1	IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES
2	x
3	MICHAEL J. ASTRUE, COMMISSIONER :
4	OF SOCIAL SECURITY, :
5	Petitioner : No. 11-159
6	v. :
7	KAREN K. CAPATO, ON BEHALF OF :
8	B.N.C., ET AL. :
9	x
10	Washington, D.C.
11	Monday, March 19, 2012
12	
13	The above-entitled matter came on for oral
14	argument before the Supreme Court of the United States
15	at 10:02 a.m.
16	APPEARANCES:
17	ERIC D. MILLER, ESQ., Assistant to the Solicitor
18	General, Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.; for
19	Petitioner.
20	CHARLES A. ROTHFELD, ESQ., Washington, D.C.; for
21	Respondents.
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1 PROCEEDINGS 2 (10:02 a.m.) 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear argument 4 first this morning in Case 11-159, Astrue v. Capato. 5 Mr. Miller. ORAL ARGUMENT OF ERIC D. MILLER 6 7 ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER MR. MILLER: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it 8 9 please the Court: 10 The Social Security Administration has 11 reasonably interpreted the Social Security Act to 12 provide that, as a general rule, a person seeking to 13 establish eligibility for child survivor benefits must 14 show that he or she would have been able to inherit personal property from the decedent under applicable 15 16 State intestacy law. That interpretation is supported 17 by the text, structure, and history of the Act, and it comports with principles of federalism because it defers 18 19 to State law on the determination of family status, 20 which is a traditional subject of State regulation. 21 It's reasonable and entitled to deference under Chevron. 22 Now, the textual arguments in this case 23 involve the interaction of three provisions of the Act. 24 And the first is section 402(d)(1), which is the basic 25 benefits-granting provision. And that says that under

1 certain conditions, the child of a wage earner is 2 entitled to benefits. And that provision has a cross-reference to a definition of "child" in section 3 4 416(e) of the Act. And 416(e), which is reprinted at 5 page 4a of the appendix to our brief, says that the term "child" means (1) the child or legally adopted child of 6 7 an individual, (2) a stepchild under certain cases, and (3) a person who is the grandchild or stepgrandchild of 8 9 an individual. 10

Now, I think the one thing that's immediately apparent from looking at that provision is that under anyone's reading, it's a little bit confusing because it uses the word "child" twice to mean two different things. That is, the first "child" is broader than the second, because the first one includes the second as well as adopted child, stepchild, and so forth.

JUSTICE ALITO: Suppose a State legislature got the crazy idea that children born to married people during the time of the marriage shouldn't inherit under State intestacy law. Would that mean that they would be ineligible for survivors' benefits?

23 MR. MILLER: Not necessarily, because if 24 somebody doesn't qualify under -- and I should say at 25 the outset that that is unlike the law of any State

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either in 1939 or today.

2 JUSTICE ALITO: But what if they did -- what 3 if they did that?

4 MR. MILLER: There -- there are two 5 alternative mechanisms that Congress added to the statute in the 1960s to allow children who lack 6 7 intestacy rights to establish their eligibility. Those 8 are 416(h)(2)(B) and 416(h)(3). And 416(h)(3) says that an applicant who is the son or daughter of an insured 9 10 individual but is not a child under -- under paragraph 11 (A), which is the reference to State intestacy law, 12 shall nevertheless be deemed to be a child if there was an acknowledgment in writing that the child was -- that 13 14 the applicant was the son or daughter, or there was a 15 court decree for support. So, I think --

JUSTICE GINSBURG: Those are -- those are obviously meant to deal with -- with children whose parents are not married.

MR. MILLER: That's right. And the reason for that is that, in fact, under the law of every State, both in 1939 and today, children whose parents are married do have State -- do have intestacy rights. But I think what the provision I just referred to illustrates is that the term "child" in this statute is a legal term of art, because if you were just looking at

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1 the ordinary meaning of the word "child," the concept of 2 an applicant who is a son or daughter but is not a 3 child, would be completely nonsensical.

4 JUSTICE ALITO: Maybe it means something 5 else. Maybe it means that to the Congress that initially enacted the predecessor of this provision a 6 7 child was a child. They knew what a child was. And the type of child that I mentioned earlier was a child. 8 There wasn't a need for any definition of that. And 9 10 they -- they never had any inkling about the situation 11 that has arisen in this case, just as they had no 12 inkling that any State would go off and take away intestacy rights for children born to married people 13 14 during the course of their marriage.

15 MR. MILLER: Well, I mean, I think -- I 16 think those are probably accurate factual claims about 17 what Congress was thinking, but had Congress wanted --18 the way that Congress chose to make sure that the 19 children of married parents could establish their 20 eligibility was by looking to State intestacy law, because Congress knew that under State intestacy law, 21 those children had such rights. 22

JUSTICE KAGAN: Isn't there something
sort of bizarre about your reading, because Congress in
the (e) section sets up very specific definitions about

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1 stepchildren and grandchildren and even

2 stepgrandchildren in which State intestacy law is not 3 referenced? But you're saying that as to the largest 4 category, the category in which 90 percent of people are 5 going to get benefits, there Congress sent us all off to 6 State law.

7 MR. MILLER: Well, it -- that's -- that's
8 what section 416(h) says. Section 416(h) sets out a
9 rule --

10 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, suppose I'm not so 11 convinced that (h) is as clear as you think it is, 12 because there are two sentences of -- of section (h). 13 I'm just asking you to provide a reason why Congress 14 would have specified everything about what -- how you get benefits for stepchildren and grandchildren and 15 16 stepchildren, but not for the main category of people at 17 issue.

MR. MILLER: Well, I think -- I think it's 18 19 because with respect to the main category of people at 20 issue, the question Congress was asking is: What is the class of people who are likely to have a sufficiently 21 22 close relationship to the insured person such that it 23 would be appropriate to provide benefits to replace the 24 loss of support that they would likely be getting during the person's life? And if you look at what is the body 25

of law that defines that class of people who have a close relationship with someone, it's State intestacy law. And State intestacy law sets out sort of clear, easy-to-apply rules for the distribution of estates. CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, they don't always do --

7 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Mr. Miller, there's one provision in (h) that's puzzling, and maybe you can tell 8 me what it means. It's at (h)(2)(A), and it's the last 9 10 sentence of (A). It says: "Applicants who according to 11 State law would have the same status relative to taking 12 intestate personal property as a child ... shall be 13 deemed such." What person is that referring to? 14 Someone who is not a child but has the same status as a 15 child?

16 MR. MILLER: That -- that's right. The 17 first sentence sets out the general rule that you look to State law for the definition of "child." And the 18 19 second sentence says that people who do not have the 20 status of children but nonetheless have the inheritance rights of children shall be deemed children. And as a 21 22 practical matter, the people that that applies to are 23 people who have been equitably adopted.

