1	IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES
2	x
3	MARK J. MCBURNEY, ET AL. :
4	Petitioners :
5	v. :
6	NATHANIEL L. YOUNG, DEPUTY : No. 12-17
7	COMMISSIONER AND DIRECTOR, :
8	VIRGINIA DIVISION OF CHILD :
9	SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT, ET AL. :
10	x
11	Washington, D.C.
12	Wednesday, February 20, 2013
13	
14	The above-entitled matter came on for oral
15	argument before the Supreme Court of the United States
16	at 10:19 a.m.
17	APPEARANCES:
18	DEEPAK GUPTA, ESQ., Washington, D.C.; on behalf of
19	Petitioners.
20	EARLE DUNCAN GETCHELL, JR., ESQ., Solicitor General of
21	Virginia, Richmond, Virginia; on behalf of
22	Respondents.
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1	PROCEEDINGS
2	(10:19 a.m.)
3	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear argument
4	this morning first in Case 12-17, McBurney v. Young.
5	Mr. Gupta?
6	ORAL ARGUMENT OF DEEPAK GUPTA
7	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONERS
8	MR. GUPTA: Thank you, and may it please the
9	Court:
10	All 50 States have public records laws. 47
11	of those States make access available to residents and
12	nonresidents on equal terms. Virginia, by contrast,
13	enforces a discriminatory access policy, and, because
14	commercial requesters make up the vast majority of
15	records requesters, out-of-State businesses bear the
16	brunt of Virginia's policy.
17	JUSTICE SCALIA: When when was the first
18	of those laws enacted? Do you know? I think it's I
19	think it's in my adult lifetime that Florida was the
20	first to enact a sunshine law. Is that am I correct
21	about that?
22	MR. GUPTA: That's right. All of these
23	laws
24	JUSTICE SCALIA: In the '60s.
25	

1	MR. GUPTA: In the '60s and the early '70s. The
2	Virginia law was enacted in 1968. And we don't deny
3	that
4	JUSTICE SCALIA: And you say that's a
5	fundamental that's a fundamental right covered by
6	Privileges and Immunities Clause, which nobody had until
7	the 1960s?
8	MR. GUPTA: Well, to be clear, the modern
9	transparency laws are new, but they sit on top of
10	well-established common-law right rights to access
11	that are based, not on modern notions of transparency,
12	but on the right to secure property and other basic
13	interests
14	JUSTICE SCALIA: But those those rights
15	still exist in this State, don't they? Cannot you get
16	records of deeds and whatever the common law would have
17	covered?
18	MR. GUPTA: Well, it's true that that
19	Virginia's law exempts deeds from its Freedom of
20	Information law, but, if I understand their position
21	correctly, they would be entitled, as a constitutional
22	matter, under their theory, to preclude people from
23	other States from accessing even deeds.
24	JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, I'll ask them I
25	didn't understand that to be their position, but but

1	I guess we can ask them. MR. GUPTA: Well, my
2	client, Mr. Hurlbert,
3	is in the business of gathering property records for his
4	clients. Now, it's true that, in Virginia, he could get
5	the deed, but what he can't get and what he principally
6	gathers for his clients are real estate tax assessment
7	records, and those are a much richer storehouse of
8	property-related information than simply the deed.
9	JUSTICE GINSBURG: Can you can you
LO	explain that business a little more fully than you did
L1	in the briefs? He's in the business of collecting
L 2	records from all the States about tax assessments.
L 3	MR. GUPTA: That's right.
L 4	JUSTICE GINSBURG: And he and he does
L 5	that for a client who could very well ask himself. So
L6	what is the service that's being performed?
L 7	MR. GUPTA: Well, he you know, he doesn't
L 8	just do the routine request. The the large data
L9	companies are the ones who hire him. And they if
20	they're routine requests, they can do them themselves;
21	although if they're not based in Virginia, they would
22	still have to hire a Virginian to do it.
23	But they bring him in when there's some flaw
24	in the the routine process where the the State is
2.5	being recalcitrant or the local official is being

- 1 recalcitrant. And he's an expert in being able to gather
- 2 these -- these records and knowing the process is
- knowing what he's allowed to do and what he's not
- 4 allowed to do.
- 5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: All -- all he has to
- 6 do is get somebody from -- from Virginia to ask for him,
- 7 right?
- 8 MR. GUPTA: Well, he could hire someone from
- 9 Virginia to do that, but that's -- you know, that's sort
- of precisely what the --
- 11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, but you don't
- have to pay the person too much, he just has to write a
- 13 letter saying, give me these documents, right?
- 14 MR. GUPTA: He would still have to hire
- 15 someone, and that would be an increased cost. And -- for
- 16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, an increased
- 17 cost of -- I don't know how much -- 100 bucks, right?
- 18 Go -- write a letter, say you want these documents, and,
- 19 when they come to your house, give them to me.
- MR. GUPTA: Yeah. For the large data
- 21 companies -- you know, they will hire someone other than
- 22 him to perform this service. They will -- if you're
- 23 talking about routine requests. But even -- you know,
- 24 even for them, if you're talking about a -- a request
- 25 that isn't routine, if he has to do something further to

- 1 enforce the rights, he's going to have to do that in his own
- 2 name, or the data company will have to hire someone
- 3 other than him, someone based in Virginia, to do that
- for them. And then he will lose that business.
- 5 So the lower you go down in the food chain
- of the data industry, the bigger the effect of
- 7 Virginia's policy.
- 8 JUSTICE GINSBURG: How much -- how much of
- 9 an impact, in fact, does it have on his business? I
- mean, there are 47 States who will provide this
- 11 information.
- MR. GUPTA: Well, for -- for him, in the
- 13 Virginia market, it completely forecloses him from doing
- 14 access -- business in the Virginia market.
- 15 And, if other States were to have policies
- like this, he wouldn't be able to do business in those
- 17 States as well. So if -- if the focus is on him and his
- 18 business in Virginia, it completely cuts him off.
- 19 If the focus is on -- on what the effect is
- in the aggregate, on the market as a whole, because most
- 21 public records requests are commercial requests, it's
- 22 going to have an effect on most commercial requesters
- 23 who are out-of-State. And --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Mr. Gupta, I -- I
- 25 understand that the -- the reasoning of Virginia in not

1	allowing out-of-State people to to get these FOIA requests
2	is the following: That the purpose of these
3	these laws and I remember it when the first ones were
4	enacted government in the sunshine. The purpose of
5	it was not to enable people to get information, per se;
6	it was to enable people to see how their government is
7	working, so that they could attend to any malfeasance
8	that is occurring in the process of government.
9	It seems to me entirely in accord with that
10	purpose of these laws to say it's only Virginia citizens
11	who who are concerned about the functioning of
12	Virginia government and ought to be able to get whatever
13	records Virginia agencies have.
14	What's what's wrong with that reasoning?
15	MR. GUPTA: A few responses, Justice Scalia.
16	First, transparency was one purpose, but, as
17	I said, these laws also carried forward the much more
18	longstanding rights to access based on personal
19	interests and property interests. Also, even at the
20	time that these laws were enacted
21	JUSTICE SCALIA: But but you don't need
22	any personal or property interest under these laws. You
23	can just just out of curiosity, if you if you were a
24	Virginian, at least, in Virginia, even though you have
25	no interest in the matter at all, you can ask the agency

