

1 you can tell me there's a guideline on this particular
2 application of the mandatory minimum. And the statute
3 and the guidelines both say a judge can depart for a
4 reason not taken adequately into consideration by the
5 commission.

6 So unless you can point to me someplace
7 where they take this into consideration, although they
8 might in the future, I would say they didn't take it
9 into consideration at all.

10 MR. YANG: I -- I think the --

11 JUSTICE BREYER: And therefore the language
12 allows it. The language allows it, and indeed the
13 theory allows it, because the theory is you could have a
14 person there who's convicted of 19 multiple counts, you
15 know, and -- and the judge is given considerable power
16 to work all this out so that you have overall a fair
17 sentence. All right? That's the whole argument.

18 So what's your response?

19 MR. YANG: Well, I guess to the whole
20 argument, we have a few responses.

21 JUSTICE BREYER: I know you do.

22 MR. YANG: But -- but I think -- first of
23 all, on the -- on the guidelines point, the guidelines
24 have taken this into account since the very beginning
25 when you were on the Sentencing Commission.

1 JUSTICE BREYER: Where?

2 MR. YANG: Well --

3 JUSTICE BREYER: Where did you take this?
4 Where.

5 MR. YANG: Well, the guidelines specifically
6 address in Section 2K2.4, comment note 4, they talk
7 about how you -- and as well as in Chapter 5 about
8 determining a total sentence based on aggregate
9 sentences, multiple terms of imprisonment. The
10 guidelines said that what you do with the predicate is
11 you determine the predicate under the guidelines, but
12 you don't include the specific offense --

13 JUSTICE KAGAN: That's --

14 MR. YANG: -- characteristic of --

15 JUSTICE KAGAN: That's --

16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I'm -- I'm going to
17 let you get back to a fuller answer to Justice Breyer.
18 But that certainly cuts against you, the idea that they
19 recognize that, yes, you do have to look to the
20 mandatory minimums. You should take that into account
21 in imposing the sentence. And now you say when it gets
22 down to what the actual sentence is, you can't look at
23 the mandatory minimums at all.

24 MR. YANG: I don't think it cuts against us,
25 as in -- in we're going to have multiple discussions

1 about these various factors.

2 First, I don't think the guidelines shed a
3 lot of light on the statutory question here. If you
4 were to disagree with our understanding of the
5 guidelines, that would not mean that the statute's
6 wrong; it means that the guidelines would have to give
7 way. We are defending the commentary in the guidelines,
8 which, again, have existed since the very beginning.

9 JUSTICE BREYER: You look at 2.4. I missed
10 it. Where -- where is the place on --

11 MR. YANG: 2K2.4, comment note 4. And --
12 and then subsequently, this is also cited in our brief
13 back in the pages around the 40s when we discussed the
14 guidelines.

15 But about the guidelines in the statute, the
16 guidelines would have to give way. And we are defending
17 the commentary because we think, not only have this
18 commentary been around since 1987 when the guidelines
19 were first sent to Congress, and had since been there,
20 we think this is a sensible distinction between the
21 conduct that the court considers when determining the
22 sentencing of the predicate, and knowing that the
23 conduct is accounted for separately in the 924(c), and
24 considering the total aggregate sentence. That is
25 something different.

1 Congress specified where courts look to the
2 total aggregate sentence in Section 3584. In Section
3 3584, Congress said, "When there are multiple terms of
4 imprisonment, the court shall, with respect to each
5 offense, consider the 3554 -- 3553A factors when
6 deciding whether to make the total sentence by making
7 them concurrent or consecutive."

8 But we know that Section 924(c) wholly
9 removed that power. And in doing so, it removed the
10 power of the court to tailor the total aggregate
11 sentence, which is a power that was set to --

12 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But the government must
13 recognize that 924(c) can influence the sentence on the
14 predicate offense because -- I think I'm correct in
15 saying the government takes the position if 924(c) drops
16 out if it's not proved, then when it goes back to the
17 district court --

18 MR. YANG: Right.

19 JUSTICE GINSBURG: -- the district court can
20 enlarge the original sentence for the predicate offense.

21 MR. YANG: And because we think -- and this
22 is what happens in -- in courts, courts are applying the
23 guidelines. And the guideline says when you're
24 calculating the sentence for the predicate, you ignore
25 the offense conduct with respect to the gun because we

1 don't want to double-count it. But if you drop the
2 924(c), it should -- it should go back for the court to
3 consider the offense conduct as it considers the -- the
4 -- the sentence for the predicate.

5 This is a --

6 JUSTICE BREYER: Where? Where? I mean,
7 I -- my quick reading of 4, I promise I didn't memorize
8 the guidelines. I used to know them pretty well, but I
9 don't know them perfectly, by any means, and never did.

10 But it seems to me that comment 4 in 2K2.4
11 is saying that -- that defendant, you have committed a
12 crime, and in our guideline as punishment for the crime,
13 part of it is increased because you had a gun. And so
14 if we're going to apply the mandatory over here, which
15 is our special statute here, don't apply that. But I
16 don't see anything there that says you can't subtract.

17 MR. YANG: Well, when you go to 5G1.2, which
18 governs the total sentence, the -- when you have
19 multiple offenses with terms of imprisonment, it says
20 you -- you calculate the total sentence with respect to
21 the non-924(c)'s and then you tack on --

22 JUSTICE BREYER: 5G?

23 MR. YANG: 1.2, I believe. This is
24 addressed in pages --

25 JUSTICE BREYER: Right --

1 MR. YANG: I think around page 42 of our
2 brief. 43. Nope. 42.

3 JUSTICE BREYER: Maybe I'll find it.

4 MR. YANG: So the -- the point is the --
5 this is the way that the guidelines have been applied,
6 and they were applied, in fact, in this way in this
7 case. The district court calculated the sentencing
8 guidelines range, which is 84 to 105 months, based on
9 the guidelines.

10 No one is disputing that's what the
11 guidelines required. In fact, they conceded that that
12 was the proper guideline sentence in district court.
13 And then the district court then varied downward, and I
14 think the provision that you're talking about, about
15 3553(b) --

16 JUSTICE BREYER: Yeah. Yeah.

17 MR. YANG: -- part of that was, of course,
18 rendered inoperative under --

19 JUSTICE BREYER: Yeah. Yeah. That's --

20 MR. YANG: -- under Booker -- Booker. And
21 then -- and what the court did here is a post-Booker
22 thing, vary. It's not a technical departure, it's a
23 variance because he is applying --

24 JUSTICE BREYER: No. He varied here. He
25 varied.

1 MR. YANG: He varied. He varied down to 40
2 months. And then he additionally said, if I had
3 discretion, I'd go down to one day because I think 30
4 years is enough. But that is essentially a -- just a
5 disagreement with the policy judgment.

6 JUSTICE BREYER: No. And that's harder for
7 you. It's harder for you, because after all, if it's a
8 variance, he's not applying the guidelines. If he's not
9 applying the guidelines, all this stuff in the
10 guidelines that supports you is out the window. And --
11 and -- including the sentence I read. And if it's out
12 the window, all we're trying to do is back where we
13 started, is the statute -- does the statute, which
14 doesn't mention this, forbid it, or is it otherwise
15 unfair?

16 MR. YANG: Well, I would, I guess -- first
17 of all, we're not relying on the --

18 JUSTICE BREYER: My fault, not your fault.

19 MR. YANG: We're not relying on the
20 guidelines as an affirmative. We just wanted to point
21 out in our brief we think the guidelines are consistent.

22 JUSTICE KAGAN: But what are you suggesting
23 ought to happen? I mean, presumably, the guidelines
24 reflect an idea that there shouldn't be any
25 double-counting of the gun, right? So what does -- how

1 does the court do the -- the sentence on the underlying
2 crime, taking away the fact of the gun?

3 In other words, most robberies have guns in
4 them, and the sentences are written to reflect that they
5 have guns in them, don't they? Aren't they?

6 MR. YANG: No, actually. The guidelines
7 take into account things like Hobbs Act robbery and
8 separately account for the gun with a two-level
9 enhancement. And so the guidelines range, when you
10 commit a Hobbs Act robbery without a gun, will just be
11 the standard Hobbs Act robbery range.

12 Now, there are going to be other offense
13 characteristics if you injure someone or -- you know,
14 these things can affect --

15 JUSTICE KAGAN: What you think ought to
16 happen is that the -- is that the judge should say,
17 okay, imagine a robbery without a gun, what would be a
18 reasonable sentence for that.

19 MR. YANG: I think the judge should do --
20 take into account what judges normally do under a real
21 offense sentencing approach, which is you look at the
22 offense conduct, you look at the history and
23 characteristics of the defender --

24 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, offense conduct, does
25 that mean without a gun?