24There's a doctrine in the law of many States25where you have an adoption -- or you have an agreement

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1 to adopt, but not yet a completed legal adoption. In 2 that circumstance, the would-be adoptee does not have the status of a child for all purposes or even 3 4 necessarily for all inheritance law purposes, but can 5 take property from the adopting parents. So, that's who would be covered by that sentence, and that's now 6 7 addressed in the regulations at --JUSTICE GINSBURG: Anyone else or just that 8 9 category? 10 MR. MILLER: I think -- I think that is the -- the most likely category that it would apply to. 11 12 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Counsel --13 JUSTICE SCALIA: I'm sorry. Go ahead. 14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: You said earlier that the State intestacy law provides clear rules, but I 15 16 assume that's not always the case, particularly with all 17 this new technological advancement. There must be 18 situations where you can't tell what State intestacy law 19 provides. And what does the Social Security 20 Administration do in that case? 21 MR. MILLER: The Social Security 22 Administration tries to apply State law. And --23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: No. My hypothetical is that there's no clear answer. I mean, let's take a 24 25 situation where this type of reproduction is -- is new,

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1 and the State legislatures haven't had a chance to 2 decide whether they want to recognize the offspring for State intestacy law or not. What would SSA do? 3 MR. MILLER: Well, the SSA does the best 4 5 that it can to figure out what the State law is, and then on review in the district court, you know, the 6 7 district court is able to review that. And there have been cases in which district courts have certified 8 9 questions to State courts. And I think actually the 10 fact that there are those difficult questions that can 11 come up in some of the cases, particularly involving 12 assisted reproductive technology, really illustrates one 13 of the virtues of leaving it to the States rather than, 14 as Respondent would have it, effectively forcing SSA and then the Federal courts on review of its decisions to 15 16 create a sort of Federal common law of parentage to 17 resolve all of those very difficult questions. 18 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: There was in my memory, 19 and it's been a while, that some States, if not all --20 and that's what I was going to ask you -- basically deem any child born during the marriage to be a child of the 21 22 marriage, whether it's a biological child or not, so 23 that if a mother has had a relationship outside of marriage, the married parent's still responsible for 24 25 that child.

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1	That would take care of, I think, a great
2	number, wouldn't it, of the new technology births that
3	occur without perhaps the input of one of the
4	biological input of one of the parents?
5	MR. MILLER: That that's right. And, in
б	fact, there are statutes in a number of States
7	addressing the question of when a yes.
8	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Yes. My question was,
9	do all States have similar rulings? And for those that
10	don't, what happens to a child that's been born with, as
11	Justice Roberts said, as the Chief said, with new
12	technology? What happens to that child in terms of
13	their definition of whether they'll be considered a
14	child for Social Security purposes?
15	MR. MILLER: I I can't speak with
16	certainty to all of the States, but I believe that that
17	is the the general rule. So, I'm not aware of any
18	any States where, when you have a married couple using
19	donor donor sperm, that the child would not be
20	deemed the child of the husband.
21	JUSTICE SCALIA: My impression is that, I'm
22	not sure it's by statute, but just by judicial decision,
23	a child born in the marriage is a child of the marriage
24	unless unless the child is repudiated by by the
25	father.

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1	MR. MILLER: I believe that is that is
2	the general rule. And I think one thing that that
3	illustrates, of course, is that Respondents' definition,
4	which is also the court of appeals' definition, of what
5	a child is and the definition that they urge the Court
б	to apply in 416 is the biological child of married
7	parents.
8	And not only is the does the "married"
9	part of that not comport with the ordinary understanding
10	of "child," because of course in ordinary usage whether
11	somebody is a child doesn't depend on whether their
12	parents are married, but the biological part also does
13	not comport with legal usage because, both in 1939 and
14	today, there are many cases in which biological
15	parentage is not determinative of legal parentage, both
16	for the reason that we were just talking about and then
17	also for another example is when you have an
18	adoption; a child who has been adopted by somebody else
19	is no longer legally the child of his biological
20	parents.
21	JUSTICE KENNEDY: Would you tell me if if
22	the Capato twins are both found to be be children
23	within the meaning of the Act, will they meet the
24	dependency or the deemed dependency requirements? Or is
25	that a back-up argument that you have? Or

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1	MR. MILLER: We that that would be a
2	question for the agency to address in the first
3	instance. The agency has not addressed that question in
4	the administrative process here. So, we are not
5	JUSTICE GINSBURG: It it was addressed in
6	the Ninth in the Ninth Circuit decision, wasn't it?
7	MR. MILLER: That's right. And the Ninth
8	Circuit read the dependency provision of the Act to say
9	that any legitimate child is deemed to be dependent, and
10	it then conducted an examination of legitimacy under
11	California law.
12	JUSTICE KENNEDY: You don't have a position
13	on that here? Or you want that to be elaborated more
14	by the agency?
15	MR. MILLER: That that's right. I mean,
16	I what I will say is, just speaking in general terms
17	about dependency, the statute creates a number of
18	presumptions that allow basically any any natural
19	child, any child under the that first that second
20	child in 416(e)(1), anyone who fits into that category
21	is deemed to be dependent. So, it doesn't necessarily
22	turn on on factual dependency, which is obviously not
23	present in
24	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Rebuttable presumption
25	or irrebuttable?

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1	MR. MILLER: The presumption in favor of
2	dependency for anyone who qualifies is irrebuttable.
3	JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, you rely only on that
4	on that definition.
5	The section is entitled "Old-age and
6	survivors insurance benefit payments," and it also
7	provides in (d) that a child is entitled to the benefits
8	if, among other things, (C) was dependent upon such
9	individual, (i) if such individual is living at the time
10	that the application was filed, (ii) if such individual
11	has died at the time of death, or (iii) if such
12	individual had a period of disability, et cetera, et
13	cetera.
14	It seems to me is the word "survivor"
15	used anywhere in the text of this statute except in
16	the in the heading of this section?
17	MR. MILLER: I don't it doesn't appear in
18	any of the the operative definitional provisions, but
19	I would certainly agree with you that it is
20	JUSTICE SCALIA: We use titles to determine
21	the meaning of ambiguous provisions later, don't we?
22	MR. MILLER: Yes, and I certainly would
23	would agree with the the idea that it is difficult to
24	describe someone as a survivor who was not alive at the
25	time that or not

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1 JUSTICE SCALIA: Nor would -- nor would he 2 meet the requirements of (C), would he? Would he meet any of the requirements of (C)? Of (d)(1)(C). 3 4 MR. MILLER: The dependency requirement is 5 defined in 402(d)(3) and -- which unfortunately is not reproduced in the appendix, but which has the effect of 6 7 making anyone who qualifies under 416(h) be deemed 8 dependent. Now, we don't think that the children in 9 this case qualify under 416(h). So, there's no -- not 10 even any need to reach the dependency question there. 11 JUSTICE SCALIA: Then what does -- what does (d)(1)(C) do if it's all washed out by --12 13 MR. MILLER: Well, the dependency 14 requirement is something that people who don't qualify 15 under 416(h), people who are adopted children or 16 stepchildren or grandchildren, may in some cases have to 17 make an individualized determination of actual 18 dependency. JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, it doesn's say - it 19 20 says every child as defined in 416(e) has to meet that requirement. If such -- such child, the one defined in (e). 21 22 MR. MILLER: Right, but then -- but then 23 402(d)(3) says a child shall be deemed dependent under 24 certain circumstances that effectively track the 416(h) analysis. And I -- I would refer you on that point to 25

