SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF TH	HE UNITED STATES
ROMAG FASTENERS, INC.,)
Petitioner,)
v.) No. 18-1233
FOSSIL, INC., ET AL.,)
Respondents.)

Pages: 1 through 66

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8		
9	Washington, D.C	
10	Tuesday, January 1	4, 2020
11		
12	The above-entitled matt	er came on for
13	oral argument before the Supre	me Court of the
14	United States at 11:13 a.m.	
15		
16	APPEARANCES:	
17		
18	LISA S. BLATT, ESQ., Washingto	on, D.C.;
19	on behalf of the Petitione	r.
20		
21	NEAL K. KATYAL, ESQ., Washingto	on, D.C.;
22	on behalf of the Responden	ts.
23		
24		
25		

1	CONTENTS	
2	ORAL ARGUMENT OF:	PAGE:
3	LISA S. BLATT, ESQ.	
4	On behalf of the Petitioner	3
5	ORAL ARGUMENT OF:	
6	NEAL K. KATYAL, ESQ.	
7	On behalf of the Respondents	30
8	REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF:	
9	LISA S. BLATT, ESQ.	
10	On behalf of the Petitioner	61
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		

1	PROCEEDINGS
2	(11:13 a.m.)
3	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear
4	argument next in Case 18-1233, Romag Fasteners
5	versus Fossil, Inc.
6	Ms. Blatt.
7	ORAL ARGUMENT OF LISA S. BLATT
8	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER
9	MS. BLATT: Thank you, Mr. Chief
10	Justice, and may it please the Court:
11	The Lanham Act authorizes courts to
12	remedy trademark violations by awarding
13	infringers profits subject to the principles of
14	equity. The question presented here is whether
15	the this phrase "principles of equity"
16	requires trademark owners to prove willfulness
17	as an absolute precondition to profit awards.
18	The answer is no for three reasons:
19	First, the phrase "principles of
20	equity" signifies a multifactor analysis where
21	no one factor is controlling.
22	Second, the phrase excuse me. The
23	statutory text and structure supersede any
24	settled willfulness requirement.
25	And, third, there was no such settled

- 1 background willfulness requirement.
- 2 First, the phrase "principles of
- 3 equity" refers to the familiar equitable
- 4 principles that courts have long applied in
- 5 determining whether to award profits in
- 6 trademark cases. A defendant's culpability is a
- 7 weighty factor, but it should not be
- 8 controlling. Other traditional equitable
- 9 factors are also important to further the
- 10 landmark -- the Lanham Act's purposes to protect
- 11 consumers and trademark owners' goodwill.
- 12 Such traditional factors include
- whether other relief adequately compensates the
- 14 plaintiff and whether the defendant is enriched
- 15 by his violation of law.
- 16 And these factors can all exist along
- 17 a spectrum. For instance, culpability can range
- 18 from fraudulent to innocent and everything in
- 19 between, including callous disregard and
- 20 negligence. So in a case where a defendant is
- 21 completely innocent, courts should require a
- 22 greater showing of other factors before awarding
- 23 profits.
- 24 Conversely, greater culpability
- 25 justifies a profit award that deters future

- 1 infringement. And courts can be trusted to use
- 2 their discretion to balance the equities for the
- 3 cases in between. The statute also requires the
- 4 amount of any award to be compensatory and not a
- 5 penalty, and just, according to the
- 6 circumstances.
- 7 Second, even assuming a settled
- 8 willfulness requirement before the Lanham Act,
- 9 the statutory text and structure reflect a
- 10 congressional intent to supersede it. From the
- 11 Act's inception, i.e., from 1946, Congress has
- 12 expressly distinguished and protected defendants
- and which defendants from awards of monetary
- 14 relief based on a heightened mental state.
- Today the Lanham Act contains eight
- 16 provisions tying monetary relief to a heightened
- 17 mental state. That's -- that's a lot of
- 18 provisions. The provision that dictates
- 19 monetary relief, Section 117(a), is the
- 20 provision that controls this case. That case --
- 21 that provision, excuse me, requires a willful
- violation for trademark dilution under 1125(c),
- but no such mental state requirement appears for
- 24 infringement violations under Section 1125(a) or
- any other cause of action under the Lanham Act.

1	We think the inference is particularly
2	strong that the omission of a willfulness
3	requirement is intentional. The same Congress
4	in 1999 that amended the statute to add a
5	willfulness requirement for trademark dilution
6	cases under subsection (c) affirmatively
7	distinguished this type of infringement case
8	under subsection (a) because the amendment
9	simultaneously struck out the word "violation"
10	of Sections 1125(a) and then reinserted that
11	same phrase, violation of subsection (a), and
12	then added a willful infringement
13	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Ms. Blatt, could
14	you concentrate on the word "equity"? Do you
15	think equity would sustain an award for innocent
16	or good-faith infringement without a more
17	culpable state of mind? Because there's a wide
18	swath of behavior between truly innocent, truly
19	good faith, and willful. There could be
20	reckless. There could be callous disregard.
21	Would equity consonance an award for negligence
22	or good faith?
23	MS. BLATT: Yes. And as I said in the
24	earlier
25	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But how?

1	MS. BLATT: the earlier case, you
2	would need a greater showing of the other
3	purposes or the other equitable factors. And
4	those are two. The first and foremost is
5	whether if no other relief could adequately
6	compensate the plaintiff.
7	And even in a case of a completely
8	innocent defendant, damages are notoriously hard
9	to prove. They're almost never recovered in
10	trademark cases. And they're particularly
11	impossible to prove in component cases.
12	There's other equitable factor so
13	that's one, is that even a dollar, that they
14	would rule that out in an innocent case, even
15	though there's no other relief, but the second
16	equitable factor is the basic principle of
17	equity, which is just you don't get to hold on
18	to profits that don't correctly belong to you if
19	you violated the law to get them.
20	And, again, here, let's just take the
21	example, the other side says, at a minimum, we
22	concede \$900. That's their argument. All we're
23	entitled to for profits is \$900. Their view is
24	we can't even get \$900 unless you show
25	willfulness, and you, otherwise, you just walk

- 1 away with nothing.
- Now, they say that there's the
- 3 statutory damages, you can always opt for the
- 4 \$200,000 statutory damages, which is certainly
- 5 nice, but the problem with that is multifold.
- One is that it's not even available unless the
- 7 mark is both registered and counterfeit, so
- 8 countless trademark plaintiffs aren't even
- 9 eligible for this.
- 10 And, second, it's supposed to be a
- 11 floor and an alternative. So in a hypothetical
- 12 case, that is our position. Now, in this case
- 13 we have a little more. The parties on a remand
- 14 have lots of arguments why the amount should be
- 15 closer to 900. We have arguments why it should
- be higher because this is not only just a small
- 17 business, but the manufacturer set up its
- 18 operations in China, where counterfeiting is
- 19 rampant and there's no incentive -- if all you
- 20 have to pay is nothing, there's just really not
- 21 that much incentive to prevent counterfeiting.
- 22 So those would be the arguments on
- 23 remand. And let me just say, at the common law,
- we did cite examples, they're not voluminous,
- 25 but there are examples, both pre-Lanham Act and

- 1 post-Lanham Act, where courts in cases of
- 2 innocent infringement did award profits. It's
- 3 just not routine.
- 4 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Pre- -- pre-Lanham
- 5 Act, that's not much, right?
- 6 MS. BLATT: Three? Well, sure. Sure,
- 7 three's a lot when --
- 8 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Pre- -- pre-Lanham
- 9 Act, I said.
- MS. BLATT: Yes.
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Yeah.
- 12 MS. BLATT: Yeah. So the one of them
- was the Mishawaka.
- 14 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Yes.
- MS. BLATT: And that was a Supreme
- 16 Court case.
- 17 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Right.
- MS. BLATT: You didn't award profits,
- 19 but the -- the district court did. The second
- 20 was the Oakes case, which is, I don't know,
- 21 1888. It was from Alabama. Nothing wrong with
- 22 Alabama. It counts as a case.
- 23 (Laughter.)
- MS. BLATT: So -- and then we had a
- 25 third case that -- the third case is

- 1 Prest-O-Lite, and that's from New Jersey. So I
- 2 don't know why these cases don't count just
- 3 because there are other cases that say we're
- 4 going to award profits.
- 5 So if you just look at the -- the
- 6 common law, and the most significant aspect of
- 7 the common law, of course, is that the very
- 8 cases from the common law that articulate a
- 9 willfulness requirement say in the very same
- 10 sentence: But there was some conflict in the
- 11 decision.
- 12 So a conflict is a conflict is a
- 13 conflict. It's not a -- the kind of clear rule
- 14 that you could say would always rule it out.
- 15 JUSTICE GINSBURG: How is willfulness
- 16 defined? I mean, here the jury found callous
- 17 disregard, but not willfulness. Did the judge
- 18 charge on what those terms meant?
- 19 MS. BLATT: Yes. Yes. So the -- the
- 20 charge on willfulness was -- it includes
- intentional conduct and willful blindness, which
- is awareness of a high probability of harm and
- 23 you take affirmative steps to avoid learning
- 24 about it.
- 25 Callous disregard is a rubric of

- 1 willfulness, but it doesn't rise to either of
- 2 those levels. It's closer on the recklessness
- 3 spectrum. So generally in your case law,
- 4 willfulness is defined usually to include
- 5 reckless, but here the parties, meaning our
- 6 side, did not object to recklessness being taken
- 7 out so that the jury was only instructed on
- 8 willfulness and not recklessness.
- 9 JUSTICE BREYER: Is it --
- 10 MS. BLATT: But they're similar
- 11 because callous disregard under Second Circuit
- 12 case law was a function of willfulness, it just
- wasn't willful blindness.
- JUSTICE BREYER: I can't work out,
- there's maybe an obvious answer to this that
- 16 I've missed, but -- but in reading the statute,
- 17 I thought, well, suppose you do have to have
- 18 willfulness in order to get profits, and there
- 19 would be a certain number of cases you don't get
- 20 profits, right, okay. Think of those cases.
- 21 Then I see this sentence in 1117, it
- 22 says, "if the court shall find that the amount
- of recovery based on profits is either
- inadequate or excessive, the court may in its
- 25 discretion enter judgment for such sum as the

- 1 court shall find to be just, according to the
- 2 circumstances of the case."
- 3 So if you did have to have
- 4 willfulness, but all these things like in China
- 5 and so forth were -- were -- were right there in
- 6 the case, the -- the -- the court could give the
- 7 -- the -- the Plaintiff more money, couldn't
- 8 they, under that sentence?
- 9 MS. BLATT: Maybe I don't understand
- 10 the question. The other side is no, we don't
- 11 get any money --
- 12 JUSTICE BREYER: In this case --
- MS. BLATT: -- absent willfulness.
- 14 JUSTICE BREYER: -- they think that,
- but I want to know why. And even if we were
- 16 arguing about willfulness, so I say suppose
- they're right that willfulness does apply, you
- 18 think it doesn't apply, right?
- MS. BLATT: Right.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Okay. But suppose
- 21 they win. Suppose you produce your instance
- 22 which you just did, that in China they'll go
- around and, dah-dah-dah, and we won't be able to
- 24 get any significant amount of money, why
- 25 wouldn't you say to the judge: Read that

- 1 sentence, Judge, they weren't willful, we agree
- 2 but we're giving you reasons why in this case we
- 3 should get more relief.
- 4 MS. BLATT: Well, if you're saying you
- 5 should read willfulness into the --
- JUSTICE BREYER: No, I'm not -- I'm
- 7 saying --
- 8 MS. BLATT: No --
- 9 JUSTICE BREYER: -- it's what you do,
- 10 yeah.
- 11 MS. BLATT: Yeah, so if your view is
- 12 that you read it into it but then courts can
- 13 read it out --
- JUSTICE BREYER: They did not say they
- 15 can read it out. They can say it's there, they
- weren't willful but we have a sentence here
- 17 which gives us total discretion in the interest
- of justice to give the damages that we think are
- 19 just and fair.
- 20 So nobody is going to be hurt by
- 21 accepting their side. All it's going to do is
- 22 give this -- more discretion to the district
- 23 court to award as much money or as little as he
- 24 thinks is fair.
- MS. BLATT: So --

1 JUSTICE BREYER: Now why isn't that 2 what that sentence does? I just want to --MS. BLATT: I think this sentence --3 JUSTICE BREYER: -- know what it does. 4 MS. BLATT: -- helps us. Here's just 5 my concerns. Six circuits read that sentence as 6 7 saying they cannot award profits if willfulness 8 is not shown. 9 JUSTICE BREYER: No matter how 10 appealing the case? MS. BLATT: Yes, that's why we're here 11 12 on a petition to --JUSTICE BREYER: Has anybody argued 13 14 about this sentence? 15 MS. BLATT: Yes. JUSTICE BREYER: In our brief -- in 16 17 your brief you put that? 18 MS. BLATT: Yes. 19 JUSTICE BREYER: Good. Where -- what -- where -- I better read it. 20 21 (Laughter.) MS. BLATT: I mean, it's -- it's in 22 23 the intro and it's in the --24 JUSTICE BREYER: Fine. Will you just 25 tell me. I obviously, you know, sometimes I

- 1 read these fast.
- MS. BLATT: I don't know the page. I
- 3 mean, it's definitely -- the gestalt of the
- 4 cases going our way is, look, we'd like to see
- 5 willfulness, but if we don't see it, it's not
- 6 controlling, and it's just one of these weighty
- 7 factors but there's always been a list of
- 8 traditional factors, before the Lanham Act and
- 9 after he Lanham Act. The culpability is one and
- 10 the two that I've ever -- the two that I
- 11 mentioned are the other ones that are critical,
- whether there's some form of compensation and
- whether there's just a sense of unjust
- 14 enrichment. But yes, you can go down or above.
- But I think that we use that sentence
- to say, there's no harm, there's no risk of a
- 17 windfall because no matter where you come up
- 18 with your award, the Court can always reduce it
- 19 or raise it, depending on the circumstances. So
- 20 I don't -- maybe I just don't understand your
- 21 question.
- 22 JUSTICE BREYER: Well, I was trying to
- 23 understand the significance of the case. And
- you're saying, unless we read willfulness out of
- it, there are going to be some terrible cases

- 1 where, in fact, the -- the infringer did it
- 2 totally by accident, totally by accident. He
- 3 had a dream with this -- this symbol appeared to
- 4 him and he put it on his thing not knowing that
- 5 somebody else had it, a total accident.
- 6 MS. BLATT: So --
- 7 JUSTICE BREYER: Now, you say still
- 8 this is very bad because don't you know, that
- 9 the trademark is owned by some widows and
- 10 orphans and terribly suffering people and --
- 11 and -- and you should certainly give them some
- money or goodness knows what'll happen, you know
- 13 --
- MS. BLATT: Right, so --
- 15 JUSTICE BREYER: -- very appealing
- case that you're worried about, therefore you
- 17 say --
- MS. BLATT: Yeah.
- 19 JUSTICE BREYER: -- read willfulness
- out of it. I say why do you need to do that?
- 21 Why not just point to the sentence?
- MS. BLATT: So we're not reading it
- 23 out. We're just saying that it's not a
- 24 precondition in step one. It is -- no question,
- I mean, our view is that it's a sliding scale,

- 1 all of these traditional equitable factors are
- 2 appropriate and then when you get to the amount,
- 3 you can adjust it.
- 4 So it just would seem odd to write an
- 5 opinion that says, even though it's not in the
- 6 statute, even though it wasn't a clearly stated
- 7 rule, just because the other side asked for it,
- 8 we want to read it in because we want to be nice
- 9 to the respondent. I don't think that's a good
- 10 way to write an opinion.
- 11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Ms. --
- 12 Ms. Blatt, your -- your lead argument, of
- 13 course, is the phrase willful violation under
- 14 Section 1125(c) and the willfulness is not --
- doesn't appear in the other part, but 1125(c)
- includes willfulness, it's about willfulness.
- 17 So, and I gather this is the argument
- on the other side, saying willful violation
- 19 under -- that's kind of like just the label,
- 20 this is what it is. And so when you just stick
- 21 the label in, it's about a willful violation,
- that shouldn't have the same sort of
- 23 exprecionias -- whatever it is, argue -- impact
- 24 as you suggest.
- MS. BLATT: Right. And that's a --