1 MR. YANG: But -- but without the gun. We
2 say -- we think the judge has discretion, ultimately, to
3 either consider it with the gun or -- or not because
4 Congress hasn't expressly prohibited that. But the
5 guidelines approach, which we think is permissible, is
6 to consider it; you consider it without the gun and then
7 you -- the reason for that is the guidelines say
8 Congress has separately provided -- remember, the
9 legislative history, I think, there are -- Senator
10 Mansfield, that kind of was the -- the main proponent of
11 the relevant text, the very stringent sentencing
12 provisions, made clear that the whole purpose of this
13 was to impose this additional sentence and require
14 additional time in prison solely for the choice to use
15 the gun, so the guidelines --

16 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, that -- that's an
17 excerpt from the legislative history that, it seems to
18 me, is unimportant in light of what 3553 says. 3553(a)
19 says, you know, well, that the judge at the end of the
20 day has to consider the need for the sentence imposed to
21 reflect the seriousness of the offense and so forth. And --

22 MR. YANG: But the 3553 --

23 JUSTICE KENNEDY: And it seems to me you're
24 asking us to say that 924(c) really supersedes 3553.

25 MR. YANG: No. What we say is 3553 doesn't

1 apply on its own terms. It doesn't apply on its own
2 terms. If you look through the Sentencing Reform Act,
3 there are at least nine provisions, all of which, when
4 you're looking at them, fine or imprisonment or
5 probation or whatever it might be, the court -- the
6 provision says, the court shall, in setting this
7 sentence, consider the 3553(a) factors.

8 In addition, with respect to multiple terms
9 of imprisonment -- and this is on page -- I believe it's
10 5A of our -- excuse me -- 11A of our appendix. If you
11 look at 3584(b), it says, "The court, in determining
12 whether terms imposed to be" -- "are to be ordered
13 concurrently or consecutively, shall consider for each
14 offense" -- remember, this is multiple offenses -- "each
15 offense for which a term of imprisonment is being
16 imposed the factors set forth in 3553(a)."

17 So, normally, what happens is the courts
18 will determine individual sentences. So you could have
19 a sentence of seven years and a sentence of another
20 seven years, and then maybe one is capped at five. And
21 then the court says, I've got these individual
22 sentences. I sentence for each offense. What's the
23 total sentence? You could make that five and seven and
24 seven. You could make it 19. Or you could just make it
25 seven. It depends on whether you make them consecutive

1 or concurrent.

2 So the question about the total imprisonment
3 when you have multiple terms of -- of -- with multiple
4 offenses with terms of imprisonment is 3554(b) affects
5 that, and it says that's where you apply the 3553(a)
6 factors to determine the total length. But Congress
7 took that power away. Congress took that power away
8 totally in 924(c) by directing that you cannot do that.
9 You must impose them consecutively.

10 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well that's where I don't
11 understand your -- your answer to Justice Kennedy,
12 because you said, no, you're not saying that 924
13 supersedes 3553. I think you have to be saying that.
14 You might still be right, but you have to be saying that
15 there's this background principle, which is 3553, which
16 is this parsimony principle and all these factors, and
17 then 924 comes along and says, but not here.

18 MR. YANG: I guess in a sense we are saying
19 that, but I don't think it -- it operates directly on
20 3553(a), because I don't think 3553(a) operates as a
21 freestanding -- freestanding provision. It comes into
22 play at various points in the Sentencing Reform Act
23 where the court -- the Congress has said, you consider
24 these factors in making this determination. In
25 setting -- deciding whether to set on the amount of a

1 fine, you look at the 35 --

2 JUSTICE KAGAN: One way you might look at
3 this, and this goes back to what the Chief Justice said,
4 he said, well, when there's a 30-year sentence
5 implicated, you better be pretty clear. And also when
6 you're legislating against a fairly strong background
7 principle of 3553, you better be pretty clear that
8 you're displacing that background principle.

9 MR. YANG: But the --

10 JUSTICE KAGAN: And here, you're just not --
11 you just have not been clear enough. You were clear
12 enough in 1028(a). We know what that looks like. But
13 here, you just haven't been clear enough to upset this
14 background presumption.

15 MR. YANG: We think that it's clear enough
16 because 3553(a) applies by -- when you -- for purposes
17 of setting the total term of imprisonment, the only
18 reason 3553(a) applies is because Congress provided that
19 they are to be considered in 3584(b) in setting the
20 consecutive or concurrent sentence. And so that has
21 been removed. That has been removed.

22 If it were true that 3553(a) just generally
23 was a free-floating provision that applied everywhere,
24 then all the nine provisions of the Sentencing Reform
25 Act that specifically say you must consider the 353 --

1 53 factors with respect to these specific types of
2 sentences would be superfluous.

3 JUSTICE ALITO: If this case had arisen
4 before the Sentencing Reform Act was adopted, I -- I
5 think that Dean's argument would certainly be correct,
6 would it not?

7 MR. YANG: I think we would have a more
8 difficult --

9 JUSTICE ALITO: The judge would have
10 complied with the statute, the term wasn't consecutive,
11 and other than that, it was discretionary. So it was
12 completely within the judge's discretion.

13 MR. YANG: I think what we would have to
14 argue in that case is that the Congress would have known
15 that the traditional place that judges determine the
16 aggregate length of a sentence, when there are multiple
17 offenses carrying terms of imprisonment, is in the
18 determination that -- of whether the sentences run
19 concurrently or consecutively.

20 JUSTICE ALITO: At a minimum, you would have
21 had a very tough argument. On the other hand, if this
22 case had arisen before we decided Booker, if you read
23 the guidelines correctly -- and it does seem to be --
24 they do seem to say what you say they say -- then you
25 would clearly be correct.

1 MR. YANG: Yeah.

2 JUSTICE ALITO: So we're in this kind of
3 weird -- we're -- we're in this weird world that this
4 Court has created where the guidelines are advisory, but
5 then they're not advisory, and so that's why we have
6 this problem; is that correct?

7 MR. YANG: Well --

8 JUSTICE ALITO: You don't want to say that
9 because --

10 (Laughter.)

11 JUSTICE ALITO: -- nobody but me would agree
12 with you.

13 MR. YANG: We -- we -- we obviously accept
14 Booker as the proper interpretation of the law -- of the
15 Constitution. But I think what I would say is that the
16 guidelines -- there might be a slightly different
17 analysis. And I think the guidelines would then provide
18 yet an additional --

19 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Mr. Yang --

20 MR. YANG: -- reason that we're correct.

21 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- I mean, the lack of
22 beauty of the guidelines is they're so artificial on so
23 many levels; all right? What differentiates a normal
24 theft from a robbery is the use of force. And the
25 guidelines, in defining the guidelines range for a

1 theft, starts at a much, much lower base level. Starts
2 at a seven, okay? For a robbery, it starts at a base
3 level of 20.

4 Once you start with that huge difference
5 between the use of force and the nonuse of force,
6 obviously, the robbery guideline is always going to
7 include the use of force. The fact that it might be
8 with a gun as opposed to a knife as opposed to a threat
9 of violence or whatever else you want to define it, the
10 use of force is inherent already in the guideline
11 calculation because, otherwise, that -- there's no
12 reason. They could have just had one table and said, if
13 you rob someone, if it was a pure calculation, as you
14 suggest it, without thinking about the gun, it would
15 have been \$20,000 is taken, we're all going to start at
16 a offense level of five years and build up from there.
17 That's not what the guidelines do.

18 So when you're taking discretion away from a
19 judge, I think that's one of the reasons we often
20 require specificity, because the guidelines are
21 artificial in so many different ways. And there are
22 gyrations that we go through as judges to comply with
23 dictates that are not very often very clear.

24 MR. YANG: Well, I think -- I'm not here to
25 criticize the guidelines. I think the guidelines have

1 worked for quite some time and have brought some
2 rationality to sentencing that didn't previously exist,
3 which was an important thing. The guidelines post
4 Booker, of course, advisory -- are advisory.

5 JUSTICE BREYER: That's -- that's what I'm
6 trying -- I'm not criticizing, not criticizing. I'm
7 trying to figure out what's the right system, putting
8 this case aside.

9 MR. YANG: Well, we --

10 JUSTICE BREYER: Now, if we had the
11 guidelines there -- try this. If the guidelines were
12 here, it wouldn't be such a problem, because they would
13 have -- the commission could look into this and it could
14 take the factor into account. And then we'd have
15 3553(b) and we'd follow that in the future unless it's
16 irrational.

17 But they're out the window. Okay. They're
18 out the window because it was a variance. So now we're
19 left with 924(c), you know, the statute, and we're also
20 left with the provision that says that a -- a court of
21 appeals has to look at a departure or a variance and see
22 if it's reasonable. Is that the right word? Reasonable
23 or rational or something. What's the word?

24 MR. YANG: Well, I think --

25 JUSTICE BREYER: -- on the appellate part.

1 MR. YANG: -- that you'd have to look to the
2 reasonableness of the sentence overall.

3 JUSTICE BREYER: Over -- what -- what is
4 it -- there's a word in the appellate part when they're
5 doing the review. Is it reasonable or -- you know, I'll
6 look it up.

7 MR. YANG: I think it is reasonable.

8 JUSTICE BREYER: Yeah, I think it is too.
9 Okay. So now --

10 MR. YANG: Reasonable always is a good word.

11 JUSTICE BREYER: Correct, correct, correct.

12 (Laughter.)

13 JUSTICE BREYER: So that's the -- that's
14 the -- the question in this case beyond the case is
15 really, how do we do that? And so -- so what I would
16 try out is, it would be obvious if you're right and the
17 statute is clear; okay? The -- the 924(c). Then you
18 win. That's the end of it. That's what you think. I
19 don't think it's clear.