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1 the agency's regulations defining dependency, which are 2 404.361, which say that any natural child -- which is the term the agency uses for that second child in 3 4 416(e) -- any natural child is deemed dependent. Now --5 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Can I ask --6 Justice Scalia said that the statute is ambiguous. Is 7 that your position? Is it your position that the definition of "child" is ambiguous and that we have to 8 9 give the agency deference, or is it your position that, 10 in context, it's unambiguous and even if the Social 11 Security Administration wanted to extend benefits, it 12 couldn't, in the circumstances of this case? 13 MR. MILLER: I think that when the statute 14 was initially enacted in 1939 with more or less the same structure of these provisions as we have now, it might 15 16 at that time have been ambiguous. But the agency 17 adopted an interpretation that is, again, in structure 18 materially identical to its current interpretation in 19 1940, and it has adhered to it ever since. And Congress 20 has amended the statute with the understanding that that was the interpretation, that everybody had to go through 21 22 State law to qualify. 23 And I think in light of that history, at this point -- and Congress's ratification of that 24

25 understanding, at this point the best view is that it is

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unambiguous and clearly resolves the question in favor
 of the interpretation set out in the agency's
 regulations.

JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Miller, could I take you back to 416(e)? I take it that you don't contest that for purposes of deciding the -- which stepchildren get benefits and which grandchildren get benefits, we're just looking to Federal law, that we don't look to State law on those questions; is that correct?

MR. MILLER: Yes, because those terms do not appear in 416(h). There's -- there's no instruction in the statute that those terms be defined by reference to State law, as there is with respect to "child."

14 JUSTICE KAGAN: And, you know, I'm looking at some of these, the grandchildren one, for example. 15 16 It says a person who is the grandchild, but only if, 17 blah, blah, blah. It seems to have just sort of an 18 understanding of what a grandchild is. In other words, 19 it's not really defining a grandchild here; it's 20 limiting a class of grandchildren with a pre-existing understanding of what a grandchild is. And so, I'm 21 22 wondering, if that's true of grandchildren, why isn't it 23 also true of children?

24 MR. MILLER: Well, I should say two things 25 about that, then. The first is, specifically with

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1 respect to grandchildren, the agency's -- the agency 2 defines a grandchild as the child, within the meaning of the statute, of a child. And that's set out in the 3 4 regulations at 404.358. 5 JUSTICE KAGAN: I'm sorry, the child of a The child -- what kind of child? 6 child. MR. MILLER: Well, somebody -- somebody who 7 would qualify under 416(h) as a child. 8 9 JUSTICE KAGAN: Oh, so, for grandchildren, 10 the agency is also looking to State law? 11 MR. MILLER: Indirectly. I mean, a 12 grandchild is not expressly defined in the Act, but 13 somebody who qualifies either under State law or you can 14 also qualify as a stepchild or adopted child of someone 15 who qualifies as a child in that same sense. 16 But -- I mean, again, the lack of a -- what's 17 significant, I think, is the lack of any other provision in the statute that tells you how to define 18 "grandchild." I mean, the -- the run of cases that 19 20 Congress was concerned about involved children, and for -- in explaining to the agency how to deal with those 21 22 cases, Congress gave explicit guidance, and that's to 23 look to State law, in 416(h). 24 Now, Respondent makes much of the fact that 25 the benefits-granting provision, 402(d), has an express

1 cross-reference to the definition in 416(e) but doesn't 2 cross-reference the definition in 416(h). 3 And I think there are two problems with that 4 argument, the first of which is that 416(h) by its own 5 terms says that it applies for purposes of this subchapter, that is throughout all of the parts of the 6 7 Act that we're talking about here. So, effectively 416(h) incorporates itself into the 416(e) definition, 8 9 and there's no need for an express cross-reference. 10 The second point about that is that the structure of the definitions here is very similar to the 11 structure of the definitions used in defining other 12 family relationships that are eligible for benefits. 13 14 So, under 402, some of the other subsections of 402, there are benefits for the wife or husband or widow or 15 16 widower of an insured person. And just to take the 17 benefits for a wife as an example, in 402(b) the statute says that the "wife (as defined in section 416(b) of 18 this title)" under certain circumstances can get 19 20 benefits. If you look at the definition in 416(b) of 21 22 "wife," it's very much like the definition in 416(e). 23 It says, "the term 'wife' means the wife of an individual," and then it has some limitations. So, if 24 25 you were to --

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1 JUSTICE SCALIA: Could you -- go ahead and 2 finish. 3 MR. MILLER: If you were to take Respondents' approach, you would just stop there and 4 5 apply some sort of Federal standard of figuring out 6 whether people are married or not. But in fact 416(h), 7 in paragraph (1) of 416(h), says an applicant is the wife or husband or widow or widower of an insured person 8 9 if the State courts would regard them as being married. 10 So -- and in the 1939 Act, all of those 11 references to State law for wives and widows and 12 children were all combined in one paragraph, so it was even clearer that that was how the statute worked, that 13 14 you look to State law for defining all these family 15 relationships. 16 JUSTICE SCALIA: Counsel, I now have in 17 front of me (h)(3). I don't see how it has anything to 18 do with whether the child was dependent under (d)(1)(C). 19 Why do you think it has something to do with that? 20 MR. MILLER: I'm sorry. The -- the definition of dependency is in -- is in(d)(3), 21 22 402(d)(3), not -- if you're -- 402(d)(3) says a child 23 shall be deemed dependent upon his father unless at such 24 time such individual was not living with or contributing 25 to the support of such child and the child is neither

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the legitimate nor adopted child of the individual. So, the effect of that is anyone who is a legitimate child is deemed dependent under 402(d)(3).

JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, unless such 4 5 individual was not living with or contributing to the support of such child -- which is certainly the case 6 7 here; the child had not yet been born -- and other 8 qualifications. The principal condition does not exist. 9 Shall be deemed dependent upon his father or adopting 10 father unless at such time such individual, mother or 11 father or adopted father was not living with or 12 contributing to the support of such child. How does 13 that alter the dependency requirement of (d)(1)(C)? 14 MR. MILLER: Well, because the child is 15 deemed dependent unless he was -- I mean, again, 16 since -- to be clear, we -- we think that the children 17 in this case do not -- are not eligible for child status 18 because they don't meet the requirements of 416(h). 19 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, that may well be. 20 MR. MILLER: And --JUSTICE SCALIA: If that is ambiguous, why 21 22 doesn't -- why doesn't (d)(1)(C), despite -- what is it 23 (h)(3) or whatever the 3 we're -- we've been playing with here -- despite (d)(3), despite that, it seems to 24 me that they don't meet that requirement. 25

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MR. MILLER: That -- that might well be the case. Our position is simply that that's not an issue that the agency has addressed and that would be a matter for the agency to resolve in the first instance if this Court were to disagree with us on the definition of "child."

