

# SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

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IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

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ELSA HALL, AS PERSONAL )  
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ESTATE OF )  
ETHLYN LOUISE HALL AND AS )  
SUCCESSOR TRUSTEE OF THE ETHLYN ) No. 16-1150  
LOUISE HALL FAMILY TRUST, )  
Petitioner, )  
v. )  
SAMUEL HALL, ET AL., )  
Respondents. )  
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Pages: 1 through 66

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 (10:04 a.m.)

3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear  
4 argument first this morning in Case 16-1150,  
5 Hall versus Hall.

6 Mr. Simpson.

7 ORAL ARGUMENT OF ANDREW C. SIMPSON

8 ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER

9 MR. SIMPSON: Mr. Chief Justice, may  
10 it please the Court:

11 Ever since the Judiciary Act of 1789,  
12 there has been a right of appeal from a final  
13 judgment. We ask that this Court support the  
14 right of appeal in this case because -- for  
15 three reasons.

16 First, it comes from a final judgment  
17 entered in the case. It provides a bright-line  
18 rule that brooks no exception. When a final  
19 judgment is entered, you have a right of  
20 appeal.

21 Second, Rule 42 does not merge cases.  
22 There's a careful architecture in the federal  
23 rules from Rules 13 through Rule 24 designed to  
24 bring cases that should be tried as one case  
25 together.

1           Rule 42, on the other hand, is for the  
2           exceptional case that doesn't fall within the  
3           categories that fall under Rules 13 through 24.  
4           And -- and there's no reason for merger in  
5           those cases.

6           JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Please explain to  
7           me what the purpose of 42 -- dividing it up  
8           into two sections is.

9           MR. SIMPSON: Certainly.

10          JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Because you don't  
11          need the (b) section under your reading. Why  
12          use the word "consolidate," which your  
13          adversary points out generally has a  
14          connotation of merging two things into one?  
15          Why use it at all?

16          MR. SIMPSON: I --

17          JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: What's the  
18          necessity of it?

19          MR. SIMPSON: I -- I think Rule  
20          42(a)(1), which talks about joining for hearing  
21          or trial, is designed for the case that the  
22          judge wants to keep on separate tracks but has  
23          a reason to have, say, an omnibus hearing;  
24          whereas 42(a)(2) is for true consolidation,  
25          whether it's for trial, for a hearing, or for

1 pretrial.

2 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I don't understand  
3 the necessity, meaning if we had only (a)(1),  
4 the court could do exactly what you're saying  
5 as well. It didn't need (a)(2) to accomplish  
6 what (a)(1) already says it can. It suggests  
7 to me that there's a separate purpose for  
8 (a)(2).

9 MR. SIMPSON: I -- I agree that there  
10 is a separate purpose. I think, as -- in the  
11 -- as Footnote 4 in the Ringwald case explains,  
12 the old consolidation statute actually is  
13 embodied in (a)(2) and (a)(3). It's (a)(1)  
14 that is new. So there was consolidation  
15 before, and (a)(2) and (a)(3) continued the  
16 consolidation.

17 What (a)(1) does is allow for, as I  
18 say, an omnibus hearing where the cases remain  
19 on separate tracks. And if I can give an  
20 example of how that would work, suppose there  
21 is a mass tort, a industrial explosion. You  
22 have a class of plaintiffs, separate actions,  
23 that are death cases. You have some who are  
24 terminally ill from this case, from this  
25 explosion. You have some that have property

1 damage only.

2 The court might decide I'm going to  
3 consolidate under (a)(2) the death cases and  
4 the people who are terminal and the -- and the  
5 -- and the property damage. So we have three  
6 separate groups, three separate tack -- tracks.

7 It made sense to keep those cases  
8 together and consolidate them under (a)(2), but  
9 there might be, for example, the initial  
10 hearing, where the judge says: Despite that  
11 I've got these three groups of consolidated  
12 cases, separately consolidated, I also have  
13 overriding administrative business to do, and  
14 I'm going to do that under (a)(1). I'm going  
15 to have an omnibus pretrial hearing under  
16 (a)(1), I'm going to bring everyone together.  
17 I'm not consolidating these three groups, but  
18 we're going to talk about how we're going to  
19 administer this case. And --

20 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: How is this  
21 different from a case in which a plaintiff  
22 brings multiple claims, not all of them  
23 directly related? And in that situation, if  
24 there's a partial entry of judgment on one of  
25 the claims, you can't appeal. How is this

1 different?

2 MR. SIMPSON: Are you talking about  
3 where the plaintiff has filed separate lawsuits  
4 or just one lawsuit --

5 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: One lawsuit with  
6 multiple claims.

7 MR. SIMPSON: Because this -- this is  
8 a -- my client's case is one lawsuit with  
9 multiple claims that proceed to determination,  
10 just as --

11 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Your -- your client  
12 has not brought a lawsuit with multiple claims.  
13 Your client has brought a claim. And it's not  
14 like a -- one plaintiff has one, two, three  
15 claims. This is a separate claim brought not  
16 by the plaintiff, so it's not the plaintiff  
17 picking one claim and -- and leaving out  
18 another plaintiff's claim.

19 This is a lawsuit A against B and then  
20 a separate lawsuit on an entirely different  
21 subject matter, B against C. So --

22 MR. SIMPSON: That's --

23 JUSTICE GINSBURG: -- it doesn't bring  
24 up at all the question that Justice Sotomayor  
25 just posed.

1 MR. SIMPSON: That -- that's entirely  
2 correct. And under Rule 14, if C was liable to  
3 B for something arising out of the A versus B  
4 lawsuit, that could be brought as one lawsuit  
5 and --

6 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Simpson, I guess I  
7 don't understand your answer to Justice  
8 Sotomayor or Justice Ginsburg because, although  
9 this suit does present this different kind of  
10 issue, I took it that your argument would apply  
11 just as well to a suit in which somebody has  
12 five claims, splits them up into five different  
13 lawsuits. And you're saying that should be  
14 treated the same way that one claim with -- one  
15 suit with those five claims is.

16 MR. SIMPSON: I -- I don't think that  
17 those -- well, I think if it gets to the point  
18 where a final judgment is entered because the  
19 case has not been managed from an early point  
20 of the case, where in that situation what the  
21 courts do is, under Rule 12(b)(6), they -- they  
22 say that this -- this -- you have five  
23 different lawsuits going on. Once one is  
24 decided, you're facing res judicata in the  
25 other four.

1           And what they do is they order the  
2 plaintiff to file all of the claims in one  
3 case, and then they dismiss the other four. So  
4 that's how that's handled under the  
5 architecture of the rules. That shouldn't even  
6 come up under Rule 42.

7           JUSTICE KAGAN: I -- I guess the --  
8 the bigger point that I'm making is that it  
9 seems to me that your argument applies whenever  
10 there is consolidation of cases, regardless of  
11 exactly how those cases look and what's in  
12 them. Am I -- am I right about that, the  
13 breadth of your argument?

14           MR. SIMPSON: Yes, Your Honor. I --  
15 that is absolutely correct. And I point out in  
16 the briefs that when you have that kind of a  
17 case, what the court of appeals can do is stay  
18 them. But I actually believe, more  
19 importantly, the district court should be  
20 managing those early on and you should never  
21 get to that point.

22           JUSTICE KAGAN: Do you think --

23           CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I take it --  
24 it's correct, isn't it, that if you prevail and  
25 so that you can appeal, you must appeal?

1           MR. SIMPSON: Absolutely. And that's  
2 why I say if -- if that case that Justice Kagan  
3 has described gets to that point, then, yes,  
4 they must appeal, and then I think the court of  
5 appeals has the ability to look at them and  
6 say, well, this case should have been brought  
7 as one case and I'm going to -- the court can  
8 say I will stay that.

9           CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Yeah, but I  
10 mean -- yes, but I think most people would  
11 think that the district court has a greater  
12 familiarity with the litigation, particularly  
13 since the court of appeals may know nothing  
14 about it until you get a notification, and  
15 understands how related the two cases are or  
16 how not related they are. And maybe the  
17 ability to consolidate ought to continue to --  
18 I mean, to keep the cases together, to the  
19 extent appropriate, ought to remain with the  
20 district court, rather than suddenly throwing  
21 the issue before a court of appeals that is new  
22 to the whole litigation.