20 If it's not clear, what do we do?

21 MR. YANG: Well, I think --

22 JUSTICE BREYER: And now -- now, what about
23 looking -- looking to see what the commission said about
24 it, noting that this is an individual case, not general,
25 not general where the district court has more power or

1 other things. Now you tell me. Those are floating
2 around in my mind. I'd like to know what's floating
3 around in your mind.

4 MR. YANG: I -- I don't believe the
5 commission gets any deference with respect to construing
6 Federal statutes.

7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, I --

8 MR. YANG: With respect to the guidelines,
9 yes, but with respect to construing Federal statutes,
10 I -- I don't think so. And so what we're back to is
11 924(c) and its interaction to the various provisions of
12 the Sentencing Reform Act.

13 The -- the key provisions, they rely on
14 3553(a) and they say look, you have to consider all
15 these factors, but 3553(a) applies in very specific
16 places of the Sentencing Reform Act, including when
17 there are multiple terms of imprisonment and a court has
18 to decide what the total imprisonment is going to be.

19 JUSTICE KAGAN: Counsel --

20 MR. YANG: That's 3584, and that's been
21 taken away because Congress took away the power to -- to
22 have concurrent sentences.

23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: If you think the
24 case is resolved at a higher level, it seems to me that
25 your -- your friend has a very good technical argument

1 that says these sentences have to run concurrently. One
2 day, they run concurrently, end of case.

3 And your argument is, you know, you look at
4 the drafting history, the commentary to 2K2.4, all the
5 other arguments you got and you make -- make -- and the
6 basic one is well, that's technically correct, but it's
7 obviously not what Congress had in mind. Congress
8 obviously had in mind adding the mandatory onto a normal
9 sentence, one way or another, under -- under the
10 guidelines in 30 and all the provisions we've been
11 talking about.

12 So if you view the case that way,
13 technically correct, you know, contrary to the obvious
14 policy, what -- what case can you give me that tells us
15 how to approach a conflict like that?

16 MR. YANG: Well, our --

17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: What's your --
18 what's your best case when you have a very significant
19 sanction in the balance, and you have technical
20 compliance on one hand, but clearly contrary to purpose?

21 MR. YANG: We don't think that the -- that
22 they're technically correct.

23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, I understand
24 that.

25 MR. YANG: We -- we think that there is a

1 plausible argument that they make on the text, but we
2 think that the proper approach is you always have to
3 approach statutes holistically. You look at the
4 statutory text; you look at the Congress's text
5 structure, the context --

6 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, but then there
7 are also these basic rules they -- I mean, you insist
8 when citizens deal with the government that they turn
9 square corners, and I think it's right for a criminal
10 defendant when they're facing 30 additional years to
11 insist that the government turn square corners.

12 MR. YANG: Well, I think what you might be
13 referring to is the principle of lenity. But the Court
14 has repeatedly emphasized -- I think Abramski; one of
15 Justice Kagan's recent opinions explains this -- that
16 lenity applies only if there's a grievous ambiguity that
17 you might -- at the end of the day you --

18 JUSTICE KAGAN: But I don't think you have
19 to go to a principle of lenity for Mr. Stoler to be
20 right. I mean, you were just saying this is very much
21 along the lines of what the Chief Justice was saying.
22 You would just say something like, look, if we're going
23 to be strictly textualist here, this does not have the
24 kind of requirement you wish it had, which is to say it
25 doesn't have the language that's in 1028A. Your

1 essential argument is that, read Mr. Stoler's way, this
2 would utterly eviscerate (c)(1)(D)(ii), the consecutive
3 requirement. And I'm quite sympathetic to that. But
4 there's still this question of when a statute doesn't
5 say what you would like it to say and you're reduced to
6 saying if you read it the other guy's way, it would
7 eviscerate what we -- what we meant when we passed
8 another provision, you know, what -- what should we do
9 and where do you point us?

10 MR. YANG: I would say that it's true that
11 it -- it eviscerates the purpose and the whole structure
12 of the statute, but the statute says a lot by removing
13 authority. So the question is what authority was
14 removed. I -- I think it's helpful to look at page 11A
15 of the government's appendix, 3584. 3584(b) governs the
16 discretionary decision of a judge when there are
17 multiple terms of imprisonment, how do you decide the
18 total length. The total length is set by making them
19 concurrent or consecutive, and 3554(b) -- or 3584(b),
20 sorry, specifically says that in deciding the total
21 length by making consecutive or concurrent, you apply
22 the factors set forth in 3553(a). That's what they rely
23 on.

24 But 924(c) removes that authority. 924(c)
25 removes the authority to be able to set the total length

1 of imprisonment when there are multiple terms of
2 imprisonment.

3 JUSTICE KENNEDY: So you're saying that in
4 this case, the judge says I can't look at 3553(a)?

5 MR. YANG: No, he does. The -- the judge --
6 there are various other places, but for the total --

7 JUSTICE KENNEDY: But -- but -- but other
8 than for the initial downward departure.

9 MR. YANG: But -- but -- but for the total.
10 You -- for -- you can look at 3553(a) in setting the
11 individual terms, but Congress separately addressed how
12 you make those terms, how you add them, make them -- the
13 total, it depends on the aggregate; right? You --
14 whether you add them or run them concurrently or with
15 each other. So that is what 3554(b) -- or 3584(b)
16 addresses, and that's where the 3553(a) factors are
17 applied, but Congress took that authority away.

18 That's -- that's what I think speaks
19 volumes. And -- and when you look at the structure of
20 the Sentencing Reform Act, the -- the Sentencing Reform
21 Act kind of has a modified real offense sentencing
22 approach. You take a look at the -- the offender, the
23 characteristics of the offender, the history. Not only
24 the offense conduct, you look beyond this particular
25 offense, conduct broadly, what's all the relevant

1 conduct, critic conduct --

2 JUSTICE KENNEDY: You're -- you're asking
3 the judge to say, in calculating the sentence for the
4 underlying offense, I'm going to look at all these
5 factors. Frankly, it's meaningless, because what I'm
6 going to do in the 924(c), but I'll do something
7 meaningless.

8 MR. YANG: No, no, no, not at all. If --
9 if, for instance, a judge would say, as in this case, an
10 appropriate sentence is 40 months, right? The judge
11 says an appropriate sentence for this -- each of these
12 four has a 40-month term. In a normal world, if there
13 was also a five-year sentence, the judge would then go
14 to 3584(b) and say I'm going to consider the 3553
15 factors to decide if I'm going to add the 40 to the five
16 years, or I'm going to just run them concurrently so
17 it's five years total. That's what normally happens.

18 Section 924(c) says you can't do that. You
19 have to add it. It is add -- in addition to the
20 punishment, the punishment for the predicate offense.
21 And so we think that simply underscores what -- what has
22 always been the -- the thrust, the understanding of --
23 of 924(c).

24 It is a harsh provision. There is no doubt.
25 But Congress intended that to be harsh because of the

1 extreme danger presented when you add a gun to either a
2 crime of violence or a drug trafficking offense. And
3 Congress made that determination that it's going to be
4 at least five additional years for the gun, and if
5 there's a second or subsequent, 25 years. Disagreement
6 with that length of an imprisonment simply circumvents
7 what Congress was doing in 924(c).

8 JUSTICE BREYER: If -- if you -- if you're
9 in the realm of what's reasonable and the judge is
10 looking at, well, you are under the appellate provision
11 because he's varied from the guidelines, of course, you
12 have to give the mandatory minimum, there it is, the
13 gun, 25 years. And now the judge thinks, you know, this
14 is way beyond what this guy did. It's fine for the gun,
15 but his total conduct here was -- doesn't warrant such a
16 long sentence.

17 MR. YANG: On appellate --

18 JUSTICE BREYER: It's in -- it's in the
19 other part, it's a reasonable thing given this
20 individual who may suffer certain individual things, da,
21 da, da.

22 MR. YANG: Congress --

23 JUSTICE BREYER: A reasonable thing to give
24 him one day.

25 MR. YANG: Congress made the determination.

1 You don't do a reasonable --

2 JUSTICE BREYER: Yeah, yeah.

3 MR. YANG: -- analysis.

4 JUSTICE BREYER: If think that, then you
5 win; that's the end of it.

6 MR. YANG: And -- and that's why, you know,
7 when you have a predicate offense that Congress said add
8 this additional mandatory on, you don't look to the
9 length of the total, because maybe -- maybe 30 years, in
10 the judge's view, is not reasonable, but Congress
11 required that.

12 That is a separate -- that is for Congress
13 to decide what the minimum is going to be for the
14 924(c). What would be reasonable is when you take a
15 look at the predicate offense and you say would this be
16 a reasonable -- one day for four felonies, would that be
17 reasonable? And the answer to that is of course not,
18 as -- as my brother conceded at -- in his argument.

19 So, again, I think the whole -- the idea
20 that a judge would go down to one day because of a
21 disagreement with the length of the mandatory minimum
22 simply circumvents the statute and is inconsistent with
23 924(c)'s text.

24 Thank you.

25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.

1 Five minutes, Mr. Stoler.

2 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF ALAN G. STOLER

3 ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER

4 MR. STOLER: There's no affirmative ban in
5 district courts considering 924(c) sentencing when
6 considering the predicate offenses, and given the
7 overarching theme of -- of discretion and parsimony
8 pervades.