7 I referred a minute ago to the 1939 Act and the structure of that Act, and I think that that's very 8 9 instructive because, again, the way that the provisions 10 were arranged in the 1939 Act, as we set out in our 11 brief, were the same for present purposes as they are 12 today. And Congress, when it amended the Act in the 13 1960s to allow certain nonmarital children to be 14 eligible for child status, recognized that that was the case, recognized the commission's interpretation that 15 16 everybody had to go through 416(h) and establish their 17 eligibility under State law, and then chose to make 18 express exceptions to the requirement of State law for 19 those children. No such exception applies here. 20 If I could reserve the remainder of my time. 21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,

22 Mr. Miller.

23 Mr. Rothfeld.

24 ORAL ARGUMENT OF CHARLES A. ROTHFELD

25 ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENTS

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1	MR. ROTHFELD: Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice,
2	and may it please the Court:
3	If I can, I'll start with a question that
4	Justice Sotomayor asked about the ambiguity or not of the
5	statute, and we think that in fact the statute is not
6	ambiguous at all. We think that it unambiguously
7	dictates the reading that we advance. And it's useful,
8	I think, in addressing the case to recognize that it
9	presents essentially two issues. One is whether all of
10	the categories of applicants for child survivor benefits
11	that are defined to be children in the statutory
12	definition of "child," section 416, qualify for child
13	benefits without reference to State law, as we submit.
14	If they do, then the second question is
15	whether the children in this case, the Capato twins,
16	fall within one of the categories of children so
17	defined. And we think that they very clearly do.
18	Congress said expressly that every child as
19	defined by 416(e) shall receive benefits so long as they
20	satisfy certain criteria that are not at issue in this
21	case. Section 416(e), to which Congress has expressly
22	directed us in determining who is a child eligible for
23	these benefits, defines a child to be (1) a child or
24	adopted child, (2) a stepchild
25	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Excuse me. Could you

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1 tell me what purpose 416(h) serves in this statute --2 MR. ROTHFELD: We think --3 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- given that you 4 believe that 416(e) is self-sufficient unto itself? 5 MR. ROTHFELD: We think subsection 416(e) is sufficient as to the children defined to be a child 6 7 within that statute. JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: As the child who should 8 9 receive. So, what's the purpose of (h)? 10 MR. ROTHFELD: And our understanding of who falls within section 416(e), (e)(1), definition of 11 "child," is the natural child, the biological child of 12 married parents. There are, of course --13 14 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So, the -- a child who was born during marriage but is not a biological child 15 16 wouldn't qualify? 17 MR. ROTHFELD: No -- well --18 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Even though they qualify 19 under State law as a child? 20 MR. ROTHFELD: Well, as to the question of what (h) is designed to accomplish, we think that 21 22 Congress enacted (h) for children whose parentage or 23 parental relationships were unclear, which would 24 principally have been children who were born outside of 25 marriage, as to whom there was no presumption --

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1 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So, would this -- let's 2 assume Ms. Capato remarried but used her deceased 3 husband's sperm to -- to birth two children. They're 4 the biological children of the Capatos. Would they 5 qualify for survivor benefits even though she's now 6 remarried? MR. ROTHFELD: Well, I think that's an 7 interesting and more difficult question than what we 8 9 have here. I think that the answer may well be "yes," 10 and I think that the -- situations like that can arise 11 really in -- outside of the IVF context. That's a related situation. 12 13 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Well, that's -- you see, 14 a situation like that is what is making me uncomfortable because I don't see the words "biological" in the 15 16 statute. I don't see the word "marriage" directly 17 when -- within the definition of "child." So, where do 18 I draw them from? Where do I come --MR. ROTHFELD: Well, let me answer both of 19 20 those questions. As to where marriage comes from, I think from a number of sources. One is the point that 21 22 was raised by Justice Alito and Justice Kagan, that at 23 the time Congress enacted the statute in 1939, the overwhelming majority of children in the United States, 24 25 more than 90 percent -- it was actually more than 95

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1 percent -- were the children of married parents. And 2 so, when Congress --

3 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: That would be true 4 under State intestate law.

5 MR. ROTHFELD: Well, simply as to what 6 Congress had in mind when it said a child is a child --7 and you asked where marriage comes from in the 8 statute -- I think when Congress said a child is a 9 child, as I think Justice Alito's question suggested, it 10 would have had in mind the paradigm of a child at that 11 time, which was the children --

12 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But the words -- you say 13 this is plain meaning. It says the child of a wage 14 earner, an individual; a child -- it seems to me you are importing the term "married," because someone can be the 15 16 undisputed child of a wage earner who is unmarried. So, 17 it's not a question of disputed versus undisputed. A wage earner can have a child, undisputed that the wage 18 19 earner is the parent, but the wage earner is not married. 20 MR. ROTHFELD: Well, let me say two things about that. And, first, to continue the question of 21 22 where marriage comes from, there is a textual reference 23 to marriage which appears in section 416(h)(2)(B), the companion to the intestacy provision upon which the 24 25 Government relies.

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1	JUSTICE GINSBURG: But I thought we weren't
2	supposed to look to (h) at all. I mean, your thesis is
3	(e) covers it
4	MR. ROTHFELD: But
5	JUSTICE GINSBURG: and there's no reason
6	to refer to (h).
7	MR. ROTHFELD: But I think (h) reflects what
8	Congress had in mind in the statutory definition,
9	because in the provision that I'm referring to, Congress
10	said that if the parents went through a form of marriage
11	that was defective in some sense, nevertheless the child
12	would be deemed to be a child, which tells us that
13	marriage (a) was a significant part of what constitutes
14	childness as defined
15	JUSTICE SCALIA: I don't I don't look,
16	when Congress says "child," "child" means child, and the
17	mere fact that Congress wrote that at an age when most
18	children were indeed children of married people doesn't
19	change the word "child." I mean, we don't go back and
20	say Congress often uses words that go beyond what
21	what their immediate concern is, and here they used the
22	word "child."
23	MR. ROTHFELD: But
24	JUSTICE SCALIA: You want us to probe their
25	mind and say, well, since 90 percent of all children

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were children of married people, that's what they must have meant by "child." I just don't think that follows at all. "Child" means child.