- 1 that's a fair argument. The argument is it is
- 2 just mirroring the cause of action. And so that
- 3 just begs the question of why did they even need
- 4 to put willfulness in the trademark dilution as
- 5 a protection against profits and damages in the
- 6 first place. That's our whole argument about it
- 7 appearing eight times.
- 8 The underlying 1125(c), when it was
- 9 passed, says you need a willful violation for a
- 10 cause of action to collect monetary relief. And
- our point is simply it is not the most natural
- inference or the most natural inference is if
- 13 they didn't think that there was already an
- 14 omnibus willfulness requirement for all profit
- awards because they took such care in 1125(c),
- in the statutory damages, and in the treble
- damages and profits. They basically say you
- can't get monetary relief, damages, and profits
- 19 absent these heightened scienter. And the other
- 20 side says: Well, but those apply to damages
- 21 too.
- 22 And our point is, sure, but it seems
- odd that Congress went out of its way to protect
- from the beginning in 1125(c) against profits
- 25 when, under their view you didn't need it

- 1 because it was already read into the statute as
- 2 a principle of equity in all cases.
- So, in other words, take section --
- 4 the -- the -- the original Trademark Act of --
- 5 the original 1946 act, that was 1114, which is
- 6 the violation for registered trademarks. So
- 7 it's very similar, like 1125(c), it says, here's
- 8 going to be a class of cases where we don't want
- 9 monetary relief.
- 10 So innocent printers and innocent
- 11 publishers, no damages, no profits. And any
- 12 defendant who reprints -- or excuse me, who
- 13 prints an infringe mark without knowing that the
- infringement was intended to confuse, can't get
- 15 profits or damages.
- The other side says, well, it's not
- 17 superfluous because it at least applies to
- damages. And our point is, well, it's at least
- 19 superfluous as to profits. It's that Congress
- 20 is taking its care in eight provisions to keep
- 21 saying no profits here, no profits there, no
- 22 profits left and right, based under these
- 23 heightened scienter.
- So whatever you think principles of
- 25 equity means, the one thing it can't mean is a

- 1 heightened scienter because the statutory
- 2 structure is so overwhelming that Congress had
- 3 this carefully calibrated scheme where they're
- 4 spelling out when willfulness is required.
- 5 JUSTICE ALITO: Of the cases where the
- 6 courts have said that willfulness is a necessary
- 7 condition, which one would you cite as being --
- 8 as leading to the most unjust result?
- 9 The case where -- where a court said
- we're not going to award profits because there
- 11 wasn't any willfulness and that's very unjust
- 12 based on the facts of the case, is there one you
- would cite as an example?
- MS. BLATT: No, because they don't
- 15 say, like their -- the leading case, that Regis
- 16 case by the highest court in Massachusetts, it
- just says, we're not going to -- although the
- law is conflicted, we're not going to allow
- 19 profits, and they're mostly relating to a
- 20 fraud-based tort. So the underlying tort at the
- 21 common law is one of fraud.
- 22 And so I'm not sure they see it as
- 23 particularly unjust if you're suing for fraud
- that you don't get relief if there's no fraud.
- 25 But in the technical trademark cases where most

- of our cases come from, they are including the
- 2 three cases -- well, the Hamilton-Brown case,
- 3 they're saying you -- this property, your
- 4 property was infringed so there's a pot of money
- 5 that's going to rightfully belongs to you.
- 6 And by the time you get around to your
- 7 three cases, the Champion Sparkplug case and the
- 8 Mishawaka case, the Court is balancing the
- 9 circumstances. It's saying, the willfulness is
- 10 relevant but it also said, look, we don't think
- 11 the plaintiff is really hurt, we don't think the
- 12 defendant really benefitted. You know, you get
- an injunction and go home.
- 14 And so I just haven't seen cases where
- there was a mean court saying: Looks like you
- 16 deserve it but I'm constrained by this
- 17 willfulness requirement. I don't know if that
- 18 answers your question.
- 19 JUSTICE KAGAN: Do you think it's open
- 20 to us, Ms. Blatt, to pick a position someplace
- 21 between you and Mr. Katyal? In other words, Mr.
- 22 Katyal says, never under any circumstances can
- you get profits without willfulness and you say,
- 24 well, willfulness is just one factor among the
- 25 things that you think about.

1	But I I would think that there's
2	some kind of intermediate position, which is
3	based on the history and and a general sense
4	of it, which is that willfulness might not be a
5	an absolute necessity but it certainly should
6	be entitled to very significant weight.
7	You know, you could say like a
8	presumption of a kind.
9	MS. BLATT: No, I would not say a
LO	presumption unless you're going to give us the
L1	same presumption, the presumption of
L2	compensation when other remedies aren't adequate
L3	and a presumption against unjust enrichment.
L4	And here's why we sort of used the Kirtsaeng
L5	case as an as an example in terms of
L6	fashioning our rule, is that I do think it's a
L7	sliding scale. The more innocent the defendant,
L8	you better have a greater justification for
L9	compensation; and the more guilty the defendant
20	is and then you might have some cases in
21	between.
22	But you could have a negligent or a
23	reckless defendant, and I don't know where the
24	presumption would fit. And the Court should
25	just balance it, should the plaintiff get at

- 1 least one dollar in that case? And so a
- 2 presumption just puts the -- the scales too
- 3 heavy.
- I think all the courts recognize, and
- 5 I said, it's a weighty and important factor. So
- 6 --
- 7 JUSTICE BREYER: Well, how do you do
- 8 this?
- 9 MS. BLATT: Sure.
- 10 JUSTICE BREYER: I think -- I guess
- 11 your view is there's no willfulness requirement.
- 12 But what it says is the plaintiff shall be
- 13 entitled to recover defendant's profits,
- 14 damages, and the cost of the action -- okay, it
- 15 says that -- subject to principles of equity.
- 16 Okay?
- Now, we have a problem. One thing to
- say is equity has always held that willfulness
- is necessary. Good, we're finished with this
- 20 case. But that's not your position. Your
- 21 position --
- MS. BLATT: It's also not true.
- JUSTICE BREYER: No, well, I -- I -- I
- 24 understand. I understand. Okay. Can we say
- 25 anything about what principles of equity

1 require? 2 MS. BLATT: Sure. JUSTICE BREYER: All right. Now, I 3 notice the Sixth Circuit uses the word 4 5 "wrongful." Do you want us to use that word? 6 MS. BLATT: No. JUSTICE BREYER: How do you want us to 7 8 write that sentence? What principles of equity 9 require? 10 MS. BLATT: So -- and I think it helps 11 to say that all of the courts have agreed on 12 what the principles of equity mean. They're the 13 factors that start from the English cases up and 14 through your cases. The ones I said. The 15 defendant's culpability, the need that other relief doesn't adequately compensate the 16 17 plaintiff, and the theory or are there profits 18 that are -- is there just a -- you're holding on 19 to profits that don't rightfully belong. Those are the three. Now, the Fifth Circuit and the 20 21 Second Circuit has articulated this maybe in a 22 six-factor test, but they're all getting at 23 those three things. 24 So the factors are clearly defined

already in the case law. The courts are all

- 1 happy. The only thing they're disagreeing about
- 2 is whether willfulness is a gateway on/off
- 3 switch.
- 4 So I would be very happy with an
- 5 opinion -- and this, if you want to advance the
- 6 case law further away from where it is on our
- 7 side, it's perfectly -- I think it's appropriate
- 8 to say, because the defendant's culpability is a
- 9 weighty factor, you should have other reasons.
- 10 But part of the purposes where I would turn to
- in terms of -- you know, there is no other
- 12 relief in almost all of these cases. And the
- whole point of this is not only to -- it' not
- just giving the -- the mark owner some money; it
- is protecting consumers.
- The only other choice would be an
- injunction, and an injunction in some cases is
- 18 either hard to get or it just doesn't work.
- 19 Otherwise, there's no incentive for negligence.
- 20 You might as well just take your -- you might as
- 21 well just see what happens if you put some
- 22 counterfeit stuff on. If it's negligent, you're
- 23 probably not going to have to pay. It wasn't
- 24 willful; it was just negligent. Who cares? And
- 25 so it seems like you should at least have

- 1 something to deter infringement when -- just
- 2 look at the statute. The -- Congress obviously
- 3 --
- 4 JUSTICE BREYER: I have that part.
- 5 MS. BLATT: -- cares about trademark
- 6 infringement.
- 7 JUSTICE BREYER: But is it all right
- 8 to say this, that there could be cases where --
- 9 some profits but not all profits?
- MS. BLATT: Yes.
- 11 JUSTICE BREYER: Is the equitable
- 12 thing to do?
- MS. BLATT: Yes.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Yes, so we could say
- 15 that?
- MS. BLATT: Yes. Yes. And the
- parties on remand are actually, you know, going
- 18 to debate about how much profits, and the
- 19 ranges, you know, can be as low as \$900 and they
- 20 go all the way up from there.
- 21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, that's a
- 22 little strange. I mean, equity either includes
- 23 profits or it doesn't. I don't know why you
- 24 would just sort of split the baby and so each
- 25 side is a little happy. It's a principle of --

- 1 of equity. And -- and you either get them or
- 2 you don't.
- I mean, equity is not -- doesn't mean
- 4 what seems fair. It -- it's a little more
- 5 complicated.
- 6 MS. BLATT: Sorry, I was -- yeah, and
- 7 this is a different, separate issue that I was
- 8 referring to, not just profits, but there's a
- 9 debate in this case whether you get profits that
- 10 are attributable to the infringement. So
- 11 because this is a purse and a snap, there's
- 12 the --
- 13 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Oh, sure.
- MS. BLATT: That --
- 15 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, that's a
- 16 --
- 17 MS. BLATT: That --
- 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: -- different
- 19 legal basis. It's not the --
- 20 MS. BLATT: That's all I was talking
- about, yes.
- 22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: In response to
- 23 Justice Breyer, you didn't --
- MS. BLATT: No.
- 25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: -- didn't say,

- okay, profits are \$100,000, you take 50; I'll
- 2 take 50.
- 3 MS. BLATT: No, so the profits that
- 4 are attributable to the infringement, at least
- 5 the other side would say, you know, you don't
- 6 even get your \$900. Now, the only reason courts
- 7 have lowered them would be laches. You know,
- 8 there are -- or unclean hands. So there are
- 9 principles. Or for some reason you thought, I
- don't know, that -- it can't be a penalty, so
- 11 for some reason you thought it was a penalty or
- 12 excessive. I could probably think of some
- 13 hypotheticals where you might want to lower it,
- 14 like say you thought the plaintiff was no longer
- going to be in business or who cared about the
- 16 -- the goodwill. But, yeah, the -- you're
- 17 entitled to your profits and then -- but the
- 18 court does allow an adjustment. But --
- 19 JUSTICE BREYER: The profits on the
- 20 purse are -- are \$4 million. The
- 21 infringer did put in a copy of the trademark in
- 22 a tiny little inside purse that nobody ever saw.
- 23 So now he's entitled to profits, \$4 million,
- when it's unlikely that anybody or maybe only
- 25 three people were lured into buying his purse

- 1 because -- so that's what I was thinking of.
- 2 Maybe what he is entitled to is the purse -- is
- 3 the profits on --
- 4 MS. BLATT: So --
- 5 JUSTICE BREYER: -- on -- on three
- 6 purses.
- 7 MS. BLATT: So --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Or maybe --
- 9 MS. BLATT: -- there's a separate
- 10 legal issue which the parties haven't briefed
- and there's no dispute in the case law, but it's
- just an amount, whether you're either limited to
- the attribution or -- and, if not, what kind of
- 14 mental state would go over that. I can make a
- 15 very good argument --
- 16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Yeah, but it's
- 17 still -- I mean, it's unlikely that there will
- be \$4 million in profits attributable to this
- 19 little thing that nobody could see, and that's a
- 20 guestion. But -- but I don't think that --
- 21 well, maybe it's right, maybe equity allows you
- of there -- you know, it just seems like too
- 23 much, you say, well, I'm going to just give you
- less.
- MS. BLATT: I would say that the

- 1 equity -- the traditional factors are -- are the
- 2 equity ones I talked about. The -- the statute
- does allow, the provision that Justice Breyer
- 4 was focusing on, an adjustment for -- because
- 5 you either think it's inadequate or excessive
- 6 and it can't be a penalty or compensatory.
- 7 I don't think that relates to equity.
- 8 I think that's just a legal thing that the --
- 9 that the statute gives the courts discretion.
- If I can make -- make one other thing.
- 11 The statute actually says you can go up to three
- 12 times damages. So --
- 13 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you.
- 14 Thank you, counsel.
- 15 Mr. Katyal.
- 16 ORAL ARGUMENT OF NEAL K. KATYAL
- 17 ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENTS
- 18 MR. KATYAL: Thank you, Mr. Chief
- 19 Justice, and may it please the Court:
- 20 My friend tries to make this case seem
- 21 easy, but to do that, she has to sweep both
- 22 Congress's words and two centuries of history
- 23 under the rug. We're here today because
- 24 Congress expressly made that Lanham Act's
- 25 monetary awards principles subject to the --

- 1 monetary awards subject to the "principles of
- 2 equity, and over many decades courts developed
- 3 a principle that governs cases like this one.
- 4 They required willfulness for the equitable
- 5 remedy of profits awards, unlike for
- 6 injunctions.
- 7 For all the dust my friend tries to
- 8 kick up about the cases in her brief, here's the
- 9 bottom line on all the cited cases: Not one of
- 10 them, none, actually awarded profits without
- 11 willfulness in two centuries, either here or in
- the U.K., and in response to Justice Alito, she
- hasn't been able to give you a single example of
- 14 an unjust result as a result of this long
- 15 tradition.
- 16 Now, trademark infringement isn't some
- 17 newfangled violation like cyber-squatting. It's
- one of the oldest violations in the book. And
- 19 that book, both before 1946 and after, required
- 20 willfulness before a defendant could be forced
- 21 to go through the burdensome process of
- 22 accounting for its profits and risking a
- 23 windfall.
- 24 Five different treatises set out this
- 25 rule. Many cases speak of this categorical

- 1 rule. The remainder demonstrate a long-standing
- 2 practice that -- which is, to use Judge Friendly
- and the Court's phrase in Halo, has narrowed the
- 4 channel of discretion for awarding profits.
- 5 Legislated Congress against the
- 6 backdrop of that practice, which is why even the
- 7 1905 Act was interpreted to have a willfulness
- 8 requirement, and that requirement is now
- 9 expressed in the Lanham Act's reference to the
- 10 principles of equity.
- 11 With respect to my friend's textual
- 12 arguments, she's asking you to believe that
- Congress, by implication in the '90s, invited --
- intended to invite Congress -- the courts to do
- 15 something they had never done in practice. If
- 16 Congress wanted to take that step, that would be
- 17 huge news. They would have said so.
- 18 Her best argument is the 1999
- 19 amendment changes things, which is what she
- 20 walked away from in her brief but is now
- 21 resurrecting here. And that has four problems:
- First, Congress in 1999 didn't repeal
- the textual hook for the willfulness
- 24 requirement, which was the phrase "principles of
- 25 equity." That's the way court after court had

- 1 interpreted it, including the Tenth Circuit just
- 2 the year before in the Bishop case. Congress
- 3 left that phrase untouched.
- 4 Second, Congress never indicated
- 5 anywhere in this -- in the 1999 Act that they
- 6 were trying to modify the willfulness
- 7 requirement in any way, which is what Judge Dyk
- 8 said below, what the law professor's, Lemley,
- 9 brief says here.
- 10 Third, the 1999 amendment did
- 11 something unique. It was newfangled. It
- 12 introduced a new cause of action, trademark
- dilution, one which had no historical analogue.
- 14 It didn't have a customer confusion element.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Mr. Katyal, my
- 16 basic problem is that as I'm looking at these
- cases, the term "willfulness" over the centuries
- 18 has been differently defined by different
- 19 people. Some people have included recklessness.
- 20 Others haven't.
- 21 McCarthy, if you read his definition
- of willfulness, it does include recklessness and
- 23 callous disregard and a whole bunch of
- 24 blameworthy features. There was a circuit split
- on this very issue when Congress acted in 1999.

