SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

| IN THE SU | PREME COURT OF THE | UNITED STATES |
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| EDGARDO ESTERAS, | |) |
| | Petitioner, |) |
| v. | |) No. 23-7483 |
| UNITED STATES, | |) |
| | Respondent. |) |
| | | |

Pages: 1 through 86

Place: Washington, D.C.

Date: February 25, 2025

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| 3 | EDGARDO ESTERAS, |) |
| 4 | Petitioner, |) |
| 5 | v. |) No. 23-7483 |
| 6 | UNITED STATES, |) |
| 7 | Respondent. |) |
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| 10 | Washington, I | O.C. |
| 11 | Tuesday, February | z 25, 2025 |
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| 13 | The above-entitled matte | er came on for |
| 14 | oral argument before the Suprer | me Court of the |
| 15 | United States at 10:17 a.m. | |
| 16 | | |
| 17 | APPEARANCES: | |
| 18 | CHRISTIAN J. GROSTIC, Assistant | t Federal Public |
| 19 | Defender, Cleveland, Ohio; | on behalf of the |
| 20 | Petitioner. | |
| 21 | MASHA G. HANSFORD, Assistant to | the Solicitor General |
| 22 | Department of Justice, Wash | nington, D.C.; on behal: |
| 23 | of the Respondent. | |
| 24 | | |
| 25 | | |

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| 1 | PROCEEDINGS |
|----|--|
| 2 | (10:17 a.m.) |
| 3 | CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We will hear |
| 4 | argument first this morning in Case 23-7483, |
| 5 | Esteras versus United States. |
| 6 | Mr. Grostic. |
| 7 | ORAL ARGUMENT OF CHRISTIAN J. GROSTIC |
| 8 | ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER |
| 9 | MR. GROSTIC: Mr. Chief Justice, and |
| 10 | may it please the Court: |
| 11 | In Section 3583(e), Congress listed |
| 12 | factors that courts must consider when |
| 13 | terminating, modifying, or revoking supervised |
| 14 | release and omitted the factors that it intended |
| 15 | to preclude, most important here Section |
| 16 | 3553(a)(2)(A)'s retribution factors. |
| 17 | 3553(a) expressly states that (a)(2)'s |
| 18 | four subsections are the purposes of sentencing |
| 19 | which courts must satisfy when imposing prison, |
| 20 | a fine, or probation. Courts have wide |
| 21 | discretion about what to consider and how to |
| 22 | fulfill those purposes, but they do not have |
| 23 | discretion about what purposes to satisfy. |
| 24 | In 3583(e), Congress was surgical and |
| 25 | removed one of those purposes: retributive |

- 1 punishment under (a)(2)(A). That was different
- 2 from every other sentencing option, including
- 3 the otherwise identical language in the
- 4 probation statute. Congress thereby precluded
- 5 courts from considering (a)(2)(A)'s retributive
- 6 purposes in the supervised release context, as
- 7 this Court recognized in Tapia regarding the
- 8 identical list in subsection (c).
- 9 And the Senate report confirms what we
- 10 see in the text. Under subsection (c), courts
- "may not" -- supervised release "may not be
- imposed for purposes of punishment." And the
- identical list in subsection (e) has the same
- 14 meaning. That also fits with the history of the
- 15 statute. When Congress abolished parole, it
- 16 created supervised release to fulfill the -- the
- 17 rehabilitative purposes following a prison
- sentence that satisfies (a)(2)(A). Congress
- 19 gave courts tools to adjust supervision, such as
- 20 extending or modifying, but only for the limited
- 21 purposes listed in 3583(e).
- 22 Congress did not add (a)(2)(A) to that
- list when --- in later amendments when it added
- 24 the revocation tool and when it added additional
- 25 fact -- factors to consider. Congress thus

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1 precluded courts from relying on (a)(2)(A) in
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- 2 the supervised release context.
- I welcome the Court's questions.
- 4 JUSTICE THOMAS: How do you square
- 5 your argument with provisions that more
- 6 expressly limit consideration of other
- 7 sentencing factors?
- 8 MR. GROSTIC: The -- what Congress did
- 9 here was rely on a well-established mechanism
- 10 for excluding factors, which was the negative
- implication canon, and, in particular, there's
- 12 two aspects of that that I believe put the --
- 13 that implication at its highest here.
- 14 The first, as this Court noted I
- 15 believe most recently in Johnson versus Guzman
- 16 Chavez, when -- when Congress specifies one item
- 17 from a list of associated -- an associated group
- or series, it excludes those that it does not
- 19 mention. Here, we don't just have an associated
- 20 group or series. We have a defined list. We
- 21 know the exact universe. So that -- that puts
- that associated group or series implication at
- 23 its highest point.
- 24 The second, as this Court said in --
- for example, in Bittner, when Congress includes