4 MR. ROTHFELD: If I may, Your Honor, 5 Congress wrote a Federal definition of "child," and as 6 Mr. Miller acknowledged in his opening argument, when Congress defined "child," it defined "child" to include 7 8 a number of things. The first thing that it defined was 9 a child is a child or adopted child and stepchild, 10 grandchild, stepgrandchild. Congress used the word 11 "child" to have a particular meaning, because it said a 12 child is a child and other things. The other things 13 that it mentioned were --

14 JUSTICE KAGAN: But, Mr. Rothfeld, I guess the question is, when it says a child is a child, does 15 16 it mean a child is a child born in wedlock or a child is 17 just a child? And we know that Congress knew how to 18 distinguish between the two because Congress distinguished between the two in this very Act in the 19 20 dependency provisions. It talks about the legitimate child of such individual. Well, here it didn't add that 21 word. It just said "the child." 22

23 MR. ROTHFELD: But -- and I think the reason 24 it did that, I mean, as -- again, as Mr. Miller said, 25 Congress used the "child" in two senses. It used the

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1 word "child" in the generic sense: Everyone who 2 qualifies for child benefits is a child. So, it said "child" is, in that sense, a child, adopted child, 3 4 stepchild, so forth. 5 In the dependency section, Congress is referring to all children, all children in that -- in 6 7 the generic sense, everybody who qualifies for benefits 8 as a child. And, therefore, Congress had to distinguish 9 between what we say it meant when it said a child is a 10 child, natural child of married parents --11 JUSTICE KAGAN: Are there any other statutes 12 that you can point to around this time which support the notion that when people said "child" they meant child 13 14 within a legal marriage? 15 MR. ROTHFELD: I can't point to specifically 16 that, because I think it was clear when Congress used 17 the word "child" that that's what they had in mind as a 18 generic matter. As I suggested, when --19 JUSTICE KAGAN: I'm sorry. You can't point 20 to anything because it's so clear? 21 MR. ROTHFELD: In a sense, that's right. Ιf 22 everyone knew what the word meant -- the word "child" was 23 used to define, I think, the category that people would have had in mind when they thought of a child in the legal 24 25 sense.

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1	JUSTICE GINSBURG: Mr. Rothfeld, don't you
2	run into a problem? Perhaps not in 1939, but since then
3	this Court has had a number of decisions that deal with
4	the distinction between children born in and out of
5	wedlock, and in some of those cases, it has held that
б	the distinction between the two is unconstitutional,
7	that there are no illegitimate children. All children
8	are legitimate, whatever their parents may be.
9	MR. ROTHFELD: That is true. But I think
10	the question is, what was the intent of Congress when it
11	wrote this statute in 1939?
12	JUSTICE GINSBURG: Yes, but if we are going
13	to apply those equal protection decisions to this
14	statute
15	MR. ROTHFELD: Well, that that may
16	suggest that an unfavorable application of the statute
17	to children born out of wedlock would be
18	unconstitutional. But the question of whether or not
19	Congress intended to provide benefits to these
20	children
21	JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, I suppose the question
22	is aren't you at the very least getting us into a
23	situation where we should interpret the statute the
24	Government's way because of constitutional avoidance
25	concerns?

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1	MR. ROTHFELD: I think that the contrary is
2	true. I think that you should interpret it our way
3	because the Government's application sort of disfavors
4	children who are born through, you know through
5	assisted means by its incorporation of State law in
6	favor of
7	JUSTICE SCALIA: Oh, it disfavors children
8	who are born after the father has died, which is in
9	accord with the title of the statute: survivors
10	benefits.
11	MR. ROTHFELD: But
12	JUSTICE SCALIA: What's issue here what's
13	at issue here is not whether children that have been
14	born through artificial insemination get benefits. It's
15	whether children who are born after the father's death
16	get get benefits.
17	MR. ROTHFELD: But I think I suspect the
18	reason that Mr. Miller was resisting your questions on
19	that point is there is no question that children who are
20	born who are, quote, conceived naturally in the marriage
21	and are born after the father's death are deemed to be
22	dependents and receive benefits. That has been the
23	consistent position of the agency, and we think that
24	that's clearly right. So, I don't think that the fact
25	the child was born after death says dispositively that

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1 they were not dependent upon --2 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I'm interested as to 3 what your definition of "child" is. Is it just a 4 biological offspring? Is it limited to a biological 5 offspring born of a particular marriage, but in what 6 context? Because we go back to Justice Ginsburg's 7 question of what happens if the -- if the decedent is There's no question that she bore this 8 the mother. child. Married or unmarried, does it matter? 9 10 Does marriage matter only if it's the father that's the decedent? What is your --11 12 MR. ROTHFELD: We think --13 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: If there is a sperm 14 donor, does any offspring that sperm donor have qualify? 15 MR. ROTHFELD: No, we -- we think not, 16 because what we think what Congress had in mind when it said 17 in the first part of clause (1) of the definition of 18 child is the child, the natural child -- and I use 19 natural as distinct from adopted child or stepchild who 20 are dealt with separately in the statute, which is why we think it is clear that Congress was there talking 21 22 about natural children, biological children -- the 23 natural children of married parents, which we -- as I say, the reason we think --24 25 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So, a mother who is

1

unmarried who bears a child, this child is not 2 automatically covered. 3 MR. ROTHFELD: We think that as Congress 4 wrote the statute in 1939, that's correct, and that 5 child would then have been referred to the intestacy 6 provision upon which the Government relies, and --7 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Oh, so there are situations in which you think those provisions should 8 9 govern. 10 MR. ROTHFELD: Yes. Absolutely. We think that those provisions were added as an additive 11 12 provision as a mechanism for children who do not qualify 13 for the definition to be deemed a child. 14 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: This is what was not clear to me. So, you're -- you're not arguing that 15 16 "child" has just one natural meaning. 17 MR. ROTHFELD: We -- we argue that Congress used the word "child" --18 19 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: In whatever meaning you 20 could give it. 21 MR. ROTHFELD: We -- I wouldn't say that. I 22 think that when Congress said a child is a child, which 23 is the provision of the statute we were referring to, it was distinguishing the child from the adopted child and 24 stepchild, and we think they were doing it in the 25

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1 context of marriage because (a) that was the paradigm of 2 family relationships at the time; (b) we think the reason -- what Congress was very concerned with 3 4 accomplishing in the statute was guaranteeing certainty in the -- in parentage and the parental relationship. 5 6 And it set up a system of -- because in 1939 7 there were no genetic paternity tests, there was no -it was impossible to be absolutely, scientifically 8 certain as to who the -- at least as to who the father was, 9 10 Congress set up a series of proxies to establish whether 11 or not the applicant for child benefits was in fact the 12 child. 13 The principal one of those was the marital 14 relationship because in 1939, as I think Justice Scalia's question suggested, there was a very 15 16 strong, virtually per se conclusive presumption that a 17 child born in marriage was the biological natural child 18 of both the father and mother, of the married couple. 19 And so, the existence of the marriage was a way of 20 establishing in 1939 dispositively that the child was the child of the parents, the child of the survivor --21 22 of the insured whose eliqibility for benefits are being 23 invoked here. 24 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Rothfeld, I'm curious