- for records about this or that. It -- it can't be
- 2 based on -- on the
- 3 traditional property interest. It's based on the
- 4 ability of the citizens of the State to find out what
- 5 the -- what the government of the State is up to.
- 6 MR. GUPTA: Even -- even at the time that
- 7 these laws were enacted in the -- in the '60s, it was
- 8 well-understood that they were going to have a big
- 9 commercial impact. The property records industry was in
- 10 full swing by the end of the late 19th Century.
- 11 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But the point is that
- 12 FOIA is tied to, as Justice Scalia said, the citizens
- 13 should know what their government is doing. And you
- don't have to give any reason at all, if you were a part
- of that political community. Now, Virginia doesn't
- 16 allow people from out-of-State to vote. They're not
- 17 part of Virginia's political community.
- 18 So why isn't this -- if you're not part of
- 19 the political community, then you don't fall under FOIA,
- 20 which is a peculiar statute, in that everybody who is
- 21 covered by it can get whatever they want, and they don't
- 22 have to give any reason for it.
- MR. GUPTA: Right. Well, elections just
- 24 simply don't work if you -- if you allow noncitizens to
- 25 participate in elections or if you can't wall off the

1	State in that respect. But what the State can't say is,
2	simply because one purpose of this law is that we want
3	to constitute ourselves as a political community, that
4	we can exclude activities that have a big commercial
5	effect.
6	And you know, when we're looking under
7	the Dormant Commerce Clause or under the Privileges and
8	Immunities Clause, this Court's cases have said
9	repeatedly you don't look to uncover the original
10	legislative purpose, you look to whether there is
11	discrimination, which there is here, on its face, and
12	you look to whether there is a discriminatory effect.
13	One example of how this policy is actually
14	being
15	JUSTICE KAGAN: And is the only thing that's
16	necessary excuse me is the only thing that's
17	necessary that the law affect a few people commercially?
18	I mean, how much how many of the requesters have to
19	be engaged in some kind of commercial activity in order
20	for your arguments to work?
21	MR. GUPTA: Well, what this Court has said
22	is that there is no de minimis exception, if there's
23	discrimination against commerce, but, here, what's going
24	on is anything, but de minimis. Virginia does not deny
25	that the the vast majority of the requesters are

- 1 commercial requesters -- the vast majority of out-of-State
- 2 requesters are commercial requesters.
- 3 Their -- the amicus brief supporting their
- 4 side, the Local Government Attorneys of Virginia amicus
- 5 brief, at page 30, explains the way this policy --
- 6 policy is being implemented, is that noncommercial
- 7 requests are typically honored, but out-of-State
- 8 requests by data miners are being categorically denied
- 9 under the policy.
- 10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But this -- this is
- 11 not -- this is not a regulation of commerce. It's a
- 12 State practice that may have an incidental effect on
- commerce, and the incidental effect may be
- 14 disproportionate, depending upon whether you're State or
- local, but it's not a regulation of commerce.
- MR. GUPTA: But that's -- that was the
- 17 Fourth Circuit's theory, and I think incidental can mean
- 18 a few different things, and I think in -- in their
- 19 opinion, it -- it does mean at least three different
- 20 things. So maybe it would be helpful if I try to unpack
- 21 that.
- 22 If it means incidental in terms of the
- effect on my client's business, I think, as I've
- explained, it's anything, but incidental; it completely
- 25 forecloses him from the market. If it means incidental

- in terms of the -- the aggregate effect of this statute,
- 2 again, it's not incidental because the vast majority
- 3 of -- of affected parties under this policy are
- 4 out-of-State commercial requesters, particularly data
- 5 companies.
- 6 And -- you know, if it means incidental
- 7 compared to the purpose of the statute, as I've said,
- 8 transparency was one purpose of the modern FOIA laws,
- 9 but they also subsumed and sit on top of all of the
- 10 longstanding rights of public access that have been
- 11 around since the -- the first settlements in the United
- 12 States -- or before the United States, when, in order to
- have a functioning property system, we recognized that
- 14 you've got to have records of who owns what and -- and
- 15 those records have to be made available to anyone in
- order to exercise property rights.
- 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: What if the State of
- 18 Virginia says, as a policy, we want to help Virginia
- 19 businesses, and so we're going to open a business
- 20 training, best practices institute, where you're going
- 21 to learn how to be a better business person, but the
- 22 only people who can come in are -- are Virginia
- 23 businesses.
- MR. GUPTA: Right.
- 25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Under your theory,

- 1 because that will have an effect -- an incidental effect on
- 2 commerce in a way that's discriminatory, is -- is
- 3 that unconstitutional?
- 4 MR. GUPTA: I don't think so. And there are
- 5 a couple of distinctions.
- 6 First, that's not something that the State
- 7 exclusively is able to provide. It's not like the
- 8 courthouse or the public archives across the street or
- 9 the road that runs between them that only the -- the
- 10 State is able to provide.
- 11 Anyone can provide a business training
- institute, so the State is just one player among many.
- 13 Also -- running a
- 14 JUSTICE SCALIA: But that -- that just goes
- 15 to the extent of the impact, not -- not on the
- 16 principle. And you say extent doesn't matter. You say
- 17 there's no such thing as a de minimis exception.
- 18 MR. GUPTA: No --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: So that -- that explanation
- doesn't -- doesn't seem, to me, to hold water.
- 21 MR. GUPTA: Well, maybe I didn't explain it
- very well. To be clear, I think it's more than just a
- difference in degree; it's a difference in kind. These
- 24 are fundamentally different when -- when you're talking
- about running the courthouse or running the public

1	archives, nobody else can do that. Nobody else
2	can collect you know, make
3	tax assessments, collect those records, and keep the
4	official public archive of those things. That
5	JUSTICE SCALIA: So what? So what? Except
6	to the extent that that bears upon how much of a an
7	imposition this is upon interstate commerce. It seems,
8	to me, that's the only relevance of that point.
9	MR. GUPTA: Well
10	JUSTICE SCALIA: And and you dismiss that
11	relevance. You say it doesn't matter how extensive the
12	impact is on on interstate commerce.
13	MR. GUPTA: Well, to the extent that you
14	you think it does matter, I mean, that that
15	distinction doesn't matter in this case because the
16	impact is is great. The principal impact is an
17	impact on out-of-State commerce.

- 18 But let me --
- 19 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Is that -- when
- you're talking about impact, is that a Pike analysis?
- 21 MR. GUPTA: No. I think this -- if you were
- in -- in the dormant Commerce Clause, this would be the
- 23 per se rule of invalidity. You have facial
- 24 discrimination. The -- the --
- 25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, I thought, if

1	it was facial discrimination, you're not concerned about
2	impact.
3	MR. GUPTA: That's right. That's right.
4	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I thought a question
5	of talking about the effects on interstate commerce,
6	that's the you know, the Pike analysis.
7	MR. GUPTA: No. What this Court has said is
8	that that the first sort of first-tier scrutiny,
9	the per se rule is is for cases where there's
10	discrimination on its face or discrimination in effect.
11	And then you've got this other category for the the
12	Pike analysis, where the State regulates evenhandedly.
13	JUSTICE KENNEDY: What's your closest case
14	in support of the proposition that this is impermissible
15	as a discrimination against interstate commerce? What's
16	your best case?
17	MR. GUPTA: When you say, "this," you mean
18	the that public records access is commerce?
19	JUSTICE KENNEDY: If if you you are
20	arguing, as one of your arguments here, that this is
21	discriminatory as to as to interstate commerce, as I
22	understand your argument, what is the best case you have
23	to support your position? What's the closest case?
24	MR. GUPTA: Well, I think if you're if
25	you're if the question is about whether or not