23           MR. SIMPSON: It -- that -- that's  
24 certainly the argument that has been made by  
25 the amici, but I think if you look at the

1 architecture of the rules, again, Rule 23(f)  
2 also deals with an appeal coming up,  
3 an interlocutory appeal under the class action  
4 statutes, and there the discretion is given  
5 completely to the appellate court. And --

6 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But what about the  
7 district court in a case like this one? Could  
8 the district court say I think that E, your  
9 client, loses on her claim, but I'm not going  
10 to enter -- I'm going to instruct the clerk not  
11 to enter judgment until we resolve the -- what  
12 started out as a counterclaim and then became a  
13 separate claim?

14 MR. SIMPSON: I think the court can do  
15 that. I don't think that would be appropriate.  
16 I don't think that's what the rules anticipate.

17 If -- and, you know, under Rule 72, if  
18 a judgment is entered on the docket, after 150  
19 days it's deemed final. So I think there's a  
20 -- there's an indication in the rules that we  
21 want these cases to move along.

22 JUSTICE KENNEDY: But as -- as these  
23 questions indicate, there's a whole wide range  
24 of -- of possibilities here. And you're saying  
25 that the district judge, which, as the Chief

1 Justice pointed out, is really better situated  
2 to decide whether the appeal should be held,  
3 has -- has very little authority to do that.

4 And, furthermore, it seems to me this  
5 is a trap for the unwary.

6 MR. SIMPSON: Well, to address the  
7 first question, I -- I think the district court  
8 has great latitude to do this, but it's under  
9 the rubric of Rule 13, compulsory  
10 counterclaims, Rule 14, third-party practice,  
11 Rule 19, joinder of indispensable parties.

12 That's where these -- the Footnote 7  
13 cases in Gelboim, the cases that should have  
14 been filed as one, that's where that's supposed  
15 to happen. That's not where it comes up in  
16 Rule 42.

17 In terms of a trap for the unwary, the  
18 double final judgment rule that my friend  
19 proposes actually creates the trap for the  
20 unwary because you can have situations where a  
21 final judgment is not entered after your case  
22 is dismissed and a final judgment is entered.

23 You can have a situation where you  
24 don't know how the court is going to deem it  
25 consolidated because, if I understand their

1 argument, if it's consolidated for trial, they  
2 agree that it can be appealed immediately, but  
3 if -- a final judgment is entered, but if it's  
4 consolidated for this nebulous all purposes, it  
5 cannot.

6 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Suppose these  
7 parties who certainly don't agree on very much  
8 did agree that this case could be treated as  
9 one for purposes of appeal.

10 What would the stipulation say? What  
11 words would they use to do that?

12 MR. SIMPSON: For the parties to  
13 stipulate that it would be --

14 JUSTICE KENNEDY: The parties -- the  
15 parties agree that there should be only one  
16 appeal. Is it -- is it possible under -- and  
17 I'm not sure what the stipulation would even  
18 say.

19 MR. SIMPSON: I think the -- I think  
20 the stipulation in that circumstance would be  
21 the parties in 1154 who have the final judgment  
22 would stipulate in the court of appeals to a  
23 stay and say we agree that this should remain  
24 in abeyance until the rest of the case is  
25 decided.

1           But that allows the party to protect  
2 their right of appeal.

3           CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, the  
4 court of appeals might well have something to  
5 say about that. The courts of appeals don't  
6 like to have matters just resting on their  
7 docket, depending upon matters of years before  
8 the district court might get to the other  
9 matter.

10           MR. SIMPSON: Certainly. But I think  
11 if the parties are coming to the court and  
12 explaining why they think it should be stayed,  
13 I -- I don't -- the court of appeals might  
14 disagree, and, obviously, that's its  
15 prerogative.

16           JUSTICE GORSUCH: Well, counsel, for  
17 the -- for the courts of appeals that prefer  
18 the practice of deferring everything until  
19 there's a final judgment on a final matter in  
20 the district court, could they just have a  
21 rule, a local rule or practice of deferring  
22 cases along the lines that we've just  
23 discussed?

24           MR. SIMPSON: I -- I think -- I think  
25 if -- they could have a rule for cases that

1 should have been filed as one, the Gelboim note  
2 7 cases.

3 JUSTICE GORSUCH: No, I'm talking  
4 about for cases just like this. If we're in a  
5 circuit that prefers as a matter of practice to  
6 wait until everything is done, is there  
7 anything inhibiting them from adopting a rule  
8 staying cases where there's another related  
9 matter still lurking in the district court? I  
10 can't see any.

11 And it's not -- this is not an  
12 unfriendly question.

13 MR. SIMPSON: Understood. I -- I -- I  
14 think the whole purpose, you know, of Rule 1  
15 and the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, and I  
16 think there's an equivalent under the Federal  
17 Rules of Appellate Procedure, is that cases are  
18 supposed to be administered for the speedy  
19 administration of justice, speedy and  
20 efficient.

21 And I think a blanket rule like that  
22 would run counter to that. I think if the  
23 court exercised its discretion to look at each  
24 case and say, well, we think this should be  
25 stayed, I think that would pass muster.

1 JUSTICE ALITO: Suppose you were  
2 arguing this point before the civil rules  
3 committee. And so the question would be: What  
4 is the best procedure, what would your argument  
5 be? Why is the procedure you outline a better  
6 one than the alternative?

7 MR. SIMPSON: The reason it's a better  
8 one is because it provides this bright line  
9 rule. You cannot be trapped. When you have a  
10 final judgment, you know you have to appeal.

11 There's -- as I indicated, there's a  
12 problem in the double final judgment rule with  
13 not having a second final judgment actually  
14 entered. There's the problem of not knowing  
15 why the case was -- that the court of appeals  
16 might disagree with you as to why the court of  
17 --

18 JUSTICE ALITO: But why would there --  
19 why would the alternative not provide a bright  
20 line rule? So the alternative might be that if  
21 a case -- if cases are consolidated, they are  
22 considered to be one case for purposes of the  
23 final judgment rule.

24 MR. SIMPSON: I -- I think -- I think  
25 that's counter to a whole -- a lot of history

1 of this Court and counter to the rest of the,  
2 as we describe in the briefs, the various  
3 problems with merging cases.

4 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Could you design a  
5 rule, if you were following Justice Alito's  
6 question, you are addressing the rules  
7 committee, you want to improve the rules, could  
8 you design a rule so that the parties or the  
9 judge does have an option?

10 MR. SIMPSON: Absolutely. It would be  
11 Rule 42(a)(4). And it would be -- provide that  
12 in cases that should have been brought as one  
13 or could have been brought as one under Rules  
14 13 through 24, the district court will have the  
15 power to merge them. But if they don't fall  
16 within that category, that is the Gelboim  
17 Footnote 7 category --

18 JUSTICE ALITO: But why is that better  
19 than Rule 54(b)? This is what I'm getting at.  
20 So you -- I asked you why would your rule be a  
21 better rule, and part of your answer was  
22 there's a lot of history and authority on the  
23 other side. But I'm asking you to disregard  
24 all that.

25 Let's say it's just a policy question.

1       Why is your rule better than a rule that says  
2       that when cases are consolidated they are  
3       considered to be one case for purposes of the  
4       final judgment rule, and the district court, of  
5       course, can proceed under Rule 54(b) if it  
6       wishes?

7                   MR. SIMPSON:  It creates a lot of  
8       mirky rules.  For example, if a plaintiff has  
9       -- a private party plaintiff is suing and the  
10      government is suing, and those two cases are  
11      consolidated, when -- when does the time for no  
12      -- for filing a notice of appeal run, 30 days  
13      or 60 days?  If they're not merged, each party  
14      knows.  If they're merged, there's a real  
15      question as to when that happens.