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1
                You don't think they count for much.
 2
     You try to distinguish them. But there are
      cases -- not many, I grant you -- where
 3
      something less than willfulness was the basis
 4
 5
     for a recovery.
 6
                Given the uncertainty of what
     willfulness means, the fact that there were
 7
 8
     exceptions to the common law rule, whether you
9
     recognize them as significant or not, how do we
10
     write an opinion that says you need willfulness
11
     a -- a la what you mean --
12
               MR. KATYAL: So --
13
                JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- willfulness
14
     being just conscious avoidance, not
15
     recklessness, not callous disregard, not this,
16
     not that?
17
               MR. KATYAL: Justice Sotomayor, at the
18
      time --
19
               JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: How do we --
20
               MR. KATYAL: -- of the --
21
                JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- do that in
22
      light of 117(a), which doesn't have an equity
23
      limitation. It says -- 117(a) says you can
24
     award profits. If you think it's too much or
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too little, use your discretion.

1 MR. KATYAL: Absolutely, Justice 2 Sotomayor. That's what Congress said. Once you pass the threshold of getting a profits award, 3 4 which is of course in 1117(a), quote, "subject 5 to the principles of equity," then we absolutely 6 agree there's discretion at the back end. That's where those equitable principles come in. 7 8 But Congress at the front end did here 9 exactly when it did in the injunction context 10 and what this Court said in eBay, which is, 11 there's a hard and fast requirement for 12 principles of equity to show their irreparable 13 harm. You said it must be shown, even though 14 equity is generally flexible, you've got to go 15 through the gate. Here that gate is the same thing. 16 1946, she has --17 18 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Go --19 MR. KATYAL: -- got a case --20 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- go to the more 21 important part of my question, which is: What 22 does willfulness mean? 23 MR. KATYAL: All right. 24 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: And -- and where 25 is there --

Τ	MR. KATYAL: In
2	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: a universal
3	definition?
4	MR. KATYAL: Yes, we think there is a
5	universal lowest common denominator of
6	willfulness at least meaning what exactly the
7	district court charged here, the petition
8	appendix page 43A which is
9	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Common denominator
10	
11	MR. KATYAL: Yeah
12	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: which is to say
13	it was the only
14	MR. KATYAL: which is the
15	defendants must be actually aware of the
16	infringing activity. So there are five separate
17	treatises that set that out as a hard and fast
18	requirement, Nims and Ludlow and Jenkins and
19	Haseltine, which, by the way, she misstates
20	because she cites the wrong provision about
21	Haseltine about injunctions, but page 305 with
22	respect to profits says willfulness is required.
23	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Why should
24	MR. KATYAL: Case after case says
25	willfulness meaning knowledge is is required

1 And my basic point is, she's got no 2 case on the other side that disagrees with this with except the possible hypothetical of Oakes 3 in 1883, which, again, didn't actually award 4 5 profits in the absence of willfulness. And --6 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Mr. Katyal --7 8 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Why should --9 JUSTICE GINSBURG: -- you say that 10 "principle of equity" means willfulness, but in many cases, as Ms. Blatt pointed out, the 11 12 statute uses the word "willfulness," so you say plain text, "principles of equity." I would say 13 14 if it said "willfulness," that would be plain text, but "principles of equity"? 15 MR. KATYAL: So, Justice Ginsburg, as 16 17 our brief explains, every time Congress -- and 18 they certainly didn't use willfulness in the 19 1946 act. Every time they added to it later on, 20 there was a reason for it. 21 So for example, in 1999, the reason 22 they added to it is because you couldn't look to 23 principles of equity to determine what was 24 trademark dilution because that was a 25 brand-newfangled defense which didn't have

- 1 consumer confusion as a element. So -- but here
- 2 we're talking about the oldest violation in the
- 3 book, trademark law.
- 4 And I'd say, Justice Ginsburg, if you
- 5 adopted that reading, which is -- she's trying
- 6 to do, which is, oh, if Congress says the word
- 7 in some other places by negative implication,
- 8 then it's -- then it's out in other places, that
- 9 would be a dangerous cannonball to the statute.
- 10 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Well --
- 11 MR. KATYAL: So, for example, Section
- 12 1115(b)(9), which you can look at Joint Appendix
- page 135, that has that, that says that laches
- is available to fight incontestability and
- 15 Section 1069 from the '46 Act says laches is
- 16 available to contest inter partes
- 17 determinations.
- If you adopted her reading, you'd be
- 19 saying, well laches isn't anywhere else in --
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Why should --
- 21 MR. KATYAL: -- the statute.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: No, no, no --
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Why should we
- 24 assume that Congress wanted to exclude reckless
- 25 infringement?

1	MR. KATYAL: Because Congress in 1946
2	acted against the backdrop of long-standing,
3	consistent practice. There is not a single
4	example
5	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: But there
6	MR. KATYAL: she is able to give
7	you in which there was an award given.
8	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: But as Justice
9	Sotomayor points out, willfulness is a a
LO	vague word, ambiguous word, sometimes covered
L1	what we would consider recklessness. So why
L2	would you, therefore
L3	MR. KATYAL: Because
L 4	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: exclude
L5	recklessness?
L6	MR. KATYAL: here, Justice
L7	Kavanaugh, there's a more specific tradition.
L8	There's no doubt, cases like Ratzlaf say
L9	"willfulness" means different things in
20	different contexts, but here it is always meant
21	at least actual knowledge, subjective knowledge
22	
23	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: What would be
24	MR. KATYAL: and not recklessness.
25	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: What would be the

policy objective achieved by excluding --

1

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2
               MR. KATYAL: Well --
               JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: -- reckless
 3
 4
      infringement?
 5
               MR. KATYAL: -- so we do think they
 6
     are there, but we think Congress used this
7
     phrase and your job is to interpret the phrase
 8
9
               JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: I agree -- I --
10
               MR. KATYAL: -- and to essentially get
11
     to it. But --
12
               JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: I understand that
13
14
               MR. KATYAL: But --
15
               JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: But can you answer
16
17
               MR. KATYAL: -- the policy --
18
               JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Yeah.
19
               MR. KATYAL: -- objectives are -- are,
20
      I think, incredibly strong, that is, the
21
     tradition of profits comes from equity and the
22
      idea that damages weren't -- weren't at that
23
     point in time available in courts of equity.
24
     And so courts looked to profits.
25
                Then there was a separate rationale of
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- 1 unjust enrichment but that was all about moral
- 2 blameworthiness, about wrongdoing. And someone
- 3 who was innocent is not wrongdoing, which is why
- 4 this Court in Saxel, Henner, and in McLean which
- 5 states --
- 6 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: But if you're
- 7 reckless, you're -- there is some wrongdoing.
- 8 MR. KATYAL: But I -- it's always been
- 9 more than that. The courts have always said you
- 10 actually have to be subjectively knowing what
- 11 you're doing -- subjectively on knowledge of
- 12 what you're doing.
- 13 The Moet case, which this Court has
- 14 referred to twice as stating the rule both in
- 15 1877 in McLean and in 1900 in Saxel, Henner is a
- 16 perfect example of this because in Moet what
- 17 happened -- Moet, what happened is you had a
- 18 champagne dealer who imported some bottles not
- 19 knowing that they were spurious.
- 20 And what the court said in England and
- 21 what this Court cited with approval twice before
- the Lanham Act was, that's someone who's
- innocent, they're not engaged with wrongdoing.
- 24 You can even have situations in which they're
- 25 reckless. For example, the Gorham case in 1912

- 1 was one in which you had a silverware dealer who
- 2 was reckless, who blew off the fact that the --
- 3 that there was a stamp used on the -- on the
- 4 silverware, which was really the -- a mark of a
- 5 famous silverware company.
- 6 But what this Court said is: No --
- 7 excuse me, what the southern district said is,
- 8 no, you need more than that. You need actual
- 9 knowledge, and that --
- 10 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Mr. Katyal, can we
- 11 return to Justice Ginsburg's question for just a
- moment on the statutory text and whether
- principles of equity might be an unusual way of
- 14 saying willfulness?
- 15 As I understood your response to
- 16 Justice Ginsburg, that we would -- we would
- 17 perhaps read out laches as a defense, and -- and
- 18 I -- I just -- my problem with that is that when
- 19 we say "principles of equity," we -- we mean
- 20 laches. Those are -- that is part of the trans-
- 21 substantive history of equity.
- 22 And if I go look at a treaty in
- 23 equity, I'm going to find laches. What I'm not
- 24 going to find is a substantive rule about
- 25 trademark. For that, I have to go look at a

- 1 trademark treatise, and -- so that's my problem
 2 textually. And I -- I just want to give you a
- 3 chance to respond to it.
- 4 And I might ask you, really, isn't
- 5 your argument nothing about principles of equity
- 6 but about willfulness in the air?
- 7 MR. KATYAL: So --
- 8 JUSTICE GORSUCH: And why didn't you
- 9 make an argument that we should, as a background
- 10 principle, assume some sort of consistency with
- 11 the common law when Congress was legislating?
- 12 You seem to have disclaimed that and
- 13 said no, no, there's a textual hook here and
- 14 it's principles of equity. So that's a long
- 15 wind-up, but those are my concerns that --
- MR. KATYAL: We certainly made exactly
- 17 that argument citing Morissette in our brief for
- 18 the idea, even if there weren't the price --
- 19 principles of equity, Congress acts against the
- 20 backdrop of the common law and is deemed to
- 21 interpret it. So that's certainly there.
- I think it's common ground that
- 23 principles of equity include will -- include
- 24 knowledge and willfulness because she's even
- 25 saying it's a factor. That's how she started

- 1 her argument, and it's at page 8 of her reply
- 2 brief.
- 3 So I think everyone agrees that it is
- 4 a principle of equity, the -- the state of mind,
- 5 it's just a question of how much weight you give
- 6 it.
- 7 Our point to you is, Congress in 1946
- 8 when they used the phrase "principles of
- 9 equity," I don't think just meant
- 10 trans-substantive principles. After all, it was
- 11 the bedrock of a profits award. Profits is,
- 12 after all, an equitable remedy in the first
- 13 place.
- 14 And so in order to decide whether that
- 15 equitable remedy should be given, you would look
- 16 to the tradition of equity. And that tradition
- 17 has always been -- the long-standing practice
- 18 for two centuries is that -- is that willfulness
- 19 has been required. And that's why there's not a
- single example on the other side.
- Now she says, well, this is hard,
- you're going to have to read all these cases,
- but I think that's the dog that didn't bark.
- 24 Every single case that's given profits awards in
- 25 two centuries has required willfulness, so the

- 1 question is, is it worth the candle to make it a
- 2 factor and run into the kind of standardless
- 3 result that I think she's --
- 4 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But -- but as
- 5 Justice Sotomayor just pointed out, there wasn't
- 6 -- there isn't in the cases a uniform agreement
- 7 on what "willful" means. And Justice Kagan had
- 8 suggested that maybe it isn't all one way or all
- 9 the other, so you can say the innocent infringer
- 10 -- no profits when it's innocent. But then
- 11 there are shades of blameworthiness.
- 12 And we not -- we're not going to make
- willfulness the essential one. Maybe callous
- 14 disregard. Maybe reckless.
- 15 MR. KATYAL: Justice Ginsburg, ask her
- 16 to cite a case in which callous disregard was
- 17 enough before 1946 to find -- to -- to find a
- 18 profits award. She won't be able to cite one
- 19 except for the theoretical possibility of Oakes.
- 20 And my point to you is when you were
- 21 interpreting the phrase "principles of equity"
- just as in Halo, just as in eBay, what this
- 23 Court did is look to the long-standing practice
- 24 -- Justice -- the Chief Justice's separate
- opinion in eBay referred to a page of history

- 1 being worth a volume of logic. And that's
- 2 exactly what's happened here.
- 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: That -- that
- 4 wasn't original with me.
- 5 (Laughter.)
- 6 MR. KATYAL: And that's exactly what's
- 7 happened here, is that you've had two centuries
- 8 in which this phrase, at equity, has been
- 9 interpreted by court after court, and it is a
- 10 fast rule. Indeed, this Court in the McLean
- 11 case, Justice Ginsburg, in 1877, said courts
- 12 constantly refuse profits awards without that.
- 13 And there isn't any tradition, there
- isn't any example on the other side, and there's
- 15 treatise after treatise. And, by the way,
- 16 Justice Gorsuch, the Restatement is a general
- 17 treatise -- the Restatement on Torts, it's not
- 18 like, you know -- so -- but I do think actually
- 19 the trademark-specific treatises would be what
- 20 would be the relevant tradition here, if you're
- 21 trying to understand --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Reading all those
- 23 I'll -- I'll try this again and maybe I should
- 24 ask you. All right. Suppose you win. And so
- 25 the callous disregard person can't get -- don't

- 1 -- profits doesn't apply. But this is really a
- 2 rotten infringer. And he behaved very badly.
- 3 Can the winning trademark owner point
- 4 to the sentence I read initially and say, Judge,
- 5 it's not fair that they're not counting profits
- 6 here, so don't call it profits, but give me a
- 7 lot more money?
- 8 MR. KATYAL: Absolutely. The statute
- 9 -- this is what we say at page 54 of our brief
- 10 allows treble damages for that --
- JUSTICE BREYER: No, I'm not just --
- 12 treble, but up to a limit?
- MR. KATYAL: -- profits, but you can't
- 14 treble profits --
- 15 JUSTICE BREYER: Up to a limit? But a
- 16 sentence --
- 17 MR. KATYAL: You can't just treble
- 18 profits because that is a harder --
- 19 JUSTICE BREYER: Correct. So -- so --
- 20 but the sentence I read has no such limitation.
- 21 That's what's confusing me about it.
- MR. KATYAL: Well --
- JUSTICE BREYER: So I thought is this
- 24 all much ado about nothing.
- MR. KATYAL: Well, again, I think that

- 1 the award is subject in the first instance of
- 2 the gate to principles of equity.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Yeah, all right.
- 4 Fine.
- 5 MR. KATYAL: But there's a much more
- 6 important answer here, Justice -- Justice
- 7 Breyer. She can't come up in response to
- 8 Justice Alito with a single time in which this
- 9 happened, an unjust result, in two centuries.
- 10 And the reason for that is trademark
- 11 law focuses on protection of consumers in which
- injunctions and damages has always been enough,
- which is why there isn't an example on the other
- 14 side.
- To the extent she has some theoretical
- argument, it should be one made to Congress.
- 17 Congress dealt with it actually here, in this
- 18 idea that --
- 19 JUSTICE BREYER: I'm still trying to
- get the -- it's -- I don't know why I -- I can't
- 21 get it. I -- I must be missing something.
- Where it turns out for you having won
- 23 that there is a case, imaginary, where the
- 24 person does behave badly but doesn't meet the --
- 25 the thresh -- the threshold, does this

- 1 sentence -- do you come across anything that
- 2 suggests the sentence that I read does any work,
- 3 where you would say, Judge, I agree, we don't
- 4 get profits? It wasn't willful what he did, but
- 5 it was pretty bad.
- 6 MR. KATYAL: Justice Breyer --
- 7 JUSTICE BREYER: And so we want more
- 8 money.
- 9 MR. KATYAL: Yes, Justice Breyer, it
- does work with respect to damages, not with
- 11 respect to profits, because up above in 1117 --
- 12 JUSTICE BREYER: Yeah.
- 13 MR. KATYAL: -- profits is subject to
- 14 the principles of equity. And that is a
- 15 limitation. But --
- 16 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: But damages is
- 17 notoriously hard to prove, correct?
- MR. KATYAL: Well, I actually disagree
- 19 with that. She doesn't cite any study or
- 20 anything. The only study I'm aware of is the
- 21 Lex Machina study in 2017, which surveyed 2009
- 22 to 2017, and every trademark award and found
- that profits accounted for a total of 13 percent
- of profits awards and also 13 percent of the
- dollars.