1	records access is commerce, there's Reno v. Condon this
2	Court's unanimous decision
3	JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, my question is
4	what's the best case you have for your argument?
5	MR. GUPTA: Well, I think you know, this
6	Court's unanimous decision in Reno v. Condon held that,
7	because people buy public records and sell them in
8	interstate commerce, that's, indisputably, interstate
9	commerce. So we
10	JUSTICE KENNEDY: But that wasn't a
11	discrimination. That wasn't a
12	MR. GUPTA: That's right.
13	JUSTICE KENNEDY: That's just that goes
14	to the question whether or not this is commerce.
15	MR. GUPTA: That that's right.
16	JUSTICE KENNEDY: What what is your best
17	case to show that this is discriminatory in violation of
18	our precedence?
19	MR. GUPTA: Well, Virginia doesn't deny that
20	there's discrimination on its face, so I take your
21	question to be asking you know, what about the
22	commerce aspect? And in Reno v. Condon
23	JUSTICE KENNEDY: Now if I have

to write the opinion, what case do I put down? I'm

24

25

waiting.

- 1 MR. GUPTA: Yeah, I mean, you -- okay. So you
- 2 can also look to Camps Newfound, which, I think --
- 3 you know, was much -- much more attenuated to commerce.
- 4 There, you had a generally applicable law, a property
- 5 tax law --
- 6 JUSTICE BREYER: If I only have time to read
- 7 one case --
- MR. GUPTA: Yeah.
- 9 JUSTICE BREYER: -- or possibly two, which
- 10 would you like me to read? I think that's, basically,
- 11 the question.
- 12 (Laughter.)
- MR. GUPTA: Yeah. I mean -- you know, look.
- 14 There's no case that's -- that's entirely on all fours,
- 15 but --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Okay. But I assume you
- 17 don't want me --
- 18 JUSTICE KENNEDY: That's why you're here.
- 19 (Laughter.)
- 20 MR. GUPTA: So right. So -- so -- okay. So
- 21 the Camps Newfound case is -- is a case where you had a
- generally applicable law. It was a property tax law.
- 23 It exempted -- you know, charities that served primarily
- in-State residents.
- 25 It was -- there is no evidence that the

- 1 State of Maine intended that to be a -- you know, a
- 2 discrimination against commerce and, obviously, swept
- 3 more broadly and affected both commerce and
- 4 non-commerce. But this Court said that -- you know, you
- 5 had facial discrimination against commerce because there
- 6 were people operating these summer camps, and they were
- 7 treated differently --
- JUSTICE BREYER: I'll look at those. But I
- 9 think the Commerce Clause, basically, has, as its
- 10 objective, insofar as it's dormant, to prevent a
- 11 legislature or decisionmaker within its State
- discriminating in favor of their own State producers.
- MR. GUPTA: Right.
- 14 JUSTICE BREYER: Now, it's pretty hard for
- me to put this case into that mold.
- 16 MR. GUPTA: Well, I mean, one -- you know,
- 17 one piece of evidence, Justice Breyer, is the media
- 18 exception to the Virginia statute. It -- this -- this
- 19 makes it clear that Virginia was aware that people who
- 20 were requesting information for commercial purposes were
- 21 going to use this statute and they exempted the press --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: It's just Virginia media,
- 23 though, isn't it? Isn't it only media that --
- MR. GUPTA: That's right, Justice Scalia.
- 25 So it's --

Τ	JUSTICE SCALIA: exists or is broadcast int
2	Virginia?
3	MR. GUPTA: That's right. So it's
4	it's
5	JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, that's consistent
6	with their purpose, that this statute is meant to assure
7	good, honest government in Virginia.
8	MR. GUPTA: Well, if this is a statute, it's
9	a pretty unusual statute that discriminates among
10	newspapers, so it says
11	JUSTICE BREYER: If it does what the I
12	had exactly the same question for both parts of your
13	argument, that what it's their am I right in thinking
14	that anyone can get any information anyone in any
15	State can get any information that pertains to him or
16	her? Is that right or not?
17	MR. GUPTA: There is a separate Virginia
18	JUSTICE BREYER: Is that right or not?
19	MR. GUPTA: Yes. There is a
20	separate Virginia statute that allows this.
21	JUSTICE BREYER: Okay. That's what I wanted
22	to know, whether it's separate or not.
23	MR. GUPTA: That's right.
24	JUSTICE BREYER: Anyone from Alaska to
25	Hawaii can get any information that pertains to him or

1	her. Second, that this has nothing to do with
2	judicial records, there is a different statute that
3	makes judicial records public.
4	MR. GUPTA: That's correct.
5	JUSTICE BREYER: Okay. So we're, now,
6	talking about the class of information, other than the
7	two classes I've mentioned.
8	And I then ended up and I'd like you to
9	add something to this, if you can, that, really, this is
10	about since getting information involves usually a
11	benefit to the recipient, but, sometimes, harm to the
12	person the information is about, that willing to run
13	that harm and risk of harm is the interest in State good
14	government, okay?
15	MR. GUPTA: Uh-huh.
16	JUSTICE BREYER: Now, if that's the
17	interest, that's an interest that probably a State has
18	the right, just as it has the right to say other people
19	can't vote in State elections, if that's the interest,
20	then I guess it could take reasonable measures related
21	to that interest.
22	All right. Now, that is the the argument
23	or the position that I would appreciate your addressing.
24	MR. GUPTA: Sure. You know, that we
25	

1	don't	deny	that	that's	s an	ınterest	that	the	State	has,	but

- 2 then you have to see whether the -- the interest is
- 3 reasonably furthered by the statute. And, here, you
- 4 have a resource that is not finite, and the statute
- 5 allows the State to recoup its expenses.
- 6 So nothing is lost to Virginians. There
- 7 isn't any loss in transparency to Virginians by
- 8 extending access to out-of-State data companies.
- 9 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But if it costs for
- 10 Virginia -- Virginia has to take care of its own, and,
- if it has to service FOIA requests from all over, it's
- going to cost the State. It's going to have to hire
- 13 people to do this. They're going to have to spend many
- 14 hours going through these records, so the State
- doesn't -- it wants to conserve its resources for its
- own people.
- 17 MR. GUPTA: But -- but there's no loss in
- 18 resources, Justice Ginsburg, because the statute allows
- 19 Virginia to fully recoup any administrative expenses.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Counsel, I'm having --
- 21 JUSTICE SCALIA: But they -- but they just
- don't want out -- they -- they don't want outlanders
- 23 mucking around in -- in Virginia government. It's
- 24 perfectly okay for good old Virginians to do that, but
- 25 they don't want outlanders to do it. Why -- why is that

- 1 unreasonable? MR. GUPTA: Yeah. That -- that is 2 certainly their interest. But you've got to see whether the 3 4 policy serves -- serves -- you know, the interest, and -- and this is a statute that is supposed to promote 5 б transparency. It actually makes it less transparent. 7 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Counsel, I'm -- I -there is underlying your argument a sort of fundamental 8 9 belief that you are entitled to relief -- pardon the 10 alliteration -- simply because the statute discriminates between citizens and noncitizens. Is that your 11 12 position? 13 MR. GUPTA: No, not at all, I mean --JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So if it's not, what are 14 15 the two rights that you -- or what rights are it that 16 you're claiming have been violated? You say privileges 17 and immunities. What's the privilege or immunity? 18 MR. GUPTA: It's the privilege or immunity 19 of pursuing a common calling across State borders. So there's no dispute here that Mr. Hurlbert's common 20 21 calling is -- is gathering data. In fact, those are the
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So is this -- is this an as-applied challenge to the --

principal users of public records laws.

