said you shouldn't believe
- 6 it; it happened too late.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Mr. Kennedy, can I bring
- 8 you back to page 35? The -- the court of appeals'
- 9 opinion, Ninth Circuit's opinion, says, "Accordingly, if
- 10 2254(e)(2) were to limit the scope of the evidence
- 11 before us, it would exclude only the new mental
- 12 impairment theories" -- the new mental impairment
- 13 theories -- "introduced in federal court, and their
- 14 exclusion would not affect our result."
- 15 The State contends that there -- there was
- 16 other factual material, not just those theories but also
- 17 the 6-and-a-half-hour time sheet evidence.
- MR. KENNEDY: Well --
- 19 JUSTICE SCALIA: So at least, you know, that
- 20 really doesn't cover the waterfront of -- of all new
- 21 evidence.
- MR. KENNEDY: Well, the State also says in
- 23 its reply brief that it's not just the affidavits; it's
- 24 the affidavits looked -- looked at against the backdrop
- 25 of the whole State court record.

- 1 JUSTICE KAGAN: But, Mr. Kennedy, do you
- 2 agree with the State that there are two things at issue
- 3 here? There's the new medical testimony, and there's
- 4 also the billing sheets?
- 5 MR. KENNEDY: Well, I -- I respectfully
- 6 don't, because the billing sheets in our State --
- 7 there's a procedure where counsel has to submit the
- 8 billing sheets to the court, and where the information
- 9 comes from is the clerk's transcript in this case from
- 10 the State court record.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Oh, but that's not -- that
- 12 was not presented as evidence in the State court, the
- 13 billing sheets?
- MR. KENNEDY: No, we -- we said he didn't
- 15 prepare at all in State court. And then when the
- 16 billing sheets were revealed, Mr. Brainard, who is the
- 17 lawyer who did all of the witnesses at penalty phase,
- 18 has an entry, "begin preparing for penalty phase," and
- 19 every one -- that entry and every one after it is
- 20 6.5 hours.
- 21 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Could you just clarify
- 22 again for me? I'm not sure I understand. Do the
- 23 billing records in -- when do they get disclosed to --
- MR. KENNEDY: In our State, the -- the
- 25 appointed counsel submits a 987 form under penalty of

- 1 perjury saying these are the hours I worked; I want to
- 2 be paid. And it happens in real time, and it was done
- 3 throughout the trial, and it's part of the clerk's
- 4 transcript. And the reason the district court admitted
- 5 them in this case, they were -- they were exhibits 67
- 6 through 72, and it's -- they were admitted because they
- 7 were the records from the State court record, from the
- 8 clerk's transcript.
- 9 JUSTICE BREYER: But what about --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: I think what's important is
- 11 that they are not -- I mean, tell me if I am wrong, but
- 12 they were not part of the State court record on which
- 13 the State court made the 2254(d)(1) determination; is
- 14 that right?
- MR. KENNEDY: Well, the -- they were not,
- 16 but the allegation was that they did nothing. So it was
- 17 an even stronger allegation in State court than was
- 18 ultimately pursued at the (e)(2) hearing.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: To say that they were on
- 20 record in the State court is not to say that they were
- 21 part of the record, of the trial record. And these
- things were not part of the trial record, right?
- MR. KENNEDY: Well, the clerk's transcript
- 24 is part of the trial record. The transcript is -- part
- 25 of the record is usually the reporter's transcript, the

- 1 clerk's transcript, and the docket. So that --
- 2 JUSTICE SCALIA: All -- all that goes --
- 3 goes to the fact-finder?
- 4 MR. KENNEDY: Well --
- 5 JUSTICE SCALIA: All that goes to a jury in
- 6 criminal cases?
- 7 MR. KENNEDY: Oh I'm sorry, Your Honor, I
- 8 didn't mean to say that. It's not in the evidentiary
- 9 portion of the record before the jury; it is part of the
- 10 State court record.
- 11 JUSTICE KAGAN: I'm sorry, I don't know --
- 12 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: When you say the
- 13 State court -- you just told us that this was better off
- 14 because it's only 6 hours, and you said in State court
- 15 they did nothing; is that right?
- MR. KENNEDY: Yes. Are they --
- 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: When you say they
- 18 did nothing, surely that was rhetorical hyperbole, and
- 19 you took the 6 hours to say this proves what we said,
- 20 they did nothing; they did next to nothing. You're not
- 21 saying, oh, well, it was 6 hours, so we're sorry we said
- 22 they did nothing.
- MR. KENNEDY: I think what we did is we
- 24 confirmed the allegation that we had made in State
- 25 court, which is just another example of why it was