25 why you didn't argue a different theory, which is that

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1 (e) refers to all biological children whether in 2 marriage or outside of marriage, and then (h) is set up for cases in which biological status is contested. 3 4 I mean, what would you think of that theory? 5 MR. ROTHFELD: Well, I -- we would certainly 6 embrace it if the Court were --7 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, why didn't you argue it? 8 9 MR. ROTHFELD: I think -- we think that we 10 are arguing essentially a -- sort of a subset of that 11 theory. Our sense of what Congress was up to was that it wanted to assure certainty, as I just said in 12 response to the previous question, in establishing 13 14 parentage. And the principal way in 1939 that Congress could do that was by (a) invoking existence of a 15 16 parental relationship which established sort of as a per 17 se matter that the children born within the marriage were the children of each of the married -- each member 18 19 of the married couple. 20 For parents -- children who did not fall 21 into that category, there was this additive provision, 22 section (h), which provided a mechanism for doing it, 23 and establishing that State intestacy law would recognize this child as the child of -- typically it was 24 25 going to be the paternity that was contested -- the

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1 child of the father, (h) established a mechanism for 2 doing that. So, I think that we are getting to the same 3 place --4 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: What if --5 MR. ROTHFELD: -- that your question 6 suggests. 7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: What if the children -- well, I don't want -- the Capato twins were conceived 8 9 4 years after of the death in this case? Would your 10 argument be the same? 11 MR. ROTHFELD: I think that our argument would be the same, but as a practical matter, almost all 12 13 of these cases involve children who were born relatively 14 soon after. 15 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Why is that? Why 16 would they all involve children born relatively soon 17 after? 18 MR. ROTHFELD: They don't necessarily have 19 to, but I think the practical reason why they do is that 20 it's often the case that the surviving mother has children to produce a family sibling for an already 21 22 existing child as was -- as was the case --23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, there's no reason it couldn't take place 4 years after. 24 25 MR. ROTHFELD: There is no reason. That's

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1 correct. 2 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So, what happens if 3 the biological mother remarries or something and then 4 goes through this process? Does the child get double 5 survivor benefits or --6 MR. ROTHFELD: Well, it --7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Which -- I assume you would argue that in that case the child is eligible 8 9 through two different routes. 10 MR. ROTHFELD: Potentially, that's correct. 11 There are rules in the Act that prevent double recovery 12 of survivor benefits. And so, I don't think that would 13 be an issue that would arise here. But --14 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Mr. Rothfeld, these children were born 18 months after the insured wage 15 16 earner died. If we look to other categories of 17 children, say, stepchildren -- and there is also one for 18 adopted children. For stepchildren, they qualify only if they had that status no less than 9 months before the 19 20 wage earner died, and adopted children is also a limitation. The stepchild and the adopted child --21 22 there could never be any question of being born 23 18 months later. They wouldn't qualify. There's -there is a time limit for the other children. And if 24 25 Congress had thought about this problem, maybe it would

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1 have put a time limit on this, too.

2	MR. ROTHFELD: Well, I think that the
3	question that the Court has to confront here is,
4	Congress wrote a Federal definition of the word "child."
5	And it was sort of the first question in the case, I
6	think, is whether we are correct in our understanding
7	that, when Congress wrote this definition, all
8	applicants for child survivor benefits who fall within
9	that category, those defined categories, qualify.
10	And then we have if the answer to that is
11	"yes," and so children as defined in clause (1) of the
12	definition, which we think that the Capato children do,
13	whether or not all children so defined qualify for
14	benefits without regard to State intestacy law. If we
15	are right about that, then that raises the question what
16	is the meaning of "child" in the in the statute? And
17	we think that
18	JUSTICE BREYER: The question is what you
19	haven't mentioned the text that suggests you're not
20	right, which is right in (h) which says: In determining
21	whether an applicant is a child of an insured, the
22	Commissioner shall apply such law as intestacy law.
23	Okay? That's what it says. Now, how do you
24	get out of that?
25	MR. ROTHFELD: Because

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1	JUSTICE BREYER: Because you say, well,
2	there's an implicit exception.
3	MR. ROTHFELD: No, no. That's not what we
4	
5	JUSTICE BREYER: You're saying that that
6	doesn't apply. And so, I've listened carefully to your
7	reasons for saying why (h) doesn't apply when its
8	language seems to say it does apply, and I'm not sure of
9	why it doesn't apply. I mean
10	MR. ROTHFELD: Because
11	JUSTICE BREYER: Suppose that two parents
12	have lived together for 6 years and 4 months in State $X$ ,
13	and they have a child. Fine. The father dies. Were
14	they married? They never went through a ceremony. Is
15	there a common law marriage? Might it depend on the
16	State? Do you know the answer in every State? My
17	answer is: You don't know. And I don't know. And,
18	therefore, we have to look to the law of the State in
19	order to see whether that (e) is satisfied. Now, we
20	have to look to it to decide if they're married. Even
21	you say that.
22	So, what Congress did is it found a pretty
23	good shorthand way of saying where you look. We're not
24	going to worry about 6 years and 2 months; we're just
25	going to look at their intestacy law. That's, as I read

1 it, what it seems to say.

2	Now, I have been listening to you ,
3	and I don't see how you're going to save us from
4	even worse problems, particularly when I started looking
5	at the state of the artificial insemination and so
6	forth, and every State has a dozen different variations.
7	There are uniform acts. There are things you have to
8	acknowledge in writing. It's a very complicated
9	subject. And and that's why I am rather hesitant to
10	read it the way you want. But I want you to reply to
11	that.
12	MR. ROTHFELD: Well, the answer to the first
13	sentence of section (h), if that were the only thing in
14	the statute, I think that you would be right, but
15	there's a second sentence to (h), which says in in
16	applying State intestacy law, the the Commissioner is
17	supposed to look at the status of an applicant and
18	determine whether or not the status of the applicant is
19	the same as that of a child. And if so, the applicant
20	is deemed
21	JUSTICE BREYER: Where is that sentence?
22	MR. ROTHFELD: That appears in it's
23	JUSTICE BREYER: Is it the bottom of the
24	paragraph?
25	MR. ROTHFELD: It's the bottom of the

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1 paragraph. 2 JUSTICE BREYER: It says, "Applicants who according to such law would have the same status 3 4 relative to taking intestate property as a child or a 5 parent shall be deemed such." 6 MR. ROTHFELD: And that --7 JUSTICE BREYER: So? MR. ROTHFELD: But as a child. Why does it 8 9 -- it requires a comparison to someone who is a child. 10 "Child" is defined in section (h). If -- if -- I think the problem with the Government's interpretation of the 11 12 first sentence of that -- of section (h) is that it makes the -- the statute circular. 13 14 JUSTICE SCALIA: I haven't found the sentence you're talking about. Where is it? 15 16 JUSTICE BREYER: At the bottom of the paragraph. 17 JUSTICE SCALIA: Bottom of what? Page what? 18 MR. ROTHFELD: It is at page 9a of the --19 the appendix to the Government's brief. 20 JUSTICE BREYER: It's sort of like a -- you say there is no board of tax -- sorry. I won't get into 21 22 that. But -- because they used the word "deemed." Is 23 that right? 24 MR. ROTHFELD: Well --25 JUSTICE BREYER: That's the heart of your