16                   JUSTICE GINSBURG:  In this case -- in  
17      this case, it was the clerk that entered the  
18      final judgment, am I right?  The clerk was the  
19      one who issued the judgment under 58.

20                   MR. SIMPSON:  Yes.

21                   JUSTICE GINSBURG:  And doesn't that  
22      rule provide that the court could otherwise  
23      order if the court didn't want that judgment to  
24      be entered?

25                   MR. SIMPSON:  Yes.  And -- and not

1     only that, you know, I think there is evidence  
2     from -- not only from that, but from the fact  
3     that when the motion for attorneys' fees was  
4     not filed within 14 days of final judgment, the  
5     district judge denied the motion for fees for  
6     failure to file it in a timely fashion.  If  
7     that was not a final judgment, they would not  
8     have denied the motion.

9             JUSTICE KAGAN:  Could you explain a  
10     little bit more how you're reading Rule 58?

11            MR. SIMPSON:  Sure.

12            JUSTICE KAGAN:  And that was what  
13     Justice Ginsburg asked you; is that right, and  
14     you said yes, it authorizes the court to do  
15     that.  What -- how does it do that?

16            MR. SIMPSON:  It -- it's non-specific.  
17     Essentially, it says if -- with -- after entry  
18     of a verdict, and two other occasions, the  
19     clerk shall enter the judgment, unless the  
20     district judge directs otherwise.

21            There's no guidance given to that.

22            JUSTICE GORSUCH:  Well, but, counsel,  
23     that's what it says I think in (b)(1) with  
24     respect to general verdicts.  But then (b)(2)  
25     with respect to special verdicts doesn't

1 contain any parallel language like that and, in  
2 fact, suggests that the judgment has to be  
3 entered promptly.

4 What do we do about that?

5 MR. SIMPSON: I -- I -- I think -- I  
6 think it does have to be entered promptly. And  
7 that -- I think that's what happened in this  
8 case. It was entered promptly. Not under 52  
9 -- not under that section.

10 JUSTICE GORSUCH: But as I understood  
11 your answer to Justice Kagan and -- and Justice  
12 Ginsburg, it was one of the reasons we don't  
13 need to worry about your proposed rule is that  
14 the district court has discretion to delay the  
15 entry of judgment and that that is textually  
16 found in (b)(1), which, indeed, it is with  
17 respect to general verdicts, but there's no  
18 parallel language that you can rely on with  
19 respect to (b)(2).

20 And does that diminish your argument  
21 by suggesting there the district court doesn't  
22 have discretion to delay the entry of judgment?

23 MR. SIMPSON: I -- I don't -- I don't  
24 think it diminishes the argument at all. I  
25 think -- we are advocating for the entry of

1 judgment. So whether it's under (b)(1) or  
2 (b)(2), I'm not sure that there's a distinction  
3 from our point of view.

4 JUSTICE KAGAN: May I ask you a  
5 different kind of question, Mr. Simpson? It  
6 just really goes back to the language here.

7 I mean, would you agree that your  
8 understanding of what it means to consolidate  
9 cases is different from the ordinary meaning of  
10 that term?

11 MR. SIMPSON: I think -- I'm not sure  
12 what the ordinary meaning of that term is,  
13 quite frankly, Your Honor.

14 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, suppose I said  
15 to you that a company was going to consolidate  
16 two offices. Are they going to have two  
17 offices or one office?

18 MR. SIMPSON: Typically, I think  
19 people would think they would have one office.  
20 So if you're talking about the -- the typical  
21 layman's understanding, yes, I think that means  
22 one.

23 JUSTICE KAGAN: So -- and it's not  
24 just laymen, right? I mean, if you look at  
25 Black's Law Dictionary, it says a consolidation

1 in civil procedure, it defines as "the  
2 court-ordered unification of two or more  
3 actions into a single action."

4 So that's the Black's Law Dictionary  
5 definition. Same thing. Two becomes one.

6 MR. SIMPSON: And I -- I -- I don't  
7 think that's what the rules do. And I don't  
8 think that's --

9 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Well, there was a  
10 statute, was there not, before the rules, there  
11 was a statute?

12 MR. SIMPSON: Correct.

13 JUSTICE GINSBURG: And the statute  
14 used the word "consolidate," didn't it? I  
15 don't have it in front of me. So I -- but what  
16 the -- the statute that dealt with this issue  
17 before Rule 58.

18 MR. SIMPSON: Yes, Your Honor.

19 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Didn't that statute  
20 --

21 MR. SIMPSON: Again, I'm looking for  
22 the language, but --

23 JUSTICE KAGAN: I mean, it did. And  
24 -- and then, in Johnson, Johnson tells us that  
25 "consolidate" for the purpose of that

1 predecessor statute did not mean a complete  
2 merger.

3 MR. SIMPSON: Correct.

4 JUSTICE KAGAN: So Johnson is very  
5 much on your side. But -- but Johnson was  
6 interpreting a statute which, although it  
7 similarly used the word "consolidate," was  
8 different in other respects.

9 And I'm wondering whether now that  
10 we're on a kind of blank slate, we have a new  
11 rule, it's different from the statute in a  
12 number of ways, why we have to keep on giving  
13 this quite unusual understanding of the word  
14 "consolidate," why we have to keep on the same  
15 track; why we can't just say, you know what,  
16 "consolidate" means consolidate. It means two  
17 becomes one.

18 MR. SIMPSON: That -- I -- of course,  
19 you're -- you are operating on a blank slate  
20 and you could do that, but I think when you  
21 look at how the courts have interpreted  
22 "consolidate," there are many different  
23 understandings of the term.

24 And -- and so -- and I think that's  
25 what the -- the rules have embodied over the

1 years. So you have --

2 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, there is -- lots  
3 of courts say, look, we're going to consolidate  
4 for some purposes but not all purposes. And  
5 when a court does that, of course, it means  
6 something else. It means just segments of  
7 these two lawsuits are going to come together.

8 But when a court says we're going to  
9 consolidate for all purposes, I mean, just the  
10 usual understanding of that is, okay, now we  
11 have one lawsuit in front of us. And that  
12 would have consequences as to what we think the  
13 final judgment is, when it comes, and when your  
14 appellate rights would kick in.

15 MR. SIMPSON: Yes, Your Honor. But,  
16 again, even there the courts are all over the  
17 world on that.

18 Some courts say all purposes has to --

19 JUSTICE KAGAN: I know. But where --  
20 we kind of get to figure out what's right and  
21 what's wrong as to all these courts that are  
22 all confused. That's why we're here.

23 MR. SIMPSON: But I would submit then  
24 that if -- if that would be the definition,  
25 then the cases must truly become one.

1 JUSTICE KAGAN: But there could be --

2 JUSTICE BREYER: In which case I have  
3 just one question, which is forget the  
4 consolidation for a moment, just to clarify in  
5 my mind; think of Rule 54(b), imagine it's a  
6 case with a lot of parties and a lot of issues,  
7 and Rule 54(b), I think, says that the court  
8 can direct entry of a final judgment as to one  
9 or more but fewer than all the claims or  
10 parties, right?

11 MR. SIMPSON: Yes.

12 JUSTICE BREYER: Okay. Now suppose a  
13 judge does that as to one of the claims. At  
14 that moment, the clerk writes a separate piece  
15 of paper and it says final judgment as to that  
16 claim, right?

17 MR. SIMPSON: I don't -- I don't know  
18 how that --

19 JUSTICE BREYER: Well, that's  
20 important because -- because what I'm going to  
21 ask you is -- is -- there is a single piece of  
22 paper here, is there not?

23 MR. SIMPSON: Yes.

24 JUSTICE BREYER: And it says final  
25 judgment, right?

1 MR. SIMPSON: In this case only, yes.

2 JUSTICE BREYER: So I thought perhaps  
3 there is a rule somewhere which says when there  
4 is a final judgment on a separate piece of  
5 paper, you can take an appeal. But there is no  
6 such rule that I can find.

7 Rather, what it says is the appeals  
8 courts have jurisdiction over every decision,  
9 final decision. It doesn't say "final  
10 judgment." And so, if it says "final decision"  
11 and there is no place where it says you can  
12 always appeal from a final judgment, then  
13 whether this counts as a decision for purposes  
14 of appeal, is it a final decision, is up for  
15 grabs.