- 1 important based on these allegations for Pinholster to
- 2 get a hearing to develop the record --
- 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, that's -- that
- 4 gets back to the point Justice Scalia was making, is
- 5 that this is new evidence that the Ninth Circuit
- 6 considered with respect to the original. In other
- 7 words, they were not just saying, okay, even if none of
- 8 this happened, we'd still rule against you, because one
- 9 of the new things they had was the 6-hour evidence,
- 10 which you've just said makes your case stronger. I
- 11 think it does make your case stronger, but it also makes
- 12 clear that we can't say let's just look -- the Ninth
- 13 Circuit just looked at what was there originally.
- MR. KENNEDY: Well, I think you can, because
- 15 the Ninth Circuit -- I mean, if you look at the -- if
- 16 the Court looks at the allegations in State court, there
- 17 were -- the allegations regarding counsel's performance
- 18 was that they did not believe that they were going to a
- 19 penalty phase; that, because they did not look at the
- 20 prosecutor's open file, they did not know that their
- 21 theory that they would not have a penalty phase was
- 22 wrong; and that they had no strategic reason
- 23 whatsoever --
- 24 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: You're going back to
- 25 arguing that you win under the original proceeding, and

- 1 the question on which we granted cert --
- 2 MR. KENNEDY: Yes.
- 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: -- shouldn't be
- 4 addressed.
- 5 MR. KENNEDY: Yes.
- 6 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Okay.
- 7 JUSTICE BREYER: Is -- I just want to be as
- 8 clear as possible. Justice Scalia read the sentence on
- 9 page 35. I read the heading from what Judge Kozinski
- 10 says, "Our review is limited to the record presented in
- 11 the state habeas petitions." That's what he says.
- 12 All right. Now, you told me that the
- 13 sentence he read means the majority there says if our
- 14 record is limited to the record -- our review is limited
- 15 to the record presented in the State habeas petitions,
- 16 you still win.
- MR. KENNEDY: Yes.
- 18 JUSTICE BREYER: Okay. But that's not what
- 19 it said. It said exactly what Justice Scalia said it
- 20 said, so -- which is talking about the evidence coming
- 21 in under (e)(2) or something. Now, I see a nightmare in
- 22 front of me where I have to go through hundreds or
- 23 thousands of pages to try to figure out whether they did
- 24 or didn't mean our review is limited to the record
- 25 presented in the State habeas petition.

- 1 MR. KENNEDY: Well, the -2 JUSTICE BREYER: And I can ask you, is that
- 3 conceded on both sides?
- 4 MR. KENNEDY: Well, what the Ninth Circuit
- 5 majority was saying is that if there was some bar that
- 6 (e)(2) had to holding a hearing where new evidence could
- 7 be properly presented, that it wouldn't matter, because
- 8 based on the record before it in State court, it proved
- 9 a Strickland violation under Williams, Wiggins, and
- 10 Rompilla; and it was objectively unreasonable.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Yes, but that -- that was
- on the assumption that the only new evidence would have
- 13 been the evidence of -- how did they put it? "The new
- 14 mental impairment theories introduced in federal court."
- 15 That that's the only new evidence that would be -- would
- 16 be excluded. And the other side contradicts that.
- MR. KENNEDY: Well, but I'm -- I'm sorry.
- 18 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Counsel, could I just
- 19 ask one clarifying question? In the Second Circuit for
- 20 many years, you had the record on appeal which the
- 21 parties prepared, but you also had the record below
- 22 which was sent automatically to the judges to review as
- 23 well. The billing records that we're talking about --
- 24 you say they were part of the record below -- would that
- 25 automatically have been sent under California law to the

- 1 reviewing court?
- 2 MR. KENNEDY: Yes, because it's the same --
- 3 we have automatic appeals, and the habeas is done in
- 4 front of the Supreme Court. So the entire record, I
- 5 believe, is before the California Supreme Court, and
- 6 it's also my understanding that the State makes the same
- 7 argument in its reply brief, that it's not just
- 8 Pinholster's allegations; it's Pinholster's allegations
- 9 considered against the total record.
- 10 But even if the specific allegation of
- 11 6.5 hours was not there, the allegation was that counsel
- 12 had done nothing to prepare, that they had not spent any
- time preparing because they wrongly believed that they
- 14 were not in a death penalty --
- 15 JUSTICE SCALIA: I wouldn't believe that. I
- 16 mean, you had nothing to support it. I mean, I'd say
- 17 that's just lawyer's puffery --
- MR. KENNEDY: Well --
- 19 JUSTICE SCALIA: -- whereas you come up with
- 20 a record that shows 6.5 hours. I mean, that's
- 21 something.
- MR. KENNEDY: Your Honor, the lawyers made
- 23 this revelation in court at trial in front of the
- 24 famously aggressive prosecutor and the trial judge, who
- 25 knew these lawyers and had sat through the hearing, and