9 The -- the -- counsel for the government
10 seems to indicate that we look at 3584(b), we agree that
11 it limits -- that there has to be that 30-year
12 consecutive sentence, but it just guides the court's
13 discretion with respect to the 3553(a) factors. It
14 doesn't say that they only apply to each count, not the
15 aggregate sentence. And you look at 3584 and you read
16 the third provision, it talks about the aggregate
17 sentence in itself.

18 So the -- the reliance by the government on
19 3584 is -- we -- we say is misplaced and does not affect
20 whether or not the -- the total sentencing scheme that
21 the parsimony requirements put on ends the result of the
22 court determining what sentence is sufficient, but not
23 greater than necessary.

24 We don't quarrel that 30 years must be
25 imposed under the mandatory minimums. What we do

1 quarrel with is whether or not the court should be able
2 to take that -- those factors into consideration, as
3 well as all those other factors that are set forth in
4 3553(a), 3551, 3661, which gives us the -- the
5 determination to be made as to what the -- what should
6 be the appropriate sentence in this case.

7 If there's no other questions.

8 JUSTICE BREYER: Well, I was thinking of at
9 a deep level of what Thomas Reed Powell said about the
10 law. He wants us to think of this second part, you
11 know, as related, but really no. Look at the second
12 part, keep it totally separate, and the statute means
13 that the part about robbery has to be done separately.
14 Reed Powell said if the -- you can think of a thing that
15 is inextricably related to another thing without
16 thinking of the thing to which it is inextricably
17 related, you then have the legal mind.

18 (Laughter.)

19 JUSTICE BREYER: That's what he wants us to
20 do. He says that's what the statute requires.

21 MR. STOLER: We submit that the statute
22 shouldn't be read that way in this instance, Your Honor.

23 JUSTICE ALITO: Do you think it matters that
24 it's a 30-year mandatory minimum? What if it was a
25 one-year mandatory minimum. Would the result be

1 different?

2 MR. STOLER: It may. I mean, that's the
3 court's --

4 JUSTICE ALITO: It would? Really?

5 MR. STOLER: Well, it -- it may be different
6 from the standpoint -- no. The one-year has to be
7 imposed.

8 JUSTICE ALITO: A year and a day would be
9 okay?

10 MR. STOLER: If, under the -- the total test
11 of reasonableness and applying the factors the court's
12 supposed to apply, makes that decision that he thinks
13 that -- that that -- he or she thinks that's the
14 appropriate sentence, that -- that may be right, but
15 it's going to be subject to the test of substantive
16 reasonableness on appeal. And the -- here in the
17 instance, it's -- it's a different scenario because it's
18 30 years, Your Honor, and that's what we're saying.

19 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
20 The case is submitted.

21 (Whereupon, at 11:02 a.m., the case in the
22 above-entitled matter was submitted.)

23

24

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A	12:9 13:25 19:19 20:3 22:23 25:5 26:14 35:13,14 40:18 46:10 50:4 51:8	amended 12:5 12:24 13:7 amending 12:21 amount 26:1 37:25 analysis 16:5 40:17 51:3 analytical 23:8 analytically 21:25 23:13 answer 10:4,8 12:3 14:18 16:14,16 28:17 37:11 51:17 ANTHONY 1:18 2:6 24:20 anyway 23:18 appeal 4:2 54:16 appeals 6:17 13:20 42:21 APPEARAN... 1:15 appellate 19:24 20:7,11,19 21:3 42:25 43:4 50:10,17 appendix 36:10 47:15 application 27:2 applications 21:1 applied 20:25 32:5,6 38:23 48:17 applies 38:16,18 44:15 46:16 apply 24:8 31:14 31:15 36:1,1 37:5 47:21 52:14 54:12 applying 16:9 30:22 32:23 33:8,9 54:11 Appointed 1:17 approach 34:21 35:5 45:15 46:2,3 48:22	appropriate 8:1 14:6 19:21 49:10,11 53:6 54:14 argue 5:5 39:14 argument 1:13 2:2,5,8 3:3,6 23:3 24:20 27:17,20 39:5 39:21 44:25 45:3 46:1 47:1 51:18 52:2 arguments 45:5 arisen 39:3,22 arriving 3:17 articulated 17:15 artificial 40:22 41:21 aside 42:8 asked 24:24 asking 8:8 35:24 49:2 assessment 12:18 Assistant 1:18 assume 5:4,22 17:22 authority 10:12 47:13,13,24,25 48:17 aware 13:20	19:17 20:19 28:8 32:8 basic 17:7,17 45:6 46:7 basically 6:17 6:23 7:16 9:17 beauty 40:22 beginning 27:24 29:8 behalf 1:16,20 2:4,7,10 3:7 24:21 52:3 believe 10:23 13:10 22:15 26:15 31:23 36:9 44:4 belt-and-susp... 11:24 best 45:18 better 12:21 38:5,7 beyond 7:3 25:5 43:14 48:24 50:14 bit 19:5 23:9,15 blinders 22:18 body 12:19 Booker 32:20,20 39:22 40:14 42:4 Breyer 14:17 15:2,7,9 16:7 17:7,17,22 18:17 26:22,24 27:11,21 28:1 28:3,17 29:9 31:6,22,25 32:3,16,19,24 33:6,18 42:5 42:10,25 43:3 43:8,11,13,22 50:8,18,23 51:2,4 53:8,19 brief 25:23 29:12 32:2 33:21 bring 25:7
			B	
			back 8:7 28:17 29:13 30:16 31:2 33:12 38:3 44:10 background 37:15 38:6,8 38:14 balance 45:19 ban 52:4 bar 4:7 base 41:1,2 based 13:22 17:13 18:12	

broadly 48:25	34:13,23 48:23	26:25 27:5,25	10:23 11:23	53:2
brother 14:11	Chief 3:3,8,24	42:13 43:23	12:4,13,25	considerations
17:13 51:18	10:4 13:17	44:5	13:19,21 14:3	21:2
brought 42:1	20:8 24:17,19	commit 34:10	15:24 16:2	considered 7:21
build 41:16	24:22 25:8,20	committed 14:7	23:4 25:11,15	7:25 18:23
Basic 13:23 14:2	26:3,10 28:16	31:11	25:16 26:3,19	19:19 38:19
	38:3 44:7,23	compared 17:12	29:19 30:1,3	considering
	45:17,23 46:6	compels 26:14	35:4,8 37:6,7	17:10 29:24
	46:21 51:25	compensate	37:23 38:18	52:5,6
	54:19	11:14	39:14 44:21	considers 29:21
	choice 25:6	completely 9:12	45:7,7 48:11	31:3
	35:14	9:13 39:12	48:17 49:25	consistent 33:21
	choose 18:24	compliance	50:3,7,22,25	Constitution
	circuit 13:2,9	45:20	51:7,10,12	40:15
	22:17	complied 39:10	Congress's 7:8	constraints
	circumstance	comply 41:22	25:19 46:4	10:24
	15:14 16:11	component	congressional	construing 44:5
	circumstances	10:15	3:12	44:9
	7:24	concede 9:12	conjunction	context 19:8
	circumvent 25:3	conceded 32:11	25:18	46:5
	25:9	51:18	consecutive 5:21	contrary 25:24
	circumvention	concedes 25:1	6:12 8:6 9:3,24	45:13,20
	25:12	concurrency 4:9	13:25 21:23,23	convicted 27:14
	circumvents	concurrent 4:7	21:24 25:5	convictions
	50:6 51:22	4:11,13 5:19	30:7 36:25	17:14
	cited 29:12	5:20 8:8 30:7	38:20 39:10	corners 46:9,11
	citizens 46:8	37:1 38:20	47:2,19,21	correct 7:5,6,9
	clear 20:24	44:22 47:19,21	52:12	13:5 14:24
	25:19,21,22	concurrently	consecutively	23:21,25 24:1
	35:12 38:5,7	5:8 36:13	5:8 36:13 37:9	30:14 39:5,25
	38:11,11,13,15	39:19 45:1,2	39:19	40:6,20 43:11
	41:23 43:17,19	48:14 49:16	consider 3:16	43:11,11 45:6
	43:20	condemnation	11:14 12:11	45:13,22
	clearly 6:6 25:15	21:17	18:25 19:11,12	correctly 39:23
	39:25 45:20	conduct 29:21	19:14 30:5	counsel 6:15
	co-defendant	29:23 30:25	31:3 35:3,6,6	24:17 44:19
	14:11	31:3 34:22,24	35:20 36:7,13	51:25 52:9
	comes 37:17,21	48:24,25 49:1	37:23 38:25	54:19
	comment 28:6	49:1 50:15	44:14 49:14	count 10:19
	29:11 31:10	conferred 10:11	considerable	52:14
	commentary	conflict 10:22	27:15	counting 23:9
	29:7,17,18	45:15	considerably	counts 27:14
	45:4	confronting	16:18	course 32:17
	commission	3:10	consideration	42:4 50:11
	11:2 15:15,22	Congress 4:24	7:17 15:15	51:17
	16:2,13 18:20	5:20,22 6:2,5	16:12 21:4	court 1:1,13,17
	18:21,24,24	9:14 10:11,17	22:7 27:4,7,9	3:9,10 5:10,12