16 And the policy arguments and the old  
17 statute and the old case are all relevant.  
18 Now, have I got the question right?

19 MR. SIMPSON: I think so, yes.

20 JUSTICE BREYER: I do?

21 MR. SIMPSON: Yes, I think so.

22 JUSTICE BREYER: Okay. So then we are  
23 going to decide -- if we decided against you  
24 and said, no, final decision does not always  
25 mean final judgment, and, indeed, this is a

1 case for the policy reasons they list, for  
2 example, where it doesn't count, okay, and the  
3 judge has to -- all right. What havoc would we  
4 work?

5 MR. SIMPSON: A lot of havoc.

6 JUSTICE BREYER: I know you think  
7 that, but I want to know what.

8 MR. SIMPSON: Well, for -- for  
9 starters, there's -- there's always been the  
10 core, going -- going not even back just to the  
11 Judiciary Act but back to Blackstone, of the  
12 final judgment that -- where the court  
13 disassociates itself from the case being an  
14 appealable judgment. And that's what we have  
15 here.

16 JUSTICE BREYER: And so all the time,  
17 under Rule 54(b) when he issues a final  
18 judgment, it's always appealable? True or  
19 false?

20 MR. SIMPSON: If -- if the judge  
21 certifies the question under --

22 JUSTICE BREYER: No, he doesn't  
23 certify it. What he does is follow 54(b). He  
24 enters in a normal case, not consolidated, a  
25 piece of paper which says this is a final

1 judgment in respect to claim number 1 of the --  
2 there are 42 claims in the case. That piece of  
3 paper is entered.

4 Is there always an appeal, yes or no?

5 MR. SIMPSON: Yes, unless the court of  
6 appeals decides that the judge has not  
7 applied 54(b) --

8 JUSTICE BREYER: So you will -- I will  
9 be able to find authority where -- that  
10 supports this; is that right? And where is  
11 that authority in your brief? Because I want  
12 to -- the authority is for the proposition,  
13 forgetting consolidation, that once a piece of  
14 paper under 54(b) is entered, it says final  
15 judgment in respect to some but not all of the  
16 case, there is always an appeal.

17 Where is that authority?

18 MR. SIMPSON: I think that's what Rule  
19 54(b) says.

20 JUSTICE BREYER: Where is the  
21 authority that says that's what Rule 54(b)  
22 means?

23 MR. SIMPSON: I -- I -- I'm not sure  
24 that the question has come up in that --

25 JUSTICE BREYER: Oh, it must have come

1 up. Surely, somebody has tried to take an  
2 appeal sometime from a judgment under 54(b)  
3 where there are 92 parties in a case. Like a  
4 BP, they have 4,000 parties, okay, and -- and  
5 one of them gets a partial judgment and it's  
6 entered under 54(b), wants an appeal. That's  
7 never come up? Okay, you don't have the  
8 authority. I'll look for it.

9 JUSTICE GINSBURG: In 54(b), it's not  
10 simply that the -- the judge enters a judgment.  
11 He has to make a finding. He has to find that  
12 there is no just reason for delay. Only if the  
13 court expressly determines that there is no  
14 just reason for a delay. And the whole purpose  
15 of 54(b) is to enable an appeal even though the  
16 case has covered the --

17 JUSTICE BREYER: Thank you. That's  
18 what I wanted to know, actually.

19 MR. SIMPSON: Okay. I -- I apologize.  
20 I did not understand the question. But because  
21 exactly when the order is issued it becomes  
22 appealable, I don't know anyone who would  
23 challenge that unless they were claiming that  
24 the judge had not met the standard.

25 I -- if there are no further

1 questions, I'd like to reserve the balance of  
2 my time.

3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,  
4 counsel.

5 Mr. Katyal.

6 ORAL ARGUMENT OF NEAL K. KATYAL  
7 ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENTS

8 MR. KATYAL: Thank you, Mr. Chief  
9 Justice, and may it please the Court:

10 The district here entered -- the court  
11 entered an order here consolidating for all  
12 purposes the cases brought by brother and  
13 sister against each other. Instead of  
14 challenging that, Petitioner wants to appeal  
15 part of its claims now. That maneuver runs  
16 headlong into determinations by both Congress  
17 and this Court that litigants can only appeal  
18 generally from final decisions.

19 If adopted, my friend's rule --

20 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Could you tell me  
21 how you square this with the fact that the  
22 district court denied the motion for attorneys'  
23 fees because it wasn't filed with -- within 15  
24 days of the final judgment?

25 MR. KATYAL: Absolutely. So, first of

1 all, Justice Sotomayor, this is a late-breaking  
2 claim in the reply brief, both -- it's not --

3 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But it does  
4 suggest to that me the district court --

5 MR. KATYAL: I will --

6 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- was treating  
7 them --

8 MR. KATYAL: I don't think so. I'll  
9 get to that in a moment. But I do think it is  
10 waived. I mean, that is both -- below we  
11 argued this was an all-purpose consolidation.  
12 We pointed out in our brief in opposition at  
13 page 2 the only time they take issue with it is  
14 in their merits reply brief. And as this Court  
15 said in *Argentina versus NML*, that is far too  
16 late.

17 But now, to answer the substantive  
18 question --

19 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But just to  
20 interrupt --

21 MR. KATYAL: Yes.

22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: -- that means  
23 -- that means that maybe they can't raise a  
24 separate claim for the fees. It's a -- it's an  
25 argument; it's not a separate claim.

1 MR. KATYAL: No, but the -- as I  
2 understand his argument, it's that we -- this  
3 case is not an all-purpose consolidation case.  
4 And I think to make that argument -- and using  
5 the attorneys' fees as his rationale for that.

6 And I think to make that argument only  
7 in the reply brief at the merits stage is too  
8 late, Mr. Chief Justice.

9 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Okay. Now you  
10 can get back to Justice Sotomayor.

11 MR. KATYAL: Now, with -- with respect  
12 to the attorney fees questions, I think my  
13 friend has misstated the way the rules work.  
14 So, first of all, the judgment here, the piece  
15 of paper, to use Justice Breyer's term, was  
16 entered on February 4th of 2015.

17 That resolved all claims. It was at  
18 that moment a final judgment and started three  
19 different clocks ticking. One is the 14-day  
20 attorneys' fees clock. One is the -- the Rule  
21 59 motion for a new trial, which is a 28-day  
22 clock. And one is the 30-day notice of appeal  
23 clock.

24 Now, the attorneys' fees motion was  
25 filed actually 20 days later, after the 14-day

1 clock had expired. Had the motion been filed  
2 within the 14 days, it wouldn't have been out  
3 of time. But the different -- what happened  
4 here is that the motion came in late. And all  
5 the district court is saying, which is the same  
6 thing that courts all over the country say, is:  
7 You don't get to start a new attorneys' fees  
8 clock by filing after the 14-day period a  
9 motion for a Rule 59 new trial.

10 Moore's Federal Practice says this is  
11 essentially a trap engendered by the 2009  
12 rules.

13 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But if it's not a  
14 final judgment at all, which is your point,  
15 it's not a final judgment until both -- all  
16 issues in both cases are resolved, how does the  
17 14-day clock start --

18 MR. KATYAL: So, Justice Sotomayor --

19 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- without a final  
20 judgment?

21 MR. KATYAL: Justice Sotomayor, our  
22 position is it is a final judgment when the  
23 piece of paper was entered on February 4th.  
24 And what changed it, and this is what Rule 59,  
25 the advisory committee notes say, is when you

1 file a Rule 59 motion, it suspends what was  
2 otherwise a final judgment.

3 So we agree, my friend could have  
4 brought his appeal February 5th, absolutely.  
5 There's no problem with that. But what he's  
6 trying to do now is have his cake and eat it,  
7 too, may -- file a motion for a new trial and  
8 then take a piece of the case up, and it runs  
9 headlong into all the --

10 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But the piece --  
11 the piece has a final judgment attached to it.  
12 There were two final judgments, right? There  
13 was a final judgment in her case and there was  
14 a final judgment in her brother's case.