MR. GUPTA: That's right.

2.2

1	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: All right. MR.
2	GUPTA: That's right.
3	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So this is an as-applied
4	challenge?
5	MR. GUPTA: Yes. So so it's an
6	as-applied challenge with respect to Mr. Hurlbert's
7	common calling. There's no there's no dispute that
8	that is his common calling and that this law has the
9	effect of completely cutting him off from pursuing his
10	common calling in the Virginia market and that 47 other
11	States
12	JUSTICE GINSBURG: Then you would be doing
13	something very strange with this statute because you
14	would be saying Hurlbert has a right to this because
15	it's his business. But the statute, the character of
16	this statute is it doesn't matter what you want the
17	information for.
18	But you're saying the out-of the
19	in-Stater, it doesn't matter. Out-of-Stater, is it your
20	argument that, if this out-of-Stater has a good reason
21	for getting this and it's related to the out-of-State's
22	business, so you you're changing the character of a
23	FOIA statute, which is it doesn't matter what you want
24	it for.
25	MR. GUPTA: Right. I mean, you would you

- 1 know, we would -- we would ask that you rule that the statute
- 2 is unconstitutional, as applied to him, and then
- 3 Virginia would have the choice, if it has a --
- 4 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I -- I'm having a
- 5 problem, and then I think it's Justice Ginsburg's
- 6 problem, which is, absent the statute, he can't demand
- 7 that Virginia provide him with this information because
- 8 that's how he wants to work, correct?
- 9 So what's the added value that gives him a
- 10 right to demand it merely because a statute exists? He
- doesn't have a right to the information.
- MR. GUPTA: Well, he's -- all he's asking
- for is information that's available in the public
- 14 archives on equal terms with Virginians. In the same
- 15 way that -- that someone who --
- JUSTICE BREYER: He -- he has a very
- 17 reasonable request in my view, but the question isn't
- 18 the reasonableness of his request. The question's --
- 19 you know, whether they can do it. And the -- the way --
- 20 the work -- the thing that's bothering me on the work
- 21 part is this: It seems that the work is sort of
- 22 tailored to the statute.
- It's in this way. I -- I have a job, and my
- 24 job is to study election processes. And I write
- 25 reports, and I find amazing things about differences

- 1 among States. They're truly amazing. And I say
- 2 -- you know, it would help me a
- 3 lot if I was actually a voter in each of these States.
- 4 That would help my job. It would lend authenticity, and
- 5 I could learn things that I probably couldn't learn
- 6 otherwise.
- 7 Now, does that add anything to the argument?
- 8 I mean, I don't think so, but it sounds a little bit
- 9 like you're making that kind of argument --
- 10 MR. GUPTA: No.
- 11 JUSTICE BREYER: -- and -- and they either
- do have the right or they don't. And I don't know that
- 13 it helps that I -- that I say, well, I really want it
- 14 for my work.
- MR. GUPTA: Right. But this is -- this is a
- 16 profession that has existed since the founding era. I
- 17 mean, we've -- you know, we've cited cases in our
- 18 opening brief of -- of people hiring professionals to
- 19 search the records for them before engaging in property
- transactions. By the late 19th Century, you had an
- enormous industry that was designed to do this.
- 22 So this isn't -- Mr. Hurlbert isn't someone
- who's making up some profession. He's part of a very
- large industry that has done this for a very long time.
- 25 And that industry, yes, like lawyers depend on

- 1 courthouses or truckers depend on roads, his industry depends
- 2 on access to the public archives.
- 3 And -- you know, it's true that -- that now
- 4 you have these modern public records laws, but I -- I
- think Virginia's argument would be the same if you were
- 6 just talking about can -- can they bar the doors to the
- 7 archives building? Can they bar the doors to the
- 8 property records? So there's no -- I don't see any
- 9 distinction in kind --
- 10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Is this -- is this
- 11 your Privileges and Immunities argument or your dormant
- 12 Commerce Clause argument?
- 13 MR. GUPTA: You know, I think the logic of
- 14 both arguments are similar, but I think it, most
- 15 clearly, is illustrated in the Privileges and Immunities
- 16 context where --
- 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So then it's not
- 18 enough that this is a big deal to your client. It has
- 19 to be something that is essential to hold the country
- together as a national unit. And it seems, to me, it's
- a bit of a stretch to say somebody gathering records
- about commercial -- under FOIA fits that description.
- 23 MR. GUPTA: I don't think it's a stretch at
- 24 all, Justice -- Chief Justice. The -- the aggregators
- of records make possible mortgage origination, credit

- 1 reporting, insurance adjustment. The -- the economy -- and
- 2 you have an amicus brief --
- 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: No, but, see,
- 4 they're just to get into those. Again, I think a lot of
- 5 those examples you -- you do have access under other
- 6 statutes. You're talking about mortgage rules and all
- 7 that. Aren't those all --
- 8 MR. GUPTA: No, no. Not to this kind of
- 9 information. The -- the information that Mr. Hurlbert
- is gathering, tax assessment information, is essential
- 11 to -- to mortgage origination and credit reporting. The
- 12 people who hire him are large data companies, and the --
- 13 the data industry brief explains the uses of this
- 14 information.
- 15 That -- that information is essential to
- 16 these activities. And Virginia, virtually alone among
- 17 the States, is -- is erecting this barrier to access
- 18 that market and reserving the right to access that
- market to only people who live in the State.
- 20 And -- and -- you know, this would be no
- 21 different if it were just talking about the archives
- 22 that -- that include all the information that the --
- yes, it's true that Virginia has exempted of the title
- itself, but I don't see that the logic of their position
- 25 allows them to make that distinction. I mean, that's

- 1 just a feature of their -- of their statute.
- 2 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Could I -- I'm still trying to
- 3 tease out what your claim is. Let's suppose Virginia
- 4 passes a statute that says, We'll let nonresidents have
- 5 access, but they have to pay all the costs.
- 6 Nonresidents don't.
- 7 Would that satisfy you as valid?
- 8 MR. GUPTA: I think that would be a closer
- 9 question, but I think that presents some problems as
- 10 well. I mean, so, in your hypothetical, it's free to
- 11 the citizens of the State, but they're just passing the
- 12 cost on to out-of-Staters.
- 13 And -- you know, this -- this Court, in
- 14 cases like Toomer and Mullaney, have said that at
- 15 least -- you know, where the State can show that the
- 16 nonresidents pose some unique evil, that the -- the
- 17 State is entitled to pass the costs on.
- 18 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Why isn't it just -- you
- 19 just being costs them more?
- MR. GUPTA: Right.
- 21 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: That was Justice
- 22 Ginsburg's point, which is every time you've put in a
- request, you're costing them more money.
- MR. GUPTA: Right. But -- but that would be
- 25 discriminating against non as -- noncitizens solely