5:14 6:17,23 7:8 8:1 10:1 12:10 13:20 14:2,2 15:13 18:9 19:11,12 19:17 20:2,22 20:23 22:16 24:23,24 26:16 26:17 29:21 30:4,10,17,19 31:2 32:7,12 32:13,21 34:1 36:5,6,11,21 37:23 40:4 42:20 43:25 44:17 46:13 52:22 53:1 court's 13:2 26:13 52:12 54:3,11 courts 6:17 10:12 13:22,24 20:7 25:4 30:1 30:22,22 36:17 52:5 covered 10:15 created 40:4 crime 6:9 9:5 11:1,18 21:10 22:5 23:14,24 31:12,12 34:2 50:2 crimes 3:21 5:15 6:10 10:2 14:7 22:8,19 23:10 23:21 24:7 criminal 17:14 46:9 critic 49:1 criticize 41:25 criticizing 42:6 42:6 current 14:15 cuts 28:18,24	D.C 1:9,19 da 50:20,21,21 danger 50:1 day 4:10 5:17,19 5:20 7:1,8,11 7:11 8:10,12 8:13 15:10,18 20:3 33:3 35:20 45:2 46:17 50:24 51:16,20 54:8 de 20:25 deal 46:8 dealt 20:22 Dean 1:3 3:4 17:12 Dean's 39:5 decide 44:18 47:17 49:15 51:13 decided 9:10 39:22 deciding 18:11 30:6 37:25 47:20 decision 13:8 26:12,13 47:16 54:12 decisions 13:20 deep 53:9 defendant 14:9 26:6 31:11 46:10 defender 34:23 defending 29:7 29:16 deference 44:5 define 41:9 defining 40:25 degree 15:14 16:11 depart 15:3,4 16:3,8,18 18:22 19:2 27:3 departed 15:18 16:24	Department 1:19 departure 14:22 15:24 17:4,6 32:22 42:21 48:8 departures 14:21 depends 36:25 48:13 determination 11:17 12:10 16:6 19:10,20 21:21 22:3 37:24 39:18 50:3,25 53:5 determinations 18:14 determine 10:1 10:12 21:9 28:11 36:18 37:6 39:15 determined 17:13 determining 8:1 10:18 19:15 28:8 29:21 36:11 52:22 deterrence 7:4 dictates 41:23 difference 41:4 different 20:10 29:25 40:16 41:21 54:1,5 54:17 differentiates 40:23 difficult 21:8,25 39:8 difficulty 23:8 direct 14:18 directing 37:8 directives 3:12 directly 25:3 37:19 disagree 6:18 29:4	disagreement 33:5 50:5 51:21 disappear 5:18 discretion 3:11 10:14 12:15 19:25 20:14 21:6 22:9 33:3 35:2 39:12 41:18 52:7,13 discretionary 39:11 47:16 discussed 8:12 29:13 discussions 28:25 displacing 38:8 disputing 32:10 distinction 29:20 district 5:9,12 5:14 6:17,23 7:8 10:11 24:24 30:17,19 32:7,12,13 43:25 52:5 doing 10:17 12:12 22:20 30:9 43:5 50:7 double 23:9,9 double-count 31:1 double-counti... 33:25 doubt 3:24 49:24 downward 16:3 16:9,18,24 19:2 32:13 48:8 drafting 26:19 45:4 drop 31:1 drops 30:15 drug 50:2	E 2:1 3:1,1 effect 8:7 9:13 either 18:1 20:24 35:3 50:1 emphasized 46:14 ends 8:2,23 52:21 enhancement 17:1 34:9 enlarge 30:20 ensure 6:20 10:25 11:4 entire 10:17 enumerated 10:13 error 20:24 ESQ 1:16,18 2:3 2:6,9 essential 47:1 essentially 5:6,9 5:18 33:4 eviscerate 47:2,7 eviscerates 6:5 47:11 evolution 11:5 Exactly 24:9 example 4:14 13:23 18:16 excerpt 35:17 excuse 4:25 36:10 exercise 3:11 exist 5:5 21:15 42:2 existed 29:8 existence 4:23 11:13 exists 15:13 explains 46:15 expressly 35:4 extent 5:25 12:15 extreme 50:1
D			E	F
D 3:1 47:2				

faces 26:6	follow 42:15	27:15 50:19	guidelines 6:16	hear 3:3
facing 46:10	follows 4:17	52:6	8:5 14:24 15:1	helpful 47:14
fact 6:3 32:6,11	forbid 33:14	gives 7:8 53:4	15:3 16:10,13	helping 8:17
34:2 41:7	force 40:24 41:5	giving 16:14	17:2 18:7 19:9	helps 19:10
factor 15:23	41:5,7,10	20:14	19:18 20:25	higher 44:24
18:23,23 19:11	formulating	go 8:6 18:8	21:1 27:3,23	history 11:5
42:14	15:16 16:13	20:13 31:2,17	27:23 28:5,10	17:14 26:19
factors 3:16 7:5	forth 3:16 7:23	33:3 41:22	28:11 29:2,5,6	34:22 35:9,17
7:22 9:16	18:6 19:13	46:19 49:13	29:7,14,15,16	45:4 48:23
10:14 18:6,7,8	21:24 35:21	51:20	29:18 30:23	Hobbs 34:7,10
18:12,13 19:12	36:16 47:22	goals 3:18	31:8 32:5,8,9	34:11
19:14,19 29:1	53:3	goes 4:16 22:5	32:11 33:8,9	holistically 46:3
30:5 36:7,16	forward 12:7	30:16 38:3	33:10,20,21,23	Honor 4:4 7:14
37:6,16,24	found 19:18	going 11:2 19:3	34:6,9 35:5,7	15:8 16:4 22:3
39:1 44:15	four 18:15 24:25	20:11 23:18	35:15 39:23	24:13,18 53:22
47:22 48:16	49:12 51:16	28:16,25 31:14	40:4,16,17,22	54:18
49:5,15 52:13	Franklin 13:10	34:12 41:6,15	40:25,25 41:17	hostile 16:15
53:2,3 54:11	Frankly 49:5	44:18 46:22	41:20,25,25	hours 5:17
fair 6:25 17:18	free-floating	49:4,6,14,15	42:3,11,11	huge 41:4
25:24 27:16	38:23	49:16 50:3	44:8 45:10	hypothetical
fairly 38:6	freestanding	51:13 54:15	50:11	21:13
far 5:25	37:21,21	good 6:6 43:10	guides 52:12	
farther 4:16	friend 44:25	44:25	gun 23:12,18,20	I
12:9	friendly 16:15	governed 10:19	25:7 30:25	idea 28:18 33:24
fault 33:18,18	fuller 28:17	government	31:13 33:25	51:19
favor 13:4	further 7:3	20:1,4 22:20	34:2,8,10,17	identity 11:16
February 1:10	24:14	23:2 30:12,15	34:25 35:1,3,6	23:23 24:2,5
Federal 44:6,9	future 14:4 27:8	46:8,11 52:9	35:15 41:8,14	ignore 30:24
feel 14:5	42:15	52:18	50:1,4,13,14	ii 47:2
felonies 25:1	G	government's	guns 5:1 11:1	imagine 34:17
51:16	G 1:16 2:3,9 3:1	22:1 47:15	17:2 34:3,5	implicated 38:5
felt 20:2,4,22	3:6 52:2	governs 31:18	guy 50:14	important 42:3
figure 42:7	general 1:19	47:15	guy's 47:6	impose 6:18,19
find 4:14 7:19	43:24,25	greater 3:18	gyrations 41:22	6:20 15:12
7:20 32:3	generally 10:11	52:23		19:21 20:2
finds 15:13	38:22	grievous 46:16	H	25:4 35:13
fine 36:4 38:1	GINSBURG	guess 27:19	hand 25:9 39:21	37:9
50:14	3:23 4:6,19 8:4	33:16 37:18	45:20	imposed 3:13
first 11:7 21:7	8:10 11:19,22	guide 19:10	hands 18:20	14:6 19:15
27:22 29:2,19	16:17,21,23	guideline 6:19	happen 20:17	20:20 35:20
33:16	17:3 30:12,19	6:21 7:18	22:6 33:23	36:12,16 52:25
five 20:15 24:9	Ginsburg's 5:7	14:22 15:4,12	34:16	54:7
36:20,23 41:16	give 5:14 21:16	15:16,17 16:5	happens 30:22	imposes 18:10
49:15,17 50:4	29:6,16 45:14	16:19 18:11	36:17 49:17	imposing 26:5
52:1	50:12,23	27:1 30:23	hard 9:18	28:21
five-year 49:13	given 7:2 23:14	31:12 32:12	harder 33:6,7	imposition
floating 44:1,2		41:6,10	harsh 49:24,25	26:14