15 She's not -- she wants to appeal her  
16 case. Nothing else to be done in her case. So  
17 she should wait, how many, two, three more  
18 years until she can appeal?

19 Do you claim that the judge would have  
20 in any way altered the judgment that you won  
21 during the pendency of the -- of the son's suit  
22 against the -- the daughter?

23 MR. KATYAL: Yes, we do, Justice  
24 Ginsburg. There is a few different points to  
25 make here.

1           Number 1 is in all-purpose  
2           consolidation cases it's very common to have  
3           two pieces of paper, two judgments as there are  
4           here. The Gonzalez case in the Northern  
5           District of Illinois in 2014, the Tucker case  
6           in the Eastern District. Lots of cases say  
7           that you have to -- and you actually are  
8           mandated to have two pieces of paper, even when  
9           you have all-purposes consolidation.

10           But to go back to Justice Breyer's  
11           question, there is no case, zero case that says  
12           that when you file two pieces of paper, that  
13           that somehow changes things.

14           Rather, the Court has always looked to  
15           the underlying substance. Is this two becoming  
16           one or is it two separate claims?

17           JUSTICE GINSBURG: But it's for the  
18           judge --

19           CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, if it's  
20           just -- if it's -- if they're consolidated for  
21           all purposes, why did the district court enter  
22           separate judgments? Why didn't he wait and  
23           say, well, there's only going to be one  
24           judgment because these are all consolidated for  
25           all purposes, so I should wait 'til we're ready

1 to have one judgment?

2 MR. KATYAL: Because, again, I think  
3 lots of times courts do it for belts and  
4 suspenders reasons, but I don't think that that  
5 somehow takes back their all-purpose  
6 consolidation. All-purpose consolidation --

7 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Why not? Why  
8 doesn't it?

9 MR. KATYAL: So --

10 JUSTICE GORSUCH: That's where I get  
11 stuck.

12 If we have a district court that  
13 issues separate judgments, I think pretty much  
14 any cautious litigator would take that  
15 seriously and file a notice of appeal because  
16 it's a signal from the district court that it  
17 is complete. It is finished. There is a final  
18 decision in this matter.

19 MR. KATYAL: So, Justice Gorsuch,  
20 first, let's start with what the district court  
21 did. It's found at the petition appendix, page  
22 815. This is the consolidation order. And it  
23 says: "First, the motion to consolidate is  
24 granted. Second" --

25 JUSTICE GORSUCH: I've read it and

1 it's ambiguous. It doesn't say they are  
2 merged. It doesn't use that word.

3 MR. KATYAL: Well --

4 JUSTICE GORSUCH: It doesn't say for  
5 all purposes.

6 And then we have, as the Chief Justice  
7 points out, a later order from the same  
8 district court, which I assume we would take as  
9 seriously as a consolidation order, it being a  
10 final judgment and all. So help me out with  
11 that.

12 MR. KATYAL: Yes. If I could, first  
13 I'd like to -- just to use the language of the  
14 plain text of this order -- of what the order  
15 is.

16 So Number 2 is the following cases,  
17 plural, shall be consolidated, Number 1154 and  
18 then 1395.

19 And then the third piece is: "All  
20 submissions in the consolidated case shall be  
21 filed in Case Number 354." So two really does,  
22 plural, cases, become one, kind of like married  
23 --

24 JUSTICE GINSBURG: If the case --

25 JUSTICE BREYER: That's why I'm

1 interested in rule -- in Rule 54. I'm  
2 interested in a case. We're not interested in  
3 consolidation.

4 So rule -- under that rule, no  
5 consolidation because the finding of what  
6 Justice Ginsburg said, a district judge can  
7 enter a final judgment as to some but not to  
8 all the parties or claims.

9 Now, once you as a lawyer see that  
10 piece of paper that says final judgment, you  
11 think: I better appeal.

12 MR. KATYAL: Well, I don't --

13 JUSTICE BREYER: Period. Now, if  
14 there is nothing to the contrary, there is a  
15 strong argument for doing the same thing here  
16 because lawyers then know, once they see a  
17 piece of paper saying a final judgment, bong,  
18 appeal.

19 Now, sometimes they also have to know  
20 that if someone has moved for a new trial and  
21 it's granted, then, of course, there's no  
22 longer a final judgment. But that wouldn't be  
23 true in Rule 59 or 50, what was it, 50,  
24 wherever it was, 54, in respect to a new trial  
25 for some of the other parties.

1 MR. KATYAL: So --

2 JUSTICE BREYER: That wouldn't affect  
3 the judgment on -- that says final judgment as  
4 to Smith when Jones gets a new trial on other  
5 issues.

6 And so why wouldn't the lawyer think  
7 exactly the same here?

8 MR. KATYAL: So --

9 JUSTICE BREYER: It's the same  
10 process. It's the same thing. It is totally  
11 consolidated, perhaps no more and no less than  
12 an ordinary case with thousands of parties and  
13 thousands of issues.

14 MR. KATYAL: So -- so, Justice Breyer,  
15 I'll answer your question and then, if I could,  
16 I'd like to return to Justice Gorsuch's  
17 question.

18 JUSTICE BREYER: Yeah.

19 MR. KATYAL: So the answer to your  
20 question is the part of Rule 54 which nobody  
21 has read yet. And if you -- turn our red brief  
22 to the appendix, page 3A reproduces 54. And  
23 I'll just read a part of it to you: "When an  
24 action presents more than one claim for relief,  
25 whether there's a claim, counterclaim,

1 cross-claim or third-party claim, or when  
2 multiple parties are involved, the court may  
3 direct entry of a final judgment as to one or  
4 more but fewer than all."

5 JUSTICE BREYER: Right.

6 MR. KATYAL: Now, here is the  
7 important language, a sentence down:  
8 "Otherwise, any order or other decision,  
9 however designated, that adjudicates fewer than  
10 all the claims or rights and liabilities of  
11 fewer than all the parties does not end the  
12 action."

13 So the Rule 54, Justice Breyer,  
14 answers the question by saying, look, if you  
15 have a consolidated case, and then not all the  
16 claims or counterclaims of all of the rights  
17 and parties are adjudicated, then you're on  
18 notice that your case is not yet final.

19 And that's what we're asking you to  
20 do, which is the rule, as our red brief at page  
21 14 points out, in every single circuit, with  
22 the partial exception of the Sixth Circuit,  
23 which has introduced contrary things. And he  
24 wants to switch up the rule massively.

25 Now, Justice Gorsuch, you asked what

1 about this order, doesn't it suggest maybe that  
2 it wasn't all-purpose consolidation? As -- as  
3 I said, the Third Circuit as the case comes to  
4 the court, this is found at petition appendix,  
5 page 4, says this was all-purpose  
6 consolidation. At the oral argument, they even  
7 asked this and said, hey, it doesn't use the  
8 word all purpose, but the court relying on the  
9 Third Circuit precedent, which is Bergstrom,  
10 said if a decision -- and this is the law in  
11 many, many circuits -- if a decision doesn't  
12 say all-purpose consolidation or not, but  
13 everything is merged together, it is treated as  
14 all-purpose consolidation.

15 And that follows --

16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Mr. Katyal,  
17 one thing that concerns me. This is, for all  
18 the back and forth, a relatively simple case.  
19 We're talking about two cases, same lawyers,  
20 same parties, but consolidation can come up in  
21 a situation and often does when there are 100  
22 separate cases, a mass tort situation.

23 And there, one waiting for the final  
24 judgment can be a very long wait and it could  
25 be very prejudicial. I mean, let's say it's in

1 some sort of mass tort and some of the people  
2 have, you know, emotional distress damages,  
3 others physical injury, and early on the judge  
4 says, look, I don't think you can recover  
5 emotional distress.

6 So all the cases that just have  
7 emotional distress, judgment is entered against  
8 them.

9 Now let's go on to the other thing  
10 which is going to take five years. Doesn't  
11 your position make that extremely complicated?