- 1 language in one statute but omits it in a
- 2 neighbor, that also brings the negative
- 3 implication canon to the fore. And, here, we
- 4 have, again, multiple neighbors where (a)(2)(A)
- 5 is listed and an -- otherwise identical language
- 6 in the probation statute. So, again, that's at
- 7 its highest there.
- 8 And one further point. The --
- 9 Congress did actually remove two factors from --
- from 3583(e), the second being (a)(3), the kinds
- of sentences available. If that were also
- 12 permissive, as the government contends, that
- 13 would be nonsensical. Courts could or could
- 14 not, at their option, consider other kinds of
- 15 sentences.
- So, when we put all of those things
- 17 together, we believe that the negative
- 18 implication canon here is at its highest, and --
- and Congress thus excluded the (a)(2)(A)
- 20 factors.
- 21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: How do you --
- 22 how precise is the split? I mean, let's say
- 23 under (c) the judge says: I have to consider
- 24 what's necessary to protect the public from
- 25 further crimes, right, and because it was such a

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1 serious offense and there was no respect for the
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- 2 law, I'm going to do this or that.
- 3 Is -- is that acceptable or not?
- 4 MR. GROSTIC: I believe that would be
- 5 acceptable because the judge specifically tied
- 6 it to a permissible factor. And I --
- 7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Even though,
- 8 in doing so, he recited an impermissible factor?
- 9 MR. GROSTIC: I -- I believe so,
- 10 and I -- I -- I do understand Your Honor's
- 11 question, and I believe that that puts -- that's
- the most puzzling thing about what Congress did
- 13 here, but I also believe Congress solved that
- 14 puzzle for us in the text because Congress must
- 15 have known when they drafted this statute that
- there was the possibility that a reader could
- 17 see overlap or surplusage. And yet it still did
- 18 two things. In 3553(a), it listed the factors
- in separate subsections. And then, in 3583(e)
- and (c), it obviously excluded one of those.
- 21 So I believe what Congress was
- 22 directing is focus on the permissible factors.
- Obviously, we don't need to fly-speck every word
- that a court uses. And as long as the district
- court makes clear it's relying on a permissible

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1 factor, that would be permissible.
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- 2 JUSTICE ALITO: Let me give you
- 3 another example. Under the statute, the judge
- 4 must consider the nature and circumstances of
- 5 the offense. But, on your reading of the
- 6 statute, the judge may not consider the
- 7 seriousness of the offense. And how is a judge
- 8 supposed to do that?
- 9 Let me give you this -- let me give
- 10 you an example. The offense is a bank robbery.
- 11 Fifty thousand dollars is stolen in the robbery.
- 12 The robber terrorizes the bank employees and the
- 13 clients who are present in the bank at the time,
- and one of the clients has a heart attack.
- So the judge -- how is the judge going
- 16 to consider the nature and circumstances of that
- 17 offense without considering the severity of the
- 18 offense?
- MR. GROSTIC: Under -- understood,
- 20 Your Honor. And -- and what I would point to,
- 21 again, is, in the text of the statute, I
- 22 believe, by splitting those two factors out,
- 23 Congress, in identifying the nature and
- 24 circumstances, was talking about the type of --
- 25 the type of offense involved, the circumstances

- 1 that surrounded it, many of the facts that Your
- 2 Honor just pointed to.
- 3 Those facts allow a court to make a
- 4 judgment about the seriousness of the offense if
- 5 that's permissible. But those facts also allow
- 6 a court to make judgments about other things,
- 7 like the need to protect the public, the need to
- 8 deter.
- And so, when Congress in (a)(2)(A) --
- 10 specifically said consider the need to reflect
- 11 the seriousness of the offense, that points to
- 12 the retributive purpose. And so what Congress
- was doing there is saying consider those facts,
- and then how you use those facts is what we
- 15 direct in (a)(2)(A).
- JUSTICE ALITO: Well, I'm sorry, I
- don't really understand the answer. I just
- don't see the difference between the nature and
- 19 circumstances of the offense and the severity of
- the offense.
- 21 MR. GROSTIC: Well --
- JUSTICE ALITO: Let me ask you -- let
- 23 me ask you this as to where your argument leads.
- 24 It could mean that there's a violation if --
- 25 I'll give you three possibilities. Maybe there