imprisonment 28:9 30:4 31:19 36:4,9 36:15 37:2,4 38:17 39:17 44:17,18 47:17 48:1,2 50:6	intended 15:24 49:25 intent 25:19 interaction 44:11 interpret 23:1 interpretation 40:14 interpreted 13:24 irrational 42:16 issue 12:6 19:6 items 24:5	14:17 15:2,7,9 16:7,17,21,23 17:3,7,17,22 18:17 20:8 21:7 22:10,13 22:21,25 23:7 23:23 24:3,9 24:17,19,22 25:8,20 26:3 26:10,22,23,24 27:11,21 28:1 28:3,13,15,16 28:17 29:9 30:12,19 31:6 31:22,25 32:3 32:16,19,24 33:6,18,22 34:15,24 35:16 35:23 37:10,11 38:2,3,10 39:3 39:9,20 40:2,8 40:11,19,21 42:5,10,25 43:3,8,11,13 43:22 44:7,19 44:23 45:17,23 46:6,15,18,21 48:3,7 49:2 50:8,18,23 51:2,4,25 53:8 53:19,23 54:4 54:8,19	35:23 37:11 48:3,7 49:2 key 44:13 kind 15:14 16:11 35:10 40:2 46:24 48:21 knife 41:8 know 5:17,19 6:3 10:24 12:14,14 14:9 15:11 16:16 18:17 20:15 26:10 27:15,21 30:8 31:8,9 34:13 35:19 38:12 42:19 43:5 44:2 45:3 45:13 47:8 50:13 51:6 53:11 knowing 23:17 29:22 known 39:14 knows 5:23 10:23	legal 53:17 legislating 38:6 legislative 12:19 35:9,17 lends 22:8 length 21:24 37:6 39:16 47:18,18,21,25 50:6 51:9,21 lenity 46:13,16 46:19 Let's 18:15 level 41:1,3,16 44:24 53:9 levels 40:23 Levon 1:3 17:11 lies 18:20 light 3:12 8:1 10:13 29:3 35:18 limit 5:24 12:14 limitation 7:25 limitations 10:25 limits 9:3,25 52:11 line 12:22 lines 46:21 listed 24:6 little 19:5 23:15 lived 14:16 long 11:3 17:8 17:19 50:16 longstanding 25:3 look 4:16 7:22 11:4 13:23 15:17 18:15 21:17,18 22:18 25:16 26:18,18 28:19,22 29:9 30:1 34:21,22 36:2,11 38:1,2 42:13,21 43:1 43:6 44:14 45:3 46:3,4,22 47:14 48:4,10
improvement 21:18 include 23:4 28:12 41:7 included 23:5 including 33:11 44:16 inconsistent 51:22 increased 31:13 independence 22:4 independent 6:19 indicate 52:10 indicated 8:25 17:10 indication 13:19 indisputably 25:22 individual 36:18 36:21 43:24 48:11 50:20,20 inextricably 53:15,16 influence 30:13 inherent 23:8 41:10 initial 48:8 injure 34:13 inoperative 32:18 insist 46:7,11 instance 19:17 20:2 23:6 49:9 53:22 54:17 instances 24:12 instructions 26:21 insurance 11:25	<hr/> J <hr/> Jr 1:3 17:12 judge 3:11,16,20 7:3 11:22 14:23,25 16:6 16:8,18 17:9 18:10 19:1 21:9,20 23:10 23:16 25:11 26:5 27:3,15 34:16,19 35:2 35:19 39:9 41:19 47:16 48:4,5 49:3,9 49:10,13 50:9 50:13 51:20 judge's 39:12 51:10 judges 21:12,16 22:18 34:20 39:15 41:22 judgment 33:5 Justice 1:19 3:3 3:8,23,24 4:6 4:19 5:2,4,6,16 6:1,15 7:7,11 7:15 8:4,10,11 8:14,14,17,20 8:21 9:7,11 10:3,4,10 11:19,22 12:17 13:2,6,13,17 13:18 14:8,12	<hr/> K <hr/> Kagan 5:2,4,16 6:1 8:11,14,17 8:21 26:23 28:13,15 33:22 34:15,24 37:10 38:2,10 44:19 46:18 Kagan's 46:15 keep 22:12 53:12 Kennedy 9:7,11 21:7 22:10,13 22:21,25 35:16	<hr/> L <hr/> lack 40:21 language 3:20 4:13,14,16,17 5:6,7,10,10 6:8 6:11 9:24 12:8 12:20 26:4,5 26:14 27:11,12 46:25 Laughter 8:16 8:18,22 40:10 43:12 53:18 law 15:12 25:12 40:14 53:10 laws 5:23 12:14 lawyers 21:12 leads 19:14 learn 18:3 leave 24:15 left 42:19,20	

<p>48:19,22,24 49:4 51:8,15 52:10,15 53:11 looked 18:5 19:20 20:25 looking 14:20 19:9 21:7,10 21:22 36:4 43:23,23 50:10 looks 38:12 lost 14:19 lot 23:9 25:11,13 29:3 47:12 lower 41:1 Lucero's 11:23</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">M</p> <hr/> <p>main 18:15 35:10 making 6:8 11:17 17:6 21:20 30:6 37:24 47:18,21 mandatories 17:18 mandatory 3:13 3:25 6:10,16 6:24 11:16 12:12 15:20 17:8 20:4,9 27:2 28:20,23 31:14 45:8 50:12 51:8,21 52:25 53:24,25 Mansfield 35:10 matter 1:12 18:20 54:22 matters 53:23 mean 5:18,19 11:6 12:1 18:2 22:6 25:23 29:5 31:6 33:23 34:25 40:21 46:7,20 54:2 meaningless 49:5,7</p>	<p>means 29:6 31:9 53:12 meant 5:20 6:12 47:7 meets 3:17 memorize 31:7 mention 33:14 merely 6:21 24:4 merits 25:11 mind 19:3 22:12 44:2,3 45:7,8 53:17 minimum 3:13 6:24 11:16 12:12 20:9 27:2 39:20 50:12 51:13,21 53:24,25 minimums 3:25 6:10 20:4 28:20,23 52:25 minutes 52:1 misplaced 52:19 missed 29:9 mitigating 15:13 16:11 18:23 mixed 8:23 modified 48:21 moment 5:5 17:24 monitored 6:22 months 15:4,5,6 15:18 16:25 20:15 32:8 33:2 49:10 morning 3:4 multiple 27:14 28:9,25 30:3 31:19 36:8,14 37:3,3 39:16 44:17 47:17 48:1 myriad 3:16</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">N</p> <hr/> <p>N 2:1,1 3:1 nature 5:3 17:14</p>	<p>Neb 1:16 necessary 3:19 52:23 need 35:20 negate 5:10 9:13 negates 9:12 negating 7:7 never 31:9 nine 6:13 36:3 38:24 non-924(c)'s 31:21 non-Section 24:25 nonuse 41:5 Nope 32:2 normal 40:23 45:8 49:12 normally 20:9 34:20 36:17 49:17 note 28:6 29:11 noting 43:24 novo 20:25 numerous 17:15</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">O</p> <hr/> <p>O 2:1 3:1 obvious 43:16 45:13 obviously 14:4 19:23 40:13 41:6 45:7,8 occurred 21:12 offender 48:22 48:23 offense 4:1,13 11:2 12:2,11 21:21 25:10 28:12 30:5,14 30:20,25 31:3 34:12,21,22,24 35:21 36:14,15 36:22 41:16 48:21,24,25 49:4,20 50:2 51:7,15</p>	<p>offenses 6:14 9:6 10:1 20:10 31:19 36:14 37:4 39:17 52:6 okay 34:17 41:2 42:17 43:9,17 54:9 old 14:8,10,11 Omaha 1:16 Once 41:4 one-day 24:25 one-year 53:25 54:6 onward 26:19 opened 8:7 operates 37:19 37:20 operation 11:24 opinion 13:23 26:15,16 opinions 46:15 opportunity 12:4 opposed 41:8,8 oral 1:12 2:2,5 3:6 24:20 ordered 36:12 original 30:20 ought 33:23 34:15 overall 18:9 19:12 22:7 27:16 43:2 overarching 3:18 52:7 overrides 9:18 overriding 21:4</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">P</p> <hr/> <p>P 3:1 page 2:2 32:1 36:9 47:14 pages 29:13 31:24 parole 11:9 parsimony 7:18</p>	<p>7:20 8:2 18:13 18:16 37:16 52:7,21 part 3:13 31:13 32:17 42:25 43:4 50:19 53:10,12,13 particular 27:1 48:24 particularly 26:18 pass 26:4,4 passed 47:7 perfectly 31:9 period 11:3 permissible 35:5 person 23:17 27:14 pervades 7:18 52:8 Petitioner 1:4,17 2:4,10 3:7 19:22 24:24 25:1 52:3 pick 13:17 picture 3:25 place 29:10 39:15 places 44:16 48:6 plausible 46:1 play 37:22 played 17:12,13 please 3:9 24:23 plus 5:19,20 point 4:9 5:7 7:15 8:7 11:23 15:25 19:3,9 27:6,23 32:4 33:20 47:9 points 37:22 policy 18:8 33:5 45:14 portion 3:21 20:21 position 9:12 22:1 23:17</p>
---	---	---	---	---