12 MR. KATYAL: No, Mr. Chief Justice. I  
13 think that this is -- this is really a bad  
14 solution of my friend in search of a problem.  
15 There is no problem. That is, in those  
16 complicated cases, there are three different  
17 independent safety valves.

18 And as this Court in Mohawk said, they  
19 go a long way toward resolving this in, for  
20 example, the multiple claim case.

21 So there is Rule 54. The district  
22 court can -- can send a case up to the court of  
23 appeals. There is 1292(b), an interlocutory  
24 appeal. And there is the writ of mandamus.  
25 And together I think those do a good job --

1           JUSTICE GINSBURG: But why wouldn't  
2 the district court think: What's the point in  
3 my entering a 54(b) rule? I have a case in  
4 which a final judgment is entered. Why isn't  
5 that piece of paper that says final judgment  
6 under Rule 58 the equivalent of 54(b)? I mean,  
7 the judges say you want me to order a 54(b)  
8 judgment, but there's already a final judgment  
9 in this case. The clerk entered it. And I  
10 didn't tell him otherwise.

11           MR. KATYAL: So just let me say,  
12 Justice Ginsburg, I'm not aware of any case in  
13 the entire federal system that says because I  
14 entered a piece of paper with the -- that uses  
15 the words final judgment, that that alone is  
16 enough.

17           And to the contrary, and this goes  
18 back to Justice Breyer's question, Mackey and  
19 Cold Metal Process are both cases in which  
20 there was the designation of a final judgment.  
21 But that wasn't enough because, if you resolve  
22 only some of the claims or you resolve claims  
23 only against some of the defendants, that's not  
24 enough. You've got to ask for the 54 or have  
25 it sua sponte.

1           JUSTICE GINSBURG: Can you explain to  
2 me, you did say in your brief that there is --  
3 that a common issue is central to the  
4 resolution of these two cases.

5           One case is the estate against the son  
6 for using his -- rent from his mother's  
7 property improperly. That's the charge of the  
8 estate.

9           Then there's the charge of the son  
10 against the daughter for alienation of  
11 affection. What is the -- what is the common  
12 issue central to the resolution of both of  
13 those cases?

14           MR. KATYAL: The Third Circuit  
15 found -- and this is Petition Appendix pages 8  
16 and 9 -- that there was overlap, that there was  
17 going to be credibility determinations, that  
18 there was going to be --

19           JUSTICE GINSBURG: You said the  
20 central issue. I see in one case the central  
21 issue is did the son misuse the rent from his  
22 mother's property? Other case, did the  
23 daughter alienate the mother's affection  
24 against the son?

25           MR. KATYAL: And --

1 JUSTICE GINSBURG: So what's --

2 MR. KATYAL: And the central issues in  
3 both turn on the state of mind and the  
4 credibility of both the brother and the sister.  
5 And that is what the petition appendix -- what  
6 the Third Circuit found. That's why they were  
7 central. Look, I can imagine they could  
8 disagree with that, but that's appealing the  
9 consolidation order, not now going back and  
10 saying: I want to break apart a chunk of the  
11 case.

12 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Can I ask you, this  
13 relates to the question that the chief asked,  
14 and I think it's key: She's lost the case, and  
15 she's lost it and has a final judgment. The  
16 judge orders a new trial of the other case.  
17 How much time has elapsed from the time she  
18 lost her case with a paper saying final  
19 judgment and when the son's case against the  
20 daughter is finally resolved?

21 MR. KATYAL: Right. So the -- there  
22 is a large gap of time, as there often is in --

23 JUSTICE GINSBURG: How much time?

24 MR. KATYAL: I think about  
25 approximately two years. And that's true

1 sometimes in multiple defendant cases --

2 JUSTICE GINSBURG: And she should --  
3 she should sit there --

4 MR. KATYAL: No.

5 JUSTICE GINSBURG: -- for the two  
6 years?

7 MR. KATYAL: No. She should do  
8 exactly what the Third Circuit said, ask for a  
9 54(b) judgment or perhaps a 1292. And the  
10 difference is, as the Chief Justice and Justice  
11 Kennedy were saying to my friend, the district  
12 court is empowered under 54 and 1292 and they  
13 are the ones with expertise and familiarity --

14 JUSTICE GINSBURG: How would a lawyer  
15 that has a final judgment, which -- you -- you  
16 get a piece of paper that says final judgment,  
17 you know that now you can appeal. How would a  
18 lawyer know that, oh, this piece of paper that  
19 says final judgment, forget it, that it's  
20 meaningless, meaningless; you have to get a  
21 54(b) judgment?

22 MR. KATYAL: Because, as I was saying,  
23 Justice Ginsburg, any lawyer who read Rule  
24 54(b), the language I was reading to Justice  
25 Breyer, it says however you designate it -- and

1 I'm not even sure it uses the words "final  
2 judgment" on that form, but however you  
3 designate it, the designation alone is not  
4 enough. That is the rule in circuit after  
5 circuit.

6 And, you know, if you adopt my  
7 friend's rule --

8 JUSTICE BREYER: Okay. Okay. So --

9 MR. KATYAL: -- you have a trap for  
10 the unwary on the other side.

11 JUSTICE BREYER: All right. Now I  
12 think I may be getting this. You say, look,  
13 here's what you want us to say. Once you see  
14 your cases consolidated for all relevant  
15 purposes -- I mean, there could be exceptions,  
16 but forget that for a second -- for all  
17 relevant purposes, you have what the rules call  
18 a case with multiple claims involving multiple  
19 parties, both.

20 And, therefore, what you do, lawyer,  
21 is if you want a quick appeal, you tell the  
22 judge to make an express finding that there is  
23 no just reason for delay. Judge, you must make  
24 that finding or you cannot enter a final  
25 judgment. Whatever you call it, it isn't a

1 final judgment. That's because of the  
2 "otherwise" language.

3 So you want the consolidation -- it  
4 would be nice if it explicitly, but you want us  
5 to say it implicitly references 54(b) and  
6 that's how we should handle it; is that right  
7 or wrong?

8 MR. KATYAL: That is right. And that  
9 is exactly what every circuit does -- this is  
10 our red brief at page 14 -- with the partial  
11 exception of the Sixth. We're asking that you  
12 keep the same rule in place.

13 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, in Johnson --

14 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Katyal --

15 JUSTICE ALITO: Mr. Katyal, in  
16 Johnson, the Court -- before Rule 42 was  
17 adopted, the Court said consolidation is  
18 permitted as a matter of convenience and  
19 economy and administration but does not merge  
20 the suits into a single cause or change the  
21 rights of the parties.

22 Now, if -- and -- and there's the old  
23 rule that the plaintiff is the master of the  
24 complaint that the plaintiff files. So, if the  
25 intent of Rule 42 was to change that, wouldn't

1 the -- wouldn't the -- the rule drafters have  
2 done so clearly? But just to use the term  
3 "consolidation" doesn't -- is certainly not a  
4 clear signal that Johnson's understanding of  
5 consolidation is no longer the one that's  
6 embodied in the rule.

7 MR. KATYAL: So, Justice Alito, we  
8 quite agree that plaintiffs are in general the  
9 masters of their complaint, but they're not  
10 masters of the timing of their appeal. That is  
11 the whole purpose of the final judgment rule,  
12 to empower district courts really to make the  
13 determination.

14 Johnson was a partial consolidation  
15 case. It was not a full purpose consolidation  
16 case. And here's what the advisory committee  
17 notes in 1937 said about this. They said:  
18 Section 734, which was the statute being  
19 interpreted in Johnson, but is -- insofar as  
20 the statute differs from the rule, it is  
21 modified.

22 And so you do have the advisory  
23 committee saying so. And as Justice Kagan  
24 points out, that is the definition --

25 JUSTICE GINSBURG: The advisory

1 committee did not say -- it said insofar as; it  
2 didn't say that your position is the correct  
3 one.

4           Suppose -- could you not, instead of  
5 just -- there was -- the court granted a new  
6 trial in your client's case against the  
7 daughter. You could have asked the district  
8 court at that point to stay the entry of  
9 judgment on the estate's claim, couldn't you?