1 And to the extent you think that's 2 somehow, you know -- you know, worth the candle 3 or something and you should bump that up, that's 4 something that I think Congress should be 5 dealing with, but of course here they did. 6 have a statutory damages provision to deal with low damages awards --7 8 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: You -- you've 9 mentioned a couple times whether it's worth the 10 candle to not have a willfulness requirement, 11 but is it worth the candle to exclude all 12 reckless cases as Justice Breyer has stated --13 MR. KATYAL: Yes. The reason --14 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: -- when -- when 15 willfulness will usually be a key factor in the calculus regardless of who wins here? 16 MR. KATYAL: Right. We don't doubt 17 18 that -- if we were to lose this case on remand, 19 you should make very clear that willfulness is a 20 key factor, the big kahuna or something like 21 that, but our point to you is that the reason 22 why a -- a reason why the common law rule makes 23 sense is that willfulness cuts off, I think, the 24 threat of very large profits awards. 25 And this case is a perfect example.

- 1 She sought \$6 million, every dollar in profits
- 2 for the sale of these handbags, and that's what
- 3 she was referring to with this attribution
- 4 thing. And, indeed, they sought every dollar of
- 5 Macy's profits, \$7 million. And Macy's is an
- 6 entity that, you know, nobody is arguing had any
- 7 knowledge whatsoever, way -- way, shape, or
- 8 form, or even recklessness with respect to what
- 9 was going on with these little snaps in the
- 10 handbags.
- 11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well,
- 12 counsel --
- MR. KATYAL: That's the danger.
- 14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I -- how much
- 15 would you have asked for? I mean -- I mean,
- it's -- it doesn't strike me as overreaching to
- 17 ask for every dollar of the profits if you think
- 18 you're entitled to profits.
- 19 MR. KATYAL: Well, that's the down --
- that's the downside here. And, indeed, the
- 21 statute puts the burden on the defendant to
- 22 disprove any attribution. And so what -- one of
- 23 the reasons why you have the willfulness
- 24 requirement is to knock out and block
- 25 circumstances in which high awards are

- 1 threatened, and indeed settlements are forced,
- 2 which happened in this very case.
- Now, she says, well, that's not going
- 4 to deter enough and you need to have something
- 5 extra, which, again, is something for Congress.
- 6 Again, this is a perfect illustration, just the
- 7 injunction alone cost us \$4 million. We had to
- 8 remove all of these bags, right on the eve of
- 9 Thanksgiving's big sales and the like.
- 10 And so in a world in which you have
- injunctions and damages and all the attendant
- 12 consequences of pulling inventory, would
- 13 Congress really have intended to disrupt a
- 14 200-year-long tradition in order to -- to do
- 15 this? And --
- 16 JUSTICE KAGAN: May I ask two
- 17 questions about that tradition? The first is
- 18 you've said several times that Ms. Blatt has
- 19 zero cases, and I believe Ms. Blatt said that
- 20 she had three cases.
- 21 MR. KATYAL: Right.
- 22 JUSTICE KAGAN: So if you would
- 23 address that.
- 24 And the second is, although you point
- 25 to a lot of cases in which the results come out

- 1 your way, there are comparatively few where the
- 2 court sets out the rule as a categorical one.
- 3 You know, in many of these cases, the courts do
- 4 seem to be thinking of willfulness as a factor,
- 5 a significant factor, but not a gateway
- 6 requirement.
- 7 So those results might come out your
- 8 way, but they don't articulate the rule that you
- 9 propose, do they?
- 10 MR. KATYAL: Five -- yes. Five
- 11 separate treaties -- treatises and 37 of the 50
- 12 cited cases do set out the rule or say
- 13 willfulness is the only factor. But I think
- 14 that's not the test this Court applies. So, for
- 15 example, in Halo, what this Court did was look
- 16 to the long practice, and indeed the first case,
- 17 main case, it cited was a case called Cincinnati
- 18 Siemens, and it -- which was a case just about
- 19 the facts of -- of a -- of damage awards and
- 20 treble damages awards, but from that
- 21 long-standing practice what the Court did was to
- 22 -- was to -- was derive a principle.
- 23 And that's what we're saying here.
- You've had a long-standing practice for 200
- 25 years, and, yes, Justice Kagan, those three

- 1 cases do not stand up. Even if she had three
- 2 cases, we don't think an outlier three cases in
- 3 200 years is going to get her where she needs to
- 4 go.
- 5 But taking them in turn, one,
- 6 Mishawaka Rubber. This is the Sixth Circuit's
- 7 determination, at 119 Federal Second 323. The
- 8 rule prevails in Michigan that an account of
- 9 profits will not be taken where the wrongful use
- of a trademark has been merely accidental. And
- 11 then saying this rule is in harmony with the
- 12 rule prevailing in the federal courts. And,
- indeed, in Mishawaka Rubber, the Court limited
- the profits award to the period after May 19th,
- 15 1933, which was when they were on notice.
- So that's --
- 17 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Mr. Katyal, the
- 18 problem is, as I read those cases, you do have a
- 19 handful, a little bit more than a handful, that
- 20 say you need willful. But a lot of those cases,
- 21 including the quote you gave me, give the
- 22 negative. Accidental, good faith, is not
- 23 enough. That's not the same thing.
- MR. KATYAL: We -- we agree not every
- 25 case states the rule, but our --

1	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But it also			
2	MR. KATYAL: She doesn't have a case			
3	on the other side with the exception of the			
4	theoretical possibility of Oakes			
5	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Why don't you			
6	MR. KATYAL: which doesn't.			
7	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Why don't you deal			
8	with the three cases that she points to.			
9	MR. KATYAL: Yeah. So the second case			
10	is Oakes, which has never once been cited again			
11	for that proposition. We're not saying it's			
12	because it's from Alabama or something like			
13	that. It's literally never been cited again for			
14	that proposition. And, again, there was no			
15	award in that case.			
16	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Well, it's only			
17	the last 20, maybe 30 years that we had Lexis to			
18	cite cases like that, but			
19	MR. KATYAL: Well, I think, you know			
20	I think			
21	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Lexis and Westlaw,			
22	but			
23	MR. KATYAL: But, Justice Sotomayor, I			
24	think, you know, this Court in the McLean case			
25	said courts constantly refuse profits awards			

- 1 because of a lack of willfulness, citing the
- 2 English case of Moet, which is the best case.
- 3 It's on all fours with this. That's the case
- 4 that, case after case, Liberty Oil, the Nims
- 5 treatise -- all of them are based on that
- 6 fundamental root.
- 7 And her third case was -- was
- 8 Prest-O-Lite. And, again, Prest-O-Lite -- and
- 9 this is our -- in our red brief at page 42. In
- 10 page 444 of Prest-O-Lite is made clear that the
- 11 conduct in that case was willful and that's why
- 12 a profits award was given. "What the defendants
- did was to fill tanks bearing the Complainant's
- 14 trademark and either sell or distribute them for
- 15 sale. I have already found the defendant had
- 16 knowledge of the practice of the dealers," and
- 17 the like.
- So every single one of the cases she
- 19 points to, I think, actually boomerangs. It
- doesn't say what she says it does.
- 21 This is true of other language in
- 22 Romag's brief which makes this look a lot more
- 23 complicated than it is. McLean and Haseltine
- 24 and -- and even Draper, she cites Draper but
- 25 that's -- she -- it's only one judge. She

- doesn't point out the other two judges disagreed
- 2 with this.
- 3 So, look, at the end of the day, she's
- 4 got one case from Alabama in 1883, which was
- 5 never actually resulted in an award of profits.
- 6 You have five treatises on the other side. You
- 7 have 37 of the 50 cases which do state a rule,
- 8 and 13 cases which are fully consistent with the
- 9 rule. I think that's at least as good as what
- 10 the Frag --
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: But in --
- 12 MR. KATYAL: -- Music case was.
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: -- stating the
- 14 rule in your brief, you consistently say good
- 15 faith, not willful, innocent, not willful. But
- there's a huge gray area, maybe not huge, but
- there is a gray area of behavior that's not good
- 18 faith or innocent but reckless but nonetheless
- 19 is not willful.
- 20 MR. KATYAL: Right, and --
- 21 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: And that -- and
- 22 that -- your description in the brief consistent
- 23 also seems consistent as Justice Sotomayor says
- 24 with the rule.
- 25 MR. KATYAL: And I should have made

- 1 this clear with respect to Justice Ginsburg's
- 2 question. Yes, the cases sometimes say
- 3 ignorance or accidental or something like that.
- 4 And so -- but there's at least a threshold of
- 5 actual knowledge.
- There is no case that she's able to
- 7 cite in which -- outside of the Oakes language
- 8 in 1883, that you could read to say that
- 9 something lower than -- something in which
- 10 there's objective recklessness is enough to
- 11 sustain a award of profits. They always rely on
- 12 subjective actual knowledge.
- 13 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: How about
- 14 subjective recklessness, conscious disregard of
- 15 a substantial risk?
- MR. KATYAL: Yeah. So, you know, I
- 17 don't think that -- I don't think the cases have
- 18 gotten too into that one way or the other,
- 19 but --
- 20 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Right. And that's
- 21 that's key, right?
- MR. KATYAL: No, I don't think so.
- 23 Here, I think -- you know, here the question is
- 24 that, you know, because here -- the district
- 25 court here found, this is at page 47A, the

- 1 evidence at trial at most could support a
- 2 finding that Fossil was negligent, not that it
- 3 acted in reckless disregard with willful
- 4 blindness and the like. So --
- 5 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Mr. Katyal, could
- 6 you explain the features of trademark that make
- 7 it different from copyright and patent where
- 8 as -- if I understand correctly, you can get
- 9 profits without showing willfulness?
- 10 MR. KATYAL: Yeah. So trademark law
- is fundamentally different from those. Those
- 12 are about ownership. Here this is about
- consumer confusion and protection of consumers.
- 14 And as our brief explains, once you go
- down that path, you have to worry -- and this is
- one of the reasons for the willfulness
- 17 requirement, that willfulness litigation will be
- 18 used to browbeat entities like Fossil and to
- 19 seek massive amounts of profits, every dollar
- 20 they made, and also downstream, not just the --
- 21 you know, not just the designer of the handbags
- 22 but every entity that sells them, the Macy's of
- 23 the world to the tune of \$7 million.
- 24 If Congress really wanted to do that
- and authorize such a revolutionary change in

- 1 trademark law, one would think they'd say so and
- 2 not leave it to negative implication because at
- 3 the end of the day, what she's asking you to do
- 4 is to say that Congress in 1999 put into the
- 5 statute something that literally had never been
- 6 done once in practice. She has not a single
- 7 time it's done.
- 8 That's why this Court in interpreting
- 9 the phrase "principles of equity" in -- in the
- 10 Halo case said, look to the long tradition, look
- 11 to what actually happened.
- 12 You don't need an ironclad rule, just
- 13 look to what happened. Here what happened is
- one thing in the U.K. and in the U.S., for at
- 15 least 180 years, which is no profits awards in
- 16 the absence of willful conduct, at least
- 17 subjective knowledge that what they were doing
- 18 was wrong.
- 19 That is the common denominator in
- 20 Nims, the Restatement, and Ludlow and Jenkins
- 21 and -- and the 37 cases cited in the brief.
- No other questions?
- 23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
- 24 counsel.
- Ms. Blatt, five minutes.

1	REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF LISA S. BLATT
2	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER
3	MS. BLATT: You may want to cut me
4	off.
5	So I I don't know what to say. I
6	didn't go to a fancy law school, but I'm very
7	confident in my representation of the case law.
8	Mishawaka is a case by you guys and you said in
9	there, in the dissent, it was an innocent
10	infringer, the profits were awarded.
11	The district court case says, hey, I
12	don't like the assertion that innocent people
13	shouldn't get profits, but you guys can read the
14	case and decide whether our assertion is
15	credible but that is a district court case and
16	it's a Supreme Court case by the dissent that
17	acknowledges innocence.
18	Oakes, it is what it is. You can read
19	it. And Prest-O-Lite is the same.
20	In terms of give me an example of an
21	unjust case, I would start with this case, the
22	argument is we get zero, even though there was
23	callous disregard, even though their snaps were
24	ripped off, even though it's a small business,
25	even though you know that's all they make and

- 1 it was a counterfeit snap, if we get zero or
- even a quarter, that would be unjust. So that's
- 3 my example.
- 4 Second, on the treatises, I hope you
- 5 read them. Four of them use the word "damages."
- 6 They don't distinguish profits. They say a
- 7 principal of trademark law is you don't get
- 8 damages. No damages absent willfulness. He
- 9 doesn't have a response to that.
- 10 All of their cases but one say
- 11 "fraudulent intent." So every case that
- 12 articulates the rule uses the word "fraudulent."
- Not "wrongful" but" fraudulent." And that's not
- 14 his argument here.
- 15 Third, no case that we found under the
- 16 1905 Act applied a mental state requirement. I
- 17 don't -- I didn't hear him say a case.
- Four, he did drop the law professor
- brief, which I'm so glad because I'm going to
- 20 quote from the leading cite of the law
- 21 professor's brief, Thurman.
- The law was quote, "not clear from
- 23 1870 through 1905." The issue was "unclear when
- 24 the Lanham Act was enacted." Specifically
- 25 notes -- this is my favorite -- "there was a

- 1 majority and minority rule on the subject and
- 2 the Supreme Court was in the minority."
- 3 So you guys had the minority rule
- 4 because you didn't require willfulness in the
- 5 Champion Sparkplug case and then apparently you
- 6 muddied the waters in Mishawaka. So that --
- 7 that's their treatise. Oh. Wait a minute, "the
- 8 end result is ambiguity." So that's from their
- 9 treatise. And -- and four out of their five
- 10 treatises use the word "fraud."
- JUSTICE BREYER: You're quite right
- 12 that I'll read the treatises and I've read the
- 13 Lemly brief, and I will read the sources, but I
- don't understand your statement that they would
- 15 receive no damages.
- MS. BLATT: So --
- 17 JUSTICE BREYER: I thought the
- 18 statute, that I have in front of me, says that
- they're entitled to recover profits and any
- 20 damages sustained.
- MS. BLATT: Right.
- JUSTICE BREYER: And so you don't need
- 23 willfulness to recover any damages sustained, do
- 24 you? Or have I miss understood what --
- MS. BLATT: No. I'm just saying --

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1
               JUSTICE BREYER: -- they're saying?
               MS. BLATT: -- the logic of the
 2
     Respondent's argument is that the same common
 3
 4
      law rule that required willfulness for profits
 5
      in the same breath said fraudulent intent was
6
      also required for damages.
7
               So it's a --
 8
               JUSTICE BREYER: All of those cases
9
      say that --
10
               MS. BLATT: All of the treatises --
11
               JUSTICE BREYER: You're right.
12
               MS. BLATT: -- four out of the five.
13
               JUSTICE BREYER: All of the treatises.
14
     Yeah, forgive me.
15
               MS. BLATT: One of the cases.
               JUSTICE BREYER: Nobody is claiming,
16
17
     are they? I wouldn't --
18
               MS. BLATT: Nope.
19
               JUSTICE BREYER: No.
20
               MS. BLATT: Nope. That's our
21
      argument.
22
               JUSTICE BREYER: Nobody is claiming
23
     that you need willfulness for -- that the
24
     client, no matter how poor, no matter how -- he
25
     gets his damages, right?
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1 MS. BLATT: Right. Our argument is --2 the other side just wants to take you up to where they win this case. The actual common law 3 sources say fraudulent intent and it also 4 5 extends to damages. This is just another way of saying the 6 law was a mess and it wasn't that clear. 7 8 three out of their eight cases say there was a 9 conflict, I just think the whole notion of the 10 Morissette or we cite that Fogerty versus Fantasy cases, if you just have a lack of 11 12 clarity on the issue, you don't have a basis to presume that Congress wanted you to read in an 13 14 unstated requirement. And I think in at least in the --15 the -- -- the Justice Scalia and Garner book, it 16 17 says, when you're talking about clarity, it's 18 something that all the members of the bar had to 19 agree was settled, and if the very case as it's -- that was conflicted, if the treatises say it 20 21 wasn't clear, and if the cases are all over the 22 map, again, the fact that we have three cases 23 where they award profits is kind of either here 24 nor there when we had eight cases that are just 25 inconsistent with the willfulness requirement,

