SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

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HERMAN	AVE	ERY (GUND	Υ,)			
			Pet	itic	neı	<u>^</u> ,)			
		v.)	No.	17-60	86
UNITED	STA	ATES,	,)			
			Res	pond	lent	-)			

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1	IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES
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3	HERMAN AVERY GUNDY,)
4	Petitioner,)
5	v.) No. 17-6086
6	UNITED STATES,)
7	Respondent.)
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10	Washington, D.C.
11	Tuesday, October 2, 2018
12	
13	The above-entitled matter came on for oral
14	argument before the Supreme Court of the United States
15	at 10:03 a.m.
16	
17	APPEARANCES:
18	SARAH BAUMGARTEL, ESQ., New York, New York; on behalf
19	of the Petitioner.
20	JEFFREY B. WALL, Principal Deputy Solicitor General,
21	Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.; for
22	the Respondent.
23	
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1	CONTENTS	
2	ORAL ARGUMENT OF:	PAGE:
3	SARAH BAUMGARTEL, ESQ.	
4	On behalf of the Petitioner	3
5	ORAL ARGUMENT OF:	
6	JEFFREY B. WALL, ESQ.	
7	On behalf of the Respondent	30
8	REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF:	
9	SARAH BAUMGARTEL, ESQ.	
10	On behalf of the Petitioner	60
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		

1	PROCEEDINGS
2	(10:03 a.m.)
3	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear
4	argument first this morning in Case 17-6086,
5	Gundy versus the United States.
6	Ms. Baumgartel.
7	ORAL ARGUMENT OF SARAH BAUMGARTEL
8	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER
9	MS. BAUMGARTEL: Mr. Chief Justice,
10	and may it please the Court:
11	SORNA's delegation provision grants
12	unguided power to the nation's top prosecutor
13	to expand the scope of criminal laws and to
14	impose burdensome, sometimes lifetime
15	registration requirements on hundreds of
16	thousands of individuals. It combines criminal
17	law-making and executive power in precisely the
18	way that the Constitution was designed to
19	prohibit.
20	This delegation is unconstitutional.
21	This delegation can be distinguished from every
22	delegation that has previously been upheld by
23	this Court due to a combination of its total
24	lack of standard and the nature and power
25	nature and significance of the delegated power.

Т	Unlike other delegations that this
2	Court has approved, SORNA has no standard to
3	guide the Attorney General's exercise of
4	discretion.
5	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, the
6	government says that they do have a standard
7	and it's the apply the prohibition or the
8	requirements in the law to the maximum extent
9	feasible.
10	MS. BAUMGARTEL: Your Honor, that
11	language does not appear anywhere in the
12	statutory text, nor can it be derived from the
13	sources that the government cites.
14	JUSTICE GINSBURG: What about the list
15	that's contained in, what is it, 20901, the
16	the list of past offenders? On your view, none
17	of those people would be required to register?
18	MS. BAUMGARTEL: That's not correct.
19	So one important thing about this case is that
20	every every state had an existing sex
21	offender registration system prior to SORNA's
22	enactment, and those registration systems would
23	remain in effect regardless of whether SORNA
24	existed or not. And so, for example,
25	Detitioner was required to register under

- 1 existing Maryland law, and so would the vast
- 2 majority of sex offenders who were also then
- 3 required to reregister under SORNA.
- 4 These state registration systems had
- 5 been in existence, many of them, since the
- 6 early '90s, but since 1996, every state had its
- 7 own registration system.
- 8 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But they would
- 9 be -- they would not come under the federal
- 10 registration system, which was the purpose of
- 11 SORNA to create. None of those examples would
- 12 be covered by the federal registration
- 13 requirement.
- MS. BAUMGARTEL: Well, as -- as this
- 15 Court held in Reynolds, the Congress left it to
- 16 the Attorney General to determine whether SORNA
- 17 would apply retroactively at all. And so
- 18 Congress declined to make the initial decision
- 19 as to whether any pre-Act offender should be
- 20 required to register. This was consistent with
- 21 how Congress had approached registration
- 22 schemes in the past.
- 23 Congress had previously enacted
- 24 registration legislation that conditioned state
- 25 funding on requiring certain things from sex

- offender registries, and in each of those prior
- 2 cases, Congress had not made the law
- 3 retroactive. And so there's -- there's nothing
- 4 strange about Congress doing this.
- 5 As the Court held in Reynolds, it then
- 6 gave the Attorney General full authority to
- 7 decide whether the law should be applied
- 8 retroactively, so the initial on/off
- 9 determination, but then as well how it should
- 10 apply, which offenders should be included, if
- it should extend all the way back to 20, 30, 40
- 12 years. There was absolutely no guidance
- 13 provided to the Attorney General in making --
- 14 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, suppose the --
- 15 the statute said that the Attorney General
- shall have the authority to determine the
- 17 application of this subchapter to pre-enactment
- 18 offenders as public safety and fairness
- 19 requires. Would that be a -- a violation of
- the Non-Delegation Doctrine?
- MS. BAUMGARTEL: Yes, Your Honor.
- 22 Given the subject matter of this delegation,
- 23 Congress needs to provide more guidance than
- 24 something along the lines of "in the public
- 25 interest." And --

1 JUSTICE BREYER: What about the most 2 famous regulation, that I think people in this room would imagine, Rule 10b-5? I mean, Rule 3 10b-5 is promulgated under a statute that says 4 the SEC can forbid the use of any manipulative 5 device -- that's like the sex offender part --6 in contravention of such rules as are 7 appropriate in the public interest. 8 9 MS. BAUMGARTEL: So there are -- there are a few distinctions. One is that the SEC, 10 obviously, is a different body than the 11 12 Attorney General, and so this is a point where the Court's due process and delegation concerns 13 14 converge. And it's important from the 15 Constitution to have a separation between the body that is the regulatory lawmaker and the 16 17 body that is the prosecutor. JUSTICE BREYER: Is it only the 18 Attorney General who falls within the rule that 19 -- falls within your argument? 20 MS. BAUMGARTEL: That's something that 21 2.2 exacerbates this delegation. JUSTICE BREYER: No, but -- but I'm --23 24 look, the SEC has a rule such as we know,

10b-5, the word is the public interest. The

- 1 Consumer Product Safety Commission has another
- one very similar. And we're told in one of the
- 3 briefs that there are 300,000 such regulations.
- 4 That may be an exaggeration, I don't know.
- 5 So which, in fact, fall, as you said,
- 6 within your specially harsh rule? All of the
- 7 300,000? We'll be busy in this Court for quite
- 8 a while.
- 9 MS. BAUMGARTEL: Your Honor, it's not
- 10 an especially harsh rule. What it would
- 11 require is some more --
- 12 JUSTICE BREYER: Your especially
- 13 strict rule.
- MS. BAUMGARTEL: -- some more specific
- 15 congressional guidance when this power is
- 16 delegated. And a few things to say. First --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Sorry, you're
- answering Justice Breyer yes, that all 300,000
- of those -- whatever the number is, of those
- delegations are wrong?
- MS. BAUMGARTEL: No, that's absolutely
- 22 not our position.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So what
- 24 distinguishes those -- that delegation or those
- 25 delegations from the example that Justice Alito

1 gave you? 2 MS. BAUMGARTEL: So, in each of the prior delegations that this Court has upheld, 3 there has actually been some standard in the 4 delegation provision, even if it was what the 5 Court might consider to be a broad standard. 6 7 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But there are standards here. I mean, it's not the Attorney 8 9 General, it's the Congress that defines what crimes will require registration, where, and 10 when the individual is required to register, of 11 12 what information is necessary, and the penalties for failure to register. All that is 13 14 specified by Congress. The Attorney General 15 doesn't -- is not at liberty to prescribe when, where, how, what crimes. All that is done by 16 17 Congress. MS. BAUMGARTEL: But none of those 18 very detailed provisions of SORNA that Congress 19 set forth apply to pre-Act offenders. 20 Attorney General was given the power both to 21 2.2 decide whether the law applied to pre-Act 23 offenders and then how it should apply. JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, that gets back 24

to the question that the Chief Justice started

1 with, because it seems that there is some 2 language in the statute that supports the government's reading, that this is a statute 3 that basically says register all pre-Act 4 offenders as far as possible, with some 5 understanding that there are feasibility 6 7 considerations that may make immediate registration of everybody impossible. So 8 comprehensiveness but moderated with a 9 feasibility understanding. 10 And I think you would point to three 11 12 things. You would point to the preamble, which talks about a comprehensive national system. 13 14 think you would point then to the definition, which says that the term "sex offender" means 15 an individual, any individual, an individual 16 17 who was convicted of a sex offense. think, to get in the idea of feasibility, you 18 might look to the -- the delegation provision 19 20 itself, which talks about categories of sex offenders who are unable to comply with 21 2.2 subsection (b). 23 So both comprehensiveness as moderated 24 by some flexibility -- some -- some feasibility

constraint seems in the statute as long as

2.5

- 1 you're taking the statute as a whole.
- MS. BAUMGARTEL: So there -- there are
- 3 a few problems with reading it that way. To
- 4 start with the fact that in J.W. Hampton, the
- 5 Court emphasized that the intelligible
- 6 principle had to be clear from the legislative
- 7 act itself. And so, to the extent that the
- 8 Court is looking through other provisions --
- 9 JUSTICE KAGAN: From the legislative
- 10 act itself meaning only from the delegation
- 11 provision?
- 12 MS. BAUMGARTEL: From -- so from the
- 13 legislative act. And so to start --
- 14 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, this is the
- 15 legislative act. These are all parts of the
- 16 statute.
- 17 MS. BAUMGARTEL: That's right. And in
- 18 Panama Refining, the Court rejected the idea
- 19 that if there was a narrow delegation provision
- that did not contain any standards, that that
- 21 could then be governed and given content by the
- general preamble to the Act, which is exactly
- 23 the argument that the government is making
- 24 here.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, but when we are

- thinking about non-delegation, it's essentially
- 2 a statutory interpretation question, which it
- 3 seems should be governed by the same rules of
- 4 statutory interpretation that we use elsewhere.
- 5 And we never look only to one
- 6 provision. We look to one provision in a
- 7 context of other provisions, including purpose
- 8 provisions.
- 9 So we've -- if you look at Justice
- 10 Scalia's -- Justice Scalia was a pretty
- 11 committed textualist -- if you look at his
- 12 separate opinion in Reynolds, he clearly is
- looking to the purpose provision of this Act
- and saying it demands comprehensiveness.
- MS. BAUMGARTEL: So, Your Honor, I --
- 16 I agree 100 percent with you that this could be
- 17 a statutory interpretation issue, but we would
- 18 prevail under that.
- The problem with the government's
- statutory interpretation argument is that the
- 21 delegation provision here is not ambiguous. It
- 22 gives plenary authority to the Attorney
- 23 General. When the Court looks to, say, the
- 24 statutory context or legislative history,
- 25 things to interpret that statute, that's

1 generally when the text itself is ambiguous and 2 provides for two different plausible readings, but here that's not the situation. 3 I just note Justice Scalia was 4 dissenting, of course, in Reynolds because --5 JUSTICE KAGAN: He -- he was 6 7 dissenting, but nine Justices in Reynolds all had the same view of this statute, which is 8 9 that this statute demanded comprehensiveness in the registration of pre-Act sex offenders. 10 In other words, both in the majority 11 12 and in the dissent, this was the one point in common, that they said this statute was 13 designed for something and this statute did 14 something, that it insisted that "sex offender" 15 should be read broadly to include any 16 17 individual who was convicted of a sex offense and that all those people should be registered, 18 you know, with some feasibility recognition. 19 MS. BAUMGARTEL: So I'd like to 20 address both comprehensiveness and the 21 definition of "sex offender" while also noting 2.2 23 that, of course, if Congress had actually wanted that construction, it would have been 24 very easy for it to simply say that. The --25

1 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, but nine of us 2 said it. 3 MS. BAUMGARTEL: The preamble --JUSTICE KAGAN: Were we all wrong, 4 every single one of us? 5 6 MS. BAUMGARTEL: Your Honor, I -- I 7 don't believe that's what Reynolds says, but just with respect, because comprehensive is 8 coming up so many times, the preamble states 9 that it is a comprehensive national 10 registration system. 11 12 In the same way that the National 13 Gallery is a comprehensive art museum, that 14 doesn't mean that it has every painting that 15 has ever been made. Comprehensive can have different meanings. 16 17 In this context, SORNA is a 40-something provision statute that addresses 18 every aspect of sex offender registration, not 19 just who should register but information 20 sharing among jurisdictions, the Internet 21 2.2 design of websites for public registration, 23 civil commitment of sex offenders, the use of federal law enforcement resources to assist 24 with state registration systems. 25

These various provisions comprise the 1 2 comprehensive national registration system, and there's no indication that that general 3 preamble meant that every pre-Act offender had 4 to be registered. 5 There was a House bill that was 6 7 rejected that was pending at the same time that would have both made it explicitly retroactive 8 and that included a definition of "sex 9 offender" that explicitly said offenders 10 convicted either before or after the enactment 11 12 of this Act. 13 JUSTICE KAGAN: I quess I have --14 JUSTICE GORSUCH: I guess --15 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- two quick -- I'm sorry. 16 17 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Well, I guess where I get stuck on -- on the preamble argument is 18 that normally we -- we, when we're doing 19 statutory interpretation, prefer the more 20 specific statutory provision over the more 21 2.2 general. And the specific statutory section 23 dealing with pre-enactment offenders says 24 unambiguously that the Attorney General decides 25 whether, how, when, and who, even who. So you

- don't even know if you're going to be subject
- 2 to this law.
- 3 MS. BAUMGARTEL: Yes.
- 4 JUSTICE GORSUCH: How do people even
- 5 know who is going to be included in this class
- 6 until they hear from the Attorney General? And
- 7 I -- I'm having trouble thinking of another
- 8 delegation in which this Court has ever allowed
- 9 the chief prosecutor of the United States to
- write the criminal law for those he's going to
- 11 prosecute.
- We say that vague criminal laws must
- 13 be stricken. We've just repeated that last
- 14 term. What's vaguer than a blank check to the
- 15 Attorney General of the United States to
- determine who he's going to prosecute?
- MS. BAUMGARTEL: Yes.
- 18 JUSTICE GINSBURG: That's your
- 19 argument stated very, very concisely.
- MS. BAUMGARTEL: I'll cede my time.
- 21 (Laughter.)
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, then I'll take
- 23 back my time.
- 24 (Laughter.)
- JUSTICE ALITO: Well, suppose what

- 1 this was -- what was at stake here was civil
- 2 liability rather than -- suppose what was at
- 3 stake here was civil liability rather than
- 4 criminal liability. Would you make the same
- 5 argument?
- 6 MS. BAUMGARTEL: That would -- that
- 7 would certainly be a much closer case. Our
- 8 argument is that -- that SORNA would still be
- 9 unconstitutional simply because of the total
- 10 lack of standard.
- 11 Even in cases like NBC or American
- 12 Power & Light where the Court has upheld
- arguably very broad delegations, there has been
- 14 some standard in the law that, even if
- seemingly broad as written, drew upon an
- 16 existing body of established law.
- So, for example, in NBC, the public
- interest, convenience, and necessity
- 19 certification for licensing was an established
- 20 body of law, that it was a certification that
- 21 states had made to public service industries
- since roughly the 1870s.
- There's no existing body of law to
- 24 give context --
- 25 JUSTICE ALITO: So if you compare what