10           MR. KATYAL: Well, I -- I think we  
11 might be able to, but as Justice Gorsuch was  
12 pointing out, that delay of the entry of the  
13 judgment when you have a special verdict  
14 form --

15           JUSTICE GINSBURG: But you had --

16           MR. KATYAL: -- has to occur within  
17 150 days.

18           JUSTICE GINSBURG: You had a certain  
19 advantage by not doing that, by not asking to  
20 stay the entry of judgment on the estate's  
21 claim, because then you and your law firm have  
22 no claim outstanding against you that has to be  
23 shown on financial statements.

24           MR. KATYAL: So --

25           JUSTICE GINSBURG: So by having the

1 separate judgment final, you don't have to  
2 report it, but if you're right that it really  
3 isn't a final judgment, then as the -- Sam and  
4 his law firm, had they listed this as a claim  
5 still outstanding against them --

6 MR. KATYAL: So, Justice Ginsburg, we  
7 agree with you that sometimes, if you adopt our  
8 rule, it's going to benefit one side or the  
9 other. I think the point we're making here is  
10 the same point that this Court made in Mohawk,  
11 which is in general in the mine run of cases --

12 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But I asked -- I  
13 asked you that question. Do you know, then,  
14 did they treat it as a claim still outstanding  
15 against them?

16 MR. KATYAL: Well, I think that -- I  
17 think that as the Third Circuit said, yes,  
18 there's so much overlap between these two that  
19 there can be --

20 JUSTICE GINSBURG: No, I'm asking you  
21 how that law firm treated what was a claim  
22 against them and now is no longer because they  
23 prevailed after the trial. And a judgment has  
24 been entered.

25 MR. KATYAL: Well, they can certainly

1 appeal from that judgment that -- which  
2 dismissed the claim against the law firm. The  
3 question is only can they appeal of right --

4 JUSTICE GINSBURG: No, I'm not talking  
5 about the claim against. I just want to know  
6 is that -- on your theory, then the claims  
7 should be still outstanding.

8 MR. KATYAL: We agree every claim that  
9 they lost on one of those two pieces of  
10 paper --

11 JUSTICE GINSBURG: No, the other --

12 MR. KATYAL: -- can be appealed.

13 JUSTICE GINSBURG: The claim that they  
14 won, the claim that they -- they won -- the  
15 estate lost, right? The estate lost that case.  
16 And I'm asking you, do they have to still  
17 report it as a potential liability unless and  
18 until the whole case is wrapped up?

19 MR. KATYAL: So if I understand your  
20 question -- I mean, if they lost everything,  
21 they lost -- and they -- they didn't win any  
22 claims against us. So the law firm has won.  
23 And the -- and the son has won in the trial.

24 And those are what those two pieces of  
25 paper are. And my point to you is anything

1 that -- that my friend on the other side lost,  
2 they can appeal. The only question is the  
3 timing. And if they are worried about the  
4 hardship, they can use Rule 54 or 1292.

5 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Mr. Katyal, on 54,  
6 where I get tripped up is the word "action."  
7 54 speaks of sending upstairs a claim within an  
8 -- within an action. And the federal rules  
9 consistently understand the word "action" to be  
10 the complaint, the lawsuit. In fact, even this  
11 rule that we're now interpreting speaks of  
12 actions. Rule 2, Rule 3.

13 So it seems to me that your dependence  
14 on 54 runs into a bit of a plain language  
15 issue.

16 MR. KATYAL: I don't think so. I  
17 think that this Court has always said that Rule  
18 54 should be interpreted practically, not  
19 technically. It does have a kind of unique  
20 meaning that goes all the way back to Mackey  
21 and Cold Metal. And the question is --

22 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Do you have any --  
23 do you have any answer on the text of action,  
24 though?

25 MR. KATYAL: Well, I think that the

1 text of action is -- refers -- means a single  
2 judicial unit, and the -- and the rules empower  
3 a court to -- a district court to decide what  
4 is a single judicial unit.

5 So this is why every circuit,  
6 basically, with the exception of the Sixth,  
7 says it is -- an action for purposes of Rule 54  
8 is a all-purpose consolidated set of cases,  
9 which is merged. Two becomes one. That is an  
10 action.

11 Now, there are times when the rules  
12 use different words -- use the same words to  
13 have different meanings in it. So attorneys'  
14 fees, for example, are considered costs under  
15 Rule 68 but not 41.

16 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Do you know anywhere  
17 else in -- in the rules where "action" is used  
18 differently?

19 MR. KATYAL: Well, I think actually --  
20 you know, I don't -- I'm not sure that you --  
21 you should get into that for purposes here and  
22 -- and write an opinion that says action for  
23 all purposes in other rules, but --

24 JUSTICE GORSUCH: No, I'm -- I'm just  
25 asking whether you're familiar with any other

1 place in the rules.

2 MR. KATYAL: Well, I -- I don't know  
3 that it comes up really in -- in any other  
4 rules. Our red brief explains the kind of idea  
5 that this is going to have some domino effect  
6 on other rules, we don't think is true.

7 To the extent it'll matter, it might  
8 matter in, you know, a couple of rules. But,  
9 if anything, as Professor Steadman's article  
10 shows, you know, that might promote more  
11 efficiency. But we think you shouldn't get  
12 into it.

13 There's a long tradition of the Court  
14 adopting different meanings of words in the  
15 Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, costs, you  
16 know, costs and, you know, other -- other words  
17 like that.

18 So I don't think you should get -- I  
19 don't think you should do more. Now, if -- our  
20 central point to you, and this is made by the  
21 district judge's amicus brief, is that the  
22 whole point of the federal rules is to empower  
23 them as dispatchers to send up those cases, as  
24 the Chief Justice said, pose unique hardships.

25 Now, Justice Ginsburg, you had asked,

1 well, the 1937 rules don't really fully  
2 repudiate Johnson, but I do think -- and this  
3 goes back to --

4 JUSTICE GINSBURG: No, we don't  
5 repudiate --

6 MR. KATYAL: -- Justice --

7 JUSTICE GINSBURG: -- it at all.  
8 There's not one word said about Johnson.

9 MR. KATYAL: Well, there's not one  
10 word said about Johnson, but there is something  
11 important in the rules, and this goes back to  
12 the very first question today, which is Justice  
13 Sotomayor's question, there are two different  
14 parts to Rule 42. There is (a)(2) and there's  
15 (a)(1). (a)(1) is to join for hearing any --  
16 or trial -- any or all matters at issue in the  
17 actions. But (2) is broader. It's to  
18 consolidate the actions.

19 And that's got to mean something more  
20 than just holding a joint proceeding, like my  
21 friend on the other side said with his  
22 hypothetical, that really does refer to and  
23 empower the district court to make an  
24 all-purpose consolidation, to make two one,  
25 like marriage.

1 JUSTICE KAGAN: And was that in the  
2 prior statute, Mr. Katyal, that 42(a)(1), which  
3 really does lead you to think about the term  
4 consolidation differently.

5 MR. KATYAL: Right. Right. So I  
6 don't believe the prior statute did break apart  
7 these two. And so I do think that, to go back  
8 to the plain text of (a)(2), I do think it does  
9 say something different.

10 JUSTICE KAGAN: Could you also add  
11 42(a)(3)? Because 42(a)(1) is about, you know,  
12 joint hearings and trials.

13 MR. KATYAL: Exactly.

14 JUSTICE KAGAN: 42(a)(3) says, look,  
15 you can also issue any other kind of order you  
16 want to minimize delay. And then, separate  
17 from that, you have this consolidation  
18 provision.

19 MR. KATYAL: Exactly, Justice Kagan.  
20 And so, look, I could imagine that you could  
21 twist the rule and mean it to -- to be  
22 something else and try and get it out of  
23 Johnson, but, boy, before you did so and go  
24 against the plain text, I think you'd have to  
25 have an incredibly good reason to depart from

1 the long-standing idea that federal district  
2 courts are best empowered, as the amicus brief  
3 by federal judges says, to make these  
4 determinations, to send up those cases.