1 including, I will end with, I will sit down 2 early, is Champion Sparkplug case. It's a case 3 in 1947, it was construing the 1905 Act, said 4 it's relevant. And then it cited two other 5 factors as part of the equities. 6 That's, to me, you know, just -- it -it would be hard to find a settled rule from 40 7 8 years of silence under the Lanham Act's 9 predecessor. Thank you. 10 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Ms. Blatt --11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you. 12 JUSTICE GINSBURG: -- Texas is a fine 13 law school. 14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I was just 15 going to --16 (Laughter.) 17 MS. BLATT: Thank you. 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, 19 counsel. The case is submitted. 20 (Whereupon, at 12:11 p.m., the case 21 was submitted.) 22 23 24 25

	Official - Subjec	t to Final Review	
\$	5	air [1] 43:6	award [26] 4:5,25 5:4 6:15,21 9:2,
\$100,000 [1] 28:1	50 [4] 28 :1,2 53 :11 57 :7	AL [1] 1:6	18 10 :4 13 :23 14 :7 15 :18 20 :10
\$200,000 [1] 8:4	54 [1] 47 :9	Alabama [4] 9:21,22 55:12 57:4	34 :24 35 :3 37 :4 39 :7 44 :11 45 :18
\$4 [4] 28 :20,23 29 :18 52 :7		ALITO [3] 20:5 31:12 48:8	48 :1 49 :22 54 :14 55 :15 56 :12 57 :
\$6 [1] 51:1	6	allow [3] 20:18 28:18 30:3 allows [2] 29:21 47:10	5 58 :11 65: 23 awarded [2] 31: 10 61: 10
\$7 [2] 51 :5 59 :23	61 [1] 2 :10	almost [2] 7:9 25:12	awarding [3] 3:12 4:22 32:4
\$900 [5] 7 :22,23,24 26 :19 28 :6	8	alone [1] 52:7	awards [16] 3:17 5:13 18:15 30:25
1	8 [1] 44:1	already [4] 18: 13 19: 1 24: 25 56: 15	31 :1,5 44 :24 46 :12 49 :24 50 :7,24
<u> </u>		alternative [1] 8:11	51 :25 53 :19,20 55 :25 60 :15
1069 [1] 38:15	9	although [2] 20:17 52:24	aware [2] 36 :15 49 :20
11:13 [2] 1:14 3:2	900 [1] 8:15	ambiguity [1] 63:8	awareness [1] 10:22
1114 [1] 19: 5 1115(b)(9 [1] 38: 12	90s [1] 32:13	ambiguous [1] 39:10	away [3] 8:1 25:6 32:20
1117 [2] 11:21 49:11	Α	amended [1] 6:4	В
1117 (2) 11.21 49.11 1117(a [1] 35:4	a.m [2] 1:14 3:2	amendment 3 6:8 32:19 33:10	
1125(a [2] 5:24 6:10	able 5 12:23 31:13 39:6 45:18 58:	among [1] 21: 24	baby [1] 26:24
1125(c [7] 5:22 17:14,15 18:8,15,	6	amount [6] 5:4 8:14 11:22 12:24	back [1] 35:6
24 19:7	above [2] 15:14 49:11	17 :2 29 :12	backdrop [3] 32:6 39:2 43:20
117(a 3 5:19 34:22,23	above-entitled [1] 1:12	amounts [1] 59 :19	background [2] 4:1 43:9 bad [2] 16:8 49:5
119 [1] 54:7	absence [2] 37:5 60:16	analogue [1] 33:13	badly [2] 47:2 48:24
12:11 [1] 66: 20	absent [3] 12:13 18:19 62:8	analysis [1] 3:20	bags [1] 52:8
13 [3] 49: 23,24 57: 8	absolute [2] 3:17 22:5	another [1] 65:6	balance [2] 5:2 22:25
135 [1] 38 :13	Absolutely 3 35:1,5 47:8	answer [4] 3:18 11:15 40:15 48:6	balancing [1] 21:8
14 [1] 1 :10	accepting [1] 13:21	answers [1] 21:18	bar [1] 65 :18
18-1233 [1] 3:4	accident [3] 16:2,2,5	anybody [2] 14:13 28:24 apparently [1] 63:5	bark [1] 44:23
180 [1] 60: 15	accidental (3) 54:10,22 58:3	appealing [2] 14:10 16:15	based [6] 5:14 11:23 19:22 20:12
1870 [1] 62 :23	according [2] 5:5 12:1	appear [1] 17:15	22 :3 56 :5
1877 [2] 41 :15 46 :11	account 11 54:8	APPEARANCES [1] 1:16	basic 3ে 7 :16 33 :16 37 :1
1883 [3] 37:4 57:4 58:8	accounted [1] 49:23	appeared [1] 16:3	basically [1] 18:17
1888 [1] 9:21	accounting [1] 31:22	appearing [1] 18:7	basis ଓ 27:19 34:4 65:12
1900 [1] 41:15	achieved [1] 40:1	appears [1] 5:23	bearing [1] 56 :13
1905 [4] 32 :7 62 :16,23 66 :3 1912 [1] 41 :25	acknowledges [1] 61:17	appendix [2] 36:8 38:12	bedrock [1] 44:11
1912 [1]41:25 1933 [1] 54:15	across [1] 49:1	applied [2] 4:4 62:16	beginning [1] 18:24
1946 [8] 5:11 19:5 31:19 35:17 37:	Act [20] 3:11 5:8,15,25 8:25 9:1,5,9 15:8,9 19:4,5 32:7 33:5 37:19 38:	applies [2] 19:17 53:14	begs [1] 18:3
19 39:1 44:7 45:17	15.6,9 19.4,5 32.7 33.5 37.19 36. 15 41:22 62:16,24 66:3	apply [4] 12 :17,18 18 :20 47 :1	behalf [8] 1:19,22 2:4,7,10 3:8 30:
1947 [1] 66:3	Act's 5 4:10 5:11 30:24 32:9 66:8	appropriate [2] 17:2 25:7	17 61: 2
1999 [8] 6 :4 32 :18,22 33 :5,10,25	acted [3] 33:25 39:2 59:3	approval [1] 41:21	behave [1] 48:24 behaved [1] 47:2
37 :21 60 :4	action [5] 5:25 18:2,10 23:14 33:	area [2] 57:16,17	behavior [2] 6:18 57:17
19th [1] 54:14	12	aren't [2] 8:8 22:12	believe [2] 32:12 52:19
2	activity [1] 36:16	argue [1] 17:23	belong [2] 7:18 24:19
	acts [1] 43:19	argued [1] 14:13	belongs [1] 21:5
20 [1] 55:17 200 [2] 53:24 54:3	actual [5] 39:21 42:8 58:5,12 65:3	arguing [2] 12:16 51:6 argument [26] 1:13 2:2,5,8 3:4,7 7:	below [1] 33:8
200 4 53:24 54:3 200-year-long 1 52:14	actually [12] 26:17 30:11 31:10 36:	22 17 :12,17 18 :1,1,6 29 :15 30 :16	benefitted [1] 21:12
2009 [1] 49:21	15 37 :4 41 :10 46 :18 48 :17 49 :18	32: 18 43: 5,9,17 44: 1 48: 16 61: 1,	best [2] 32:18 56:2
2017 [2] 49 :21,22	56 :19 57 :5 60 :11	22 62 :14 64 :3,21 65 :1	better [2] 14:20 22:18
2020 [1] 1:10	add [1] 6:4	arguments [4] 8:14,15,22 32:12	between [5] 4:19 5:3 6:18 21:21
	added [3] 6:12 37:19,22	around [2] 12:23 21:6	22 :21
3	address [1] 52:23	articulate [2] 10:8 53:8	big [2] 50 :20 52 :9
3 [1] 2:4	adequate [1] 22:12	articulated [1] 24:21	Bishop [1] 33:2
30 [2] 2:7 55:17	adequately [3] 4:13 7:5 24:16 adjust [1] 17:3	articulates [1] 62:12	bit [1] 54:19
305 [1] 36:21	adjustment [2] 28:18 30:4	aspect [1] 10:6	blameworthiness [2] 41:2 45:11
323 [1] 54:7	ado [1] 47:24	assertion [2] 61:12,14	blameworthy [1] 33:24 BLATT [77] 1:18 2:3,9 3:6,7,9 6:13,
37 [3] 53 :11 57 :7 60 :21	adopted [2] 38:5,18	assume [2] 38:24 43:10	23 7 :1 9 :6,10,12,15,18,24 10 :19
4	advance [1] 25:5	assuming [1] 5:7	11 :10 12 :9,13,19 13 :4,8,11,25 14 :
40 [1] 66 :7	affirmative [1] 10:23	attendant [1] 52:11	3,5,11,15,18,22 15 :2 16 :6,14,18,
42 [1] 56: 9	affirmatively [1] 6:6	attributable [3] 27:10 28:4 29:18	22 17 :12,25 20 :14 21 :20 22 :9 23 :
43A [1] 36: 8	agree [6] 13:1 35:6 40:9 49:3 54:	attribution [3] 29:13 51:3,22 authorize [1] 59:25	9,22 24: 2,6,10 26: 5,10,13,16 27: 6,
444 [1] 56: 10	24 65 :19	authorizes [1] 3:11	14,17,20,24 28 :3 29 :4,7,9,25 37 :
46 [1] 38: 15	agreed [1] 24:11	available [4] 8:6 38:14,16 40:23	11 52 :18,19 60 :25 61 :1,3 63 :16,
47A [1] 58: 25	agreement [1] 45:6	avoid [1] 10:23	21,25 64 :2,10,12,15,18,20 65 :1 66 :
	agrees [1] 44:3	avoidance [1] 34:14	10,17
i			

credible [1] 61:15

culpability [6] 4:6,17,24 15:9 24:

critical [1] 15:11

Official - Subject to Final Review

blew [1] 42:2 blindness [3] 10:21 11:13 59:4 block [1] 51:24 book [4] 31:18,19 38:3 65:16 boomerangs [1] 56:19 both [5] 8:7,25 30:21 31:19 41:14 bottles [1] 41:18 bottom [1] 31:9 brand-newfangled [1] 37:25 breath [1] 64:5 BREYER [56] 11:9.14 12:12.14.20 **13**:6.9.14 **14**:1.4.9.13.16.19.24 **15**: 22 16:7,15,19 23:7,10,23 24:3,7 **26**:4,7,11,14 **27**:23 **28**:19 **29**:5,8 30:3 46:22 47:11,15,19,23 48:3,7, 19 **49**:6,7,9,12 **50**:12 **63**:11,17,22 64:1,8,11,13,16,19,22 brief [18] 14:16,17 31:8 32:20 33:9 37:17 43:17 44:2 47:9 56:9,22 57: 14,22 59:14 60:21 62:19,21 63:13 briefed [1] 29:10 browbeat [1] 59:18 bump [1] 50:3 bunch [1] 33:23 burden [1] 51:21 burdensome [1] 31:21 business [3] 8:17 28:15 61:24 buying [1] 28:25 C

calculus [1] 50:16 calibrated [1] 20:3 call [1] 47:6 called [1] 53:17 callous [11] 4:19 6:20 10:16,25 11: 11 33:23 34:15 45:13,16 46:25 61: came [1] 1:12 candle [4] 45:1 50:2.10.11 cannonball [1] 38:9 cannot [1] 14:7 care [2] 18:15 19:20 cared [1] 28:15 carefully [1] 20:3 cares [2] 25:24 26:5 Case [90] 3:4 4:20 5:20,20 6:7 7:1, 7,14 8:12,12 9:16,20,22,25,25 11: 3,12 **12**:2,6,12 **13**:2 **14**:10 **15**:23 16:16 20:9,12,15,16 21:2,7,8 22: 15 23:1.20 24:25 25:6 27:9 29:11 **30**:20 **33**:2 **35**:19 **36**:24.24 **37**:2 41:13.25 44:24 45:16 46:11 48:23 **50**:18.25 **52**:2 **53**:16.17.17.18 **54**: 25 **55:**2.9.15.24 **56:**2.2.3.4.4.7.11 **57**:4,12 **58**:6 **60**:10 **61**:7,8,11,14, 15,16,21,21 62:11,15,17 63:5 65:3

cases [64] 4:6 5:3 6:6 7:10,11 9:1

10:2,3,8 11:19,20 15:4,25 19:2,8

20:5,25 21:1,2,7,14 22:20 24:13,

14 25:12,17 26:8 31:3,8,9,25 33:

17 34:3 37:11 39:18 44:22 45:6

50:12 52:19.20.25 53:3.12 54:1.2.

2,18,20 **55**:8,18 **56**:18 **57**:7,8 **58**:2

17 **60**:21 **62**:10 **64**:8.15 **65**:8.11. 21,22,24 categorical [2] 31:25 53:2 cause [4] 5:25 18:2,10 33:12 centuries [7] 30:22 31:11 33:17 44:18,25 46:7 48:9 certain [1] 11:19 certainly [6] 8:4 16:11 22:5 37:18 43:16 21 champagne [1] 41:18 Champion [3] 21:7 63:5 66:2 chance [1] 43:3 change [1] 59:25 changes [1] 32:19 channel [1] 32:4 charge [2] 10:18,20 charged [1] 36:7 CHIEF [20] 3:3,9 17:11 26:21 27: 13,15,18,22,25 29:16 30:13,18 45: 24 46:3 51:11,14 60:23 66:11,14, China [3] 8:18 12:4.22 choice [1] 25:16 Cincinnati [1] 53:17 Circuit [6] 11:11 24:4,20,21 33:1, 24 Circuit's [1] 54:6 circuits [1] 14:6 circumstances [6] 5:6 12:2 15:19 21.9 22 51.25 cite [10] 8:24 20:7,13 45:16,18 49: 19 **55**:18 **58**:7 **62**:20 **65**:10 cited [8] 31:9 41:21 53:12,17 55: 10 13 60:21 66:4 cites [2] 36:20 56:24 citing [2] 43:17 56:1 claiming [2] 64:16,22 clarity [2] 65:12,17 class [1] 19:8 clear [7] 10:13 50:19 56:10 58:1 62:22 65:7.21 clearly [2] 17:6 24:24 client [1] 64:24 closer [2] 8:15 11:2 collect [1] 18:10 come [7] 15:17 21:1 35:7 48:7 49: 1 52:25 53:7 comes [1] 40:21 common [15] 8:23 10:6.7.8 20:21 **34**:8 **36**:5,9 **43**:11,20,22 **50**:22 **60**: 19 64:3 65:3 company [1] 42:5 comparatively [1] 53:1 compensate [2] 7:6 24:16 compensates [1] 4:13 compensation [3] 15:12 22:12,19 compensatory [2] 5:4 30:6 Complainant's [1] 56:13 completely [2] 4:21 7:7 complicated [2] 27:5 56:23 component [1] 7:11 concede [1] 7:22 concentrate [1] 6:14

concerns [2] 14:6 43:15

conduct [3] 10:21 56:11 60:16 confident [1] 61:7 conflict [5] 10:10,12,12,13 65:9 conflicted [2] 20:18 65:20 confuse [1] 19:14 confusing [1] 47:21 confusion 3 33:14 38:1 59:13 Congress [33] 5:11 6:3 18:23 19: 19 20:2 26:2 30:24 32:5.13.14.16. 22 33:2.4.25 35:2.8 37:17 38:6.24 39:1 40:6 43:11.19 44:7 48:16.17 **50**:4 **52**:5,13 **59**:24 **60**:4 **65**:13 Congress's [1] 30:22 congressional [1] 5:10 conscious [2] 34:14 58:14 consequences [1] 52:12 consider [1] 39:11 consistency [1] 43:10 consistent [4] 39:3 57:8,22,23 consistently [1] 57:14 consonance [1] 6:21 constantly [2] 46:12 55:25 constrained [1] 21:16 construing [1] 66:3 consumer [2] 38:1 59:13 consumers [4] 4:11 25:15 48:11 **59**:13 contains [1] 5:15 contest [1] 38:16 context [1] 35:9 contexts [1] 39:20 controlling [3] 3:21 4:8 15:6 controls [1] 5:20 Conversely [1] 4:24 copy [1] 28:21 copyright [1] 59:7 Correct [2] 47:19 49:17 correctly [2] 7:18 59:8 cost [2] 23:14 52:7 couldn't [2] 12:7 37:22 counsel [4] 30:14 51:12 60:24 66: count [2] 10:2 34:1 counterfeit [3] 8:7 25:22 62:1 counterfeiting [2] 8:18,21 counting [1] 47:5 countless [1] 8:8 counts [1] 9:22 couple [1] 50:9 course [4] 10:7 17:13 35:4 50:5 COURT [43] 1:1,13 3:10 9:16,19 11:22,24 12:1,6 13:23 15:18 20:9, 16 **21**:8,15 **22**:24 **28**:18 **30**:19 **32**: 25,25 35:10 36:7 41:4,13,20,21 **42**:6 **45**:23 **46**:9,9,10 **53**:2,14,15, 21 **54**:13 **55**:24 **58**:25 **60**:8 **61**:11,