<p>25:2 30:15 possession 24:5 post 42:3 post-Booker 32:21 postdated 13:11 13:13 Powell 53:9,14 power 27:15 30:9,10,11 37:7,7 43:25 44:21 predated 13:13 predicate 4:13 6:14 9:5 10:1 11:2 12:2,11 25:6 28:10,11 29:22 30:14,20 30:24 31:4 49:20 51:7,15 52:6 present 17:2 23:20 presented 50:1 presumably 33:23 presumption 38:14 pretty 6:22 31:8 38:5,7 prevent 25:12 prevents 3:20 21:19 26:5 previously 42:2 principle 37:15 37:16 38:7,8 46:13,19 prison 35:14 probably 9:14 probation 36:5 problem 18:18 21:18 40:6 42:12 prohibited 35:4 promise 31:7 proper 15:23 21:20 32:12</p>	<p>40:14 46:2 properly 20:23 proponent 35:10 proved 30:16 provide 40:17 provided 9:2 35:8 38:18 provision 4:11 32:14 36:6 37:21 38:23 42:20 47:8 49:24 50:10 52:16 provisions 4:24 7:20 9:2 10:12 25:17,18 35:12 36:3 38:24 44:11,13 45:10 punished 6:9 23:18 punishing 23:17 24:4 punishment 7:4 7:12 8:12 9:1 22:5 23:11,13 23:19,20 25:6 26:1 31:12 49:20,20 punishments 14:6 pure 41:13 purpose 7:8 35:12 45:20 47:11 purposes 38:16 put 12:9,19,20 22:6 23:16 52:21 putting 42:7</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Q</p> <p>quarrel 52:24 53:1 question 3:10 7:13 13:18 16:15,15,16 22:13 29:3</p>	<p>37:2 43:14 47:4,13 questions 24:14 53:7 quick 31:7 quickly 14:19 quite 21:20 42:1 47:3 quote 25:23 quoting 26:9,11</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">R</p> <p>R 3:1 range 16:19,24 32:8 34:9,11 40:25 rational 42:23 rationality 42:2 read 9:19,21,22 10:21,22 12:1 25:17 33:11 39:22 47:1,6 52:15 53:22 reading 4:8 6:5 6:6 31:7 real 12:1 34:20 48:21 realistic 12:18 12:18 really 16:5 35:24 43:15 53:11 54:4 realm 50:9 reason 12:23 15:19 16:10 17:7,17 18:22 27:4 35:7 38:18 40:20 41:12 reasonable 10:13,19 20:6 34:18 42:22,22 43:5,7,10 50:9 50:19,23 51:1 51:10,14,16,17 reasonableness 19:25 20:20</p>	<p>21:5 43:2 54:11,16 reasons 6:20 9:14 17:6,10 17:15 41:19 rebuttal 2:8 24:16 52:2 recalibrated 4:22 11:10 recalibration 11:6 recognize 28:19 30:13 recognized 26:17 recognizing 26:6 recommendati... 14:22 reduced 47:5 reducing 3:21 redundancy 12:6 Reed 53:9,14 referring 16:1 46:13 reflect 11:10 33:24 34:4 35:21 Reform 3:15 7:19 11:9 25:18 36:2 37:22 38:24 39:4 44:12,16 48:20,20 related 53:11,15 53:17 relation 17:25 relationship 14:5 relevance 18:4 relevant 35:11 48:25 reliance 52:18 rely 44:13 47:22 relying 22:17 33:17,19 remember 35:8</p>	<p>36:14 removed 30:9,9 38:21,21 47:14 removes 47:24 47:25 removing 47:12 rendered 32:18 repeat 16:10 repeatedly 46:14 repeating 19:4 repeats 5:6 require 9:23 21:11 35:13 41:20 required 20:4 21:11 32:11 51:11 requirement 7:18 8:2 13:24 22:24 25:4 46:24 47:3 requirements 52:21 requires 4:12 9:24 53:20 resolved 44:24 respect 10:14 30:4,25 31:20 36:8 39:1 44:5 44:8,9 52:13 Respondent 1:7 1:20 2:7 24:21 response 14:1 27:18 responses 27:20 rest 7:2 24:15 restrict 26:20 restriction 12:9 restrictions 9:23 result 6:20 52:21 53:25 results 8:3 reversed 4:2 review 19:24 20:6,12,19 21:3 43:5</p>
---	--	--	---	--

<p>reviewed 20:12 right 4:20 6:1 15:1,2,7,9 16:22 27:17 30:18 31:25 33:25 37:14 40:23 42:7,22 43:16 46:9,20 48:13 49:10 54:14 roadmap 4:17 rob 41:13 robberies 34:3 robbery 14:21 34:7,10,11,17 40:24 41:2,6 53:13 ROBERTS 3:3 3:24 13:17 20:8 24:17,19 25:8,20 26:3 26:10 28:16 44:7,23 45:17 45:23 46:6 51:25 54:19 role 17:11,11,12 ruled 10:18 13:4 rules 46:7 ruling 13:3 run 5:7,8 6:13 39:18 45:1,2 48:14 49:16 runs 4:12 18:13</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">S</p> <hr/> <p>S 2:1 3:1 sanction 45:19 saying 9:17 21:22 23:16 30:15 31:11 37:12,13,14,18 46:20,21 47:6 48:3 54:18 says 5:7 6:12 7:24 15:11,17 16:8 26:13 30:23 31:16,19</p>	<p>35:18,19 36:6 36:11,21 37:5 37:17 42:20 45:1 47:12,20 48:4 49:11,18 53:20 scenario 54:17 scheme 23:8 52:20 second 50:5 53:10,11 Section 3:12,20 4:15 28:6 30:2 30:2,8 49:18 see 15:17 19:2 21:25 31:16 42:21 43:23 Senator 35:9 sense 37:18 sensible 29:20 sent 29:19 sentence 3:14,17 3:21 4:2,10 5:14,16 6:18 6:25 7:2,21 8:1 8:8 9:1,4 10:7 10:13,18,18 11:3,3,8,16 12:2 13:25 14:15,21,23 15:4,12,19 18:9,11 19:15 19:21,23 20:3 20:6,12,20,21 21:9,15,23,24 24:25 25:5 26:6 27:17 28:8,21,22 29:24 30:2,6 30:11,13,20,24 31:4,18,20 32:12 33:11 34:1,18 35:13 35:20 36:7,19 36:19,22,23 38:4,20 39:16 43:2 45:9 49:3</p>	<p>49:10,11,13 50:16 52:12,15 52:17,22 53:6 54:14 sentenced 20:11 sentences 8:6 28:9 34:4 36:18,22 39:2 39:18 44:22 45:1 sentencing 3:11 3:15 4:7 7:19 11:9 12:10,15 15:15 16:13,17 19:11 20:23 22:9 25:18 26:21 27:25 29:22 32:7 34:21 35:11 36:2 37:22 38:24 39:4 42:2 44:12,16 48:20,20,21 52:5,20 separate 4:24 6:8 22:4,5 23:13 24:4 51:12 53:12 separately 6:9 29:23 34:8 35:8 48:11 53:13 serious 35:21 serve 14:15 set 3:16 7:23 10:24,24 18:6 19:13 21:24 30:11 36:16 37:25 47:18,22 47:25 53:3 setting 36:6 37:25 38:17,19 48:10 seven 36:19,20 36:23,24,25 41:2 severe 11:3</p>	<p>severity 23:11 shed 29:2 show 10:10 shrink 4:8 side 19:6 significant 17:4 17:4 45:18 simply 6:18 16:1 49:21 50:6 51:22 six 5:17 Sixth 13:9 slightly 40:16 Smith 13:8 22:16,16 solely 25:6 35:14 Solicitor 1:18 someplace 27:6 sorry 8:15,19,24 47:20 Sotomayor 6:15 7:7,11,15 8:14 8:20 13:2,6,13 14:8,12 23:7 23:23 24:3,9 40:19,21 speaks 48:18 special 31:15 specific 28:12 39:1 44:15 specifically 28:5 38:25 47:20 specificity 41:20 specified 24:7 25:4 30:1 square 46:9,11 stand 20:1 standard 34:11 standpoint 20:1 21:3 54:6 start 41:4,15 started 11:7 33:13 starting 4:22 19:9 starts 41:1,1,2 statements 18:8</p>	<p>States 1:1,6,13 3:4 13:10 22:16 statute 4:8 5:9 8:5 9:19 16:7,8 21:22 23:1,4 24:7 27:2 29:15 31:15 33:13,13 39:10 42:19 43:17 47:4,12,12 51:22 53:12,20 53:21 statute's 29:5 statutes 4:15 6:4 10:23 14:18 15:25 44:6,9 46:3 statutory 9:2 29:3 46:4 step 26:20,20,20 Stoler 1:16 2:3,9 3:5,6,8 4:3,11 4:21 5:3,13,22 6:7 7:6,10,13 7:16 8:9,11,15 8:19,23 9:9,20 10:9,21 11:20 12:3,25 13:5,8 13:15,21 14:10 14:14,25 15:6 15:8 16:4,20 16:22,25 17:5 17:9,20 18:5 19:7 20:18 22:2,12,15,23 23:3,22 24:1,6 24:11,18 46:19 52:1,2,4 53:21 54:2,5,10 Stoler's 47:1 strengthen 12:22 strictly 5:24 46:23 stringent 35:11 strong 38:6</p>
--	--	---	---	---