1	because they're noncitizens. So, if there's some particular
2	
3	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Well, why? You were
4	costing them more.
5	MR. GUPTA: Right. Well, that's that's
6	precisely the rationale that that in
7	Justice Kennedy's opinion for the Court in Barnard v.
8	Thorstenn, this Court rejected. This the Virgin
9	Islands wanted to say if we open up our bar to people
10	from all over the country, it's going to increase the
11	administrative resources. And this Court said, no,
12	that's not a good enough reason. That's just
13	discriminating on the basis of citizenship.
14	But if, for example, the State could show
15	that there was you know, there were shipping costs
16	that were uniquely posed by nonresidents and they wanted
17	to assess a \$5 shipping fee for all nonresidents, that
18	might be permissible.
19	And, if there are no further questions, I'd
20	like to reserve my time.
21	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
22	General Getchell?
23	ORAL ARGUMENT OF EARLE DUNCAN GETCHELL, JR.,
24	ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENTS
25	MR. GETCHELL: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it

1	please the Court: The
2	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I'm not sure how you
3	save administrative costs under this statute. They
4	could go to any Virginia resident, it's not illegal, and
5	probably will, it'll cost them something more, but not
6	you, and get the very same information.
7	So how do you justify this discrimination?
8	Because it's so easily the administrative cost is
9	going to be imposed anyway.
10	MR. GETCHELL: I would would suggest that
11	the purpose of the statute, which is political, not
12	commercial, left the State with the position that it was
13	going to subsidize with tax dollars this function
14	because we can't recover our overhead; we can over
15	only recover the actual cost.
16	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So you want to give more
17	businesses to Virginia citizens who will now charge
18	out-of-State residents money to process their FOIA
19	requests?
20	MR. GETCHELL: No, Your Honor. I don't
21	think anybody was thinking about businesses of any sort.
22	I think they were saying that we have a political
23	hygiene statute. They were very much the fad. It
24	happened in in my lifetime, too. I remember when
25	

- they were adopted. Nobody thought they were commercial in
- 2 nature.
- 3 And I do want to -- want to repel the notion
- 4 that there is even substantial discrimination in this
- 5 case because Mr. Hurlbert, in his admission that this is
- 6 an as-applied challenge, has a difficulty with
- 7 substantial equality of access, because it turns out
- 8 that Mr. Hurlbert, in his reply brief, when he teed up
- 9 the 1786 statute, which does give access -- did give
- 10 access, he focused his argument on that statute.
- And if you run that statute, you will find
- 12 that between 1830 -- 1813 and 1840, that you did not
- 13 have general access. They went back to having to show a
- 14 particular interest. But that -- from 1840, '41 until
- today, through the codes of 1819 and -- and up until the
- present code, Section 17.1208, he has the right of
- 17 access to tax assessment records.
- 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So the -- if I
- 19 understood your answer to Justice Sotomayor, the only
- 20 reason you don't let out-of-Staters get these records is
- 21 because of the added overhead costs?
- MR. GETCHELL: No, Your Honor. It's just
- 23 not part of the interests the State was trying to serve.
- 24 The State --
- 25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, I know.

- 1 But -- but -- so why don't you do it anyways? Just -- just
- 2 as I asked your friend, it doesn't seem like that
- 3 big a deal. It doesn't seem like that big a deal for
- 4 you either. If you can recoup overhead costs from
- 5 people who request -- and I'd assume you would be able
- 6 to -- why don't other people -- people from West
- 7 Virginia may have interest in how Virginia government
- 8 operates, too.
- 9 And -- and, again, if -- what cost is there to
- 10 you, other than overhead? You don't want to keep how
- 11 Virginia government operates quiet from outsiders when
- 12 you let in -- its citizens get the access, do you?
- 13 MR. GETCHELL: The -- we are here to defend
- 14 the decisions of the two lower courts that apply
- existing doctrine. And, under existing doctrine, only
- 16 if we discover that this is a fundamental right, do I
- 17 have to justify --
- 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, that's under
- 19 the Privileges -- the Privileges and Immunities
- argument.
- MR. GETCHELL: That's correct.
- 22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Okay. But what
- about the Dormant Commerce Clause?
- 24 MR. GETCHELL: Under the Dormant Commerce
- 25 Clause, we would first have to have a regulation of

- 1 commerce that's discriminatory. And I would say that a --
- 2 that this is a governmental function. I would say
- 3 that --
- 4 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: No, I know -- I
- 5 understand your argument. I'm just asking you why
- 6 bother? I mean, what -- what's the -- and that's
- 7 certainly pertinent to some of the Commerce Clause
- 8 analysis. And I haven't heard anything, other than the
- 9 overhead costs. And I think you can recoup that from
- 10 the requesters.
- 11 MR. GETCHELL: I cannot, Your Honor.
- 12 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Why not?
- 13 MR. GETCHELL: Mr. Chief Justice, the
- 14 statute says I cannot recoup the cost of maintaining and
- generating the database, which is, by definition,
- 16 overhead. I cannot --
- 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, you've got to
- 18 maintain and generate the database, anyway, for Virginia
- 19 citizens who are going to ask for it. This is not an
- 20 added cost. It's an added cost if you
- 21 have to hire an additional person to handle -- as far as
- I can tell, just these two people.
- MR. GETCHELL: It's an added burden, too.
- 24 It's not all --
- 25 JUSTICE SCALIA: But the Virginia citizens

- pay for that database, right? MR. GETCHELL: They
- 2 do. This is a
- 3 taxpayer --
- 4 JUSTICE SCALIA: And the out-of-Staters
- 5 don't pay for the database.
- 6 MR. GETCHELL: This is a taxpayer-subsidized
- 7 system.
- 8 JUSTICE SCALIA: And, besides, do -- do
- 9 you -- is it the law that -- that the State of Virginia
- 10 cannot do anything that's pointless?
- 11 Only -- only the Federal Government can do
- 12 stuff that's pointless?
- 13 (Laughter.)
- 14 MR. GETCHELL: The -- there is a
- burden -- there is a non-financial burden as well
- 16 because, as one who is subject to FOIA requests, we have
- 17 a finite number of officials and employees who have to
- 18 address these things. And that --
- 19 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: You keep making that
- 20 argument. But you don't stop residents for asking for
- the information from someone else. I mean, that's one
- of the points of your law, which is they can hire a
- 23 Virginia resident to get it for them. Most of the big
- 24 people are doing that already.
- 25 So you're not saving any money if they can

- get the information simply by paying someone in Virginia to
- 2 get it for them.
- 3 MR. GETCHELL: In -- in fact, the State of
- 4 Virginia has made the policy decision to give this
- 5 information to its citizens and not to inquire behind it
- to see whether or not somebody's doing it for an
- 7 out-of-Stater. And not --
- 8 JUSTICE SCALIA: Or even for commercial
- 9 purposes. Don't you think if -- if those who created
- 10 these government in the sunshine laws could have drafted
- them in such a way that inquiries for commercial
- 12 purposes would not be allowed, but only those inquiries
- 13 that are intended to look into the workings of State
- 14 government and produce government in the sunshine, don't
- you think that they probably would have excluded
- 16 commercial inquiries, if they could?
- 17 But you can't tell which ones are commercial
- 18 and which aren't.
- 19 MR. GETCHELL: And we don't -- and we don't
- 20 try. We have a policy decision that we want to have a
- 21 very simple system that allows our citizens to make
- inquiries without a demonstrated need or cause because
- 23 we want there to be sunshine.
- 24 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: It's no more
- 25 complicated a system if you let out-of-Staters have