- 1 we have before us with the statute that says --
- 2 gives or authorizes the Attorney General to
- 3 devise a rule to protect public safety,
- 4 feasibility, and consideration of individual
- 5 rights, that's the difference between a
- 6 improper delegation and a proper delegation?
- 7 MS. BAUMGARTEL: Perhaps. Certainly
- 8 --
- 9 JUSTICE ALITO: In the civil context.
- 10 Let's start there.
- 11 MS. BAUMGARTEL: Certainly, the
- 12 Congressional guidance is the difference. And
- this just comes back to the purpose of the test
- 14 itself. The idea of the intelligible principle
- 15 test is that it's not a delegation of
- 16 legislative authority because Congress itself
- 17 has made the key legislative decisions.
- 18 Here, with respect to pre-Act
- 19 offenders, Congress has not made any of the
- decisions, despite the extremely detailed
- 21 framework that there is for post-Act
- 22 registration.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Do you think the
- 24 Attorney General could, in that retroactivity,
- 25 have a different set of offenders than the text

- of FORNA -- SORNA itself, have different
- 2 requirements for where and when the
- 3 registration is to occur?
- 4 MS. BAUMGARTEL: Yes. I -- and this
- 5 is something the Court contemplated in
- 6 Reynolds, where it noted that 20913(d), the
- 7 delegation provision, essentially gave the
- 8 Attorney General three different spheres of
- 9 authority. He could decide whether the Act
- 10 applied to pre-Act offenders, whether it
- 11 applied to pre-implementation offenders, and
- then how it applied to those offenders.
- 13 And the Court recognized that he
- 14 might, for example, want to set different
- 15 registration rules for different classes of
- 16 pre-Act offenders, and that was contemplated
- and permitted by the broad plenary grant of
- 18 authority.
- 19 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: What -- what
- 20 if the Act said that it applies to pre-Act
- offenders and there was a provision saying the
- 22 Attorney General may waive the requirements of
- this Act when he determines that it's not
- 24 feasible to apply them?
- MS. BAUMGARTEL: Yeah --

1	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: And the
2	Attorney General says, you know, I don't think
3	it's feasible to apply this to pre-Act
4	offenders, so I waive the Act with respect to
5	pre-Act offenders. Is that okay?
6	MS. BAUMGARTEL: So if if the Act
7	said this Congress determines that this
8	should apply to pre-Act offenders and then gave
9	the Attorney General a limited power to grant
10	exemptions, something which is basically the
11	opposite of what this as written does, that
12	would likely be constitutional, particularly if
13	the if Congress provided some guidance
14	around where
15	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Even though
16	the consequences are the same the
17	consequences are the same with respect to
18	whether or who's making the decision about
19	whether the criminal laws should apply to whom?
20	MS. BAUMGARTEL: Respectfully, the
21	the consequences are not the same. In the
22	first instance, Congress has made the decision.
23	And then they have afforded the Attorney
24	General a power that is in first, if there
25	is quidance provided with respect to the

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granting of exemptions, then it's still --
 1
 2
               CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, let's
      say it isn't. The Attorney General may issue
 3
      exemptions to this Act with respect to
 4
     particular categories of offenders.
 5
 6
               MS. BAUMGARTEL: Even -- even if, that
 7
     would still be much closer to being
      constitutional because Congress has made the
 8
 9
      initial decision and has afforded the Attorney
      General a power that is something more akin to
10
      traditional prosecutorial discretion.
11
12
               It's not the same, but this was the
     point that Justice Scalia, joined by Justice
13
14
      Ginsburg, made in dissent in Reynolds, which is
15
      that that is much -- that seems closer to being
      constitutional because the power that the
16
17
     Attorney General has is closer to a traditional
      clemency or prosecutorial discretion power.
18
               In this case, however, the -- the
19
      statute is truly worded in the opposite
20
      fashion. It does not apply of its own force to
21
2.2
      any pre-Act offenders. And the question of
23
     whether it should apply is left to the sole
24
      discretion of the Attorney General, with --
2.5
               JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Don't we routinely
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- 1 read into statute limitations in order to save
- 2 its constitutionality?
- 3 MS. BAUMGARTEL: Yes.
- 4 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: We do do that
- 5 routinely. And we have read into delegation
- 6 cases limits. So why is the reading in a
- 7 feasibility here so unusual, given the three
- 8 contextual signals that Justice Kagan listed
- 9 previously?
- MS. BAUMGARTEL: So there are three
- 11 reasons. One is that that is essentially the
- interpretation that the Court rejected in
- 13 Reynolds. That -- that was squarely the
- 14 government's argument in Reynolds, and the
- 15 Court said no, that's not a plausible
- 16 construction of this statute.
- 17 The second reason is that, in the
- 18 context of the intelligible principle, it is
- 19 essential that Congress itself state the
- 20 intelligible principle. The Court addressed
- 21 this in American Trucking v. Whitman, where
- there the agency itself had tried to propose a
- 23 limiting construction to the delegation. And
- the Court rejected that and said that the
- 25 imposition of that limiting construction would

- 1 be the exercise of the constitutional -- the
- 2 legislative power itself. And so the
- 3 imposition of that limiting construction would
- 4 be unconstitutional because it's exercising the
- 5 legislative power.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Can we go back to
- 7 -- mention your third. But on the first folded
- 8 in, in Reynolds, we said that it would have
- 9 been strange, indeed, for anyone to imagine
- 10 that Congress intended the AG -- I'm trying to
- 11 put it into a positive -- that Congress
- intended the AG to -- to apply the Act
- 13 retroactively. It would have been strange for
- them to imagine that he or she wouldn't, that
- there might have been limitations because of
- some feasibility difficulties, but no one
- imagined the AG would exempt everyone.
- 18 MS. BAUMGARTEL: The intelligible
- 19 principle cannot be the Court's speculation
- about what Congress thinks the Attorney General
- 21 might do.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But we're
- 23 speculating from the Act itself.
- 24 JUSTICE KAGAN: It's not speculating.
- 25 It's interpreting. So if the -- if the best

- interpretation -- and I realize you don't agree
- 2 with this, but -- so I'm posing it as a
- 3 hypothetical. If the best interpretation of
- 4 the Act is the SG's interpretation, do you
- 5 agree that that would not pose a delegation
- 6 problem?
- 7 MS. BAUMGARTEL: No, I don't agree.
- 8 And so if the -- my friend uses different
- 9 formulations of their interpretation.
- 10 Sometimes it's to the maximum extent feasible.
- 11 Sometimes it's to the extent feasible.
- 12 Sometimes it's to the extent practicable.
- 13 And I would argue that there is --
- 14 there are differences there.
- 15 JUSTICE KAGAN: Let's -- let's call
- it, which is, I think, consistent with what
- 17 Reynolds said, to the maximum extent feasible.
- 18 In other words, what the Act is telling the AG
- is go register pre-Act offenders, except if you
- 20 find it unfeasible.
- MS. BAUMGARTEL: I -- again, that's --
- 22 that's nowhere in the statute, and --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Yeah, I -- I
- 24 understand that you think that. But if the
- 25 statute -- if the -- if that is the best

- 1 interpretation of the statute, would it pose a 2 delegation problem? MS. BAUMGARTEL: That likely would be 3 constitutional if you could read into the 4 statute a command to the Attorney General to 5 6 register pre-Act offenders to the maximum 7 extent feasible, although, you know, as Justice Rehnquist articulated in Industrial Union, the 8 9 benzene case, there is still a question about what feasibility means. 10 And in this context particularly, 11 12 because these are not -- this is not a technical scientific area. This is not a 13
- question of how much air particle, at what cost
 can be taken from the environment. This is
 really the fundamental weighing of liberty
 versus security interests, the sorts of
 decisions that the people's legislative body is
 supposed to make and not supposed to delegate
 to the chief prosecutor.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Are we supposed to do
 that -- are we supposed to, in your opinion,
 start distinguishing among the 300,000 and say,
 well, you have a weak standard if all that's at
 interest is the cost of pollution or something,

- 1 but you have to have a strong standard where,
- in fact, it's what you said, liberty and so on,
- and a medium standard perhaps for the SEC? I
- 4 don't -- I don't know what we do about the SEC.
- And there are 300,000, approximately.
- 6 Maybe there are only 200,000. But is that what
- 7 you're suggesting we ought to do? Yes? No?
- 8 MS. BAUMGARTEL: Yes, and the -- the
- 9 Court in American --
- 10 JUSTICE BREYER: Yes, all right,
- 11 300,000.
- MS. BAUMGARTEL: I should -- Your
- 13 Honor, I should -- I'm not conceding the
- 14 300,000.
- JUSTICE BREYER: No, I wouldn't
- 16 either.
- 17 (Laughter.)
- MS. BAUMGARTEL: But this is -- this
- is what the Court said in American Trucking v.
- Whitman, that the amount of guidance required
- 21 depends on the scope of the delegated power.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Okay. So, if we're
- supposed to go through the 200,000 or 100,000
- or whatever they are, what are the different
- categories where it's tough, not so tough, in

1 your opinion? 2 MS. BAUMGARTEL: Your Honor, the 3 question is not a matter of tough versus --JUSTICE BREYER: No, you see what I 4 mean, categories where Congress can delegate 5 with an SEC-type standard or the standard here 6 7 in categories where Congress has to be more 8 specific. 9 MS. BAUMGARTEL: The --10 JUSTICE BREYER: What -- what in your opinion are the right categories? 11 12 MS. BAUMGARTEL: The -- so the factors about SORNA that are critical include the fact 13 that it contemplates criminal sanctions. 14 15 Touby, this Court recognized that its precedents supported requiring greater guidance 16 17 for the promulgation of regulations that contemplate criminal sanctions. 18 JUSTICE KAGAN: But are -- isn't that 19 all over the place we have confronted 20 delegation challenges to civil regulations 21 2.2 whose violation will result in criminal 23 sanctions? So, I mean, there are numerous of those cases, but I'll just give you three: 24

Kollock is like that, Grimaud is like that,

- 1 Avent is like that.
- 2 So these are all places where the
- delegation is to a civil regulation, as it is
- 4 here, but if you violate that regulation that
- 5 some secretary or attorney general or whatever
- 6 has written, you're going to face criminal
- 7 sanctions.
- 8 So what's the difference between this
- 9 case and all those other cases where we said
- 10 that's -- you know, that's -- criminal
- 11 sanctions is not what matters?
- 12 MS. BAUMGARTEL: Well, Kollock is the
- perfect example because this is very different
- 14 than oleomargarine label. This is not a
- 15 question of Congress --
- 16 JUSTICE KAGAN: You know, you can say
- 17 that, and it's easy to make fun of
- 18 oleomargarine labels, but the person who
- 19 violated that provision was going to go to
- 20 prison in the same way that the person who
- 21 violates this provision is going to go to
- 22 prison.
- MS. BAUMGARTEL: It's not making fun,
- 24 Your Honor. It's that there are certain
- 25 fundamental choices about a statutory scheme

- 1 that Congress itself must make. And so
- 2 Congress can say that there needs to be
- 3 particular packaging and a label, and then it
- 4 can delegate or assign to an agency the power
- 5 to design that label.
- 6 JUSTICE KAGAN: The point I was making
- 7 is that all of these are civil regulations.
- 8 The delegation is to say you write the -- we're
- 9 going to give you some degree of discretion to
- 10 write the civil regulation, understanding that
- if somebody violates that, that person is going
- 12 to jail.
- MS. BAUMGARTEL: Your Honor, may I
- 14 answer your question and then reserve the
- 15 remainder of my time?
- Just the -- the question is always the
- 17 nature and significance of the delegated power,
- 18 and it -- it is perfectly fine for Congress to
- 19 permit agencies to fill in the details or
- 20 otherwise implement statutes, but not to make
- 21 these sorts of fundamental policy choices.
- Thank you.
- 23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
- 24 counsel.
- 25 Mr. Wall.

1	ORAL ARGUMENT OF JEFFREY B. WALL
2	ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENT
3	MR. WALL: Mr. Chief Justice, and may
4	it please the Court:
5	I wanted to start this morning where
6	Justices Ginsburg and Kagan did, with the text
7	of the Act, because I do think it is best
8	interpreted in the way that we have said. It
9	starts in the first section this is at 3a of
10	the appendix of the government's brief with
11	findings about existing sex victims and their
12	offenders. It then says, "we want a
13	comprehensive national system" to address the
14	offenders. It broadly defines "sex offender"
15	and the registration requirement. That's at
16	pages 5a and 11a. And then it says in the
17	913(d), it says, look, we know that translating
18	the system that we've just crafted for
19	offenders going forward is going to create some
20	real practical problems.
21	For one, it's literally impossible for
22	them to comply with the timing requirement.
23	Unable to comply. Those are the words in the
24	title and text of 913(d). So we are going to
25	give to the Attorney General the authority to

- 1 take this scheme and implement it with respect
- 2 to pre-Act offenders, recognizing that there
- 3 are going to be some transitional issues.
- 4 That kind of implementation is a
- 5 classic executive function. It is what
- 6 statutes give to the executive branch all the
- 7 time. And Petitioner has conceded, I think,
- 8 just now, that if the statute is best read in
- 9 the way I'm positing, that it's -- it's
- 10 perfectly permissible under this Court's cases.
- 11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, let's
- 12 take one of the items you just mentioned,
- 13 comprehensive. The Act says that it's
- 14 comprehensive -- that doesn't mean that it
- 15 covers everything. It means that it has a
- 16 scheme that it thinks addresses the waterfront.
- 17 And part of the way it -- it does that
- is to say we're not going to decide this
- 19 significant category of cases.
- MR. WALL: Oh --
- 21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: It's
- 22 comprehensive. They've told you what's going
- to happen there, and what they've said is the
- 24 Attorney General gets to decide.
- MR. WALL: Oh, it -- it's certainly

- 1 true that Congress made certain legislative
- 2 judgments about what sex offenses would
- qualify, how long people would have to register
- 4 for. They didn't say every offense that
- 5 relates to sex means you've got to register for
- 6 a lifetime. That is -- that is certainly true.
- 7 But, once they've defined the bounds
- 8 of the people they want into the system going
- 9 forward, then they said to the Attorney
- 10 General: Your job is to get as many of the
- 11 existing offenders who fall into that universe
- into the registries as you can, recognizing
- there are going to be some practical barriers.
- 14 You're going to have to specify the
- 15 applicability of the requirements in a way --
- 16 JUSTICE GORSUCH: But, Mr. Wall --
- 17 MR. WALL: -- to get them in. That's
- 18 very narrow language.
- 19 JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- you didn't -- the
- 20 government didn't make that argument in
- 21 Reynolds. The government made the opposite
- 22 argument in Reynolds. The government said that
- 23 (d) is the more specific provision and the
- 24 nature of the comprehensiveness, as the Chief
- 25 Justice indicated, for purposes of