- 1 no one had any suggestion that it was puffery or it was
- 2 false. In fact, the trial prosecutor started
- 3 to staunchly defend her conduct by saying, look, I
- 4 offered them to look at my file and they didn't show up.
- 5 Which sounds, you know, strikingly similar to Rompilla,
- 6 where counsel doesn't even look at the file that will
- 7 reveal that their whole defense is problematic and built
- 8 on a lie.
- 9 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: How long does it
- 10 take to read Dr. Stalberg's report that says I've looked
- 11 at this, I've examined this, this, and this, and there's
- 12 nothing here that's going to support a mental impairment
- 13 theory?
- MR. KENNEDY: It's very short, but the
- 15 report, when they read that quick report on its face,
- 16 they had to know that he wasn't prepared enough to
- 17 render an opinion. He seemed not to know about this
- 18 incident about I have a message from God and all of the
- 19 drinking and drug use beforehand. And the report
- 20 doesn't even mention the head injuries, being run over
- 21 by his mother and going through the window. Counsel had
- 22 to know these things, first, because that witness
- 23 testimony had occurred days before Dr. Stalberg's Sunday
- 24 interview. And, two, at least at some point in time the
- 25 mother said these things happened, and they had to know

- 1 that that report didn't appear to know that there were
- 2 serious traumatic head injuries.
- 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Counsel, just to get
- 4 back to (e)(2), what is specifically the factual
- 5 predicate that could not have been previously discovered
- 6 in this case?
- 7 MR. KENNEDY: The factual predicate that
- 8 could not be discovered was the evolution of the mental
- 9 health testimonies, as it moved from affidavit to live
- 10 testimony, and the State gave for the first time
- 11 specific notice of how it was going to attack the
- 12 presentation in State court. And all of the arguably
- 13 new mental health theories were in response to the
- 14 changes in -- that the State itself had made in Federal
- 15 court.
- 16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
- 17 Mr. Bilderback, you have 5 minutes
- 18 remaining.
- MR. KENNEDY: Thank you.
- 20 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF JAMES W. BILDERBACK, II,
- ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Could you clarify the
- 23 procedure question I asked earlier? Were the billing
- 24 records made part of the record that went up to the
- 25 California reviewing courts?

- 1 MR. BILDERBACK: Some, but not all of them
- 2 were. There were --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Are -- are you claiming
- 4 the 6-hour one didn't go up?
- 5 MR. BILDERBACK: Well, of course, part of
- 6 the problem is that the 6-and-a-half-hour figure is --
- 7 is arrived at by purportedly adding up all of the hours
- 8 spent in preparation --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I'm just asking a simple
- 10 question. Was the -- were the billing records that were
- 11 used ultimately to calculate the 6 hours --
- MR. BILDERBACK: Yes --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- were they before the
- 14 California reviewing courts?
- 15 MR. BILDERBACK: Yes. The billing records
- 16 that the Ninth Circuit relied upon were before the
- 17 California Supreme Court in the context of the clerk's
- 18 transcript that was presented to the California Supreme
- 19 Court in the appeal.
- 20 However, there were important -- indeed, the
- 21 most important records, that might have shed light on
- 22 the amount of time that counsel actually spent
- 23 preparing, were never presented to the California
- 24 Supreme Court. Indeed, those records were never
- 25 presented to the Federal court, and those were the

- 1 records of Mr. Dettmar.
- 2 Mr. Dettmar was the lawyer principally
- 3 tasked with preparation of the case in mitigation at the
- 4 penalty phase, and there were no records for Mr. Dettmar
- 5 for the 6-week period leading up to and through the
- 6 penalty phase. And it -- given --
- 7 JUSTICE SCALIA: Is that where the 6 and a
- 8 half hours came from?
- 9 MR. BILDERBACK: No, the --
- 10 JUSTICE SCALIA: His records --
- MR. BILDERBACK: No, the 6 and a half hours
- 12 came from Mr. Brainard's records. Mr. Brainard was --
- 13 JUSTICE SCALIA: Which the California court
- 14 had.
- 15 MR. BILDERBACK: Yes. The California court
- 16 had Mr. Brainard's records. They did --
- 17 JUSTICE SCALIA: So it's not new evidence,
- 18 then. It wasn't new evidence before the Federal court.
- MR. BILDERBACK: Well, the -- again, the
- 20 allegation that there were only 6 and a half hours spent
- 21 in preparation, that allegation was never made to the
- 22 California Supreme Court.
- 23 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But if I'm a reviewing
- 24 court and I'm told the lawyer spent no time preparing --
- 25 MR. BILDERBACK: I beg your pardon, Your