- 1 access, too. You say we want a simple system. It's going to
- 2 be the same system, whether you win or lose.
- 3 MR. GETCHELL: The thing that is of -- of
- 4 great concern -- why do we care, why do we bother -- is
- 5 the principle that when a government is providing a
- 6 taxpayer-subsidized service of recent origin to its
- 7 citizens, that it does not have to explain its choice,
- 8 either under the Privileges and Immunities Clause or
- 9 under the Dormant Commerce Clause.
- 10 It is very important that we not find
- ourselves with lawsuits that say, "services." Voluntary
- services are, in fact, things that, now, have to be
- justified under those two provisions of the
- 14 Constitution.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Well, that -- that's where
- 16 he comes in with his argument because I -- I agree, you
- 17 can -- you don't have -- let's say the most fabulous
- 18 reason for doing this, but you have a reason.
- 19 (Laughter.)
- 20 JUSTICE BREYER: And so the question is,
- 21 does it have to be better than that? And -- and they
- 22 are saying yes. And, as I heard it, this -- what I
- 23 would characterize as a strong argument -- this sort of,
- first of all, strikes me as a stronger argument, is
- 25 that, look, if we go back into history, out-of-State

- 1 real estate people could always get information about
- 2 property -- let's say they had a client who wanted to
- 3 buy it.
- 4 Now, you've protected that. But, in today's
- 5 world, it's important that we get statistics about this,
- too, because our economy is national. If we understand
- 7 how States are taxing their real estate, we will know to
- 8 what extent they increase the value, to what extent they
- 9 increase the rate, to what extent they really get the
- 10 money they are supposed to, to what extent they might
- get money or not get money in the future.
- 12 And all of those things are nationally
- important, so that people can put them together and
- 14 make -- better than we have done in the past --
- predictions about what is likely to happen to States
- and, hence, the national economy. All right.
- 17 That's -- that's the kind of argument he's
- 18 making. And he says, so, therefore, there is a national
- 19 interest in the flow of this information. And that
- 20 means you have to have a better than "uh-huh" kind of
- 21 rationale. That's -- that's what he's saying, I think.
- MR. GETCHELL: But it's very difficult for
- 23 Mr. Hurlbert to make that fairly expansive argument
- 24 because it turns out --
- 25 JUSTICE BREYER: Well, to be fair, I -- I

1	was sort of expanding it. (Laughter.)
2	MR. GETCHELL: But, in point of fact,
3	because he is entitled to the tax assessment data in the
4	clerk's office, in the case of Henrico County, where he
5	went, you go in the same building and if you're
6	Mr. Hurlbert, you turn in one direction, you go to the
7	clerk's office.
8	And, if somebody in Virginia and wants to
9	for whatever reason, get it from the tax assessor's
10	book, instead of from the clerk's book, you turn in the
11	other direction.
12	JUSTICE KAGAN: But you don't deny that, in
13	general, this does affect out-of-State data collectors,
14	people who are engaged in the kind of business that
15	Justice Breyer was talking about, is that right?
16	MR. GETCHELL: I have no idea in this record
17	because we were on summary judgment cross motions for
18	summary judgment, and the district court and the court of
19	appeals, both in our judgment, correctly ruled that
20	there's a two two-step inquiry.
21	And the first step is whether or not
22	there is a fundamental right. And in the absence
23	of a
24	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: It's only in his
25	

1	Privileges and Immunities Clause claim. MR
2	GETCHELL: Well
3	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: He claims that the
4	dormant Commerce Clause has been effected because he
5	reads this statute as saying only Virginia recording
6	companies have access; out-of-State can't. And it's a
7	fair reading of the statute. It only permits Virginia
8	residents, which include commercial and noncommercial,
9	to access the information.
L O	So assume, hypothetically, that the statute
L1	reads "only Virginia commercial businesses have access
L 2	to this information"
L3	MR. GETCHELL: If if, in fact, you want
L 4	to rewrite the statute to subject to it to attack,
L5	obviously, that would then raise questions about a
L6	nongovernmental protectionist intent, but that's not the
L7	way this statute was written. It's not how it was
L8	crafted. It it has nothing to do with commerce.
L9	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Well, that's the
20	question I'm I'm raising the best argument for your
21	adversary, okay?
22	MR. GETCHELL: Right.
23	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Because we could call it
24	a direct he calls it direct discrimination because
0.5	commercial businesses are being permitted in Virginia

1	but not noncommercial. You say it's indirect. How do we
2	draw the line between direct and indirect, when the
3	bottom-line consequence is the same?
4	MR. GETCHELL: I would I would have about
5	three answers to that. The first the first one is
6	that we don't trigger the dormant Commerce Clause
7	analysis, unless we are exercising the police power of a
8	State to regulate commerce. And that means it does
9	mean that not every statute a State passes triggers an
10	inquiry, even if it has an indirect effect on commerce.
11	Whereas, here, we have a statute that has a
12	solely political intent, the fact that that now that
13	the amici want to tell us about this great burgeoning
14	enterprise, they they want the Court to take that
15	into account.
16	JUSTICE KENNEDY: Are you are you telling
17	us that there is simply no commercial consequences to
18	this statute at all, that Virginians find this to be of
19	no commercial value, in any instance?
20	MR. GETCHELL: I am totally agnostic on this
21	record because we don't have any data on that.
22	JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, you were the one
23	with summary judgment. Now, maybe maybe they didn't
24	come forward with the information, but we interpret

summary judgment in favor of -- of the losing party.

25

1	And you're so you say you are totally
2	agnostic. I am concerned that you are preventing them,
3	by the summary judgment, from showing that there even
4	with Virginians, there is a commercial value frequently
5	to this information.
6	MR. GETCHELL: All right.
7	JUSTICE KENNEDY: It's not just political.
8	MR. GETCHELL: On this on this record
9	on this record, the position that was accepted by the
10	two courts below, entirely in accordance with this
11	Court's existing doctrine, was the first inquiry under
12	Privileges and Immunities, was whether there was a
13	fundamental right. If there if there is not, then we
14	make no further inquiry.
15	JUSTICE KENNEDY: Let's talk about let's
16	talk about the Commerce Clause. You are saying you are
17	agnostic. You have no idea whether or not there might
18	be some commercial value to this information. I would
19	think, as an officer of the State of Virginia or as a
20	matter of judicial notice, we could we could take
21	notice that there is.
22	MR. GETCHELL: I'm saying that, under this
23	record, that never came up, nor should it have come up,
24	because what the court said on dormant Commerce Clause,
25	both of the courts below, was this is not a regulation

- 1 of commerce, it is a governmental action --
- 2 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But it has -- it has --
- 3 JUSTICE SCALIA: You are saying that it's no
- 4 more necessary for you to show that there's no
- 5 commercial value to allowing out-of-Staters to do this
- 6 than it is necessary for you to show that there is no
- 7 commercial value to your not allowing out-of-Staters to
- 8 hunt deer in Virginia.
- 9 MR. GETCHELL: I believe --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: You say that it's up
- 11 to Virginia --
- MR. GETCHELL: Correct, Your Honor.
- 13 JUSTICE SCALIA: -- whether -- whether
- out-of-Staters can hunt for Virginia game.
- MR. GETCHELL: Correct.
- 16 JUSTICE SCALIA: And it's up to Virginia
- 17 whether out-of-Staters can have access to the State's
- records, that they have no interest in, personally,
- 19 under -- under this law. It seems, to me, perfectly
- 20 logical.
- 21 MR. GETCHELL: But, remember, they do --
- they do have access to this information, both Hurlbert
- and McBurney.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Of course, that assumes
- 25 the question as to whether or not there is a general