- 1 pre-enactment offenders was that the Attorney
- 2 General gets to decide, and the Attorney
- 3 General could decide to do nothing, the
- 4 government said, the Attorney General could
- 5 decide to include some offenders, none of the
- offenders, or all of the pre-enactment
- 7 offenders.
- 8 The government said that it could then
- 9 determine which of the Act provisions it wished
- 10 to, in a Chinese menu manner, apply to these
- 11 people it had chosen. The government then said
- 12 the Attorney General could change his or her
- mind about all of this at any given time.
- 14 And, in fact, the Attorney General has
- 15 changed his mind from time to time on these
- 16 matters. So how do you square with what you've
- just told us with the government's prior
- 18 representations in this case?
- MR. WALL: Well, the Attorney General
- 20 has never changed his or her mind with respect
- 21 to the registration duty for individuals, but
- 22 -- but to go squarely to the question --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: There have been
- 24 changes in --
- MR. WALL: Only with respect to the

- 1 state's obligations to go out and find
- 2 offenders --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: All right.
- 4 MR. WALL: -- not with the individual
- 5 duty on offenders to come forward and present
- 6 themselves and register.
- 7 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Attorney General
- 8 Holder changed the guidance provided by -- by
- 9 the prior Attorney General, correct?
- 10 MR. WALL: He narrowed the states'
- obligations to give the states a little more
- 12 breathing room. That's true. The individual
- duty to step forward and register has always
- 14 been constant.
- But, to go to your question, I really
- don't think that, reading our brief in
- 17 Reynolds, there's any inconsistency. We came
- in and said as a statutory matter this says he
- 19 shall have the authority to specify the
- 20 applicability.
- 21 That clearly means, since we know that
- they want everybody in, that we should read
- that like a waiver provision. And to be sure,
- the Court disagreed with us on that and said
- 25 the default rule was different but in the

- 1 process accepted exactly our argument as the
- 2 premise that the default rule didn't matter
- 3 because Congress wanted everybody into the
- 4 system.
- 5 And so I think --
- 6 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Mr. Wall --
- 7 MR. WALL: -- everybody was working
- 8 off of that page in Reynolds.
- 9 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- your -- your
- 10 brief in Reynolds is very important to me. If
- I read it the way Justice Gorsuch does, assume
- 12 his hypothetical, that you, in fact, said it
- was an on and off button that the -- that the
- 14 Attorney General could turn on and off. If
- that's the position you took then, what does
- 16 that do to you now?
- MR. WALL: Oh, that's -- to be clear,
- 18 Justice Sotomayor, that's exactly the same
- 19 position I'm taking here today. 913(d) is --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: No, you're adding
- in a caveat. You're saying he can turn it on
- 22 and off based only on maximum lack of
- 23 feasibility.
- MR. WALL: No. I'm addressing a
- 25 question that wasn't squarely before the Court

- 1 in Reynolds. It is an on/off switch to the
- 2 Attorney General: Specify the applicability of
- 3 the requirements -- it's pretty narrow language
- 4 -- and do it in such a way as to get them in.
- 5 I read it as the statute --
- 6 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Now you're reading
- 7 to get them in. That's --
- 8 MR. WALL: Well --
- 9 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I understand
- 10 Justice Gorsuch's point that you said he could
- 11 turn it on and off as he decided.
- MR. WALL: Yes. That's the Attorney
- General's authority as a statutory matter.
- 14 That's what the statute means. I believe the
- 15 statute means the same thing we said in
- 16 Reynolds, though the Court disagrees in the
- 17 default rule.
- 18 The separate question is, is there
- 19 guidance provided to the Attorney General in
- 20 the statute on how he should exercise that
- on/off switch authority? And that question,
- 22 not before the Court in Reynolds and not
- 23 briefed in Reynolds, the answer to that is
- 24 pretty obviously yes.
- I mean, this falls well inside a

- 1 number of the delegations that the Court has
- looked at because, here, it's not as if there
- 3 is some standard in the statute like public
- 4 interest or fair and reasonable rates, where
- 5 the executive is really doing the fleshing in.
- 6 Here, Congress set forth all the
- 7 rules. It made judgments about all the
- 8 requirements.
- 9 JUSTICE GORSUCH: What do you say --
- 10 MR. WALL: And all it said to the
- 11 Attorney --
- 12 JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- about the ACLU's
- 13 argument on that score that, under your view,
- 14 that Congress could have simply enacted a
- 15 statute with respect to post-enactment
- offenders that mirrored the language of (d) and
- 17 said, well, it's up to the Attorney General to
- 18 come up with a comprehensive and feasible
- 19 registration regime in the public interest?
- You'd be here defending that, wouldn't you?
- 21 MR. WALL: Justice Gorsuch, it would
- 22 be a much broader delegation. Under this
- 23 Court's cases, you'd need more of a general
- 24 policy. It's not at all clear why Congress
- 25 wouldn't apply it going forward.

1	JUSTICE GORSUCH: Why? What's the
2	difference? A half a million people are
3	affected by this delegation.
4	MR. WALL: Yes, if Congress found
5	there are real practical problems with applying
6	it even going forward, here is our general
7	policy to the Attorney General, I don't know
8	that it would be importantly different from
9	saying to the Attorney General in Touby which
10	drugs will be controlled substances under the
11	Act, or or in Union Bridge, which obstruct
12	which bridges will we think obstruct the
13	rivers, or in Grimaud, who will be allowed to
14	graze on federal land?
15	JUSTICE GORSUCH: Could you answer my
16	question? Would you be here defending a
17	statute that mimicked (d) with respect to
18	post-enactment offenders, and in in in
19	which case why does Congress bother to
20	legislate SORNA at all?
21	MR. WALL: It's very difficult to know
22	in that situation, Justice Gorsuch, what the
23	equivalent practical problems would be for why
24	Congress didn't apply it.
25	JUSTICE GORSUCH: So you might defend

- 1 that statute too?
- 2 MR. WALL: No, I -- I -- what I'm
- 3 saying is I -- I don't know. I don't see any
- 4 practical problems that would have required
- 5 Congress to legislate in that way, so it's very
- 6 difficult to imagine that that statute would
- 7 pass muster.
- 8 But if there were similar practical
- 9 problems and if they supplied a general policy,
- it wouldn't be importantly different from
- 11 Loving or Grimaud or Fahey or Kollock or Union
- 12 Bridge.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Mr. Wall, can you
- 14 tell me how -- how this retroactivity works?
- 15 So let's take somebody who was convicted of a
- 16 sex offense 30 years ago. He's had a clean
- 17 record ever since.
- 18 How do you -- first, tell me how such
- 19 a person gets notice of the registration
- 20 requirement.
- MR. WALL: So he's -- he's only
- required to register if he's a Tier III
- offender, so if he's got a really grave sex
- 24 offense like Petitioner --
- 25 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Yes, but let's say

- 1 he is such an offender, but it was 30 years
- 2 ago.
- 3 MR. WALL: Yes. So I think he's on
- 4 notice from the enactment of SORNA and then the
- 5 Attorney General's interim rule in 2007,
- 6 carried forward in the final rule in 2010, that
- 7 there's an across-the-board registration
- 8 requirement.
- 9 JUSTICE GINSBURG: So he's a -- he has
- 10 to know what the Attorney General's regulation
- is? There's no notice given to these people.
- 12 They can be charged with -- with failure to
- 13 register, even though nobody -- no one ever
- 14 gave them notice that they had to register?
- MR. WALL: I suppose you could try to
- bring an as-applied due process challenge. Of
- 17 course, Petitioner's not going to be able to do
- 18 that. Petitioner was informed in 2012 before
- 19 he left the BOP's custody, both in writing and
- orally, that he needed to register when he
- 21 moved to New York, and then he failed to do it.
- 22 So I -- I take the point that there could be
- as-applied notice problems, but I don't think
- that there's one here.
- 25 And to get back to -- to the -- to the

- 1 colloguy I was having with Justice Gorsuch, I
- 2 do think at the end of the day this is not a
- 3 provision that just lays out a general standard
- 4 and then requires all of the fleshing in.
- 5 That, the Court has held, is permissible,
- 6 provided you supply a general policy.
- 7 But it really is inside even that,
- 8 because Congress set up a pretty reticulated
- 9 scheme, made a lot of judgments along the way.
- 10 JUSTICE KAGAN: Do you think that if
- 11 there were a new attorney general who came in
- 12 and said, you know, I think that this
- 13 registration stuff has just gone overboard, and
- 14 I'm going to start making some exceptions with
- respect to pre-Act offenders, because I think
- it's just unfair to penalize them for the rest
- of their lives, could the attorney general do
- 18 that?
- MR. WALL: No, we don't think the
- 20 attorney general could make judgments on the
- 21 basis, other than feasibility, and disagree
- 22 with Congress's policy judgments.
- 23 And if the Court had any doubt about
- that, it should construe the statute more
- 25 narrowly, in the way I think is the most

- 1 reasonable interpretation, so as to avoid the
- 2 constitutional problem.
- 3 JUSTICE KAGAN: And when you say the
- 4 Attorney General could -- tell me what you
- 5 think the Attorney General cannot do, given the
- 6 language of this statute and given the language
- 7 of Reynolds.
- 8 MR. WALL: So I don't think the
- 9 Attorney General could say: Look, I know
- 10 Congress set up three tiers with registration
- links of 15, 25 years, and life, but I'm going
- to require you to register, but only for a few
- 13 years.
- 14 It's perfectly feasible. I could
- 15 require you all to register and there would be
- no problem on the state registries, but I just
- disagree with Congress's judgment that you
- 18 ought to be -- you ought to register.
- 19 JUSTICE BREYER: Is -- is --
- 20 MR. WALL: I don't think the Attorney
- 21 General could do that.
- 22 JUSTICE BREYER: I'm -- I'm trying to
- 23 think of -- I think Ms. Baumgartel was trying
- 24 to make a point that in my mind is something
- 25 like this: That the executive branch has many

- 1 different functions. They do all kinds of
- 2 different things.
- 3 One of the things they do is prosecute
- 4 people. Now it's quite different from the SEC
- 5 and all these other agencies because they have
- 6 other things to do.
- 7 And, moreover, there's a safeguard
- 8 going through the Department of Justice. And
- 9 there is a particular danger when you combine
- 10 prosecuting a person with the writing of the
- 11 law under which you prosecute.
- 12 And the danger is captured in the bill
- of attainder clause, it's captured maybe in ex
- 14 post facto clause, it's captured in the word
- liberty, and it is that particular danger that
- means where you have a person whose job is
- 17 prosecuting, be careful, especially careful
- 18 that that person cannot also write the law
- 19 under which he prosecutes, because there we
- 20 risk vendetta.
- Now I think my interpretation of what
- 22 she's saying is something like that. So what
- is your response?
- MR. WALL: So I do think that plays
- 25 itself out in certain rules, like not deferring

1 to the executive in the interpretation of 2 criminal statutes, but the Court's considered that argument twice in the non-delegation 3 context and rejected it both times. 4 JUSTICE BREYER: What -- which --5 6 MR. WALL: In Touby, they made exactly 7 the same argument. They said, look, you can't delegate to the executive branch which 8 substances will be controlled under the Act 9 because they're both defining what's illegal to 10 possess and they're prosecuting you. 11 12 And in Touby, you said, no, not for 13 non-delegation purposes. That controls from one branch to the other. Not where the power 14 is allocated within the executive branch. 15 And even more to the point, in Loving, 16 17 there was the availability of the death penalty. The president was just specifying 18 aggravating factors nowhere to be found in the 19 statute, and this Court, where you were 20 actually -- the executive was actually defining 21 2.2 the criminal penalty, which is not what the 23 executive has done here. This Court said we've 24 upheld delegations whereby -- this is at page 768 of Loving -- we've upheld delegations where 25

- 1 the executive defines by regulation what
- 2 conduct will be criminal, so long as Congress
- 3 has created the criminal offense --
- 4 JUSTICE BREYER: That -- those are the
- 5 standards, quite right.
- 6 MR. WALL: -- fixed the punishment --
- 7 JUSTICE BREYER: But suppose you put
- 8 --
- 9 MR. WALL: -- and given the executive
- 10 the authority.
- 11 JUSTICE BREYER: No, I -- I see where
- 12 you're going there. But -- but what we've been
- arguing here is basically the Non-Delegation
- 14 Doctrine, informed perhaps by the need to
- 15 prevent vendettas in liberty. Suppose you
- 16 reverse that. Suppose you said the problem
- 17 here is a due process argument. It is a
- 18 liberty-protecting argument. And in
- interpreting that liberty-protecting argument,
- 20 we should inform our thought with
- 21 non-delegation principles.
- MR. WALL: Justice Breyer, I just
- think the non-delegation context is a very odd
- one in which to try to cache that out, as
- opposed to -- to vagueness or -- or due

- 1 process, because it's asking whether Congress
- 2 has made the basic policy judgments that can
- 3 inform the executive's exercise of power.
- And, boy, if -- if the executive can
- 5 define the availability of the death penalty in
- 6 Loving and Mistretta, here, it seems well
- 7 withinside that to say, look, this is a civil
- 8 requirement; yes, there are criminal penalties
- 9 that could potentially attach. But that's a
- 10 commonplace feature in the law. The IRS tells
- 11 you what kind of tax return you've got to file.
- 12 Now not filing that tax return is a criminal
- violation, but nobody thinks that the IRS is
- 14 defining the scope of the criminal law, though
- in some sense it is by telling you what the
- 16 civil requirement is.
- 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, this
- is -- this is different in the sense that the
- 19 Attorney General is deciding what law applies,
- 20 not whether a particular act or a particular
- 21 exercise in commercial activity is covered by
- 22 an Act that certainly applies in a general
- 23 sense.
- I mean, it's not this -- in those
- instances, even in -- in -- in Touby, it's --

- 1 it's exercising fairly refined authority with
- 2 respect to what activity is covered.
- 3 Here, it's just saying are you going
- 4 to be -- it's not just covered by a law; does
- 5 the law even apply to you?
- 6 MR. WALL: Well --
- 7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: And it seems
- 8 to me that those -- that -- that's a
- 9 substantive difference.
- 10 MR. WALL: I don't -- I don't know,
- 11 Mr. Chief Justice. I don't know why we would
- think that specifying whether the drug you're
- 13 holding is lawful or unlawful, whether your
- 14 bridge has to be taken down, whether you can
- 15 graze on public land, whether your rates are
- 16 unreasonable is different in kind from whether
- 17 you have to register going forward and report
- 18 to the federal government.
- 19 Either way, the executive branch tells
- you whether your conduct brings you within the
- 21 scope of the law or it doesn't.
- 22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, but it's
- 23 -- the bridges, yes. I mean, the executive
- 24 branch has to specify what type of bridge needs
- to be what height or whatever and if it's this