- 1 are more, but I'll give you three.
- 2 One, there's a violation if the judge
- 3 refers by -- by name to the particular statutory
- 4 provision that he can't consider. That's number
- 5 one.
- Number two is that it's a magic words
- 7 test. So there's a violation if the judge says
- 8 anything, uses the words "seriousness of the
- 9 offense, respect for the law, provide just
- 10 punishment for the offense."
- 11 Three is the reviewing court has to
- 12 look at the essence of what the judge is doing,
- and if the reviewing court thinks that the
- 14 essence goes to the prohibited factor, the
- 15 factor you think is prohibited, there's a
- 16 violation.
- 17 Which one is it?
- 18 MR. GROSTIC: Your Honor, I -- I
- 19 believe it would be closest to the second,
- 20 although I'd like to explain further. The --
- 21 the most important thing here is that district
- 22 courts orient their decision-making around what
- 23 Congress directed.
- JUSTICE ALITO: Well, I mean, I think
- 25 those are the three choices. So, if it's -- is

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1 it the -- is it a magic words test? Is the
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- judge okay if the judge doesn't use the magic
- 3 words? Or do you look beyond that?
- 4 MR. GROSTIC: I think we look -- and
- 5 the reason I -- I know the magic words is
- 6 something I'm not supposed to say, right, and
- 7 yet I -- I indicated that anyway. And this
- 8 is -- this is my reasoning.
- 9 The first is, again, the -- the most
- 10 important thing is that district courts direct
- 11 their analysis to the factors that Congress
- 12 indicated they should direct to. How a
- 13 reviewing court reviews that is going to be
- 14 based on the words that the court uses. That's
- 15 true in every context on appeal.
- But the -- the words that a
- 17 court uses in this context are for a purpose,
- and (a)(2)(A)'s purpose, as this Court again
- 19 recognized in Tapia, was about that --
- 20 retributive purpose.
- 21 JUSTICE ALITO: All right. One
- 22 last --
- MR. GROSTIC: That's --
- 24 JUSTICE ALITO: -- one last try. You
- 25 know, in -- in reading your brief, I couldn't

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1 help thinking how this would go over with the
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- 2 trial judges I used to talk to all the time.
- 3 They want to know: What am I supposed to do or
- 4 what can't I do? And -- and I don't know.
- 5 Which of the three is it? Am I safe
- 6 if I just don't use the magic words, I don't
- 7 cite this statute?
- 8 MR. GROSTIC: I -- I think what courts
- 9 need to do is direct their analysis towards
- 10 deterring, protecting the public, and
- 11 rehabilitation.
- 12 JUSTICE JACKSON: And is that because
- 13 we're talking about supervised release?
- MR. GROSTIC: That's exactly right.
- 15 JUSTICE JACKSON: I mean, I -- I -- I
- 16 sort of think we have to orient this in the
- 17 right way. Courts sentence in different
- 18 functions. There are different things that are
- 19 happening. So, when you have an original
- offense, Congress directs in 3553(a) that the
- 21 court shall impose a sentence sufficient but not
- 22 greater than necessary to comply with the
- 23 purposes set forth in paragraph 2.
- 24 All right. So we have a direct
- 25 reference to purposes being relevant to the

- 1 sentencing exercise. The court, in determining
- 2 the particular sentence, shall consider, and
- 3 among the things are the nature and
- 4 circumstances that you talked about with Justice
- 5 Alito. But, clearly, purposes are something
- 6 different in the statute.
- 7 That's in the original sentencing
- 8 exercise. But then you have a situation in
- 9 which the court sentences someone to a term of
- imprisonment, they impose supervised release in
- lieu of what used to be probation or whatnot as
- 12 a result of the sentence, and then we have a
- 13 different set of instructions in the statute for
- what you're supposed to do with respect to
- 15 supervised release.
- So, to start, are you supposed to
- 17 consider punishment or retribution in the
- 18 context of imposition of simper -- of supervised
- 19 release?
- MR. GROSTIC: No, Your Honor. And --
- 21 and that's quite clear in the statute. And the
- 22 reason is because the court is directed to
- 23 fulfill that purpose with the prison sentence.
- So the person has committed an
- offense, a judgment about how serious the