5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: You -- you've  
6 mentioned that a couple times. What -- what  
7 are we to make of the amicus brief by -- filed  
8 by seven retired federal judges? Do we imply  
9 that the other 280 don't agree with it or -- or  
10 --

11 (Laughter.)

12 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I -- I don't  
13 quite know what to -- what to do with that.

14 MR. KATYAL: Right. I mean, I think,  
15 you know, you have -- you have a similar group  
16 before you in Gelboim, and I do think that, you  
17 know, look, we -- if we had more time I suppose  
18 we would have gotten more judges, but we did  
19 want to bring to you the perspective, I think  
20 the judges want to bring to you the perspective  
21 of, you know, having to sit through these long,  
22 complicated trials --

23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, it's the  
24 perspective of seven individuals. I don't know  
25 that that represents the perspective of

1 district judges generally.

2 MR. KATYAL: Right. It's -- it's just  
3 one data point, but I do think it's a data  
4 point that squares very much with what this  
5 Court has said time and again in *Cold Metal*, in  
6 *Mackey*, in, you know, *Richardson*, that district  
7 courts and complex cases, to use what you were  
8 saying earlier, Mr. Chief Justice, are  
9 particularly suited to trying to decide whether  
10 or not cases are going to be interrelated.

11 And to allow piecemeal appeals, you  
12 know, without the permission of the district  
13 court is really to do something very dangerous  
14 to the -- to the circuits.

15 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Katyal, what do  
16 you think we should do if, on the one hand, we  
17 think your rule makes a lot of sense for cases  
18 that are consolidated completely for all  
19 purposes, but, on the other hand, we're  
20 concerned that this case should not have been?

21 What should we do with that?

22 MR. KATYAL: Well, I don't think, you  
23 know, that it's way too late to say this case  
24 shouldn't have been consolidated. I mean,  
25 that's just, I think, waived in multiple

1 different ways, but --

2 JUSTICE KAGAN: It just does seem to  
3 me that many of the questions that have been  
4 put to you really do deal with the question of  
5 whether consolidation was proper here.

6 MR. KATYAL: Right. Exactly. And as  
7 our brief at page 43 explains, look, you can  
8 appeal a consolidation order. You can even do  
9 it on an interlocutory basis. There are cases  
10 that permit that. That would have been the  
11 proper cause of action.

12 But to fight, and this is my opening  
13 lines to you today, to fight about that, you  
14 know, through the guise of trying to say, well,  
15 I get to file a right of appeal, he's  
16 complaining about consolidation. Let him  
17 complain about consolidation, you know, he  
18 should have complained about it and other  
19 litigants can in other cases, but don't try and  
20 twist Rule 54 and Rule 42 to try and  
21 accommodate that.

22 That's a very separate thing.

23 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Well, would you --  
24 you're making it two cases, in fact, your  
25 client did, because originally that claim was

1 brought as a counterclaim, part of one action  
2 and a counterclaim. You deliberately dropped  
3 the counterclaim and commenced an independent  
4 action.

5 MR. KATYAL: So, Justice Ginsburg,  
6 that's exactly what's going on in Cold Metal.  
7 There are two very different -- there are two  
8 different causes of action.

9 JUSTICE GINSBURG: You made it -- your  
10 client made it from a case with a claim and a  
11 counterclaim into two cases.

12 MR. KATYAL: Right. And that's an  
13 argument he could have used to try and oppose  
14 consolidation. But at this point, as this case  
15 comes to the Court, I don't think that would be  
16 appropriate.

17 Now, to the extent we're worried about  
18 abuse about consolidation or something like  
19 that, I think Justice Alito's idea of the  
20 national federal rules committee is one to  
21 think about this, but I don't think it would be  
22 a good idea to use local rules and have  
23 geographic variations circuit to circuit and  
24 people having to wonder whether or not they  
25 have to file notices of appeal and, you know,

1 whether there would be a right --

2 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Wouldn't it be  
3 clearer if it were in the rules rather than in  
4 the case law which is currently so split?

5 MR. KATYAL: Well, I don't think it's  
6 actually split. I mean, if you go back --

7 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Well, the reason  
8 that we took this case is because there is a  
9 split.

10 MR. KATYAL: Well, only with a partial  
11 exception of the Sixth Circuit. Our brief goes  
12 through all of these cases. When you deal with  
13 all-purpose consolidation -- his split is about  
14 partial consolidation in general. There's only  
15 three cases we have been able to find in the  
16 Sixth Circuit, two of which are unreported,  
17 that disagree with what every other circuit  
18 that we have been able to find that's ruled on  
19 this has found.

20 So I think all we're saying to you is  
21 leave the rules where they are. To the extent  
22 you're concerned about any, you know, problems  
23 with the rules, any problems with  
24 consolidation, I think the national rules  
25 committee is the place to be.

1           If there are no further questions.

2           CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,  
3 counsel.

4           Mr. Simpson, four minutes.

5           REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF ANDREW C.

6           SIMPSON, ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER

7           MR. SIMPSON: The -- the  
8 characterization of this consolidation changed  
9 in the -- from the opposition to the writ for  
10 certiorari to the red brief.

11           At the red brief, at the certiorari  
12 stage, it was characterized as we did as a  
13 consolidation for trial.

14           And that's what it was. I think it's  
15 important to understand that all the circuits  
16 disagree about even what is consolidation for  
17 all purposes.

18           The Bogsian case from the Third  
19 Circuit says a case consolidated for pretrial  
20 and trial purposes is for all purposes.

21           That's what happened in our case. It  
22 was consolidated for pretrial and trial. And  
23 so, under the Third Circuit definition, it is  
24 all purposes.

25           Other circuits have a completely

1 different definition and they talk about, in  
2 the unitary consolidation type of case, there's  
3 one docket, there's one judgment entered, not  
4 two. They call that all-purpose consolidation.

5 So that's one of the problems we have  
6 here. The Rule 54, Justice Gorsuch, as you  
7 noted, refers to a single action. There's  
8 nothing in the amendments to the -- or the  
9 adoption of the federal rules to suggest that  
10 the rules committee was planning on overruling  
11 a Supreme Court precedent from the year before  
12 that said cases don't merge. Merge doesn't  
13 appear in the federal rules.

14 To correct one statement in reference  
15 to a question asked by Justice Ginsburg, Your  
16 Honor, the son's case is still not final. So  
17 it is not two years. We are now three years --  
18 February will make three years since the entry  
19 of the final judgment in my client's case, and  
20 the other case still is not final.

21 The new trial has already been held.  
22 No judgment has been entered on it. Once a  
23 judgment is entered on it --

24 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: How long -- do you  
25 have any idea why it's being held? This is

1 more curiosity.

2 MR. SIMPSON: No, I -- I -- I -- I --  
3 I have a theory. The -- the -- the -- the  
4 counsel representing Elsa in her individual  
5 capacity made an oral motion for a new trial  
6 and judgment on the pleadings or, excuse me,  
7 judgment as a matter of law. At the time of  
8 the conclusion of Samuel's case, when that was  
9 denied, they rested and put on no evidence.

10 The judge took the motion under  
11 advisement. The verdict then came in. And  
12 he's never ruled on that. And -- and at the  
13 same time, they also filed a written one before  
14 --

15 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: What's the  
16 verdict?

17 MR. SIMPSON: The -- the verdict --

18 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Against your  
19 client?

20 MR. SIMPSON: The verdict was against  
21 Elsa in her individual capacity. And one --  
22 just one quick clarification on this case.

23 There are two different Elsas in this  
24 case. They are not the same parties. Elsa in  
25 her individual capacity is legally distinct

1 from Elsa as the trustee of the trust. And  
2 that's the Alexander v. Todman case. And the  
3 Third Circuit makes that very clear. So this  
4 is not A versus B and B versus A where B could  
5 have asserted this -- this as a counterclaim  
6 against Elsa in her individual capacity.

7 If there are no other questions.

8 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,  
9 counsel. The case is submitted.

10 (Whereupon, at 11:03 a.m., the case  
11 was submitted.)

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