- 1 or that. But there's another -- it's a
- 2 different thing when the Attorney General says,
- 3 okay, here's a law that covers bridges; you get
- 4 to decide whether it governs at all in
- 5 particular areas.
- 6 MR. WALL: I -- I understand if SORNA
- 7 didn't have the kind of guidance that it had
- 8 here, if it hadn't defined the criminal
- 9 offense, if it hadn't fixed the punishment, if
- 10 it hadn't set a reticulated scheme on the civil
- 11 side. I understand that if it hadn't made all
- of those judgments, there could be more serious
- 13 problems.
- 14 But to do all of that and then say
- but, look, we know that there's going to be
- some practical problems, it's not just the
- 17 timing, the state -- SORNA requires a lot of
- 18 things: Provide your motor vehicle
- information, provide your DNA, provide your
- 20 photos, do periodic show-ups.
- 21 And there's no dispute, I think, that
- the state registries at the time SORNA was
- passed were not equipped to do all of that.
- 24 And so Congress, looking at that, said: Look,
- we've got hundreds of thousands of people out

- 1 there we want to bring into this system. We
- 2 know they can't all come in on day one.
- 3 There's going to be some transitional issues
- 4 that we're going to have to work out. And the
- 5 person to work those out is the person who for
- 6 the last 12 years has been dealing with exactly
- 7 that subject and interacting with the states.
- 8 And at the end of the day, that's
- 9 really much more about implementation than it
- 10 is about policy judgment. I mean, here, it
- 11 really is inside of the Grimaud, the Fahey, the
- outer bound, because you've got an intelligible
- 13 principle that's anchored in the text of the
- 14 statute, not always true in some of those
- 15 cases, like Grimaud and Fahey, and you really
- 16 have what's much closer to a classic executive
- 17 function because it's just specifying the
- applicability of the requirements themselves.
- 19 It's not even like the Attorney
- 20 General is providing the substance of those
- 21 requirements. And even that, of course, the
- 22 Court has said okay, but I just -- I think
- 23 we're --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Well, Mr. Wall, I --
- I want to develop a little bit what Justice

- 1 Breyer was after. Is there something unusual
- 2 about the Attorney General's presence in this
- 3 case as the chief prosecutor and kind of a
- 4 conflict of interest? And what if -- what if,
- 5 instead of feasibility, you were arguing just
- 6 and reasonable or in the public interest, other
- 7 standards that might have applied in a -- in a
- 8 civil delegation context?
- 9 Would you think that the Attorney
- 10 General of the United States could decide the
- 11 applicability of a criminal law for a half a
- 12 million people on the basis of his or her
- judgment about its public interest or whether
- it's just and reasonable? Or -- or would -- or
- do you accept the -- the suggestion of this
- 16 Court in Touby that delegations in the criminal
- 17 context involving the Attorney General may
- 18 merit a heightened standard of review?
- 19 MR. WALL: Justice Gorsuch, I -- I --
- 20 I don't think the Court needs to cross that
- 21 bridge here.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: I understand that.
- 23 I'm asking you to answer that question.
- MR. WALL: I -- and I want to -- I
- 25 want to try to. I think the Court has had

- 1 several cases where criminal penalties were
- 2 indirectly or directly involved, from Grimaud
- 3 to Yakus, to Loving, Mistretta. It's never
- 4 suggested, even when faced with this exact
- 5 argument in Touby, that the bar ought to be
- 6 raised higher.
- 7 But I'll grant that in Touby, the
- 8 Court said it didn't need to address that,
- 9 though it had never done that in any of its
- 10 previous cases, and just say, look, if this
- 11 statute did that, if it did nothing more than
- say to the Attorney General register them, you
- know, as reasonable, with no requirements, no
- 14 creation of the criminal offense, no fixing of
- 15 the penalty --
- 16 JUSTICE GORSUCH: No. Just and
- 17 reasonable or in the public interest. Would
- 18 those be okay or not okay?
- 19 MR. WALL: I think, as -- as long as
- 20 it's done the things it did here, it's created
- 21 the crime, it's defined the elements --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Those would be okay?
- MR. WALL: -- it's fixed the penalty.
- 24 And then, on the civil side, it has said, and
- you provided some standard like that in the

- 1 statute, the Court's cases indicate that's
- 2 enough. But I -- I do want to say, even if you
- 3 think that's not enough, this statute does come
- 4 inside of that because this is not an agency
- 5 just supplying all of the real content or
- 6 substance to a broad standard like public
- 7 interest or just and reasonable.
- 8 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Is it a right --
- 9 MR. WALL: Reading the statute,
- 10 Congress made a lot of those judgments for
- itself and left to the Attorney General a much
- 12 narrower practical problem.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: There's a lot of
- 14 discussion in our case law about the propriety
- of the Court reading into statute words, and I
- 16 think a fundamental issue that Justice Gorsuch
- 17 has been aiming at is, especially in criminal
- 18 law, is it just to delegate to the Attorney
- 19 General a fundamental decision about who gets
- 20 covered or doesn't get covered by a statute?
- 21 That seems like -- it seems like at the core of
- 22 what a law is, if someone does X act, you're
- 23 covered or you're not.
- 24 And if Congress had said that, we
- 25 probably wouldn't have found a retroactivity

- 1 problem. But what is the essence of
- 2 non-delegation that we don't let the
- 3 legislature define who's a criminal? And so
- 4 isn't retroactivity a definition of who's a
- 5 criminal or not?
- 6 MR. WALL: So two separate points,
- 7 Justice Sotomayor.
- 8 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Or who might be a
- 9 criminal because of their acts?
- 10 MR. WALL: Two separate points.
- 11 First, if Congress had given the same authority
- 12 to the Attorney General and not otherwise
- 13 expressed any intention with respect to how
- that authority would be exercised, I'll grant
- 15 that would be --
- 16 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: There's no plain
- 17 words that add maximum feasibility --
- 18 MR. WALL: So --
- 19 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- in this
- 20 statute. So you're -- you're discerning words.
- MR. WALL: I am, Justice Sotomayor.
- 22 And that's my second point. I'm doing exactly
- what the Court did in Grimaud, Fahey, Kollock,
- 24 Loving. In none of those was the intelligible
- 25 principle spelled out in the statute in so many

1 words. And the Court engaged in an interpretive act. It looked at the Act as a 2 whole, and said based on the provisions we 3 have, would a reasonable attorney general 4 understand or a reasonable executive official 5 6 understand what policy they were meant to 7 pursue in exercising this authority? And I -- to be honest with you, I 8 think it defies both the text of SORNA and 9 10 reality to think that Congress was agnostic about whether hundreds of thousands of people 11 12 who have committed very serious sex offenses, as Petitioner has, should be required to 13 14 register. I think there's no way to read SORNA's text, its legislative history, and not 15 come away with the firm and definite notion 16 that Congress wanted as many of those offenders 17 in the system as the Attorney General could get 18 19 in --20 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: If you take out --21 MR. WALL: -- and it was just a practical problem of how to accomplish that. 2.2 23 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- if you take out 24 legislative history and you take out policy

statements, because there are some of my

- 1 colleagues who don't rely on either of those
- 2 two things, what's left?
- 3 MR. WALL: I would say the findings in
- 4 20901, the statement of express statutory
- 5 purpose, which this Court has relied on in
- 6 cases like NBC and New York Central for a
- 7 comprehensive national system, the inclusive
- 8 definition of "sex offender," the broad
- 9 registration requirement in 2913(a), and then
- 10 the text and title of 913(d), which say that
- 11 this grant of authority was about addressing
- 12 the inability to comply. We know on its face
- that what spurred this was a practical
- 14 consideration, a concern by Congress about how
- to get these people into the system.
- 16 All of those things taken together, I
- 17 think, far -- the -- the intelligent principle
- 18 here far more anchored in the text of this
- 19 statute. Then take a case like Fahey, where
- 20 Justice Jackson for the Court looked at the
- 21 norms of the banking industry. Or Grimaud,
- 22 where the Court discerned it from a number of
- other statutory provisions that I don't think
- 24 were as definite as what it faces here.
- Loving, the same thing. Kollock, the same

- 1 thing.
- I think here you've got an
- 3 intelligible principle, a general policy that
- 4 really is anchored in the text of the Act, even
- 5 apart from legislative history and policy
- 6 statements and all the rest, which we -- we
- 7 have not -- we have not relied on in -- in our
- 8 brief.
- 9 JUSTICE BREYER: The part that's still
- 10 gnawing at me, I mean, your basic argument is
- 11 there is a standard here, that's the end of the
- 12 case. All right. But, in writing it, I guess
- 13 I have to think through the Non-Delegation
- 14 Doctrine.
- So I'm just interested if this strikes
- 16 any thought in your mind. Let's take the
- 17 Securities Act of '34. What it says is you
- 18 can't use a manipulative device, that's a
- 19 fraudulent device, that's the equivalent here
- of the sex offense. It says you cannot use
- 21 them in contravention of such rules as the SEC
- 22 may prescribe as appropriate in the public
- 23 interest.
- 24 Suppose instead of that word "SEC,"
- everything's the same, but it doesn't say SEC,

- 1 it says Attorney General, so what you have is
- 2 it is a crime to violate a rule, where it
- 3 concerns a manipulative device, in violation of
- 4 such rules as the Attorney General finds
- 5 appropriate, the difference being we don't
- 6 think he's an expert on securities, though the
- 7 SEC is.
- 8 MR. WALL: Right.
- 9 JUSTICE BREYER: Does that matter?
- 10 Should it matter? Should we suggest in the
- 11 opinion that it might matter?
- MR. WALL: So, to the extent it
- matters, here's what I think you could say in
- 14 the opinion.
- 15 If the executive official, the
- 16 Attorney General, were defining the elements of
- 17 the offense or defining the criminal
- 18 punishment, that would raise the Touby
- 19 guestion. But where the Attorney General or
- 20 the executive official is defining a civil
- 21 requirement, as with the '34 Act, to which
- 22 criminal consequences can possibly attach, that
- falls squarely inside a handful of cases where
- the Court has proved exactly that.
- 25 So I think the Court can set aside the

- 1 tougher case than this one where Congress
- 2 hasn't defined the elements of the offense and
- 3 fixed the punishment itself but left those
- 4 things to the executive branch.
- I do want to say just a word about the
- 6 harms here before I sit down so that we -- we
- 7 all understand what's in play. Eighteen
- 8 jurisdictions have substantially implemented
- 9 SORNA. Of the remaining 32 states, 26 of them
- 10 have taken federal funds and are attempting to
- substantially implement, but they're not there
- 12 yet.
- 13 If Petitioner prevails, I believe,
- 14 though Petitioner's briefs don't say, that all
- of their arguments translate not just from the
- 16 pre-Act offender clause but also to the
- 17 pre-implementation clause. And if that's
- 18 right, there will be no federal duty to
- 19 register in the 32 states that haven't
- 20 substantially implemented.
- 21 As a matter of federal law, more than
- 22 half the country will be a sex offender
- 23 registration-free zone. Even in the remaining
- 24 18 states, they will not be picking up new
- 25 pre-Act offenders who come into contact with

- 1 the justice system because there will no longer
- 2 be a duty to register.
- All told, our best estimate is that
- 4 we'll lose a couple of thousand people out of
- 5 the registries every month, and that's not even
- 6 including tribal areas, where we wouldn't be
- 7 able to get at non-tribal members.
- And, of course, some substantial
- 9 portion of the 4,000 convictions at issue would
- 10 be in -- in -- in jeopardy of being vacated
- 11 either on direct or collateral review.
- 12 SORNA's efficacy, if Petitioner
- prevails, will not just be sharply curtailed.
- 14 It will arguably be thoroughly gutted as -- as
- 15 a matter of how this federal law works.
- 16 And if it is possible, and we think it
- is not just possible but the most natural
- interpretation of the Attorney General's
- 19 authority to say this is a narrow authority, to
- specify the applicability of requirements in an
- on/off way in order to get people into the
- 22 system, and that interpretation avoids
- 23 constitutional problems, right, it's
- constitutional, if we read it to say do it to
- 25 the extent you can, then, as Petitioner

- 1 concedes, I think if that's -- if it's possible
- 2 to read the statute that way, that's
- 3 constitutional and that's what we would urge
- 4 the Court to do.
- If there are no further questions.
- 6 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr.
- 7 Wall.
- 8 Ms. Baumgartel, you have four minutes
- 9 remaining.
- 10 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF SARAH BAUMGARTEL
- 11 ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER
- MS. BAUMGARTEL: Thank you.
- Just to pick up where my friend left
- off, I want to emphasize that prior to SORNA's
- 15 enactment, every single state had an existing
- sex offender registry and those will continue
- 17 to exist and to require the registration of
- offenders, regardless of what happens with
- 19 SORNA.
- 20 Individuals like Petitioner were
- 21 required to register under existing state law,
- and they will still be required to register.
- 23 This was a law whose retroactive application
- 24 was opposed by the states, which is part of the
- reason why only 18 states have implemented it.

- 1 States spoke out against the retroactive
- 2 application of the law before the Attorney
- 3 General made his determination.
- 4 And so states themselves, who are the
- 5 experts in this area having run registration
- 6 systems for years, don't want this Act to be
- 7 fully retroactive.
- 8 My friend emphasized that this
- 9 delegation was all about practicality, but the
- 10 reality is, is that the Attorney General's
- 11 promulgated rule does not account for
- 12 practicality in any way, which is further
- 13 evidence for this Court that to the extent
- 14 feasible was not the standard of this
- 15 delegation.
- 16 That is not the standard that exists
- in the text. It is not the intelligible
- 18 principle that was found by any circuit court
- 19 to consider this issue. And it was not even
- the intelligible principle that the Attorney
- 21 General himself said that he was acting
- 22 pursuant to when he issued his regulation.
- In his final regulation, he said that
- 24 Congress delegated to him, and I quote, "the
- 25 discretion to apply SORNA's requirements to sex

- offenders to the extent that he determines that
- the public benefits of doing so outweigh any
- 3 adverse costs."
- 4 So the Attorney General believed that
- 5 his discretion was to essentially undertake the
- 6 fundamental policy determination as to whether
- 7 the costs outweigh the benefits. He did not
- 8 view this as an issue of feasibility or
- 9 practicality.
- 10 Finally, I'd just like to emphasize
- 11 the special nature of this delegation. This is
- 12 not licensing. This is not civil rule-making.
- 13 This is the retroactive application of criminal
- 14 law penalties that affect individual liberty
- interests in the most profound way.
- 16 This is the area where the
- 17 Constitution specifies that there must be a
- division between the law-maker and between the
- 19 executive. And for that reason, this
- 20 delegation is unconstitutional.
- 21 Thank you.
- 22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
- 23 counsel. The case is submitted.
- 24 (Whereupon, at 10:59 a.m., the case
- was submitted.)