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1 argument there. 2 MR. ROTHFELD: That's our explanation of 3 what Congress was up to in the statute. JUSTICE BREYER: Yes, all right. 4 5 MR. ROTHFELD: It -б JUSTICE BREYER: Okay. 7 MR. ROTHFELD: It was an additive provision that says that if you are the same -- and I think this 8 is an important point, Justice Breyer. If you are the 9 10 same as a child, you are deemed to have child status. 11 You can't --12 JUSTICE KAGAN: But then, Mr. Rothfeld, why can't 13 one just say, well, first sentence, who is a child? Look to State law. Second sentence, when State law treats 14 other people as children, you should treat them as other 15 -- as children, too. So, the two sentences can cohere 16 17 fine. For children, look to State law, and also look to State law to see who they treat just like children. 18 19 MR. ROTHFELD: But I -- I think that is not 20 a plausible reading of -- of the text, Justice Kagan. 21 JUSTICE BREYER: The obvious practical thing 22 is --23 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, why not? 24 JUSTICE BREYER: -- is that -- that, you 25 know, once you get beyond this and the child wasn't

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1 even -- if he's conceived -- or what the father could 2 do, couldn't he just write a note and say this is my child even if it's conceived later, and then wouldn't he 3 4 fall within one of these other exceptions, the exception 5 for being acknowledged? 6 MR. ROTHFELD: He -- he would not. The 7 father here did in fact write such a note, but I --8 JUSTICE BREYER: He has acknowledged in 9 writing that the applicant is his son or daughter. What 10 about that one? 11 MR. ROTHFELD: I -- I think that the problem is that that has to be during the life of the father. 12 13 JUSTICE BREYER: Does it? It doesn't say 14 I mean, it seemed to me easier to work with that it. one than the one you're trying to work with. But I -- I 15 16 don't know. You're the -- but -- but anyway, what I'm 17 worried about here --MR. ROTHFELD: Well, I -- well, I don't want 18 19 to argue against my position, Justice Breyer, but --20 JUSTICE BREYER: No, no, I know. 21 (Laughter.) 22 JUSTICE BREYER: Okay. What I'm actually 23 worried about and want you to address is I just -- if we were to adopt what you said, what they're concerned 24 25 about is many different applicants coming back later.

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1 That's what State intestacy is concerned about. And you 2 don't really know who their parents is. Another thing is there are already children who are eating up all of 3 4 the money. And then some new person shows up, and you have to take the money away from the other children in 5 order to give it to this new child. And all the time, 6 7 you don't know if that's what the parent who is dead 8 really wanted. 9 And so, that's why the States have gone into 10 all kinds of writing requirements. And -- and you want 11 us to sort of -- applying this old law to new 12 technology, just overlook those complications. 13 MR. ROTHFELD: Well, Congress wrote a 14 Federal definition of "child," and it's not an extraordinary thing for Congress to write a statute that 15 16 has language that applies in certain circumstances, and 17 the world changes. New developments require application 18 of the statutory text to those new developments. 19 If our reading of the statute is correct --20 if what we think that Congress had in mind when it wrote this statute was that it wanted to set in place 21 22 categories of applicants for child benefits as to whom 23 parentage in a relevant sense could be determined with certainty, and it did that by focusing on the status of 24 25 the marital relationship between the parents, and it did

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1 it by providing an alternative basis in section (h) --2 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Well, that would be fine 3 if the statute said what you claim it says. It says a 4 child is a child of a wage earner. And you'd have to 5 import these things that Congress didn't say to get to 6 what you claim is the plain meaning. But what do you do 7 with the sentence in (h)(2)(A) that says "in determining whether an applicant is a child of an insured individual 8 9 for purposes of this subchapter"? The subchapter is not 10 for purposes of (h), but for purposes of the entire 11 subchapter, which would include (e). 12 MR. ROTHFELD: Right. And I think actually that is a helpful point for us, Justice Ginsburg, 13 14 because in determining whether an applicant is a child for purposes of the subchapter, it's referring to the 15 16 use of the word "child" in the generic sense, in the 17 sense -- when -- when Congress said a child is defined 18 to include people who fall in these various categories 19 of children. So, everybody --20 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But how could it do that when the rest of the sentence says, "to determine 21 22 whether an applicant is a child for purposes of this 23 subchapter, the Commissioner shall apply the State law 24 of intestacy"?

MR. ROTHFELD: But I -- I think that -- that

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1 these two sentences have to be read together as 2 accomplishing the same thing. What I think what the -it's saying that in making the determination whether or 3 not a child qualifies for child benefits, that the 4 5 Commissioner -- applicants who according to such law would have the same status relative to taking intestate 6 7 personal property as a child shall be deemed such. 8 I think one can't apply the statute without 9 knowing who a child is, because it -- it is directing 10 the Commissioner to engage in a comparison. It's directing the Commissioner to say: Does this applicant 11 have the same status as a child? 12 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, that's exactly right, 13 14 Mr. Rothfeld. But you have two choices. In the second sentence, you do have two groups, and one has to be 15 16 compared to the other, which is children. The question 17 is, are children described by the first sentence of 18 that, or are children described by the (e) section? 19 So, you're just reading the first sentence 20 out of the statute and saying that the second sentence totally subsumes the first sentence, and we have to go 21 22 back to (e). 23 But the first sentence exists. And it says: Who are children? Children are who they are under State 24 25 law.

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1	MR. ROTHFELD: No, and I I think that
2	what it's telling the Commissioner to do is to determine
3	whether or not when an applicant who does not fall
4	within one of the defined categories in section (e)
5	applies for benefits, the Commissioner is to determine
6	whether or not that child has the same status relative
7	to State law as the child as defined in the definitional
8	section.
9	The Congress as I say, Congress said
10	expressly that a child as defined in section 416(e) of
11	the statute qualifies for benefits. And so, I think it
12	establishes a Federal standard as to what what a
13	child is for purposes of the Act.
14	The Court has to determine what that
15	standard means to apply to any particular child.
16	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Counsel, under
17	Chevron, you lose if the statute is ambiguous. Is there
18	any reason we shouldn't conclude based on the last hour
19	that it's at least ambiguous?
20	(Laughter.)
21	MR. ROTHFELD: Well
22	JUSTICE KAGAN: It's a mess.
23	(Laughter.)
24	MR. ROTHFELD: I think the problem is that
25	we are dealing with new technologies that Congress

1 didn't -- wasn't anticipating at the time. I think --2 one of the questions that was suggested to my friend, Mr. Miller, by Justice Alito, I think, that if the child 3 4 who is the -- in 1939, who is the child of married 5 parents, natural child of married parents, sought 6 benefits under this statute and they were denied because 7 some State developed an aberrant law of intestacy and 8 said that such child would not qualify, would not be 9 deemed to be the child of their parents, I think that 10 that would have been regarded as a clear misreading of 11 the statute.