- 1 Honor.
- 2 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: When I was a reviewing
- 3 judge on the court of appeals, someone said he didn't
- 4 spend any time doing X, Y, and Z, the first thing I went
- 5 to was the billing records. What -- do the billing
- 6 records dispute that or not?
- 7 MR. BILDERBACK: Yes. The billing
- 8 records --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So I'm assuming -- I
- 10 have to assume -- I don't have to assume, but it's not
- 11 new evidence. They had it before them.
- 12 MR. BILDERBACK: The billing records --
- 13 again, the billing records upon which the Ninth Circuit
- 14 arrived at its conclusion that there were only 6 and a
- 15 half hours was before the State court. However, the
- 16 allegation that there were only 6 and a half hours spent
- in preparation was never presented to State court, and,
- 18 indeed, the records presented to the State court were
- 19 incomplete in a way that would not admit to that
- 20 conclusion.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: If you're relying on
- 22 allegations rather than the evidence, the allegation was
- 23 even worse. The allegation was zip.
- MR. BILDERBACK: Exactly.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: No time.

- 1 MR. BILDERBACK: But that allegation --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, exactly, that doesn't
- 3 help you.
- 4 MR. BILDERBACK: No, it does, Your Honor,
- 5 because that allegation was plainly false, based upon
- 6 the State court record. The State doesn't blindly
- 7 accept any factual allegation made in the petition. It
- 8 -- it reviews those allegations in light of the State
- 9 court record.
- 10 And, in this case, as the Court indicates,
- 11 the State court record plainly showed that the
- 12 allegation that they did nothing to prepare for the
- 13 penalty phase was false, and, indeed, the State court
- 14 records showed that they began preparing for the penalty
- 15 phase well before the penalty phase began.
- So the factual allegation that was presented
- 17 to the State court was not only false, based on the
- 18 State court record; it was affirmatively disproved
- 19 during the Federal evidentiary hearing. It's very
- 20 difficult to see how we can arrive at the conclusion
- 21 that the State court determination was unreasonable,
- 22 when in fact it was correct.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Is this right, then?
- 24 First, for you to win, the first thing we have to say is
- 25 we're going to look at page 35, and they say, we're

- 1 looking at the State court record, the State courts
- 2 were, in effect, unreasonable. We have to say that was
- 3 wrong. We have to look through the evidence and say
- 4 that was wrong. Then you're at first base.
- 5 MR. BILDERBACK: Yes.
- 6 JUSTICE BREYER: And to get home, we now
- 7 have to look at the new evidence, and there it's some
- 8 combination of (a) there was nothing to have a hearing
- 9 about because there's nothing here that lets you have a
- 10 hearing; or (b) there was something to have a hearing
- 11 about because this was so new that it was a new claim,
- 12 and you should have gone to the State court first on
- 13 that one, but there's no room to do it. They don't let
- 14 you do it.
- So, okay, judge in the Federal court, you
- 16 have the hearing, and now, when you have the hearing,
- 17 first see if there was the diligence. And there wasn't.
- 18 That gets you home. That's the whole argument.
- MR. BILDERBACK: The only point with which I
- 20 would -- I would take issue with the Court's
- 21 characterization is -- I assume the Court was not
- 22 speaking hypothetically. The Court is speaking about my
- 23 case.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Yes, yes.
- 25 MR. BILDERBACK: In my case, the State

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| 1  | court's doors are not closed. That                      |
|----|---|
| 2  | JUSTICE BREYER: Well, then why isn't this a             |
| 3  | part of the thing, if you have a new claim here, go to  |
| 4  | the State first?  |
| 5  | MR. BILDERBACK: Because the exhaustion                  |
| 6  | difficulty in this case, the exhaustion problem in this |
| 7  | case, is a consequence of the errors that the Federal   |
| 8  | court made in doing the $(d)(1)$ in failing to do the   |
| 9  | (d)(1) determination at all and in taking evidence in   |
| 10 | clear derogation of (e)(2). If you ever take evidence   |
| 11 | in derogation of (e)(2), you're going to end up with an |
| 12 | unexhausted claim, and that's precisely what happened   |
| 13 | here.   |
| 14 | CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.              |
| 15 | The case is submitted.                                  |
| 16 | (Whereupon, at 12:05 p.m., the case in the              |
| 17 | above-entitled matter was submitted.)                   |
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| 36:5 41:11 43:22        | <b>2244</b> 13:10                    |                           |   |        |
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|                         | <b>2254(b)</b> 15:21                 |                           |   |        |
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| <b>Y</b> 51:4           | 41:13                                |                           |   |        |
| year 25:12              | <b>2254(e)(2)</b> 3:24               |                           |   |        |
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