act [31] 11:7,10,13,15,22 12:13 15: arguably [2] 17:13 59:14 1 12 **19**:9,20,23 **20**:4,6 **21**:4 **23**:12, argue [1] 24:13 10:03 [2] 1:15 3:2 23 24:4,18 30:7 31:13 33:9 38:11 arguing [2] 45:13 50:5 10:59 [1] 62:24 **44**:9 **46**:20,22 **52**:22 **54**:2,2 **56**:4, 100 [1] 12:16 17 **57**:21 **61**:6 100,000 [1] 26:23 acting [1] 61:21 10b-5 [3] 7:3,4,25 activity [2] 46:21 47:2 11a [1] 30:16 acts [1] 53:9 12 [1] 49:6 actually [4] 9:4 13:23 44:21,21 arguments [1] 58:15 15 [1] 42:11 add [1] 53:17 around [1] 20:14 17-6086 [1] 3:4 adding [1] 35:20 art [1] 14:13 18 [2] 58:24 60:25 address [3] 13:21 30:13 51:8 articulated [1] 25:8 1870s [1] 17:22 addressed [1] 22:20 as-applied [2] 40:16.23 1996 [1] 5:6 addresses [2] 14:18 31:16 aside [1] 57:25 2 addressing [2] 35:24 55:11 aspect [1] 14:19 adverse [1] 62:3 assign [1] 29:4 2 [1] 1:11 affect [1] 62:14 assist [1] 14:24 20 [1] 6:11 affected [1] 38:3 assume [1] 35:11 200.000 [2] 26:6.23 afforded [2] 20:23 21:9 attach [2] 46:9 57:22 2007 [1] 40:5 AG [4] 23:10,12,17 24:18 attainder [1] 43:13 2010 [1] 40:6 agencies [2] 29:19 43:5 attempting [1] 58:10 2012 [1] 40:18 agency [3] 22:22 29:4 52:4 2018 [1] 1:11 aggravating [1] 44:19 20901 [2] 4:15 55:4 agnostic [1] 54:10 20913(d [1] 19:6 ago [2] 39:16 40:2 25 [1] 42:11 agree [4] 12:16 24:1,5,7 26 [1] 58:9 aiming [1] 52:17 2913(a [1] 55:9 air [1] 25:14 **40**:5,10 **41**:11,17,20 **42**:4,5,9,20 3 akin [1] 21:10 ALITO [5] 6:14 8:25 16:25 17:25 3 [1] 2:4 19 **59**:18 **61**:2,10,20 **62**:4 **30** [4] **2**:7 **6**:11 **39**:16 **40**:1 allocated [1] 44:15 authority [18] 6:6,16 12:22 18:16 300,000 [7] 8:3,7,18 25:23 26:5,11 allowed [2] 16:8 38:13 32 [2] 58:9,19 although [1] 25:7 10 47:1 53:11.14 54:7 55:11 59: 34 [2] 56:17 57:21 ambiguous [2] 12:21 13:1 19 19 American [4] 17:11 22:21 26:9.19 authorizes [1] 18:2 3a [1] 30:9 among [2] 14:21 25:23 availability [2] 44:17 46:5 amount [1] 26:20 Avent [1] 28:1 4.000 [1] 59:9 anchored [3] 49:13 55:18 56:4 **AVERY** [1] 1:3 40 [1] 6:11 another [3] 8:1 16:7 48:1 avoid [1] 42:1 40-something [1] 14:18 answer [4] 29:14 36:23 38:15 50: avoids [1] 59:22 away [1] 54:16 5 answering [1] 8:18 5a [1] 30:16 В apart [1] 56:5 6 appear [1] 4:11 6 40:25 **60** [1] **2:**10 APPEARANCES [1] 1:17 banking [1] 55:21 appendix [1] 30:10 7 bar [1] 51:5 applicability [6] 32:15 34:20 36:2 barriers [1] 32:13 768 [1] 44:25 **49**:18 **50**:11 **59**:20 based [2] 35:22 54:3 application [4] 6:17 60:23 61:2 9 basic [2] 46:2 56:10 **62**:13 90s [1] 5:6 basically [3] 10:4 20:10 45:13 applied [6] 6:7 9:22 19:10,11,12 913(d [4] 30:17,24 35:19 55:10 basis [2] 41:21 50:12 50:7 Α applies [3] 19:20 46:19,22 apply [17] 4:7 5:17 6:10 9:20,23 19: a.m [3] 1:15 3:2 62:24 24 20:3,8,19 21:21,23 23:12 33: able [2] 40:17 59:7 10 **37**:25 **38**:24 **47**:5 **61**:25 above-entitled [1] 1:13 applying [1] 38:5 absolutely [2] 6:12 8:21 18 24:7,21 25:3 26:8,12,18 27:2,9 approached [1] 5:21 accept [1] 50:15 12 28:12,23 29:13 42:23 60:8,10, appropriate [3] 7:8 56:22 57:5 accepted [1] 35:1

approved [1] 4:2

areas [2] 48:5 59:6

approximately [1] 26:5

area [3] 25:13 61:5 62:16

believed [1] 62:4 benefits [2] 62:2.7 benzene [1] 25:9 argument [27] 1:14 2:2,5,8 3:4,7 7 best [6] 23:25 24:3,25 30:7 31:8 20 11:23 12:20 15:18 16:19 17:5, 8 **22**:14 **30**:1 **32**:20,22 **35**:1 **37**:13 between [5] 7:15 18:5 28:8 62:18, 44:3,7 45:17,18,19 51:5 56:10 60: bill [2] 15:6 43:12 bit [1] 49:25 blank [1] 16:14 body [7] 7:11,16,17 17:16,20,23 25: 18 BOP's [1] 40:19 both [9] 9:21 10:23 13:11,21 15:8 40:19 44:4.10 54:9 bother [1] 38:19 bound [1] 49:12 bounds [1] 32:7 boy [1] 46:4 branch [8] 31:6 42:25 44:8,14,15 **47**:19.24 **58**:4 Attorney [77] 4:3 5:16 6:6,13,15 7: breathing [1] 34:12 12.19 9:8.14.21 12:22 15:24 16:6. BREYER [21] 7:1.18.23 8:12.18 25: 15 18:2.24 19:8.22 20:2.9.23 21:3. 21 **26**:10.15.22 **27**:4.10 **42**:19.22 9,17,24 23:20 25:5 28:5 30:25 31: **44**:5 **45**:4,7,11,22 **50**:1 **56**:9 **57**:9 24 **32**:9 **33**:1,2,4,12,14,19 **34**:7,9 Bridge [5] 38:11 39:12 47:14,24 35:14 36:2,12,19 37:11,17 38:7,9 bridges [3] 38:12 47:23 48:3 **46**:19 **48**:2 **49**:19 **50**:2,9,17 **51**:12 brief [4] 30:10 34:16 35:10 56:8 **52**:11,18 **53**:12 **54**:4,18 **57**:1,4,16, briefed [1] 36:23 briefs [2] 8:3 58:14 bring [2] 40:16 49:1 19:9.18 30:25 34:19 36:13.21 45: brings [1] 47:20 broad [6] 9:6 17:13,15 19:17 52:6 **55:**8 broader [1] 37:22 broadly [2] 13:16 30:14 burdensome [1] 3:14 busy [1] 8:7 button [1] 35:13 C cache [1] 45:24 call [1] 24:15 back [6] 6:11 9:24 16:23 18:13 23: came [3] 1:13 34:17 41:11 cannot [4] 23:19 42:5 43:18 56:20 captured [3] 43:12,13,14 careful [2] 43:17,17 carried [1] 40:6 Case [15] 3:4 4:19 17:7 21:19 25:9 **28**:9 **33**:18 **38**:19 **50**:3 **52**:14 **55**: 19 56:12 58:1 62:23.24 cases [14] 6:2 17:11 22:6 27:24 28: **BAUMGARTEL** [54] 1:18 2:3.9 3: 9 31:10.19 37:23 49:15 51:1.10 6,7,9 **4**:10,18 **5**:14 **6**:21 **7**:9,21 **8**:9, 52:1 55:6 57:23 categories [6] 10:20 21:5 26:25 14,21 **9**:2,18 **11**:2,12,17 **12**:15 **13**: 20 14:3,6 16:3,17,20 17:6 18:7,11 27:5,7,11 category [1] 31:19 **19**:4,25 **20**:6,20 **21**:6 **22**:3,10 **23**: caveat [1] 35:21

cede [1] 16:20

32:6 46:22

Central [1] 55:6

certain [4] 5:25 28:24 32:1 43:25

certainly [6] 17:7 18:7.11 31:25

60:11

behalf [7] 1:18 2:4,7,10 3:8 30:2

believe [3] 14:7 36:14 58:13

accomplish [1] 54:22

across-the-board [1] 40:7

account [1] 61:11

ACLU's [1] 37:12

certification [2] 17:19.20 challenge [1] 40:16 challenges [1] 27:21 change [1] 33:12 changed [3] 33:15,20 34:8 changes [1] 33:24 charged [1] 40:12 check [1] 16:14 CHIEF [22] 3:3.9 4:5 9:25 16:9 19: 19 **20:**1.15 **21:**2 **25:**20 **29:**23 **30:**3 **31**:11.21 **32**:24 **46**:17 **47**:7.11.22 **50:**3 **60:**6 **62:**22 Chinese [1] 33:10 choices [2] 28:25 29:21 chosen [1] 33:11 circuit [1] 61:18 cites [1] 4:13 civil [15] 14:23 17:1,3 18:9 27:21 28:3 29:7,10 46:7,16 48:10 50:8 **51**:24 **57**:20 **62**:12 class [1] 16:5 classes [1] 19:15 classic [2] 31:5 49:16 clause [4] 43:13.14 58:16.17 clean [1] 39:16 clear [3] 11:6 35:17 37:24 clearly [2] 12:12 34:21 clemency [1] 21:18 closer [5] 17:7 21:7,15,17 49:16 collateral [1] 59:11 colleagues [1] 55:1 colloquy [1] 41:1 combination [1] 3:23 combine [1] 43:9 combines [1] 3:16 come [7] 5:9 34:5 37:18 49:2 52:3 **54:**16 **58:**25 comes [1] 18:13 coming [1] 14:9 command [1] 25:5 commercial [1] 46:21 Commission [1] 8:1 commitment [1] 14:23 committed [2] 12:11 54:12 common [1] 13:13 commonplace [1] 46:10 compare [1] 17:25 comply [4] 10:21 30:22,23 55:12 comprehensive [12] 10:13 14:8. 10,13,15 **15**:2 **30**:13 **31**:13,14,22 **37**:18 **55**:7 comprehensiveness [6] 10:9,23 **12**:14 **13**:9,21 **32**:24 comprise [1] 15:1 conceded [1] 31:7 concedes [1] 60:1 conceding [1] 26:13 concern [1] 55:14 concerns [2] 7:13 57:3 concisely [1] 16:19 conditioned [1] 5:24 conduct [2] 45:2 47:20 conflict [1] 50:4 confronted [1] 27:20

Congress [50] 5:15,18,21,23 6:2,4, 23 **9:**9,14,17,19 **13:**23 **18:**16,19 20:7,13,22 21:8 22:19 23:10,11, 20 27:5,7 28:15 29:1,2,18 32:1 35: 3 37:6,14,24 38:4,19,24 39:5 41:8 **42**:10 **45**:2 **46**:1 **48**:24 **52**:10,24 **53**:11 **54**:10,17 **55**:14 **58**:1 **61**:24 Congress's [2] 41:22 42:17 congressional [2] 8:15 18:12 consequences [4] 20:16,17,21 consider [2] 9:6 61:19 consideration [2] 18:4 55:14 considerations [1] 10:7 considered [1] 44:2 consistent [2] 5:20 24:16 constant [1] 34:14 Constitution [3] 3:18 7:15 62:17 constitutional [9] 20:12 21:8,16 **23**:1 **25**:4 **42**:2 **59**:23,24 **60**:3 constitutionality [1] 22:2 constraint [1] 10:25 construction [5] 13:24 22:16.23. 25 23:3 construe [1] 41:24 Consumer [1] 8:1 contact [1] 58:25 contain [1] 11:20 contained [1] 4:15 contemplate [1] 27:18 contemplated [2] 19:5,16 contemplates [1] 27:14 content [2] 11:21 52:5 context [11] 12:7.24 14:17 17:24 **18**:9 **22**:18 **25**:11 **44**:4 **45**:23 **50**:8. contextual [1] 22:8 continue [1] 60:16 contravention [2] 7:7 56:21 controlled [2] 38:10 44:9 controls [1] 44:13 convenience [1] 17:18 converge [1] 7:14 convicted [4] 10:17 13:17 15:11 convictions [1] 59:9 core [1] 52:21 correct [2] 4:18 34:9 cost [2] 25:14.25 costs [2] 62:3.7 counsel [2] 29:24 62:23 country [1] 58:22 couple [1] 59:4 course [5] 13:5,23 40:17 49:21 59: COURT [51] 1:1,14 3:10,23 4:2 5: 15 **6**:5 **8**:7 **9**:3,6 **11**:5,8,18 **12**:23 **16**:8 **17**:12 **19**:5.13 **22**:12.15.20. 24 26:9.19 27:15 30:4 34:24 35: 25 **36**:16.22 **37**:1 **41**:5.23 **44**:20. 23 49:22 50:16.20.25 51:8 52:15 **53**:23 **54**:1 **55**:5.20.22 **57**:24.25 60:4 61:13.18 Court's [6] 7:13 23:19 31:10 37:23

44:2 52:1 covered [7] 5:12 46:21 47:2,4 52: 20.20.23 covers [2] 31:15 48:3 crafted [1] 30:18 create [2] 5:11 30:19 created [2] 45:3 51:20 creation [1] 51:14 crime [2] 51:21 57:2 crimes [2] 9:10 16 criminal [30] 3:13.16 16:10.12 17: 4 20:19 27:14.18.22 28:6.10 44:2. 22 45:2,3 46:8,12,14 48:8 50:11, 16 **51**:1,14 **52**:17 **53**:3,5,9 **57**:17, 22 62:13 critical [1] 27:13 cross [1] 50:20 curtailed [1] 59:13 custody [1] 40:19

D D.C [2] 1:10,21 danger [3] 43:9,12,15 day [3] 41:2 49:2,8 dealing [2] 15:23 49:6 death [2] 44:17 46:5 decide [10] 6:7 9:22 19:9 31:18.24 **33**:2.3.5 **48**:4 **50**:10 decided [1] 36:11 decides [1] 15:24 deciding [1] 46:19 decision [5] 5:18 20:18,22 21:9 decisions [3] 18:17,20 25:18 declined [1] 5:18 default [3] 34:25 35:2 36:17 defend [1] 38:25 defending [2] 37:20 38:16

defined [4] 32:7 48:8 51:21 58:2 defines [3] 9:9 30:14 45:1 defining [6] 44:10,21 46:14 57:16, 17,20 definite [2] 54:16 55:24 definition [5] 10:14 13:22 15:9 53: 4 55:8 degree [1] 29:9 delegate [5] 25:19 27:5 29:4 44:8 52:18

deferring [1] 43:25

define [2] 46:5 53:3

defies [1] 54:9

delegated [5] 3:25 8:16 26:21 29: 17 61:24 delegation [32] 3:11,20,21,22 6: 22 7:13,22 8:24 9:5 10:19 11:10, 19 12:21 16:8 18:6,6,15 19:7 22:5,