12 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: How -- do you think that 13 Congress thought of either of these situations as real 14 possibilities? Do you really think that the 1939 Congress, or even the one that passed the later statute, 15 16 ever thought that a State would disinherit a naturally 17 born -- all naturally born children -- or that children 18 could be born 18 months, 4 years, 50 years later? 19 MR. ROTHFELD: Well --

20 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: They weren't thinking of 21 either.

22 So, the question becomes, given the language 23 of (h) that says define "child" this way throughout the 24 subchapter, why shouldn't we give that directive its 25 plain meaning?

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1 That's really the argument that you have to 2 convince us of. MR. ROTHFELD: Well, if we have to convince 3 4 you not to give the statute its plain reading, then we 5 will -- not going to prevail. I certainly recognize 6 that -- that plain meaning has to control. And as I 7 suggested at the outset, the reason we think we prevail is that the plain meaning of this statute as was written 8 9 in 1939, as it would have been understood by the 1939 10 Congress that adopted it, was that the natural children 11 of married parents, the paradigm of the situation of the child at that time, would fall into this category. Now, 12 13 it is certainly true, as you say --14 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But that's because every

MR. ROTHFELD: And every State law -- and I would put it the other way: Every State law recognized them as such because that was the way in which children were understood -- the meaning of the term "child" was understood at the time. And --

State law recognized them as such as well, correct?

21 JUSTICE SCALIA: Mr. --

15

JUSTICE GINSBURG: Well, if we're going back to 1939 understanding, wasn't it also understood that the marriage ends when a parent dies?

25 MR. ROTHFELD: Well --

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1 JUSTICE GINSBURG: So, there wouldn't be --2 a child that's born 18 months after the father died wouldn't be considered a child of a marriage because the 3 4 marriage would have ended. 5 MR. ROTHFELD: Well, I think that one has to 6 look at what Congress at the time -- I guess I would put 7 it this way: If -- if the Court were to accept our view that Congress had in mind the children of married 8 9 parents, the question is whether any particular child 10 falls in the box Congress would have regarded as the 11 marital box or the non-married box. 12 Situations like this simply could not have 13 arisen in 1939. Congress would not have specifically -14 as Justice Sotomayor said, Congress would not have specifically had in mind, contemplated, the question of 15 16 posthumous conception because --17 JUSTICE SCALIA: Mr. Rothfeld, I know that 18 the Government didn't rely on it, but just to satisfy my 19 curiosity, how -- how can this child satisfy the 20 requirements of (d)(1)(C), with regard to dependency upon the father? 21 22 MR. ROTHFELD: I quess two responses to 23 that. One, as Mr. Miller said, this -- that issue was remanded to be addressed by --24 25 JUSTICE SCALIA: I understand. But --

1	MR. ROTHFELD: But the answer
2	JUSTICE SCALIA: that is connected with
3	this other issue.
4	MR. ROTHFELD: The answer the answer why
5	we think and if I may, Mr. Chief Justice, answer.
6	The reason that we think we would prevail on
7	that question is because, as Mr. Miller said, Congress
8	created a an irrebuttable presumption that the child
9	of the legitimate child of of a parent is deemed
10	to have been dependent upon that parent at the time of
11	the parent's death. And that
12	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
13	MR. ROTHFELD: Thank you very much, Your
14	Honor.
15	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Mr. Miller, you have
16	4 minutes.
17	REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF ERIC D. MILLER
18	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER
19	MR. MILLER: Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice.
20	Since 1940, the Social Security
21	Administration has consistently interpreted the Act to
22	require all natural children to establish their
23	eligibility under 416(h), either by establishing that
24	they can inherit under State law or by showing that they
25	qualify under one of the express exceptions

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1	JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Miller, what do you
2	think is wrong with the alternative theory that that
3	I suggested, that (e) is all biological children in a
4	marriage, not in a marriage, doesn't matter; and that
5	(h) is designed to deal with situations in which
б	biological status is contested?
7	MR. MILLER: Well, I the principal
8	problem with that, I think, is that it lacks it's not
9	supported by the text of what 416(h) says.
10	JUSTICE KAGAN: But why do you think that?
11	What would you point to in (h) that is inconsistent with
12	the theory that I just gave you?
13	MR. MILLER: I would point to (h)(2)(B) and
14	(h)(3), both of which are are the exceptions to allow
15	people to qualify when they can't establish State
16	intestacy rights, and both of which refer to someone who
17	is the son or daughter of the insured person but is not,
18	and is not deemed to be, the child.
19	So, if biological parentage were were
20	what was determinative under (e), and if you only looked
21	at (h) when there was some question about biological
22	parentage, it would the idea of someone who is a son
23	or daughter but isn't a child would make no sense.
24	And so, to give effect to those meanings
25	to give effect to those provisions, to give them

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meaning, 416(h) has to have broader application than just in cases of disputed biological parentage. It is in fact the gateway through which everyone has to pass, and that's how the -- the agency has -- has so regarded it.

6 The final point I would make is simply that, 7 even if the statute were silent on whether to look to State law, it would be appropriate for the Court to 8 9 hesitate, I think, before creating what in effect is a 10 body of Federal common law about parental status. Here, 11 of course, there's an express textual command the 12 other way. And it would be particularly inappropriate 13 to create, as Respondents are urging, a Federal rule 14 that goes well beyond what any State would allow in the 15 context of --

16 JUSTICE ALITO: Why doesn't the last sentence of -- what is it -- (h)(2)(A) show that 17 18 Congress had in mind a certain idea of a category of 19 people who were indisputably children? I don't see how 20 you can get around that, because it says what you're looking for under State law is to determine whether 21 22 someone has the same status relative to taking intestate 23 personal property as a child.

24 MR. MILLER: I think the answer to that is 25 the one suggested by Justice Kagan a few minutes ago,

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and that is that you have to read the first and second sentences together. And the first sentence sets up a general rule that you're looking to State law, and then the second is about people who would have the same status as children under State law. So, that the basic background definition in either case is coming from State law.

JUSTICE ALITO: So, if the person is a 8 9 child -- you have applicants who according to State law 10 had the same status as a child, a person has that status 11 because the person is a child, and the person is deemed 12 to be a child, it seems very clear that that shows that 13 (h) -- that this provision is directed to people that 14 Congress in 1939 did not think fell within this paradigm 15 of a child.

16 MR. MILLER: The -- well, the second --17 maybe, I may be misunderstanding you, but our view of 18 what the second sentence does is that it covers people who are not treated as children, who are not children 19 20 under State law but nonetheless have the inheritance rights of children. So, principally the -- in the case 21 22 of equitable adoption, those people would have the 23 status of children.

24 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,25 Mr. Miller, Mr. Rothfeld.

1	The case is submitted.
2	(Whereupon, at 11:03 a.m., the case in the
3	above-entitled matter was submitted.)
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