15 **25**:8 culpable [1] 6:17 customer [1] 33:14 cut [1] 61:3 cuts [1] 50:23 cyber-squatting [1] 31:17 D **D.C** [3] **1:**9.18.21 dah-dah-dah [1] 12:23 damage [1] 53:19 damages [32] 7:8 8:3.4 13:18 18:5. 16.17.18.20 19:11.15.18 23:14 30: 12 40:22 47:10 48:12 49:10.16 50: 6,7 **52**:11 **53**:20 **62**:5,8,8 **63**:15,20, 23 64:6,25 65:5 danger [1] 51:13 dangerous [1] 38:9 day [2] 57:3 60:3 deal [2] 50:6 55:7 dealer [2] 41:18 42:1 dealers [1] 56:16 dealing [1] 50:5 dealt [1] 48:17 debate [2] 26:18 27:9 decades [1] 31:2 decide [2] 44:14 61:14 decision [1] 10:11 deemed [1] 43:20 defendant [11] 4:14,20 7:8 19:12 **21**:12 **22**:17,19,23 **31**:20 **51**:21 **56**: defendant's [4] 4:6 23:13 24:15 defendants [4] 5:12.13 36:15 56: defense [2] 37:25 42:17 defined [4] 10:16 11:4 24:24 33: definitely [1] 15:3 definition [2] 33:21 36:3 demonstrate [1] 32:1 denominator [3] 36:5,9 60:19 depending [1] 15:19 derive [1] 53:22 description [1] 57:22 deserve [1] 21:16 designer [1] 59:21 deter [2] 26:1 52:4 determination [1] 54:7 determinations [1] 38:17 determine [1] 37:23 determining [1] 4:5 deters [1] 4:25 developed [1] 31:2 dictates [1] 5:18 different [8] 27:7,18 31:24 33:18 courts [21] 3:11 4:4.21 5:1 9:1 13: 39:19,20 59:7,11 12 20:6 23:4 24:11.25 28:6 30:9 differently [1] 33:18 31:2 32:14 40:23.24 41:9 46:11 dilution [5] 5:22 6:5 18:4 33:13 37:

15.16 63:2

Court's [1] 32:3

53:3 54:12 55:25

covered [1] 39:10

19 66:2,2,19

disagree [1] 49:18 disagreed [1] 57:1 disagreeing [1] 25:1 disagrees [1] 37:2 disclaimed [1] 43:12 discretion [8] 5:2 11:25 13:17.22 **30**:9 **32**:4 **34**:25 **35**:6 disprove [1] 51:22 dispute [1] 29:11 disregard [13] 4:19 6:20 10:17,25 11:11 33:23 34:15 45:14.16 46:25 **58**:14 **59**:3 **61**:23 disrupt [1] 52:13 dissent [2] 61:9,16 distinguish [2] 34:2 62:6 distinguished [2] 5:12 6:7 distribute [1] 56:14 district [7] 9:19 13:22 36:7 42:7 **58:**24 **61:**11.15 dog [1] 44:23 doing [3] 41:11,12 60:17 dollar [6] 7:13 23:1 51:1,4,17 59: dollars [1] 49:25 done [3] 32:15 60:6.7 doubt [2] 39:18 50:17 down [4] 15:14 51:19 59:15 66:1 downside [1] 51:20 downstream [1] 59:20 Draper [2] 56:24,24 dream [1] 16:3 drop [1] 62:18 dust [1] 31:7 Dyk [1] 33:7

Ε

each [1] 26:24 earlier [2] 6:24 7:1 early [1] 66:2 easy [1] 30:21 eBav [3] 35:10 45:22.25 eight [5] 5:15 18:7 19:20 65:8,24 either [10] 11:1,23 25:18 26:22 27: 1 29:12 30:5 31:11 56:14 65:23 element [2] 33:14 38:1 eligible [1] 8:9 enacted [1] 62:24 end [6] 35:6,8 57:3 60:3 63:8 66:1 engaged [1] 41:23 England [1] 41:20 English [2] 24:13 56:2 enough [5] 45:17 48:12 52:4 54: 23 58:10 enriched [1] 4:14 enrichment [3] 15:14 22:13 41:1 enter [1] 11:25 entities [1] 59:18 entitled [8] 7:23 22:6 23:13 28:17, 23 29:2 51:18 63:19 entity [2] 51:6 59:22 equitable [11] 4:3,8 7:3,12,16 17:1 26:11 31:4 35:7 44:12.15 equities [2] 5:2 66:5 equity [51] 3:14,15,20 4:3 6:14,15,

21 **7**:17 **19**:2,25 **23**:15,18,25 **24**:8. 12 26:22 27:1,3 29:21 30:1,2,7 31: 2 32:10,25 34:22 35:5,12,14 37: 10,13,15,23 40:21,23 42:13,19,21, 23 43:5,14,19,23 44:4,9,16 45:21 **46**:8 **48**:2 **49**:14 **60**:9 **ESQ** [4] **1**:18 **2**:3,6,9 essential [1] 45:13 essentially [1] 40:10 ET [1] 1:6 eve [1] 52:8 even [25] 5:7 7:7.13.14.24 8:6.8 12: 15 17:5.6 18:3 28:6 32:6 35:13 41: 24 43:18.24 51:8 54:1 56:24 61: 22,23,24,25 62:2 everyone [1] 44:3 everything [1] 4:18 evidence [1] 59:1 exactly 5 35:9 36:6 43:16 46:2,6 example [16] 7:21 20:13 22:15 31: 13 **37**:21 **38**:11 **39**:4 **41**:16.25 **44**: 20 46:14 48:13 50:25 53:15 61:20 examples [2] 8:24.25 except [2] 37:3 45:19 exception [1] 55:3 exceptions [1] 34:8 excessive [3] 11:24 28:12 30:5 exclude [3] 38:24 39:14 50:11 excluding [1] 40:1 excuse [4] 3:22 5:21 19:12 42:7 exist [1] 4:16 explain [1] 59:6

F fact [4] 16:1 34:7 42:2 65:22 factor [14] 3:21 4:7 7:12,16 21:24 23:5 25:9 43:25 45:2 50:15,20 53: 4,5,13 factors [12] 4:9,12,16,22 7:3 15:7, 8 **17**:1 **24**:13,24 **30**:1 **66**:5 facts [2] 20:12 53:19 fair [5] 13:19.24 18:1 27:4 47:5 faith [5] 6:19.22 54:22 57:15.18 familiar [1] 4:3 famous [1] 42:5 fancy [1] 61:6 Fantasy [1] 65:11 fashioning [1] 22:16 fast [4] 15:1 35:11 36:17 46:10 **FASTENERS** [2] **1:**3 **3:**4 favorite [1] 62:25 features [2] 33:24 59:6 Federal [2] 54:7,12 few [1] 53:1 Fifth [1] 24:20

explains [2] 37:17 59:14

exprecionias [1] 17:23

expressly [2] 5:12 30:24

expressed [1] 32:9

extent [2] 48:15 50:1

extends [1] 65:5

extra [1] 52:5

fight [1] 38:14

fill [1] 56:13 find [7] 11:22 12:1 42:23,24 45:17, 17 66:7 finding [1] 59:2 Fine [3] 14:24 48:4 66:12 finished [1] 23:19 First [9] 3:19 4:2 7:4 18:6 32:22 44: 12 48:1 52:17 53:16 fit [1] 22:24 Five [8] 31:24 36:16 53:10,10 57:6 60:25 63:9 64:12 flexible [1] 35:14 floor [1] 8:11 focuses [1] 48:11 focusing [1] 30:4 Fogerty [1] 65:10 forced [2] 31:20 52:1 foremost [1] 7:4 forgive [1] 64:14 form [2] 15:12 51:8 forth [1] 12:5 FOSSIL [4] 1:6 3:5 59:2,18 found [5] 10:16 49:22 56:15 58:25 **62:**15 four [5] 32:21 62:5,18 63:9 64:12 fours [1] 56:3 Frag [1] 57:10 fraud [4] 20:21,23,24 63:10 fraud-based [1] 20:20 fraudulent [6] 4:18 62:11,12,13 **64**:5 **65**:4 friend [2] 30:20 31:7 friend's [1] 32:11 Friendly [1] 32:2 front [2] 35:8 63:18 fully [1] 57:8 function [1] 11:12 fundamental [1] 56:6 fundamentally [1] 59:11 further [2] 4:9 25:6 future [1] 4:25 G

gateway [2] 25:2 53:5 gather [1] 17:17 gave [1] 54:21 general [2] 22:3 46:16 generally [2] 11:3 35:14 gestalt [1] 15:3 aets [1] 64:25 aettina [2] 24:22 35:3 GINSBURG [12] 10:15 37:7.9.16 38:4 42:16 45:4,15 46:11 59:5 66: 10,12 Ginsburg's [2] 42:11 58:1 give [13] 12:6 13:18,22 16:11 22: 10 29:23 31:13 39:6 43:2 44:5 47: 6 **54**:21 **61**:20 Given [5] 34:6 39:7 44:15,24 56:12 gives [2] 13:17 30:9 giving [2] 13:2 25:14 glad [1] 62:19

Garner [1] 65:16

qate [3] 35:15,16 48:2

good-faith [1] 6:16 goodness [1] 16:12 goodwill [2] 4:11 28:16 Gorham [1] 41:25 GORSUCH [4] 38:22 42:10 43:8 **46**:16 got [4] 35:14,19 37:1 57:4 gotten [1] 58:18 governs [1] 31:3 grant [1] 34:3 gray [2] 57:16,17 greater [4] 4:22,24 7:2 22:18 ground [1] 43:22 guess [1] 23:10 guilty [1] 22:19 guys [3] 61:8,13 63:3

Halo 4 32:3 45:22 53:15 60:10

Hamilton-Brown [1] 21:2

handbags [3] 51:2,10 59:21 handful [2] 54:19,19 hands [1] 28:8 happen [1] 16:12 happened [9] 41:17,17 46:2,7 48: 9 52:2 60:11.13.13 happens [1] 25:21 happy [3] 25:1,4 26:25 hard [7] 7:8 25:18 35:11 36:17 44: 21 49:17 66:7 harder [1] 47:18 harm [3] 10:22 15:16 35:13 harmony [1] 54:11 Haseltine [3] 36:19,21 56:23 hear [2] 3:3 62:17 heavy [1] 23:3 heightened [5] 5:14,16 18:19 19: 23 20:1 held [1] 23:18 helps [2] 14:5 24:10 Henner [2] 41:4.15 hiah [2] 10:22 51:25 higher [1] 8:16 highest [1] 20:16 historical [1] 33:13 history [4] 22:3 30:22 42:21 45:25 hold [1] 7:17 holding [1] 24:18 home [1] 21:13 hook [2] 32:23 43:13 hope [1] 62:4 huge [3] 32:17 57:16,16 hurt [2] 13:20 21:11 hypothetical [2] 8:11 37:3 hypotheticals [1] 28:13

i.e [1] 5:11 idea [3] 40:22 43:18 48:18 ignorance [1] 58:3 illustration [1] 52:6 imaginary [1] 48:23 impact [1] 17:23 implication [3] 32:13 38:7 60:2

important [4] 4:9 23:5 35:21 48:6 imported [1] 41:18 impossible [1] 7:11 inadequate [2] 11:24 30:5 INC [3] 1:3,6 3:5 incentive [3] 8:19,21 25:19 inception [1] 5:11 include [5] 4:12 11:4 33:22 43:23, included [1] 33:19 includes [3] 10:20 17:16 26:22 including [5] 4:19 21:1 33:1 54:21 inconsistent [1] 65:25 incontestability [1] 38:14 incredibly [1] 40:20 Indeed [6] 46:10 51:4,20 52:1 53: 16 54:13 indicated [1] 33:4 inference [3] 6:1 18:12,12 infringe [1] 19:13 infringed [1] 21:4 infringement [14] 5:1,24 6:7,12, 16 **9**:2 **19**:14 **26**:1.6 **27**:10 **28**:4 **31**: 16 38:25 40:4 infringer [5] 16:1 28:21 45:9 47:2 **61:**10 infringers [1] 3:13 infringing [1] 36:16 initially [1] 47:4 injunction [5] 21:13 25:17,17 35:9 injunctions [4] 31:6 36:21 48:12 52:11 innocence [1] 61:17 innocent [18] 4:18.21 6:15.18 7:8. 14 9:2 19:10.10 22:17 41:3.23 45: 9.10 57:15.18 61:9.12 inside [1] 28:22 instance [3] 4:17 12:21 48:1 instructed [1] 11:7 intended [3] 19:14 32:14 52:13 intent [4] 5:10 62:11 64:5 65:4 intentional [2] 6:3 10:21 inter [1] 38:16 interest [1] 13:17 intermediate [1] 22:2 interpret [2] 40:7 43:21 interpreted [3] 32:7 33:1 46:9 interpreting [2] 45:21 60:8 intro [1] 14:23 introduced [1] 33:12 inventory [1] 52:12 invite [1] 32:14 invited [1] 32:13 ironclad [1] 60:12 irreparable [1] 35:12 isn't [9] 14:1 31:16 38:19 43:4 45: 6 8 46:13 14 48:13 issue [5] 27:7 29:10 33:25 62:23 **65**:12 it' [1] 25:13 J

January [1] 1:10 Jenkins [2] 36:18 60:20 Jersey [1] 10:1 iob [1] 40:7 Joint [1] 38:12 judge [8] 10:17 12:25 13:1 32:2 33: 7 **47**:4 **49**:3 **56**:25 judges [1] 57:1 judgment [1] 11:25 jury [2] 10:16 11:7 JUSTICE [159] 3:3,10 6:13,25 9:4, 8.11.14.17 **10**:15 **11**:9.14 **12**:12.14. 20 13:6,9,14,18 14:1,4,9,13,16,19, 24 15:22 16:7,15,19 17:11 20:5 21:19 23:7,10,23 24:3,7 26:4,7,11, 14,21 27:13,15,18,22,23,25 28:19 **29**:5,8,16 **30**:3,13,19 **31**:12 **33**:15 34:13,17,19,21 35:1,18,20,24 36:2, 9,12,23 37:7,8,9,16 38:4,10,20,22, 23 39:5,8,8,14,16,23,25 40:3,9,12, 15.18 **41**:6 **42**:10,11,16 **43**:8 **45**:4, 5,7,15,24 **46**:3,11,16,22 **47**:11,15, 19,23 48:3,6,6,8,19 49:6,7,9,12,16 **50**:8.12.14 **51**:11.14 **52**:16.22 **53**: 25 **54**:17 **55**:1,5,7,16,21,23 **57**:11, 13,21,23 58:1,13,20 59:5 60:23 **63**:11,17,22 **64**:1,8,11,13,16,19,22 **65**:16 **66**:10,11,12,14,18 Justice's [1] 45:24 justification [1] 22:18 justifies [1] 4:25