- 1 commercial interest in these -- in these
- 2 documents. And you say, oh, you are agnostic. At least
- 3 that means you are open to the possibility that there
- 4 might be a commercial interest.
- 5 (Laughter.)
- 6 MR. GETCHELL: Well, here's the problem in
- 7 this case is because I think that we are not at
- 8 first-tier analysis, because there is no regulation of
- 9 commerce that is discriminatory --
- 10 JUSTICE SCALIA: I didn't understand -- if
- 11 that's your argument on it, I reject it as Justice
- 12 Kennedy does. I -- I didn't understand you to be
- arguing that there is no commercial value.
- 14 MR. GETCHELL: I'm trying to explain why it
- 15 doesn't matter.
- 16 JUSTICE SCALIA: Yes, that's what I thought.
- 17 (Laughter.)
- 18 MR. GETCHELL: It doesn't -- it doesn't
- 19 matter because if -- if, on the threshold inquiry, we
- 20 don't have a discriminatory regulation of commerce, but
- 21 just an ordinary governmental function, then only
- 22 Pike-Church analysis could possibly --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: You -- you can't say
- 24 discriminatory regulation. What about a tax? I mean,
- 25 you can't tax discriminatorily, and I wouldn't call

1	taxation, in and of itself, a regulation of commerce, would
2	you?
3	MR. GETCHELL: The the fact of the matter
4	is that it has been taxes have been found to be both
5	violations of privileges and immunities and dormant
6	Commerce Clause, where there were there was unequal
7	taxation of commerce.
8	JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, even though it's
9	even though it's not a regulation of commerce?
10	MR. GETCHELL: Okay. Well, I
11	JUSTICE SCALIA: Okay. I mean, I guess
12	that's your argument, then.
13	MR. GETCHELL: I apologize I chose a word
14	that is not as apt as it should have been, but a
15	regulation or taxation centering around commerce
16	intended to affect and actually affecting commerce, it
17	just this just isn't that kind of activity.
18	JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, General, can I just
19	indulge me with a hypothetical. Suppose that the background
20	for these statutes was different. The statutes were the
21	same, but, in addition to talking about people's right
22	to know about how their government works, the people
23	spend a lot of time also talking about the economic
24	benefits of a free flow of information in our country.
25	Would that if that were true and I

- 1 want to put myself on record as not remembering when these
- 2 statutes were passed -- you know.
- 3 (Laughter. )
- 4 JUSTICE KAGAN: But, if that were true,
- 5 would this case be different? Or would you still be up
- 6 here saying the same thing?
- 7 MR. GETCHELL: If -- if I had -- if I had a
- 8 statute which, on its face, dealt with -- with
- 9 commerce --
- 10 JUSTICE KAGAN: The statute does exactly the
- 11 same thing. I'm just suggesting that there might be two
- interests behind the statute. One is about knowing the
- 13 way your government operates, and the other is about
- 14 free flows of information in our economy.
- And, if both of those things had gone into
- 16 the mix to create statutes of this kind, would you
- be up here saying the same thing or not?
- 18 MR. GETCHELL: I would be saying something
- 19 at least slightly different, if I had different facts
- that I had to deal with, but I think, in principle, I
- 21 would be arguing the power of the State to pass this
- 22 kind of act without having to submit to the dormant
- 23 Commerce Clause, at least first-tier dormant Commerce
- 24 Clause analysis.
- 25 JUSTICE GINSBURG: What else -- what else

- 1 can Virginia do besides -- I don't know if there are elks in
- 2 Virginia, but besides -- to reserve for its
- 3 own -- for its own people? You say, this is -- good
- 4 government in Virginia is for Virginians. Big game
- 5 hunting, scarce resource can be reserved for in-State
- 6 people.
- 7 What else can Virginia do?
- 8 MR. GETCHELL: Well, Virginia can -- can do
- 9 things including have in-State tuition. It can have --
- it can subsidize its own businesses, either by training
- 11 programs or even by other direct subsidy from public
- 12 FISK. It limits welfare payments to residents of the
- 13 Commonwealth.
- 14 When the Commonwealth is just acting as a
- government and not as a regulator or taxer of interstate
- 16 commerce, it has the status of a coequal sovereign that,
- in its own sphere, is allowed to do its own policy
- 18 choices.
- 19 JUSTICE KAGAN: I think the thing, General,
- 20 that I was trying to get at, it seems to me you have a
- 21 very good case that these statutes were -- were meant
- for a different purpose. But, in fact, it seems as
- though your friends there have a good case that these
- statutes have been taken over, to a large extent, across
- 25 the country by economic enterprises doing economic

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Τ	MR. GETCHELL: Well, there's there's
2	discrimination, only in the sense that we discriminate
3	against people who we don't let vote because they don't
4	live in the Commonwealth as well. I mean, we this
5	statute has a function. It's a legitimate function
6	and
7	JUSTICE KENNEDY: You you could say the
8	same thing, we don't discriminate against Californians
9	who want to come and pack their melons in Arizona.
10	MR. GETCHELL: Well, I would say that
11	that whether or not somebody can deal with an item in
12	commerce is is raises Commerce Clause questions.
13	And just, like in Reno v. Condon, where the State of
14	South Carolina was choosing to take its records and sell
15	them into the stream of commerce, there, the Court held
16	that that they thereby became a thing in commerce.
17	The records of the tax assessor of the
18	County of Henrico, which are available through the
19	clerk's office to Mr. Hurlbert, are not things or
20	persons in commerce, nor are they
21	JUSTICE KENNEDY: It it would surprise me
22	if an out-of-State investor, who was thinking of putting
23	a large plant in Virginia, had absolutely no interest in
24	Virginia's tax policies.
25	MR. GETCHELL: But they are available. They

- 1 are publicly available. They are not just not available
- 2 through this adjunct service. All -- all FOIA is, is a
- 3 device where you don't have to go and look. There has
- 4 always been public access for these -- these records.
- JUSTICE BREYER: So -- so suppose -- I mean,
- 6 I think they have an argument, saying, of course, this
- 7 information would be useful for gathering national
- 8 statistics and helping the national economy. I think
- 9 that's true.
- On the other hand, you say, well, but, look,
- there must be something left that the States can reserve
- to their own citizens, there must be something. They
- 13 can't protect their own commerce; that's clear. They
- 14 can't discriminate against people who want to come here
- 15 and live here. That's clear.
- 16 They can't do this and that and the other
- 17 thing, but, gee, there must be something. I mean, can't
- 18 they reserve at least their -- their beaches for their
- 19 own citizens? No. Parking near their beaches? Well,
- 20 maybe. And -- and maybe deer. And, if not this, what?
- 21 That's the end. Okay?
- 22 So that's, basically, what you are saying.
- 23 This is just an interest in trying to find out how State
- institutions work, and the voters have the main interest
- 25 there, and this is other -- so you say the other one is