23 24:5 25:2 27:21 28:3 29:8 37: 22 38:3 50:8 61:9,15 62:11,20 delegations [9] 4:1 8:20,25 9:3 17:13 37:1 44:24,25 50:16 demanded [1] 13:9

demands [1] 12:14 Department [2] 1:21 43:8 depends [1] 26:21

Deputy [1] 1:20 derived [1] 4:12 design [2] 14:22 29:5 designed [2] 3:18 13:14 despite [1] 18:20 detailed [2] 9:19 18:20 details [1] 29:19 determination [3] 6:9 61:3 62:6 determine [4] 5:16 6:16 16:16 33: determines [3] 19:23 20:7 62:1 develop [1] 49:25 device [4] 7:6 56:18,19 57:3 devise [1] 18:3 difference [6] 18:5,12 28:8 38:2 **47**:9 **57**:5 differences [1] 24:14 different [20] 7:11 13:2 14:16 18: 25 19:1,8,14,15 24:8 26:24 28:13 **34:**25 **38:**8 **39:**10 **43:**1,2,4 **46:**18 47:16 48:2 difficult [2] 38:21 39:6 difficulties [1] 23:16 direct [1] 59:11 directly [1] 51:2 disagree [2] 41:21 42:17 disagreed [1] 34:24 disagrees [1] 36:16 discerned [1] 55:22 discerning [1] 53:20 discretion [7] 4:4 21:11,18,24 29: 9 61:25 62:5 discussion [1] 52:14 dispute [1] 48:21 dissent [2] 13:12 21:14 dissenting [2] 13:5,7 distinctions [1] 7:10 distinguished [1] 3:21 distinguishes [1] 8:24 distinguishing [1] 25:23 division [1] 62:18 **DNA** [1] 48:19 Doctrine [3] 6:20 45:14 56:14 doing 5 6:4 15:19 37:5 53:22 62: done [4] 9:16 44:23 51:9,20 doubt [1] 41:23 down [2] 47:14 58:6 drew [1] 17:15 drug [1] 47:12 drugs [1] 38:10 due [5] 3:23 7:13 40:16 45:17,25

duty [5] 33:21 34:5,13 58:18 59:2

each [2] 6:1 9:2 early [1] 5:6 easy [2] 13:25 28:17 effect [1] 4:23 efficacy [1] 59:12 Eighteen [1] 58:7 either [5] 15:11 26:16 47:19 55:1 59:11 elements [3] 51:21 57:16 58:2

elsewhere [1] 12:4 emphasize [2] 60:14 62:10 emphasized [2] 11:5 61:8 enacted [2] 5:23 37:14 enactment [4] 4:22 15:11 40:4 60: end [3] 41:2 49:8 56:11 enforcement [1] 14:24 engaged [1] 54:1 enough [2] 52:2,3 environment [1] 25:15 equipped [1] 48:23 equivalent [2] 38:23 56:19 especially [4] 8:10,12 43:17 52:17 ESQ [4] 1:18 2:3,6,9 essence [1] 53:1 essential [1] 22:19 essentially [4] 12:1 19:7 22:11 62: established [2] 17:16,19 estimate [1] 59:3 even [23] 9:5 15:25 16:1.4 17:11. 14 20:15 21:6 6 38:6 40:13 41:7 **44**:16 **46**:25 **47**:5 **49**:19.21 **51**:4 **52**:2 **56**:4 **58**:23 **59**:5 **61**:19 everybody [4] 10:8 34:22 35:3,7 everyone [1] 23:17 everything [1] 31:15 everything's [1] 56:25 evidence [1] 61:13 ex [1] 43:13 exacerbates [1] 7:22 exact [1] 51:4 exactly [7] 11:22 35:1,18 44:6 49: 6 53:22 57:24 exaggeration [1] 8:4 example [5] 4:24 8:25 17:17 19:14 28:13 examples [1] 5:11 except [1] 24:19 exceptions [1] 41:14 executive [21] 3:17 31:5,6 37:5 42: 25 44:1,8,15,21,23 45:1,9 46:4 47: 19,23 **49**:16 **54**:5 **57**:15,20 **58**:4 62:19 executive's [1] 46:3 exempt [1] 23:17 exemptions [3] 20:10 21:1,4 exercise [5] 4:3 23:1 36:20 46:3. 21 exercised [1] 53:14 exercising [3] 23:4 47:1 54:7 exist [1] 60:17 existed [1] 4:24 existence [1] 5:5 existing [8] 4:20 5:1 17:16,23 30: 11 32:11 60:15,21 exists [1] 61:16 expand [1] 3:13 expert [1] 57:6 experts [1] 61:5 explicitly [2] 15:8,10 express [1] 55:4 expressed [1] 53:13

extend [1] 6:11 extent [11] 4:8 11:7 24:10,11,12,17 25:7 57:12 59:25 61:13 62:1 extremely [1] 18:20

extremely [1] 18:20 F face [2] 28:6 55:12 faced [1] 51:4 faces [1] 55:24 fact [6] 8:5 11:4 26:2 27:13 33:14 35:12 facto [1] 43:14 factors [2] 27:12 44:19 Fahey [5] 39:11 49:11,15 53:23 55: failed [1] 40:21 failure [2] 9:13 40:12 fair [1] 37:4 fairly [1] 47:1 fairness [1] 6:18 fall [2] 8:5 32:11 falls [4] 7:19,20 36:25 57:23 famous [1] 7:2 far [3] 10:5 55:17,18 fashion [1] 21:21 feasibility [14] 10:6,10,18,24 13: 19 **18**:4 **22**:7 **23**:16 **25**:10 **35**:23 41:21 50:5 53:17 62:8 feasible [10] 4:9 19:24 20:3 24:10. 11,17 25:7 37:18 42:14 61:14 feature [1] 46:10 federal [9] 5:9,12 14:24 38:14 47: 18 58:10,18,21 59:15 few [4] 7:10 8:16 11:3 42:12 file [1] 46:11 filing [1] 46:12 fill [1] 29:19 final [2] 40:6 61:23 Finally [1] 62:10 find [2] 24:20 34:1 findings [2] 30:11 55:3 finds [1] 57:4 fine [1] 29:18 firm [1] 54:16 first [8] 3:4 8:16 20:22,24 23:7 30: 9 39:18 53:11 fixed [4] 45:6 48:9 51:23 58:3 fixing [1] 51:14 fleshing [2] 37:5 41:4 flexibility [1] 10:24 folded [1] 23:7 forbid [1] 7:5 force [1] 21:21 formulations [1] 24:9 FORNA [1] 19:1 forth [2] 9:20 37:6

forward [8] 30:19 32:9 34:5,13 37:

found [4] 38:4 44:19 52:25 61:18

25 38:6 40:6 47:17

framework [1] 18:21

fraudulent [1] 56:19

friend [3] 24:8 60:13 61:8

four [1] 60:8

full [1] 6:6

fully [1] 61:7 fun [2] 28:17,23 function [2] 31:5 49:17 functions [1] 43:1 fundamental [6] 25:16 28:25 29: 21 52:16,19 62:6 funding [1] 5:25 funds [1] 58:10 further [2] 60:5 61:12

G

Gallery [1] 14:13 gave [5] 6:6 9:1 19:7 20:8 40:14 General [80] 1:20 5:16 6:6.13.15 7: 12.19 **9**:9.14.21 **11**:22 **12**:23 **15**:3. 22.24 16:6.15 18:2.24 19:8.22 20: 2.9.24 **21:**3.10.17.24 **23:**20 **25:**5 **28**:5 **30**:25 **31**:24 **32**:10 **33**:2,3,4, 12,14,19 34:7,9 35:14 36:2,19 37: 17,23 **38**:6,7,9 **39**:9 **41**:3,6,11,17, 20 42:4,5,9,21 46:19,22 48:2 49: 20 50:10,17 51:12 52:11,19 53:12 **54**:4,18 **56**:3 **57**:1,4,16,19 **61**:3,21 General's [7] 4:3 36:13 40:5.10 **50:**2 **59:**18 **61:**10 generally [1] 13:1 gets [5] 9:24 31:24 33:2 39:19 52: GINSBURG [10] 4:14 5:8 9:7 16: 18 **18:**23 **21:**14 **30:**6 **39:**13,25 **40:** give [6] 17:24 27:24 29:9 30:25 31: Given [10] 6:22 9:21 11:21 22:7 33 13 **40**:11 **42**:5,6 **45**:9 **53**:11 gives [2] 12:22 18:2 gnawing [1] 56:10 GORSUCH [23] 15:14.17 16:4 32: 16.19 **33:**23 **34:**3.7 **35:**11 **37:**9.12. 21 38:1.15.22.25 41:1 49:24 50: 19.22 **51**:16.22 **52**:16 Gorsuch's [1] 36:10 qot [6] 32:5 39:23 46:11 48:25 49: 12 56:2 governed [2] 11:21 12:3 government [10] 4:6,13 11:23 32: 20,21,22 33:4,8,11 47:18 government's [5] 10:3 12:19 22: 14 30:10 33:17 governs [1] 48:4 grant [5] 19:17 20:9 51:7 53:14 55: granting [1] 21:1 grants [1] 3:11 grave [1] 39:23 graze [2] 38:14 47:15 greater [1] 27:16 Grimaud 8 27:25 38:13 39:11 49: 11,15 **51**:2 **53**:23 **55**:21

guess [4] 15:13,14,17 56:12

guidance [11] 6:12,23 8:15 18:12

20:13,25 26:20 27:16 34:8 36:19

guide [1] 4:3 GUNDY [2] 1:3 3:5 gutted [1] 59:14

Н

half [3] 38:2 50:11 58:22 Hampton [1] 11:4 handful [1] 57:23 happen [1] 31:23 happens [1] 60:18 harms [1] 58:6 harsh [2] 8:6.10 hear [2] 3:3 16:6 heiaht [1] 47:25 heightened [1] 50:18 held [3] 5:15 6:5 41:5 **HERMAN** [1] 1:3 higher [1] 51:6 himself [1] 61:21 history [4] 12:24 54:15,24 56:5 Holder [1] 34:8 holding [1] 47:13 honest [1] 54:8 Honor [9] 4:10 6:21 8:9 12:15 14:6 26:13 27:2 28:24 29:13 House [1] 15:6 however [1] 21:19 hundreds [3] 3:15 48:25 54:11 hypothetical [2] 24:3 35:12

idea [3] 10:18 11:18 18:14 **III** [1] **39**:22 illegal [1] 44:10 imagine [4] 7:3 23:9,14 39:6 imagined [1] 23:17 immediate [1] 10:7 implement [3] 29:20 31:1 58:11 implementation [2] 31:4 49:9 implemented [3] 58:8,20 60:25 important [3] 4:19 7:14 35:10 importantly [2] 38:8 39:10 impose [1] 3:14 imposition [2] 22:25 23:3 impossible [2] 10:8 30:21 improper [1] 18:6 inability [1] **55**:12 include [3] 13:16 27:13 33:5 included [3] 6:10 15:9 16:5 including [2] 12:7 59:6 inclusive [1] 55:7 inconsistency [1] 34:17 indeed [1] 23:9 indicate [1] 52:1 indicated [1] 32:25 **indication** [1] **15:**3 indirectly [1] 51:2 individual [9] 9:11 10:16,16,16 13:

17 **18**:4 **34**:4,12 **62**:14

Industrial [1] 25:8

industry [1] 55:21

industries [1] 17:21

inform [2] 45:20 46:3

individuals [3] 3:16 33:21 60:20

48.7

information [3] 9:12 14:20 48:19 informed [2] 40:18 45:14 initial [3] 5:18 6:8 21:9 inside [5] 36:25 41:7 49:11 52:4 **57**:23 insisted [1] 13:15 instance [1] 20:22 instances [1] 46:25 instead [2] 50:5 56:24 intelligent [1] 55:17 intelligible [10] 11:5 18:14 22:18, 20 23:18 49:12 53:24 56:3 61:17. intended [2] 23:10.12

intention [1] 53:13 interacting [1] 49:7 interest [13] 6:25 7:8,25 17:18 25:

25 37:4,19 50:4,6,13 51:17 52:7 56:23

interested [1] 56:15 interests [2] 25:17 62:15 interim [1] 40:5 Internet [1] 14:21 interpret [1] 12:25 interpretation [16] 12:2,4,17,20

15:20 **22**:12 **24**:1,3,4,9 **25**:1 **42**:1 43:21 44:1 59:18,22

interpreted [1] 30:8 interpreting [2] 23:25 45:19 interpretive [1] 54:2 involved [1] 51:2 involving [1] 50:17 IRS [2] 46:10 13 isn't [3] 21:3 27:19 53:4

issue [6] 12:17 21:3 52:16 59:9 61: 19 62:8

issued [1] 61:22 issues [2] 31:3 49:3 items [1] 31:12

itself [15] 10:20 11:7,10 13:1 18:14, 16 **19**:1 **22**:19,22 **23**:2,23 **29**:1 **43**:

25 **52:**11 **58:**3

J

J.W [1] 11:4 Jackson [1] 55:20 jail [1] 29:12 JEFFREY [3] 1:20 2:6 30:1 ieopardy [1] 59:10 iob [2] 32:10 43:16 ioined [1] 21:13 judgment [3] 42:17 49:10 50:13 iudaments [8] 32:2 37:7 41:9.20. 22 46:2 48:12 52:10 jurisdictions [2] 14:21 58:8 Justice [127] 1:21 3:3,9 4:5,14 5:8 6:14 7:1,18,23 8:12,17,18,23,25 9: 7,24,25 **11**:9,14,25 **12**:9,10 **13**:4,6 **14:**1,4 **15:**13,14,15,17 **16:**4,18,22, 25 **17**:25 **18**:9,23 **19**:19 **20**:1,15 21:2,13,13,25 22:4,8 23:6,22,24 **24**:15.23 **25**:7.21 **26**:10.15.22 **27**: 4.10.19 28:16 29:6.23 30:3 31:11.