stronger 12:20	sympathetic 47:3	terrorism 23:24	Thomas 53:9	turn 46:8,11
structure 46:5	system 42:7	24:10	thought 6:25 7:3	turns 22:3
47:11 48:19		test 54:10,15	10:3,4,5 17:8	twice 7:20
stuff 33:9	T	text 35:11 46:1,4	17:18,23 18:1	twisting 23:15
subject 19:24	T 2:1,1	46:4 51:23	19:4,4,8 21:8	two 4:24 12:5
20:6 54:15	table 41:12	textualist 46:23	thread 18:13	20:13 23:25
submit 3:19 4:3	tack 31:21	Thank 24:17,18	threat 41:8	two-level 34:8
5:13 6:7 12:25	tailor 30:10	51:24,25 54:19	three 20:10,13	types 4:25 39:1
14:2 16:4 18:9	take 7:17 9:15	theft 11:16	20:16	
21:4 22:2	11:14 14:21	23:23 24:2,5	thrust 25:24	U
53:21	15:22 25:16	40:24 41:1	26:1 49:22	ultimately 35:2
submitted 54:20	27:7,8 28:3,20	theme 52:7	thrusts 26:4,8	unanimous
54:22	34:7,20 42:14	theory 27:13,13	till 17:24	26:16
subsequent 50:5	48:22 51:14	thing 26:9 32:22	time 4:22 6:15	underlying 4:1
subsequently	53:2	42:3 50:19,23	11:6,11 12:24	5:15 6:14 9:5
29:12	taken 15:15	53:14,15,16	13:7 14:15	11:17 12:11
substantial	16:12 26:25	things 5:3 19:19	21:13,16 24:15	21:10,21 22:7
19:24	27:4,24 41:15	34:7,14 44:1	35:14 42:1	22:19 34:1
substantive	44:21	50:20	times 4:24 12:5	49:4
19:25 20:5	takes 30:15	think 9:21 12:17	told 6:17	underscores
21:5 23:10,14	talk 28:6	12:23 17:18	total 3:14 7:21	49:21
54:15	talking 25:10,25	18:19 19:8	19:15,23 20:12	understand 6:4
substantively	32:14 45:11	20:14 21:13,19	20:20 28:8	37:11 45:23
20:5	talks 7:23 14:20	23:13,19 25:14	29:24 30:2,6	understanding
subtract 31:16	22:17 52:16	25:16,21 26:17	30:10 31:18,20	20:18 29:4
suffer 50:20	tapestry 18:13	27:10,22 28:24	36:23 37:2,6	49:22
sufficient 3:18	technical 32:22	29:2,17,20	38:17 44:18	unfair 33:15
52:22	44:25 45:19	30:14,21 32:1	47:18,18,20,25	unimportant
sufficiently	technically 45:6	32:14 33:3,21	48:6,9,13	35:18
25:19,21	45:13,22	34:15,19 35:2	49:17 50:15	United 1:1,6,13
suggest 41:14	tell 9:4 27:1 44:1	35:5,9 37:13	51:9 52:20	3:4 13:10
suggested 16:23	telling 10:5	37:19,20 38:15	54:10	22:16
suggesting 9:21	tells 45:14	39:5,7,13	totally 37:8	unreasonable
22:20 33:22	tenets 18:16	40:15,17 41:19	53:12	10:6 25:2
suggests 15:21	Tenth 13:3	41:24,25 42:24	tough 39:21	upset 38:13
superfluous	22:16	43:7,8,18,19	track 14:19	use 35:14 40:24
39:2	term 18:16	43:21 44:10,23	traditional	41:5,7,10
supersedes	36:15 38:17	45:21,25 46:2	39:15	utterly 6:5 47:2
35:24 37:13	39:10 49:12	46:9,12,14,18	trafficking 50:2	
supports 33:10	terms 5:11 23:7	47:14 48:18	true 25:14 38:22	V
suppose 9:15	28:9 30:3	49:21 51:4,19	47:10	v 1:5 3:4 13:10
21:15	31:19 36:1,2,8	53:10,14,23	try 6:4 42:11	22:16
supposed 54:12	36:12 37:3,4	thinking 23:11	43:16	value 21:17
Supreme 1:1,13	39:17 44:17	41:14 53:8,16	trying 18:19	vanishing 4:9
sure 6:8 25:20	47:17 48:1,11	thinks 25:11	23:10 33:12	variance 17:6
25:21,25	48:12	50:13 54:12,13	42:6,7	32:23 33:8
suspended 11:8		third 52:16	Tuesday 1:10	42:18,21

varied 19:17 32:13,24,25 33:1,1 50:11	42:18,19 44:10 46:22 54:18	41:24 42:9,24 43:1,7,10,21 44:4,8,20 45:16,21,25 46:12 47:10 48:5,9 49:8 50:17,22,25 51:3,6	<hr/> 2 <hr/>	32:15 42:15
various 17:5 29:1 37:22 44:11 48:6	we've 45:10	yeah 32:16,16 32:19,19 40:1 43:8 51:2,2	2.4 29:9	3553A 7:20,23 30:5
vary 32:22	weird 40:3,3	year 54:8	20 4:19,21 41:3	3554 30:5
varying 18:12	went 12:7,8 13:25 15:9	years 4:19,21 6:11 7:2 9:4 14:10,11 20:3 20:16 23:19,25 24:10 25:10 26:6 33:4 36:19,20 41:16 46:10 49:16,17 50:4,5,13 51:9 52:24 54:18	20,000 41:15	3554(b) 37:4 47:19 48:15
version 5:9	wholly 30:8	Z	2007 13:11	3584 30:2,3 44:20 47:15 52:15,19
view 15:25 16:1 45:12 51:10	win 43:18 51:5	0	2014 13:9	3584(b) 36:11 38:19 47:15,19 48:15 49:14 52:10
viewed 15:24,25 16:1	window 33:10 33:12 42:17,18	1	2017 1:10	3661 7:24 19:13 53:4
violence 3:22 5:15 9:5 10:2 11:18 22:8,19 41:9 50:2	wish 46:24	1	23 14:11	
violent 11:1	withdrew 10:14	1	24 2:7 14:10	
volumes 48:19	word 42:22,23 43:4,10	1	25 26:15 50:5,13	
<hr/> W <hr/>	work 20:9 27:16	1	28 1:10	
want 16:8 31:1 40:8 41:9	worked 42:1	1	2K2.4 28:6 29:11 31:10 45:4	
wanted 11:4 18:3 25:11 33:20	works 12:19	1	<hr/> 3 <hr/>	<hr/> 4 <hr/>
wants 23:2 53:10,19	world 40:3 49:12	1	3 2:4	4 28:6 29:11 31:7,10
warrant 50:15	wouldn't 42:12	1	30 6:11 7:2 9:4 20:3 23:18 25:10 26:6 33:3 45:10 46:10 51:9 52:24 54:18	40 15:6 16:24 33:1 49:10,15
Washington 1:9 1:19	write 5:23,23 12:14	1	30-year 3:13 38:4 52:11 53:24	40-month 49:12
wasn't 8:21 10:8 20:22 39:10	written 23:4 25:12,15 34:4	1	35 38:1	40s 29:13
way 4:8 6:4 9:19 9:21,25 12:18 20:9 21:19 23:2 29:7,16 32:5,6 38:2 45:9,12 47:1,6 50:14 53:22	wrong 8:15 29:6	1	353 38:25	42 32:1,2
ways 24:3 41:21	<hr/> X <hr/>	1	3551 7:19,23 10:7 19:14 53:4	43 32:2
We'll 3:3	x 1:2,8	1	3553 7:5 9:15,17 10:7 35:18,22 35:24,25 37:13 37:15 38:7 49:14	44 15:5
we're 12:21 22:17 28:25 31:14 33:12,17 33:19 40:2,3,3 40:20 41:15	<hr/> Y <hr/>	1	3553(a) 10:22 18:6,12,17 19:13 35:18 36:7,16 37:5 37:20,20 38:16 38:18,22 44:14 44:15 47:22 48:4,10,16 52:13 53:4	48 15:4,18
	Yang 1:18 2:6 24:19,20,22 25:14 26:2,8 26:12 27:10,19 27:22 28:2,5 28:14,24 29:11 30:18,21 31:17 31:23 32:1,4 32:17,20 33:1 33:16,19 34:6 34:19 35:1,22 35:25 37:18 38:9,15 39:7 39:13 40:1,7 40:13,19,20	1	3553(b) 14:20 15:11 17:25	5
		1		5 28:7 50 17:25
		1		50-odd 14:12
		1		52 2:10
		1		53 39:1
		1		5A 36:10
		1		5G 31:22
		1		5G1.2 31:17
		1		<hr/> 6 <hr/>
		1		<hr/> 7 <hr/>
		1		<hr/> 8 <hr/>
		1		84 16:25 32:8
		1		<hr/> 9 <hr/>
		1		9 13:11
		1		924 9:13 12:21

12:22,24 13:14 21:11,15 37:12 37:17 924(c) 3:12,20 4:7,10,18,22 4:25 5:25 6:10 8:4 9:3,18,22 9:25 10:6,15 10:20,21,25 11:5,7,10 12:1 12:5,8,16,20 13:7,22 14:1,4 22:5 24:25 25:2,17,25 26:18 29:23 30:8,13,15 31:2 35:24 37:8 42:19 43:17 44:11 47:24,24 49:6 49:18,23 50:7 51:14 52:5 924(c)'s 25:3 51:23				
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