- 1 attenuated, but not non-existent. He says the other is
- 2 important, though he recognizes States should be able to
- 3 do something.
- 4 So if you were me, how would you decide?
- 5 How would you choose?
- 6 (Laughter.)
- 7 JUSTICE BREYER: What is the standard,
- 8 because you know the -- the Privileges and Immunities
- 9 Clause is -- is considerably opaque, and there are very
- 10 few cases on it. And so what -- how would you tell me
- 11 to -- to resolve that -- that tension because there is a
- 12 tension.
- 13 MR. GETCHELL: I -- I think there that --
- 14 that the important policy issue in this case for us is
- 15 precisely as you articulated. There -- there is
- 16 residual sovereign power in the State to act, and we
- 17 have to violate the Constitution, clearly, before we
- 18 lose that authority.
- 19 And, under existing privileges and
- 20 immunities doctrine, the privileges and immunities
- 21 are -- are few; they are -- they have been enumerated in
- the courts, they are similar in character, having to do
- with commerce, not governmental action. So I would say
- you would not extend privileges and immunities.
- 25 JUSTICE SCALIA: We are talking about

- 1 State-owned documents, aren't we? MR. GETCHELL:
- 2 Yes, Your Honor.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: There is not much that's as
- 4 close to the sovereignty of the State as the possession
- 5 and right to exclude people from its own records and its
- 6 own documents, right?
- 7 MR. GETCHELL: I agree, Your --
- 8 Justice Scalia.
- 9 JUSTICE SCALIA: So the -- the issue is can
- 10 the State allow its own citizens, for purposes of seeing
- 11 that the government is -- is being run on the up-and-up,
- have access to those documents, without letting the
- 13 whole world?
- 14 MR. GETCHELL: Yes, Your Honor, that is our
- 15 position.
- 16 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So why doesn't the
- 17 dormant Commerce Clause affect the hypothetical I laid
- 18 out? Because, directly, this permits Virginia
- 19 commercial businesses to get something that
- 20 out-of-Staters can't. The State is putting this
- instrument into commerce. You say, I don't know that.
- 22 But make the assumption that we think the record's clear
- enough on that point.
- I know you want to fight me on that, but
- 25 it's hard -- it's a fight with no legs because you have

- 1 to know that commercial enterprises in Virginia seek these
- 2 records.
- 3 MR. GETCHELL: I am -- I am arguing that, of
- 4 course, I think we say in our brief that -- that they
- 5 can be put into commerce. They are put into commerce,
- 6 but we don't put them into commerce. And we have -- in
- 7 the architecture of our bill -- our act has nothing to
- 8 do with commerce.
- 9 And if a State can't deal with --
- 10 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Tell us, under our
- jurisprudence -- the dormant Common Commerce
- jurisprudence -- and I have some colleagues who don't -- who
- don't believe it should exist. Take that argument out.
- 14 Why is this not a dormant Commerce Clause case?
- 15 MR. GETCHELL: Because it is not an exercise
- of the State police power to regulate commerce. The
- 17 documents in the -- in the tax assessor's office of the
- 18 County of Henrico are not things or persons in commerce,
- 19 nor are they channels or instrumentalities of commerce.
- They are just the records of the sovereign, which we
- 21 will allow our citizens to obtain.
- Unless the Court has further questions, I
- think this argument has been developed from our
- 24 standpoint.
- 25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, General.

Τ	Mr. Gupta, you have three minutes remaining.
2	REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF DEEPAK GUPTA
3	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONERS
4	MR. GUPTA: Thank you. Just a few quick
5	points: First, I just want to clear up, on the statute,
6	I want to make it clear that this statute does allow the
7	State to fully recoup its costs, including
8	administrative costs, and the State hasn't said
9	otherwise.
LO	And, secondly, the suggestion has been
L1	made
L2	JUSTICE SCALIA: Excuse me. The I I
L3	think what he's saying is you don't have to pay the
L 4	costs of developing and maintaining those records, which
L5	costs are paid by the citizens of Virginia, which gives
L6	them an additional interest in being able to get to
L7	those documents.
L8	You you don't claim that that you pay
L9	for the development and the maintenance of those
20	records. You just pay for the incremental costs of
21	giving it to you, right?
22	MR. GUPTA: That that's right,
23	Justice Scalia
24	JUSTICE SCALIA: And Virginians pay for all
) <b>5</b>	the rest?

1	MR. GUPTA: That that's right, Justice Scalia,
2	and that's true of other things, like roads and
3	courthouses. And I think this gets to Justice Breyer
4	asked for our test, to try to differentiate this from
5	other services, and I'd like to try to provide one.
6	I think, at least where you've got a
7	function that is reserved to the State only the State
8	can do it, only the State can run the archives it's
9	necessary as a channel to to commerce. And in the
10	in the modern economy, this is as much part of the
11	information infrastructure as transportation is, like
12	courthouses, like archives, like roads.
13	It would not stretch limited resources. It
14	would not cost the State additional money, and it would
15	not jeopardize important local traditions or
16	institutions
17	JUSTICE GINSBURG: Are you leaving out
18	MR. GUPTA: that I think you can feel
19	comfortable
20	JUSTICE GINSBURG: Are you leaving it
21	you you switched now to and you were led there, but
22	you switched to the dormant Commerce Clause. What about
23	your other client, McBurney? He doesn't have any
24	dormant Commerce Clause claim.
25	MR. GUPTA: Right. And I I think the

- 1 test that I just laid out would work for both clauses. It's a
- 2 limiting principle on the justification side.
- 3 But -- but that's right, Mr. McBurney does not have a
- 4 dormant Commerce Clause claim. His claim is based on
- 5 equal access to proceedings.
- 6 He wanted to get recovery of child support
- 7 that he was owed. So he is a creditor seeking to pursue
- 8 a debt on equal terms with people in the State of
- 9 Virginia, and the State set up a process. As one step
- 10 along the way to court, you go to the agency, you ask
- 11 the agency to enforce. The -- the agency has unique
- 12 enforcement tools.
- 13 It can suspend someone's driver's license,
- 14 for example. It can -- it can intercept income tax
- refunds, and it can go to court on your behalf. And all
- 16 he's asking for is the rules of the game. He wants to
- 17 know what procedures apply to that process. And at
- 18 least where a -- an agency has a process that directly
- 19 affects a non-stater in the pocketbook, all we are
- 20 saying is that equal access to the proceedings means
- 21 equal access to the information governing those
- 22 proceedings.
- 23 And, finally, I would just like to close by
- 24 saying that -- you know, what I don't think we heard on
- 25 the justification side from the State was really any

1	justification because the State can recoup its costs. And so they are not saying that this will cost them
2	anything more, which was the only justification they
3	pressed in in the courts below.
4	And so they are left with the position that
5	they can discriminate simply because they think they
6	can. And, if you look at the Privileges and Immunities
7	Clause, it sits right next to the Full Faith and Credit
8	Clause, which indicates, if anything, that the framers
9	thought that the movement of public records across State
10	lines was important to interstate comity.
11	They changed the Articles of Confederation
12	version, which did not include public records; it only
13	referred to judicial records. They added a mention of
14	judicial records nonjudicial records and saw that
15	that was important to to comity across State lines.
16	But but their position is about the step
17	before that. It's about whether you get the records in
18	the first place.
19	Thank you.
20	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
21	The case is submitted.
22	(Whereupon, at 11:16 a.m., the case in the
23	above-entitled matter was submitted.)
24	
25	

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