K

KAGAN [5] 21:19 45:7 52:16,22 kahuna [1] 50:20 KATYAL [69] 2:6 21:21.22 30:15. 16,18 33:15 34:12,17,20 35:1,19, 23 **36**:1,4,11,14,24 **37**:7,16 **38**:11, 21 **39:**1.6.13.16.24 **40:**2.5.10.14. 17.19 **41**:8 **42**:10 **43**:7.16 **45**:15 46:6 47:8.13.17.22.25 48:5 49:6.9. 13,18 50:13,17 51:13,19 52:21 53: 10 54:17,24 55:2,6,9,19,23 57:12, 20,25 58:16,22 59:5,10 KATYAL, ESQ [1] 1:21 KAVANAUGH [30] 9:4,8,11,14,17 36:23 37:8 38:10,20,23 39:5,8,14, 17,23,25 40:3,9,12,15,18 41:6 49: 16 50:8,14 57:11,13,21 58:13,20 keep [1] 19:20 key [3] 50:15,20 58:21 kick [1] 31:8 kind [7] 10:13 17:19 22:2.8 29:13 **45**:2 **65**:23 Kirtsaeng [1] 22:14 knock [1] 51:24 knowing [4] 16:4 19:13 41:10,19 knowledge [11] 36:25 39:21,21 **41**:11 **42**:9 **43**:24 **51**:7 **56**:16 **58**:5, 12 60:17 knows [1] 16:12

label [2] 17:19.21 laches [7] 28:7 38:13,15,19 42:17, 20.23 lack [2] 56:1 65:11 landmark [1] 4:10 language [2] 56:21 58:7 Lanham [12] 3:11 4:10 5:8,15,25 **15**:8.9 **30**:24 **32**:9 **41**:22 **62**:24 **66**: large [1] 50:24 last [1] 55:17 later [1] 37:19 Laughter [4] 9:23 14:21 46:5 66: law [32] 4:15 7:19 8:23 10:6,7,8 11: 3,12 20:18,21 24:25 25:6 29:11 33:8 34:8 38:3 43:11,20 48:11 50: 22 59:10 60:1 61:6,7 62:7,18,20, 22 64:4 65:3.7 66:13 lead [1] 17:12 leading [3] 20:8,15 62:20 learning [1] 10:23 least [12] 19:17.18 23:1 25:25 28:4 **36**:6 **39**:21 **57**:9 **58**:4 **60**:15,16 **65**: 15 leave [1] 60:2 left [2] 19:22 33:3 legal [3] 27:19 29:10 30:8 Legislated [1] 32:5 legislating [1] 43:11 Lemley [1] 33:8 Lemly [1] 63:13 less [2] 29:24 34:4 levels [1] 11:2 Lex [1] 49:21 Lexis [2] 55:17.21 Liberty [1] 56:4 liaht [1] 34:22 limit [2] 47:12,15 limitation [3] 34:23 47:20 49:15 limited [2] 29:12 54:13 line [1] 31:9 LISA [5] 1:18 2:3,9 3:7 61:1 list [1] 15:7 literally [2] 55:13 60:5 litigation [1] 59:17 little [10] 8:13 13:23 26:22 25 27:4 28:22 29:19 34:25 51:9 54:19 logic [2] 46:1 64:2 long [5] 4:4 31:14 43:14 53:16 60: long-standing [6] 32:1 39:2 44: 17 **45**:23 **53**:21,24 longer [1] 28:14 look [16] 10:5 15:4 21:10 26:2 37: 22 38:12 42:22,25 44:15 45:23 53: 15 **56:**22 **57:**3 **60:**10.10.13 looked [1] 40:24 lookina [1] 33:16

lots [1] 8:14 low [2] 26:19 50:7 lower [2] 28:13 58:9 lowered [1] 28:7 lowest [1] 36:5 Ludlow [2] 36:18 60:20 lured [1] 28:25

М

Machina [1] 49:21 Macy's [3] 51:5,5 59:22 made [6] 30:24 43:16 48:16 56:10 57:25 59:20 main [1] 53:17 maiority [1] 63:1 manufacturer [1] 8:17 many [5] 31:2.25 34:3 37:11 53:3 map [1] 65:22 mark [4] 8:7 19:13 25:14 42:4 Massachusetts [1] 20:16 massive [1] 59:19 matter [5] 1:12 14:9 15:17 64:24, McCarthy [1] 33:21 McLean [5] 41:4.15 46:10 55:24 mean [16] 10:16 14:22 15:3 16:25 19:25 21:15 24:12 26:22 27:3.3 29:17 34:11 35:22 42:19 51:15.15 meaning [3] 11:5 36:6.25 means [5] 19:25 34:7 37:10 39:19 meant [3] 10:18 39:20 44:9 meet [1] 48:24 members [1] 65:18 mental [5] 5:14,17,23 29:14 62:16 mentioned [2] 15:11 50:9 merely [1] 54:10 mess [1] 65:7 Michigan [1] 54:8 might [8] 22:4,20 25:20,20 28:13 42:13 43:4 53:7 million [7] 28:20,23 29:18 51:1,5 **52**:7 **59**:23 mind [2] 6:17 44:4 minimum [1] 7:21 minority [3] 63:1,2,3 minute [1] 63:7 minutes [1] 60:25 mirroring [1] 18:2 Mishawaka [6] 9:13 21:8 54:6.13 61:8 63:6 miss [1] 63:24 missed [1] 11:16 missing [1] 48:21 misstates [1] 36:19 modify [1] 33:6 Moet [4] 41:13,16,17 56:2 moment [1] 42:12 monetary [8] 5:13,16,19 18:10,18 19:9 30:25 31:1 money [9] 12:7,11,24 13:23 16:12

Looks [1] 21:15

lot [6] 5:17 9:7 47:7 52:25 54:20

lose [1] 50:18

56:22

21:4 25:14 47:7 49:8

moral [1] 41:1

most [6] 10:6 18:11,12 20:8,25 59: mostly [1] 20:19 Ms [73] 3:6,9 6:13,23 7:1 9:6,10,12, 15,18,24 **10**:19 **11**:10 **12**:9,13,19 13:4,8,11,25 14:3,5,11,15,18,22 **15**:2 **16**:6,14,18,22 **17**:11,12,25 20:14 21:20 22:9 23:9.22 24:2.6. 10 26:5.10.13.16 27:6.14.17.20.24 28:3 29:4.7.9.25 37:11 52:18.19 **60**:25 **61**:3 **63**:16.21.25 **64**:2.10. 12.15.18.20 65:1 66:10.17 much [11] 8:21 9:5 13:23 26:18 29: 23 34:1,24 44:5 47:24 48:5 51:14 muddied [1] 63:6 multifactor [1] 3:20 multifold [1] 8:5 Music [1] 57:12

Morissette [2] 43:17 65:10

must [3] 35:13 36:15 48:21

narrowed [1] 32:3 natural [2] 18:11,12 NEAL [3] 1:21 2:6 30:16 necessary [2] 20:6 23:19 necessity [1] 22:5 need [14] 7:2 16:20 18:3.9.25 24: 15 **34**:10 **42**:8.8 **52**:4 **54**:20 **60**:12 63:22 64:23 needs [1] 54:3 negative [3] 38:7 54:22 60:2 negligence [3] 4:20 6:21 25:19 negligent [4] 22:22 25:22,24 59:2 never [8] 7:9 21:22 32:15 33:4 55: 10,13 57:5 60:5 New [2] 10:1 33:12 newfangled [2] 31:17 33:11 news [1] 32:17 next [1] 3:4 nice [2] 8:5 17:8 Nims [3] 36:18 56:4 60:20 nobody [6] 13:20 28:22 29:19 51: 6 64:16,22 none [1] 31:10 nonetheless [1] 57:18 Nope [2] 64:18,20 nor [1] 65:24 notes [1] 62:25 nothing 5 8:1,20 9:21 43:5 47:24 notice [2] 24:4 54:15 notion [1] 65:9 notoriously [2] 7:8 49:17 number [1] 11:19

Oakes [7] 9:20 37:3 45:19 55:4,10 **58:7 61:**18 obiect [1] 11:6 objective [2] 40:1 58:10 objectives [1] 40:19 obvious [1] 11:15 obviously [2] 14:25 26:2 odd [2] 17:4 18:23

Oil [1] 56:4 okay [6] 11:20 12:20 23:14,16,24 28:1 oldest [2] 31:18 38:2 omission [1] 6:2 omnibus [1] 18:14 on/off [1] 25:2 Once [4] 35:2 55:10 59:14 60:6 one [36] 3:21 7:13 8:6 9:12 15:6 9 16:24 19:25 20:7.12.21 21:24 23: 1.17 **30**:10 **31**:3.9.18 **33**:13 **42**:1 **45**:8.13.18 **48**:16 **51**:22 **53**:2 **54**:5 **56**:18.25 **57**:4 **58**:18 **59**:16 **60**:1. 14 62:10 64:15 ones [3] 15:11 24:14 30:2 only [12] 8:16 11:7 25:1,13,16 28:6, 24 **36**:13 **49**:20 **53**:13 **55**:16 **56**:25 open [1] 21:19 operations [1] 8:18 opinion [5] 17:5,10 25:5 34:10 45: opt [1] 8:3 oral [5] 1:13 2:2 5 3:7 30:16

order [3] 11:18 44:14 52:14 original [3] 19:4,5 46:4 orphans [1] 16:10 Other [42] 4:8,13,22 5:25 7:2,3,5, 12,15,21 **10**:3 **12**:10 **15**:11 **17**:7, 15,18 **18**:19 **19**:3,16 **21**:21 **22**:12 **24**:15 **25**:9,11,16 **28**:5 **30**:10 **37**:2 **38**:7,8 **44**:20 **45**:9 **46**:14 **48**:13 **55**: 3 **56**:21 **57**:1,6 **58**:18 **60**:22 **65**:2 Others [1] 33:20

otherwise [2] 7:25 25:19 out [29] 6:9 7:14 10:14 11:7.14 13: 13.15 15:24 16:20.23 18:23 20:4 **31**:24 **36**:17 **37**:11 **38**:8 **39**:9 **42**: 17 **45**:5 **48**:22 **51**:24 **52**:25 **53**:2.7. 12 57:1 63:9 64:12 65:8 outlier [1] 54:2 outside [1] 58:7 over [4] 29:14 31:2 33:17 65:21 overreaching [1] 51:16 overwhelming [1] 20:2 owned [1] 16:9 owner [2] 25:14 47:3 owners [1] 3:16 owners' [1] 4:11

ownership [1] 59:12

p.m [1] 66:20 PAGE [11] 2:2 15:2 36:8.21 38:13 44:1 45:25 47:9 56:9,10 58:25 part [6] 17:15 25:10 26:4 35:21 42: 20 66:5 partes [1] 38:16 particularly [3] 6:1 7:10 20:23 parties [4] 8:13 11:5 26:17 29:10 pass [1] 35:3 passed [1] 18:9 patent [1] 59:7 path [1] 59:15

pay [2] 8:20 25:23 penalty [4] 5:5 28:10,11 30:6 people [5] 16:10 28:25 33:19,19 **61**:12 percent [2] 49:23,24 perfect [3] 41:16 50:25 52:6 perfectly [1] 25:7 perhaps [1] 42:17 period [1] 54:14 person [2] 46:25 48:24 petition [2] 14:12 36:7 Petitioner [6] 1:4.19 2:4.10 3:8 61: phrase [15] 3:15,19,22 4:2 6:11 17: 13 32:3,24 33:3 40:7,7 44:8 45:21 46:8 60:9 pick [1] 21:20 place [2] 18:6 44:13 places [2] 38:7,8 plain [2] 37:13,14 plaintiff [8] 4:14 7:6 12:7 21:11 22: 25 23:12 24:17 28:14 plaintiffs [1] 8:8 please [2] 3:10 30:19 point [13] 16:21 18:11,22 19:18 25: 13 37:1 40:23 44:7 45:20 47:3 50: 21 52:24 57:1 pointed [2] 37:11 45:5 points [3] 39:9 55:8 56:19 policy [2] 40:1,17 poor [1] 64:24 position [5] 8:12 21:20 22:2 23:20, possibility [2] 45:19 55:4 possible [1] 37:3 post-Lanham [1] 9:1 pot [1] 21:4 practice [11] 32:2,6,15 39:3 44:17 **45**:23 **53**:16,21,24 **56**:16 **60**:6 Pre [2] 9:4.8 pre-Lanham [3] 8:25 9:4,8 precondition [2] 3:17 16:24 predecessor [1] 66:9 presented [1] 3:14

Prest-O-Lite [5] 10:1 56:8,8,10 61: presume [1] 65:13

presumption [7] 22:8,10,11,11,13, 24 23:2 pretty [1] 49:5 prevailing [1] 54:12 prevails [1] 54:8

prevent [1] 8:21 price [1] 43:18 principal [1] 62:7 principle 8 7:16 19:2 26:25 31:3 **37**:10 **43**:10 **44**:4 **53**:22

principles [33] 3:13,15,19 4:2,4 19:24 23:15.25 24:8.12 28:9 30: 25 **31:**1 **32:**10.24 **35:**5.7.12 **37:**13. 15.23 42:13.19 43:5.14.19.23 44:8. 10 45:21 48:2 49:14 60:9

printers [1] 19:10 prints [1] 19:13

probability [1] 10:22 probably [2] **25**:23 **28**:12 problem [6] 8:5 23:17 33:16 42:18 43:1 54:18 problems [1] 32:21 process [1] 31:21 produce [1] 12:21 professor [1] 62:18 professor's [2] 33:8 62:21 profit [3] 3:17 4:25 18:14 profits [88] 3:13 4:5,23 7:18,23 9:2, 18 **10:**4 **11:**18.20.23 **14:**7 **18:**5.17. 18,24 19:11,15,19,21,21,22 20:10, 19 **21:**23 **23:**13 **24:**17,19 **26:**9,9, 18,23 27:8,9 28:1,3,17,19,23 29:3, 18 **31**:5,10,22 **32**:4 **34**:24 **35**:3 **36**: 22 37:5 40:21,24 44:11,11,24 45: 10,18 46:12 47:1,5,6,13,14,18 49: 4,11,13,23,24 **50:**24 **51:**1,5,17,18 **54:**9,14 **55:**25 **56:**12 **57:**5 **58:**11 **59:**9.19 **60:**15 **61:**10.13 **62:**6 **63:** 19 64:4 65:23 property [2] 21:3,4 propose [1] 53:9 proposition [2] 55:11,14 protect [2] 4:10 18:23 protected [1] 5:12 protecting [1] 25:15 protection [3] 18:5 48:11 59:13 prove [4] 3:16 7:9,11 49:17 provision [6] 5:18,20,21 30:3 36: 20 50:6

provisions [3] 5:16,18 19:20 publishers [1] 19:11 pulling [1] **52**:12 purposes [3] 4:10 7:3 25:10 purse [5] 27:11 28:20.22.25 29:2 purses [1] 29:6 put [6] 14:17 16:4 18:4 25:21 28: 21 60:4

Q

puts [2] 23:2 51:21

quarter [1] 62:2 question [13] 3:14 12:10 15:21 16: 24 18:3 21:18 29:20 35:21 42:11 44:5 45:1 58:2,23 questions [2] 52:17 60:22 quite [1] 63:11 quote [4] 35:4 54:21 62:20,22

raise [1] 15:19 rampant [1] 8:19 range [1] 4:17 ranges [1] 26:19 rationale [1] 40:25 Ratzlaf [1] 39:18 Read [27] 12:25 13:5,12,13,15 14:6, 20 15:1,24 16:19 17:8 19:1 33:21 **42**:17 **44**:22 **47**:4,20 **49**:2 **54**:18 **58**:8 **61**:13,18 **62**:5 **63**:12,12,13 reading [5] 11:16 16:22 38:5,18