21 32:16,19,25 33:23 34:3,7 35:6,

9,11,18,20 36:6,9,10 37:9,12,21 **38**:1,15,22,25 **39**:13,25 **40**:9 **41**:1, 10 42:3,19,22 43:8 44:5 45:4,7,11, 22 **46**:17 **47**:7,11,22 **49**:24,25 **50**: 19,22 **51**:16,22 **52**:8,13,16 **53**:7,8, 16,19,21 **54**:20,23 **55**:20 **56**:9 **57**: 9 59:1 60:6 62:22 Justices [2] 13:7 30:6

KAGAN [20] 9:24 11:9,14,25 13:6 14:1.4 15:13.15 16:22 22:8 23:24 24:15.23 27:19 28:16 29:6 30:6 **41**:10 **42**:3 kev [1] 18:17 kind 5 31:4 46:11 47:16 48:7 50:

kinds [1] 43:1 Kollock [5] 27:25 28:12 39:11 53: 23 55:25

label [3] 28:14 29:3,5

labels [1] 28:18 lack 3 3:24 17:10 35:22 land [2] 38:14 47:15 language [7] 4:11 10:2 32:18 36:3 **37:**16 **42:**6,6 last [2] 16:13 49:6 Laughter [3] 16:21,24 26:17 law [31] 4:8 5:1 6:2,7 9:22 14:24 **16**:2,10 **17**:14,16,20,23 **43**:11,18 **46**:10,14,19 **47**:4,5,21 **48**:3 **50**:11 **52**:14.18.22 **58**:21 **59**:15 **60**:21.23 **61**:2 **62**:14 law-maker [1] 62:18 law-making [1] 3:17

lawful [1] 47:13 lawmaker [1] 7:16 laws [3] 3:13 16:12 20:19 lavs [1] 41:3 left [7] 5:15 21:23 40:19 52:11 55: 2 58:3 60:13

legislate [2] 38:20 39:5 legislation [1] 5:24 legislative [14] 11:6,9,13,15 12:24

18:16,17 **23**:2,5 **25**:18 **32**:1 **54**:15, 24 56:5 legislature [1] 53:3

liability [3] 17:2,3,4 liberty [6] 9:15 25:16 26:2 43:15 45:15 62:14

liberty-protecting [2] 45:18,19

licensing [2] 17:19 62:12 life [1] 42:11 lifetime [2] 3:14 32:6

Light [1] **17**:12 likely [2] 20:12 25:3 limitations [2] 22:1 23:15

limited [1] 20:9 limiting [3] 22:23,25 23:3

limits [1] 22:6 lines [1] 6:24 links [1] 42:11 list [2] 4:14.16 listed [1] 22:8 literally [1] 30:21 little [2] 34:11 49:25 lives [1] 41:17 long [4] 10:25 32:3 45:2 51:19 longer [1] 59:1 look [13] 7:24 10:19 12:5.6.9.11 30: 17 **42**:9 **44**:7 **46**:7 **48**:15.24 **51**:10 looked [3] 37:2 54:2 55:20

lookina [3] 11:8 12:13 48:24 looks [1] 12:23 lose [1] 59:4 lot [4] 41:9 48:17 52:10.13 Loving [7] 39:11 44:16,25 46:6 51:

3 **53**:24 **55**:25

М made [18] 6:2 14:15 15:8 17:21 18: 17,19 **20:**22 **21:**8,14 **32:**1,21 **37:**7 **41**:9 **44**:6 **46**:2 **48**:11 **52**:10 **61**:3 majority [2] 5:2 13:11 manipulative [3] 7:5 56:18 57:3 manner [1] 33:10 many [6] 5:5 14:9 32:10 42:25 53: 25 54:17 Marvland [1] 5:1 matter [11] 1:13 6:22 27:3 34:18 **35**:2 **36**:13 **57**:9.10.11 **58**:21 **59**: matters [3] 28:11 33:16 57:13 maximum [6] 4:8 24:10,17 25:6 35:22 53:17 mean [11] 7:3 9:8 14:14 27:5,23 31:14 36:25 46:24 47:23 49:10 56: meaning [1] 11:10 meanings [1] 14:16 means [8] 10:15 25:10 31:15 32:5 34:21 36:14.15 43:16 meant [2] 15:4 54:6 medium [1] 26:3 members [1] 59:7 mention [1] 23:7 mentioned [1] 31:12 menu [1] 33:10 merit [1] 50:18 might [9] 9:6 10:19 19:14 23:15,21 38:25 50:7 53:8 57:11 million [2] 38:2 50:12 mimicked [1] 38:17 mind [5] 33:13.15.20 42:24 56:16 minutes [1] 60:8 mirrored [1] 37:16 Mistretta [2] 46:6 51:3 moderated [2] 10:9,23 month [1] 59:5 moreover [1] 43:7 morning [2] 3:4 30:5

most [4] 7:1 41:25 59:17 62:15

Ms [49] 3:6.9 4:10.18 5:14 6:21 7:9.

21 8:9,14,21 9:2,18 11:2,12,17 12:

motor [1] 48:18

moved [1] 40:21

15 13:20 14:3.6 16:3.17.20 17:6 18:7,11 19:4,25 20:6,20 21:6 22:3, 10 23:18 24:7,21 25:3 26:8,12,18 **27**:2,9,12 **28**:12,23 **29**:13 **42**:23 60.8 12 much [8] 17:7 21:7,15 25:14 37:22 49:9.16 52:11 museum [1] 14:13 must [3] 16:12 29:1 62:17 muster [1] 39:7

narrow [4] 11:19 32:18 36:3 59:19 narrowed [1] 34:10 narrower [1] 52:12 narrowlv [1] 41:25 nation's [1] 3:12 national [6] 10:13 14:10,12 15:2 30:13 55:7 natural [1] 59:17 nature [5] 3:24,25 29:17 32:24 62: NBC [3] 17:11,17 55:6 necessary [1] 9:12 necessity [1] 17:18 need [3] 37:23 45:14 51:8 needed [1] 40:20 needs [4] 6:23 29:2 47:24 50:20 never [4] 12:5 33:20 51:3.9 New [6] 1:18,18 40:21 41:11 55:6 nine [2] 13:7 14:1 nobody [2] 40:13 46:13 Non-Delegation [9] 6:20 12:1 44: 3,13 **45**:13,21,23 **53**:2 **56**:13 non-tribal [1] 59:7 none [5] 4:16 5:11 9:18 33:5 53:24 nor [1] 4:12 normally [1] 15:19 norms [1] 55:21 note [1] 13:4 noted [1] 19:6 nothing [3] 6:3 33:3 51:11 notice [5] 39:19 40:4,11,14,23 noting [1] 13:22 notion [1] 54:16 nowhere [2] 24:22 44:19 number [3] 8:19 37:1 55:22 numerous [1] 27:23

0

obligations [2] 34:1,11 **obstruct** [2] **38:**11,12 obviously [2] 7:11 36:24 occur [1] 19:3 October [1] 1:11 odd [1] 45:23 offender [17] 4:21 5:19 6:1 7:6 10: 15 **13**:15.22 **14**:19 **15**:4.10 **30**:14 **39**:23 **40**:1 **55**:8 **58**:16,22 **60**:16 offenders [44] 4:16 5:2 6:10,18 9: 20,23 10:5,21 13:10 14:23 15:10, 23 18:19,25 19:10,11,12,16,21 20: 4,5,8 **21**:5,22 **24**:19 **25**:6 **30**:12,14,

19 31:2 32:11 33:1.5.6.7 34:2.5 37:16 38:18 41:15 54:17 58:25 60: 18 **62**:1 offense [11] 10:17 13:17 32:4 39: 16,24 **45**:3 **48**:9 **51**:14 **56**:20 **57**: 17 58:2 offenses [2] 32:2 54:12 official [3] 54:5 57:15.20 okay [7] 20:5 26:22 48:3 49:22 51: 18.18.22 oleomargarine [2] 28:14.18 on/off [4] 6:8 36:1.21 59:21 once [1] 32:7 one [19] 4:19 7:10 8:2.2 12:5.6 13: 12 14:5 22:11 23:16 30:21 31:12 **40**:13,24 **43**:3 **44**:14 **45**:24 **49**:2 only [9] 7:18 11:10 12:5 26:6 33: 25 35:22 39:21 42:12 60:25 opinion [6] 12:12 25:22 27:1,11 57:11 14 opposed [2] 45:25 60:24 opposite [3] 20:11 21:20 32:21 oral [5] 1:13 2:2.5 3:7 30:1 orally [1] 40:20 order [2] 22:1 59:21 other [12] 4:1 11:8 12:7 13:11 24: 18 28:9 41:21 43:5,6 44:14 50:6 55:23 otherwise [2] 29:20 53:12 ought [4] 26:7 42:18,18 51:5 out [13] 34:1 41:3 43:25 45:24 48: 25 49:4,5 53:25 54:20,23,24 59:4 61:1 outer [1] 49:12 outweigh [2] 62:2,7 over [2] 15:21 27:20 overboard [1] 41:13 own [2] 5:7 21:21

packaging [1] 29:3 PAGE [3] 2:2 35:8 44:24 pages [1] 30:16 painting [1] 14:14 Panama [1] 11:18 part [4] 7:6 31:17 56:9 60:24 particle [1] 25:14 particular [7] 21:5 29:3 43:9,15 46:20.20 48:5 particularly [2] 20:12 25:11 parts [1] 11:15 pass [1] 39:7 passed [1] 48:23 past [2] 4:16 5:22 penalize [1] 41:16 penalties [4] 9:13 46:8 51:1 62:14 penalty [5] 44:18,22 46:5 51:15,23 pending [1] 15:7 people [16] 4:17 7:2 13:18 16:4 32: 3,8 33:11 38:2 40:11 43:4 48:25 50:12 54:11 55:15 59:4.21 people's [1] 25:18 percent [1] 12:16

perfect [1] 28:13 perfectly [3] 29:18 31:10 42:14 Perhaps [3] 18:7 26:3 45:14 periodic [1] 48:20 permissible [2] 31:10 41:5 permit [1] 29:19 permitted [1] 19:17 person [9] 28:18,20 29:11 39:19 43:10.16.18 49:5.5 Petitioner [15] 1:4 19 2:4 10 3:8 4: 25 **31**:7 **39**:24 **40**:18 **54**:13 **58**:13 **59**:12.25 **60**:11.20 Petitioner's [2] 40:17 58:14 photos [1] 48:20 pick [1] 60:13 picking [1] 58:24 place [1] 27:20 places [1] 28:2 plain [1] 53:16 plausible [2] 13:2 22:15 play [1] 58:7 plays [1] 43:24 please [2] 3:10 30:4 plenary [2] 12:22 19:17 point [12] 7:12 10:11,12,14 13:12 **21**:13 **29**:6 **36**:10 **40**:22 **42**:24 **44**: 16 53:22 points [2] 53:6,10 policy [13] 29:21 37:24 38:7 39:9 **41**:6,22 **46**:2 **49**:10 **54**:6,24 **56**:3,5 pollution [1] 25:25 portion [1] 59:9 pose [2] 24:5 25:1 posing [1] 24:2 positing [1] 31:9 position [3] 8:22 35:15,19 positive [1] 23:11 possess [1] 44:11 possible [4] 10:5 59:16,17 60:1 possibly [1] 57:22 post [1] 43:14 post-Act [1] 18:21 post-enactment [2] 37:15 38:18 potentially [1] 46:9 power [19] 3:12,17,24,25 8:15 9: 21 17:12 20:9.24 21:10.16.18 23: 2 5 26:21 29:4 17 44:14 46:3 practicable [1] 24:12 practical [10] 30:20 32:13 38:5,23 **39**:4,8 **48**:16 **52**:12 **54**:22 **55**:13 practicality [3] 61:9,12 62:9 pre-Act [20] 5:19 9:20,22 10:4 13: 10 15:4 18:18 19:10,16,20 20:3,5, 8 21:22 24:19 25:6 31:2 41:15 58: 16.25 pre-enactment [4] 6:17 15:23 33: pre-implementation [2] 19:11 58: preamble [6] 10:12 11:22 14:3.9 **15:**4.18

precedents [1] 27:16

precisely [1] 3:17

prefer [1] 15:20 premise [1] 35:2 prescribe [2] 9:15 56:22 presence [1] 50:2 present [1] 34:5 president [1] 44:18 pretty [4] 12:10 36:3,24 41:8 prevail [1] 12:18 prevails [2] 58:13 59:13 prevent [1] 45:15 previous [1] 51:10 previously [3] 3:22 5:23 22:9 **Principal** [1] 1:20 principle [11] 11:6 18:14 22:18,20 **23**:19 **49**:13 **53**:25 **55**:17 **56**:3 **61**: 18 20 principles [1] 45:21 prior [6] 4:21 6:1 9:3 33:17 34:9 60:14 prison [2] 28:20,22 probably [1] 52:25 problem [9] 12:19 24:6 25:2 42:2, 16 **45**:16 **52**:12 **53**:1 **54**:22 problems [10] 11:3 30:20 38:5.23 **39:**4.9 **40:**23 **48:**13.16 **59:**23 process [5] 7:13 35:1 40:16 45:17 46.1 Product [1] 8:1 profound [1] 62:15 prohibit [1] 3:19 prohibition [1] 4:7 promulgated [2] 7:4 61:11 promulgation [1] 27:17 proper [1] 18:6 propose [1] 22:22 propriety [1] 52:14 prosecute [4] 16:11,16 43:3,11 prosecutes [1] 43:19 prosecuting [3] 43:10,17 44:11 prosecutor [5] 3:12 7:17 16:9 25: 20 50:3 prosecutorial [2] 21:11,18 protect [1] 18:3 proved [1] 57:24 provide [4] 6:23 48:18,19,19 provided [7] 6:13 20:13.25 34:8 36:19 41:6 51:25 provides [1] 13:2 providina [1] 49:20 provision [18] 3:11 9:5 10:19 11: 11,19 **12**:6,6,13,21 **14**:18 **15**:21 **19**:7,21 **28**:19,21 **32**:23 **34**:23 **41**: provisions [8] 9:19 11:8 12:7.8 **15**:1 **33**:9 **54**:3 **55**:23 public [17] 6:18,24 7:8,25 14:22 17:17,21 18:3 37:3,19 47:15 50:6, 13 **51**:17 **52**:6 **56**:22 **62**:2 punishment [4] 45:6 48:9 57:18 **58:**3 purpose [5] 5:10 12:7.13 18:13 55:

pursue [1] 54:7 put [2] 23:11 45:7 qualify [1] 32:3 question [17] 9:25 12:2 21:22 25: 9,14 27:3 28:15 29:14,16 33:22 34:15 35:25 36:18,21 38:16 50:23 57:19 questions [1] 60:5 quick [1] 15:15 quite [3] 8:7 43:4 45:5 quote [1] 61:24 R raise [1] 57:18 raised [1] 51:6 rates [2] 37:4 47:15 rather [2] 17:2.3 read [11] 13:16 22:1.5 25:4 31:8 **34**:22 **35**:11 **36**:5 **54**:14 **59**:24 **60**: reading [7] 10:3 11:3 22:6 34:16 **36:**6 **52:**9,15 readings [1] 13:2 real [3] 30:20 38:5 52:5 reality [2] 54:10 61:10 realize [1] 24:1 really [9] 25:16 34:15 37:5 39:23 **41**:7 **49**:9,11,15 **56**:4 reason [3] 22:17 60:25 62:19 reasonable [9] 37:4 42:1 50:6,14 **51**:13.17 **52**:7 **54**:4.5 reasons [1] 22:11 **REBUTTAL** [2] 2:8 60:10 recognition [1] 13:19 recognized [2] 19:13 27:15 recognizing [2] 31:2 32:12 record [1] 39:17 refined [1] 47:1 Refining [1] 11:18 regardless [2] 4:23 60:18 regime [1] 37:19 register [27] 4:17,25 5:20 9:11,13 **10**:4 **14**:20 **24**:19 **25**:6 **32**:3,5 **34**:6, 13 **39:**22 **40:**13.14.20 **42:**12.15.18 **47**:17 **51**:12 **54**:14 **58**:19 **59**:2 **60**: registered [2] 13:18 15:5 registration [30] 3:15 4:21,22 5:4, 7,10,12,21,24 9:10 10:8 13:10 14: 11,19,22,25 **15**:2 **18**:22 **19**:3,15 **30**:15 **33**:21 **37**:19 **39**:19 **40**:7 **41**: 13 42:10 55:9 60:17 61:5 registration-free [1] 58:23 registries [5] 6:1 32:12 42:16 48: 22 59:5 registry [1] 60:16 regulation [8] 7:2 28:3,4 29:10 40: 10 45:1 61:22,23 regulations [4] 8:3 27:17,21 29:7 regulatory [1] 7:16 Rehnquist [1] 25:8 purposes [2] 32:25 44:13 rejected [5] 11:18 15:7 22:12,24 pursuant [1] 61:22