46:22 really [8] 8:20 21:11,12 42:4 43:4 47:1 52:13 59:24 reason [9] 28:6,9,11 37:20,21 48: 10 50:13.21.22 reasons [5] 3:18 13:2 25:9 51:23 **59:**16 REBUTTAL [2] 2:8 61:1 receive [1] 63:15 reckless [12] 6:20 11:5 22:23 38: 24 40:3 41:7.25 42:2 45:14 50:12 **57:**18 **59:**3 recklessness [12] 11:2.6.8 33:19. 22 34:15 39:11,15,24 51:8 58:10, recognize [2] 23:4 34:9 recover [3] 23:13 63:19,23 recovered [1] 7:9 recovery [2] 11:23 34:5 red [1] 56:9 reduce [1] 15:18 reference [1] 32:9 referred [2] 41:14 45:25 referring [2] 27:8 51:3 refers [1] 4:3 reflect [1] 5:9 refuse [2] 46:12 55:25 regardless [1] 50:16 Regis [1] 20:15 registered [2] 8:7 19:6 reinserted [1] 6:10 relates [1] 30:7 relating [1] 20:19 relevant [3] 21:10 46:20 66:4 relief [13] 4:13 5:14.16.19 7:5.15 13:3 18:10 18 19:9 20:24 24:16 **25**:12 rely [1] 58:11 remainder [1] 32:1 remand [4] 8:13,23 26:17 50:18 remedies [1] 22:12 remedy [4] 3:12 31:5 44:12,15 remove [1] 52:8 repeal [1] 32:22 reply [1] 44:1 representation [1] 61:7 reprints [1] 19:12 require [4] 4:21 24:1,9 63:4 required [9] 20:4 31:4,19 36:22,25 44:19,25 64:4,6 requirement [23] 3:24 4:1 5:8,23 6:3,5 10:9 18:14 21:17 23:11 32:8, 8,24 **33**:7 **35**:11 **36**:18 **50**:10 **51**: 24 53:6 59:17 62:16 65:14,25 requires [3] 3:16 5:3,21 respect [6] 32:11 36:22 49:10,11 **51**:8 **58**:1 respond [1] 43:3 respondent [1] 17:9 Respondent's [1] 64:3 Respondents [4] 1:7,22 2:7 30: response [5] 27:22 31:12 42:15 **48:**7 **62:**9

Restatement [3] 46:16.17 60:20 result [6] 20:8 31:14,14 45:3 48:9 **63**:8 resulted [1] 57:5 results [2] 52:25 53:7 resurrecting [1] 32:21 return [1] 42:11 revolutionary [1] 59:25 rightfully [2] 21:5 24:19 ripped [1] 61:24 rise [1] 11:1 risk [2] 15:16 58:15 risking [1] 31:22 ROBERTS [17] 3:3 17:11 26:21 27: 13,15,18,22,25 29:16 30:13 46:3 **51**:11,14 **60**:23 **66**:11,14,18 ROMAG [2] 1:3 3:4 Romag's [1] 56:22 root [1] 56:6 rotten [1] 47:2 routine [1] 9:3 Rubber [2] 54:6 13 rubric [1] 10:25 rua [1] 30:23 rule [29] 7:14 10:13,14 17:7 22:16 **31**:25 **32**:1 **34**:8 **41**:14 **42**:24 **46**: 10 **50**:22 **53**:2,8,12 **54**:8,11,12,25 **57**:7,9,14,24 **60**:12 **62**:12 **63**:1,3 64:4 66:7 run [1] 45:2 S

sales [1] **52:**9 same [10] 6:3,11 10:9 17:22 22:11 **35**:16 **54**:23 **61**:19 **64**:3,5 saw [1] 28:22 Saxel [2] 41:4.15 saying [19] 13:4,7 14:7 15:24 16: 23 17:18 19:21 21:3.9.15 38:19 42:14 43:25 53:23 54:11 55:11 63: 25 **64:1 65:**6 says [28] 7:21 11:22 17:5 18:9,20 **19**:7,16 **20**:17 **21**:22 **23**:12,15 **30**: 11 33:9 34:10,23,23 36:22,24 38: 6,13,15 **44:**21 **52:**3 **56:**20 **57:**23 61:11 63:18 65:17 scale [2] 16:25 22:17 scales [1] 23:2 Scalia [1] 65:16 scheme [1] 20:3 school [2] 61:6 66:13 scienter [3] 18:19 19:23 20:1 Second [12] 3:22 5:7 7:15 8:10 9: 19 11:11 24:21 33:4 52:24 54:7 55:9 62:4 Section [6] 5:19,24 17:14 19:3 38: 11,15 Sections [1] 6:10 see [6] 11:21 15:4,5 20:22 25:21 29:19

seek [1] 59:19

seem [4] 17:4 30:20 43:12 53:4

seems [5] 18:22 25:25 27:4 29:22

sale [2] 51:2 56:15

seen [1] 21:14 sell [1] 56:14 sells [1] 59:22 sense [3] 15:13 22:3 50:23 sentence [17] 10:10 11:21 12:8 13: 1,16 **14**:2,3,6,14 **15**:15 **16**:21 **24**:8 **47**:4.16.20 **49**:1.2 separate [6] 27:7 29:9 36:16 40: 25 45:24 53:11 set [4] 8:17 31:24 36:17 53:12 sets [1] 53:2 settled [5] 3:24.25 5:7 65:19 66:7 settlements [1] 52:1 several [1] 52:18 shades [1] 45:11 shall [3] 11:22 12:1 23:12 shape [1] 51:7 she's [8] 32:12 37:1 38:5 43:24 45: 3 57:3 58:6 60:3 shouldn't [2] 17:22 61:13 show [2] 7:24 35:12 showing [3] 4:22 7:2 59:9 shown [2] 14:8 35:13 side [18] 7:21 11:6 12:10 13:21 17: 7.18 **18**:20 **19**:16 **25**:7 **26**:25 **28**:5 **37**:2 **44**:20 **46**:14 **48**:14 **55**:3 **57**:6 **65**:2 Siemens [1] 53:18 significance [1] 15:23 significant [5] 10:6 12:24 22:6 34: 9 53:5 **signifies** [1] **3**:20 silence [1] 66:8 silverware [3] 42:1.4.5 similar [2] 11:10 19:7 simply [1] 18:11 simultaneously [1] 6:9 single [7] 31:13 39:3 44:20,24 48: 8 56:18 60:6 sit [1] 66:1 situations [1] 41:24 Six [1] 14:6 six-factor [1] 24:22 Sixth [2] 24:4 54:6 sliding [2] 16:25 22:17 small [2] 8:16 61:24 snap [2] 27:11 62:1 snaps [2] 51:9 61:23 somebody [1] 16:5 somehow [1] 50:2 someone [2] 41:2.22 someplace [1] 21:20 sometimes [3] 14:25 39:10 58:2 Sorry [1] 27:6 sort [4] 17:22 22:14 26:24 43:10 **SOTOMAYOR** [24] **6**:13,25 **33**:15 **34**:13,17,19,21 **35**:2,18,20,24 **36**:2 9,12 39:9 45:5 54:17 55:1,5,7,16, 21 23 57:23 sought [2] 51:1.4 sources [2] 63:13 65:4

specific [1] 39:17 Specifically [1] 62:24 spectrum [2] 4:17 11:3 spelling [1] 20:4 split [2] 26:24 33:24 **spurious** [1] **41:**19 stamp [1] 42:3 stand [1] 54:1 standardless [1] 45:2 start [2] 24:13 61:21 started [1] 43:25 state [8] 5:14.17.23 6:17 29:14 44: 4 **57:**7 **62:**16 stated [2] 17:6 50:12 statement [1] 63:14 **STATES** [4] **1:**1,14 **41:**5 **54:**25 stating [2] 41:14 57:13 statute [16] 5:3 6:4 11:16 17:6 19: 1 **26**:2 **30**:2,9,11 **37**:12 **38**:9,21 **47**: 8 **51**:21 **60**:5 **63**:18 statutory [8] 3:23 5:9 8:3,4 18:16 20:1 42:12 50:6 step [2] 16:24 32:16 steps [1] 10:23 stick [1] 17:20 still [3] 16:7 29:17 48:19 strange [1] 26:22 strike [1] 51:16 strong [2] 6:2 40:20 struck [1] 6:9 structure [3] 3:23 5:9 20:2 study [3] 49:19,20,21 stuff [1] 25:22 subject [8] 3:13 23:15 30:25 31:1 **35**:4 **48**:1 **49**:13 **63**:1 subjective [4] 39:21 58:12,14 60: subjectively [2] 41:10,11 submitted [2] 66:19.21 subsection [3] 6:6.8.11 substantial [1] 58:15 substantive [2] 42:21,24 suffering [1] 16:10 suggest [1] 17:24 suggested [1] 45:8 suggests [1] 49:2 suing [1] 20:23 sum [1] 11:25 superfluous [2] 19:17.19 supersede [2] 3:23 5:10 support [1] 59:1 suppose [5] 11:17 12:16,20,21 46: supposed [1] 8:10 **SUPREME** [5] **1**:1,13 **9**:15 **61**:16 surveyed [1] 49:21 sustain [2] 6:15 58:11 sustained [2] 63:20.23 swath [1] 6:18 sweep [1] 30:21 switch [1] 25:3 symbol [1] 16:3

southern [1] 42:7

Sparkplug [3] 21:7 63:5 66:2

Т talked [1] 30:2 tanks [1] 56:13 technical [1] 20:25 Tenth [1] 33:1 term [1] 33:17 terms [4] 10:18 22:15 25:11 61:20 terrible [1] 15:25 terribly [1] 16:10 test [2] 24:22 53:14 Texas [1] 66:12 text [5] 3:23 5:9 37:13.15 42:12 textual [3] 32:11.23 43:13 textually [1] 43:2 Thanksgiving's [1] 52:9 theoretical [3] 45:19 48:15 55:4 theory [1] 24:17 there's [32] 6:17 7:12,15 8:2,19,20 **11**:15 **15**:7,12,13,16,16 **20**:24 **21**: 4 **22**:1 **23**:11 **25**:19 **27**:8,11 **29**:9, 11 35:6,11 39:17,18 43:13 44:19 **46:**14 **48:**5 **57:**16 **58:**4,10 therefore [2] 16:16 39:12 thev'll [1] 12:22 thinking [2] 29:1 53:4 thinks [1] 13:24 third [6] 3:25 9:25.25 33:10 56:7 62:15 though [8] 7:15 17:5,6 35:13 61: 22,23,24,25 threat [1] 50:24 threatened [1] 52:1 three [16] 3:18 9:6 21:2,7 24:20,23 28:25 29:5 30:11 52:20 53:25 54: 1,2 55:8 65:8,22 three's [1] 9:7 thresh [1] 48:25 threshold [3] 35:3 48:25 58:4 Thurman [1] 62:21 tiny [1] 28:22 Today [2] 5:15 30:23 took [1] 18:15 tort [2] 20:20,20 Torts [1] 46:17 total [3] 13:17 16:5 49:23 totally [2] 16:2,2 trademark [29] 3:12,16 4:6,11 5: 22 6:5 7:10 8:8 16:9 18:4 19:4 20: 25 **26**:5 **28**:21 **31**:16 **33**:12 **37**:24 38:3 42:25 43:1 47:3 48:10 49:22 54:10 56:14 59:6.10 60:1 62:7 trademark-specific [1] 46:19 trademarks [1] 19:6 tradition [10] 31:15 39:17 40:21 44:16,16 46:13,20 52:14,17 60:10 traditional [5] 4:8,12 15:8 17:1 30: trans [1] 42:20

53:11 **57**:6 **62**:4 **63**:10,12 **64**:10, 13 65:20 treaty [1] 42:22 treble [6] 18:16 47:10,12,14,17 53: trial [1] 59:1 tries [2] 30:20 31:7 true [2] 23:22 56:21 truly [2] 6:18,18 trusted [1] 5:1 trv [2] 34:2 46:23 trying 5 15:22 33:6 38:5 46:21 48: Tuesday [1] 1:10 tune [1] 59:23 turn [2] 25:10 54:5 turns [1] 48:22 twice [2] 41:14.21 two [12] 7:4 15:10.10 30:22 31:11 **44**:18,25 **46**:7 **48**:9 **52**:16 **57**:1 **66**: tying [1] 5:16 type [1] 6:7 U U.K [2] 31:12 60:14 U.S [1] 60:14 uncertainty [1] 34:6 unclean [1] 28:8 unclear [1] 62:23 under [15] 5:22,24,25 6:6,8 11:11 12:8 17:13,19 18:25 19:22 21:22 30:23 62:15 66:8 underlying [2] 18:8 20:20 understand [9] 12:9 15:20,23 23: 24,24 40:12 46:21 59:8 63:14 understood [2] 42:15 63:24 uniform [1] 45:6 unique [1] 33:11 UNITED [2] 1:1.14 universal [2] 36:2.5 uniust [10] 15:13 20:8.11.23 22:13 31:14 41:1 48:9 61:21 62:2 unless [4] 7:24 8:6 15:24 22:10 unlike [1] 31:5 unlikely [2] 28:24 29:17 unstated [1] 65:14 untouched [1] 33:3 unusual [1] 42:13 up [13] 8:17 15:17 24:13 26:20 30: 11 **31**:8 **47**:12.15 **48**:7 **49**:11 **50**:3 54:1 65:2 uses [3] 24:4 37:12 62:12 vague [1] 39:10 versus [2] 3:5 65:10 view [5] 7:23 13:11 16:25 18:25 23: violated [1] 7:19

violation [11] 4:15 5:22 6:9,11 17: 13,18,21 **18**:9 **19**:6 **31**:17 **38**:2 violations [3] 3:12 5:24 31:18 volume [1] 46:1

voluminous [1] 8:24

Wait [1] 63:7 walk [1] 7:25 walked [1] 32:20

wanted [4] 32:16 38:24 59:24 65:

W

wants [1] 65:2

Washington [3] 1:9,18,21

waters [1] 63:6

way [16] 15:4 17:10 18:23 26:20 32: 25 33:7 36:19 42:13 45:8 46:15 **51:**7.7 **53:**1.8 **58:**18 **65:**6 weiaht [2] 22:6 44:5

weighty [4] 4:7 15:6 23:5 25:9 Westlaw [1] 55:21

what'll [1] 16:12 whatever [2] 17:23 19:24

whatsoever [1] 51:7 Whereupon [1] 66:20

whether [15] 3:14 4:5,13,14 7:5 15: 12,13 25:2 27:9 29:12 34:8 42:12

44:14 **50**:9 **61**:14 who's [1] 41:22

whole [4] 18:6 25:13 33:23 65:9

wide [1] 6:17 widows [1] 16:9

Will [9] 14:24 29:17 43:23 50:15 **54:**9 **59:**17 **63:**13 **66:**1,1

willful [21] 5:21 6:12,19 10:21 11: 13 **13**:1,16 **17**:13,18,21 **18**:9 **25**: 24 45:7 49:4 54:20 56:11 57:15,

15,19 59:3 60:16

willfulness [87] 3:16,24 4:1 5:8 6: 2,5 7:25 10:9,15,17,20 11:1,4,8,12, 18 12:4.13.16.17 13:5 14:7 15:5. 24 **16**:19 **17**:14.16.16 **18**:4.14 **20**: 4.6.11 21:9.17.23.24 22:4 23:11. 18 **25**:2 **31**:4.11.20 **32**:7.23 **33**:6. 17.22 **34:**4.7.10.13 **35:**22 **36:**6.22. 25 37:5.10.12.14.18 39:9.19 42:14 **43**:6,24 **44**:18,25 **45**:13 **50**:10,15, 19,23 **51:**23 **53:**4,13 **56:**1 **59:**9,16, 17 **62**:8 **63**:4,23 **64**:4,23 **65**:25

win [3] 12:21 46:24 65:3 wind-up [1] 43:15 windfall [2] 15:17 31:23 winning [1] 47:3

wins [1] 50:16

without [6] 6:16 19:13 21:23 31:

10 46:12 59:9 won [1] 48:22

word [11] 6:9.14 24:4.5 37:12 38:6 39:10,10 62:5,12 63:10

words [3] 19:3 21:21 30:22 work [4] 11:14 25:18 49:2,10 world [2] 52:10 59:23

worried [1] 16:16 worry [1] **59**:15

worth [5] 45:1 46:1 50:2,9,11 write [4] 17:4.10 24:8 34:10 wrongdoing [4] 41:2,3,7,23 wrongful [3] 24:5 54:9 62:13

vear [1] 33:2

vears [5] 53:25 54:3 55:17 60:15 66:8

Z

zero [3] 52:19 61:22 62:1

trans-substantive [1] 44:10

treatise [7] 43:1 46:15.15.17 56:5

treatises [11] 31:24 36:17 46:19

treaties [1] 53:11