sometimes [4] 3:14 24:10.11.12

44 :4
relates [1] 32:5
relied [2] 55:5 56:7
rely [1] 55:1
remain [1] 4:23
remainder [1] 29:15
remaining [3] 58:9,23 60:9
repeated [1] 16:13
report [1] 47:17
representations [1] 33:18
require [5] 8:11 9:10 42:12,15 60:
17
required [11] 4:17,25 5:3,20 9:11
26 :20 39 :4,22 54 :13 60 :21,22
requirement [9] 5:13 30:15,22 39
20 40 :8 46 :8,16 55 :9 57 :21
requirements [12] 3:15 4:8 19:2,
22 32 :15 36 :3 37 :8 49 :18,21 51 :
13 59 :20 61 :25
requires [3] 6:19 41:4 48:17
requiring [2] 5:25 27:16
reregister [1] 5:3
reserve [1] 29:14
resources [1] 14:24
respect [14] 14:8 18:18 20:4,17,2
21 :4 31 :1 33 :20,25 37 :15 38 :17
41 :15 47 :2 53 :13
Respectfully [1] 20:20
Respondent [4] 1:7,22 2:7 30:2
response [1] 43 :23
rest [2] 41:16 56:6
result [1] 27:22
reticulated [2] 41:8 48:10
retroactive [6] 6:3 15:8 60:23 61:
1,7 62 :13
retroactively [3] 5:17 6:8 23:13
retroactivity [4] 18:24 39:14 52:
25 53 :4
return [2] 46:11,12
reverse [1] 45:16
review [2] 50:18 59:11
Reynolds [22] 5:15 6:5 12:12 13:5
7 14 :7 19 :6 21 :14 22 :13,14 23 :8
24: 17 32: 21,22 34: 17 35: 8,10 36:
1,16,22,23 42 :7
rights [1] 18:5
risk [1] 43:20
rivers [1] 38:13
ROBERTS [14] 3:3 4:5 19:19 20:1
15 21: 2 29: 23 31: 11,21 46: 17 47:
7,22 60 :6 62 :22
room [2] 7:3 34:12
roughly [1] 17:22
routinely [2] 21:25 22:5
Rule [15] 7:3,3,19,24 8:6,10,13 18
3 34 :25 35 :2 36 :17 40 :5,6 57 :2 6
11
rule-making [1] 62:12
rules [7] 7:7 12:3 19:15 37:7 43:2
56:21 57:4
run [1] 61:5
S

safety [3] 6:18 8:1 18:3 same [17] 12:3 13:8 14:12 15:7 17: 4 **20**:16,17,21 **21**:12 **28**:20 **35**:18 **36**:15 **44**:7 **53**:11 **55**:25,25 **56**:25 sanctions [5] 27:14,18,23 28:7,11 **SARAH** [5] **1**:18 **2**:3,9 **3**:7 **60**:10 save [1] 22:1 saying [7] 12:14 19:21 35:21 38:9 39:3 43:22 47:3 says [17] 4:6 7:4 10:4,15 14:7 15: 23 18:1 20:2 30:12.16.17 31:13 **34**:18 **48**:2 **56**:17.20 **57**:1 Scalia [3] 12:10 13:4 21:13 Scalia's [1] 12:10 scheme [5] 28:25 31:1,16 41:9 48: schemes [1] 5:22 scientific [1] 25:13 scope [4] 3:13 26:21 46:14 47:21 score [1] 37:13 **SEC** [10] **7**:5,10,24 **26**:3,4 **43**:4 **56**: 21.24.25 57:7 SEC-type [1] 27:6 second [2] 22:17 53:22 secretary [1] 28:5 section [2] 15:22 30:9 Securities [2] 56:17 57:6 security [1] 25:17 see [3] 27:4 39:3 45:11 seemingly [1] 17:15 seems [8] 10:1,25 12:3 21:15 46:6 47:7 52:21.21 sense [3] 46:15,18,23 separate [4] 12:12 36:18 53:6,10 separation [1] 7:15 serious [2] 48:12 54:12 service [1] 17:21 set [8] 9:20 18:25 19:14 37:6 41:8 **42**:10 **48**:10 **57**:25 several [1] 51:1 sex [26] 4:20 5:2,25 7:6 10:15,17, 20 13:10,15,17,22 14:19,23 15:9 **30**:11,14 **32**:2,5 **39**:16,23 **54**:12 **55:**8 **56:**20 **58:**22 **60:**16 **61:**25 SG's [1] 24:4 shall [2] 6:16 34:19 sharing [1] 14:21 sharply [1] 59:13 she's [1] 43:22 show-ups [1] 48:20 side [2] 48:11 51:24 signals [1] 22:8 significance [2] 3:25 29:17 significant [1] 31:19 similar [2] 8:2 39:8 simply [3] 13:25 17:9 37:14 since [5] 5:5,6 17:22 34:21 39:17 single [2] 14:5 60:15 sit [1] 58:6 situation [2] 13:3 38:22 sole [1] 21:23 Solicitor [1] 1:20 somebody [2] 29:11 39:15

someone [1] 52:22

SORNA [18] **4**:2,23 **5**:3,11,16 **9**:19 **14**:17 **17**:8 **19**:1 **27**:13 **38**:20 **40**:4 **48**:6,17,22 **54**:9 **58**:9 **60**:19 SORNA's [6] 3:11 4:21 54:15 59: 12 60:14 61:25 Sorry [2] 8:17 15:16 sorts [2] 25:17 29:21 SOTOMAYOR [21] 8:17.23 21:25 22:4 23:6.22 35:6.9.18.20 36:6.9 **52:**8.13 **53:**7.8.16.19.21 **54:**20.23 sources [1] 4:13 special [1] 62:11 specially [1] 8:6 specific [5] 8:14 15:21,22 27:8 32: specified [1] 9:14 specifies [1] 62:17 specify [5] 32:14 34:19 36:2 47:24 **59**:20 specifying [3] 44:18 47:12 49:17 speculating [2] 23:23,24 speculation [1] 23:19 spelled [1] 53:25 spheres [1] 19:8 spoke [1] 61:1 spurred [1] 55:13 square [1] 33:16 squarely [4] 22:13 33:22 35:25 57: stake [2] 17:1.3 standard [20] 3:24 4:2,6 9:4,6 17: 10.14 25:24 26:1.3 27:6.6 37:3 41: 3 **50**:18 **51**:25 **52**:6 **56**:11 **61**:14, standards [4] 9:8 11:20 45:5 50:7 start [6] 11:4.13 18:10 25:23 30:5 **41**:14 started [1] 9:25 starts [1] 30:9 state [11] 4:20 5:4,6,24 14:25 22: 19 **42**:16 **48**:17,22 **60**:15,21 state's [1] 34:1 stated [1] 16:19 statement [1] 55:4 statements [2] 54:25 56:6 STATES [18] 1:1.6.14 3:5 14:9 16: 9.15 17:21 34:11 49:7 50:10 58:9. 19.24 60:24.25 61:1.4 states' [1] 34:10 statute [45] 6:15 7:4 10:2,3,25 11: 1,16 **12**:25 **13**:8,9,13,14 **14**:18 **18**: 1 **21:**20 **22:**1,16 **24:**22,25 **25:**1,5 **31:**8 **36:**5,14,15,20 **37:**3,15 **38:**17 39:1,6 41:24 42:6 44:20 49:14 51: 11 **52**:1,3,9,15,20 **53**:20,25 **55**:19 statutes [3] 29:20 31:6 44:2 statutory [14] 4:12 12:2,4,17,20,24 15:20,21,22 28:25 34:18 36:13 55: 4 23 step [1] 34:13 still [6] 17:8 21:1,7 25:9 56:9 60:22 strange [3] 6:4 23:9,13

stricken [1] 16:13 strict [1] 8:13 strikes [1] 56:15 strong [1] 26:1 stuck [1] 15:18 stuff [1] 41:13 subchapter [1] 6:17 subject [3] 6:22 16:1 49:7 submitted [2] 62:23.25 subsection [1] 10:22 substance [2] 49:20 52:6 substances [2] 38:10 44:9 substantial [1] 59:8 **substantially** [3] **58:**8,11,20 substantive [1] 47:9 suggest [1] 57:10 suggested [1] 51:4 suggesting [1] 26:7 suggestion [1] 50:15 supplied [1] 39:9 supply [1] 41:6 **supplying** [1] **52:**5 supported [1] 27:16 supports [1] 10:2 suppose [8] 6:14 16:25 17:2 40: 15 **45**:7.15.16 **56**:24 supposed [5] 25:19,19,21,22 26: 23 **SUPREME** [2] **1**:1,14 switch [2] 36:1,21 system [16] 4:21 5:7,10 10:13 14: 11 **15**:2 **30**:13,18 **32**:8 **35**:4 **49**:1 **54**:18 **55**:7,15 **59**:1,22 systems [4] 4:22 5:4 14:25 61:6 talks [2] 10:13.20

tax [2] 46:11.12 technical [1] 25:13 tells [2] 46:10 47:19 term [2] 10:15 16:14 test [2] 18:13.15 text [12] 4:12 13:1 18:25 30:6,24 **49**:13 **54**:9,15 **55**:10,18 **56**:4 **61**: textualist [1] 12:11 themselves [3] 34:6 49:18 61:4 there's [16] 6:3,3 15:3 17:23 34:17 40:7,11,24 43:7 48:1,15,21 49:3 **52**:13 **53**:16 **54**:14 They've [3] 31:22,23 32:7 thinking [2] 12:1 16:7 thinks [3] 23:20 31:16 46:13 third [1] 23:7 thoroughly [1] 59:14 though [7] 20:15 36:16 40:13 46: 14 **51**:9 **57**:6 **58**:14 thousand [1] 59:4 thousands [3] 3:16 48:25 54:11 three [6] 10:11 19:8 22:7,10 27:24 **42**:10 Tier [1] 39:22 tiers [1] 42:10 timing [2] 30:22 48:17

safeguard [1] 43:7

title [2] 30:24 55:10 today [1] 35:19 together [1] 55:16 took [1] 35:15 top [1] 3:12 total [2] 3:23 17:9 Touby [9] 27:15 38:9 44:6,12 46: 25 **50**:16 **51**:5,7 **57**:18 tough [3] 26:25,25 27:3 tougher [1] 58:1 traditional [2] 21:11.17 transitional [2] 31:3 49:3 translate [1] 58:15 translating [1] 30:17 tribal [1] 59:6 tried [1] 22:22 trouble [1] 16:7 Trucking [2] 22:21 26:19 true [4] 32:1,6 34:12 49:14 truly [1] 21:20 try [3] 40:15 45:24 50:25 trying [3] 23:10 42:22,23 Tuesday [1] 1:11 turn [3] 35:14,21 36:11 twice [1] 44:3 two [5] 13:2 15:15 53:6.10 55:2 type [1] 47:24

П

unable [2] 10:21 30:23 unambiguously [1] 15:24 unconstitutional [4] 3:20 17:9 23:4 62:20 under [13] 4:25 5:3,9 7:4 12:18 31: 10 37:13,22 38:10 43:11,19 44:9 60:21 understand [8] 24:24 36:9 48:6. 11 **50**:22 **54**:5.6 **58**:7 understanding [3] 10:6.10 29:10 undertake [1] 62:5 unfair [1] 41:16 unfeasible [1] 24:20 unguided [1] 3:12 Union [3] 25:8 38:11 39:11 UNITED [7] 1:1,6,14 3:5 16:9,15 50:10 universe [1] 32:11 unlawful [1] 47:13 Unlike [1] 4:1 unreasonable [1] 47:16 until [1] 16:6 unusual [2] 22:7 50:1 up [7] 14:9 37:17.18 41:8 42:10 58: 24 60:13 upheld [5] 3:22 9:3 17:12 44:24,

V

vacated [1] 59:10 vague [1] 16:12 vagueness [1] 45:25 vaguer [1] 16:14

urge [1] 60:3

uses [1] 24:8

various [1] 15:1 vast [1] 5:1 vehicle [1] 48:18 vendetta [1] 43:20 vendettas [1] 45:15 versus [3] 3:5 25:17 27:3 victims [1] 30:11 view [4] 4:16 13:8 37:13 62:8 violate [2] 28:4 57:2 violated [1] 28:19 violates [2] 28:21 29:11

W

violation [4] 6:19 27:22 46:13 57:

waive [2] 19:22 20:4
waiver [1] 34:23
WALL [54] 1:20 2:6 29:25 30:1,3
31:20,25 32:16,17 33:19,25 34:4,
10 35:6,7,17,24 36:8,12 37:10,21
38:4,21 39:2,13,21 40:3,15 41:19
42:8,20 43:24 44:6 45:6,9,22 47:6,
10 48:6 49:24 50:19,24 51:19,23
52:9 53:6,10,18,21 54:21 55:3 57:
8,12 60:7
wanted [4] 13:24 30:5 35:3 54:17
Washington [2] 1:10,21
waterfront [1] 31:16
way [20] 3:18 6:11 11:3 14:12 28:
20 30:8 31:9,17 32:15 35:11 36:4

way [20] 3:18 6:11 11:3 14:12 28: 20 30:8 31:9,17 32:15 35:11 36:4 39:5 41:9,25 47:19 54:14 59:21 60:2 61:12 62:15 weak [1] 25:24 websites [1] 14:22 weighing [1] 25:16 whatever [4] 8:19 26:24 28:5 47: 25 whereby [1] 44:24

Whereupon [1] 62:24 whether [23] 4:23 5:16,19 6:7 9:22 15:25 19:9,10 20:18,19 21:23 46: 1,20 47:12,13,14,15,16,20 48:4 50: 13 54:11 62:6

Whitman [2] 22:21 26:20 who's [3] 20:18 53:3,4 whole [2] 11:1 54:3 whom [1] 20:19 will [15] 9:10 27:22 38:10,12,13 44:

wished [1] 33:9

9 **45**:2 **58**:18,22,24 **59**:1,13,14 **60**: 16,22

within [5] 7:19,20 8:6 44:15 47:20 withinside [1] 46:7 word [4] 7:25 43:14 56:24 58:5

worded [1] 21:20 words [7] 13:11 24:18 30:23 52:15

53:17,20 54:1 work [2] 49:4,5 working [1] 35:7 works [2] 39:14 59:15 write [4] 16:10 29:8,10 43:18 writing [3] 40:19 43:10 56:12 written [3] 17:15 20:11 28:6

Yakus [1] 51:3 years [7] 6:12 39:16 40:1 42:11,13 49:6 61:6 York [4] 1:18,18 40:21 55:6

Z

zone [1] 58:23