- 1 offense has been made. The court decides this
- 2 length of a prison term is the appropriate
- 3 retributive sanction for that and imposes that
- 4 sanction.
- Now, moving to the supervised release
- 6 context about what follows, because there is no
- 7 parole, Congress said: We recognize that there
- 8 could be value still to the court providing
- 9 rehabilitative services to an offender and, at
- 10 the same time, to manage that transition back
- into society to make sure that the public is
- 12 protected at every turn.
- JUSTICE JACKSON: And so the purposes
- there relate to other things. You're not
- imposing supervised release to punish the person
- for the crime that they committed. That's the
- incarcerative term that you've already imposed.
- 18 Is that right?
- 19 MR. GROSTIC: That's correct. And --
- 20 and -- and then, in -- later on, when we're
- 21 talking about extending, modifying, those are
- responses then to a person's potential actions
- 23 while on supervised release.
- JUSTICE JACKSON: And, in fact, you
- 25 could revoke a person's supervised release even

- 1 for non-criminal behavior.
- 2 MR. GROSTIC: That's correct.
- JUSTICE JACKSON: So you're not
- 4 necessarily punishing them at least
- 5 theoretically for a revocation. You are trying
- 6 to figure out what is necessary to get this
- 7 person to conform to the conditions of
- 8 supervised release that you've imposed.
- 9 MR. GROSTIC: That's -- that's exactly
- 10 correct. And -- and what's happening is, at the
- initial sentencing, the judge is making their
- best forward-looking determination, after this
- person is released, what conditions are going to
- 14 be necessary, what term is going to be
- appropriate, what's going to satisfy these
- 16 purposes.
- 17 JUSTICE JACKSON: So -- so,
- theoretically, we're completely sort of outside
- of the realm of punishment now. We're in the
- 20 world of supervised release, and the court is
- 21 being instructed through these directions in the
- 22 statute that preclude consideration of
- 23 punishment that we're now thinking about
- 24 rehabilitation and deterrence and the kinds of
- 25 things that are necessary to operate fairly a

- 1 supervised release system.
- 2 MR. GROSTIC: That -- that's correct.
- 3 And -- and after that initial judgment, what
- 4 we're talking about is a person on supervised
- 5 release. Their conduct might shift what the
- 6 judge now considers is necessary to meet those
- 7 factors, rehabilitation, deterrence --
- 8 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Mr. --
- 9 MR. GROSTIC: -- or protecting the
- 10 public.
- 11 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Mr. Grostic, in the
- real world, an individual comes before a judge
- having violated a term of supervised release and
- is remanded to prison.
- 15 In what world does he think he's not
- 16 being punished?
- 17 MR. GROSTIC: The -- I -- I understand
- 18 that -- that a -- a person probably thinks
- 19 they're punished -- being punished in that
- 20 world. I wouldn't -- I wouldn't dispute that.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Yeah.
- MR. GROSTIC: At the same time, what
- 23 the district court is instructed to do is not to
- 24 say: You have done something wrong here and,
- because of that wrongness, I'm going to measure

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1 how wrong it is and I'm going to punish you as a
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- 2 result.
- What it's doing is trying to say: I
- 4 thought initially this was going to be
- 5 sufficient to rehabilitate, to deter, and --
- 6 JUSTICE GORSUCH: And -- and -- and
- 7 now I find it's not.
- 8 MR. GROSTIC: And now I find it's not.
- 9 So I'm going to --
- 10 JUSTICE GORSUCH: And so, instead of
- 11 being free, you're -- you're going to prison.
- 12 MR. GROSTIC: -- I'm going to adjust
- 13 what -- what I'm doing. I thought that
- initially my prison term --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: I'm adjusting what
- 16 I'm doing by sending you to prison.
- 17 MR. GROSTIC: Correct.
- 18 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Yeah.
- 19 MR. GROSTIC: I --
- 20 JUSTICE GORSUCH: And -- and on --
- 21 on -- on the exclusio unius point, which I --
- 22 I -- I take as a strong one, as I read (e),
- 23 it -- it says you -- you effectively must
- 24 consider these factors, which I think,
- 25 certainly, from an -- you know, a linguistic

- 1 perspective, means that you don't have to
- 2 consider other factors. I'm not sure it quite
- 3 goes so far to say you must not consider other
- 4 factors.
- 5 Do you follow me?
- 6 MR. GROSTIC: I do follow. And --
- 7 and --
- 8 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Help me with that.
- 9 MR. GROSTIC: Well, that's going back
- 10 to my answer to Justice Thomas. I mean, the --
- 11 this Court has adopted a series of -- of -- in a
- series of decisions, guideposts, obviously, for
- 13 how we can determine when that -- that negative
- implication canon is at its highest.
- We believe it's at its highest here.
- And it's not just a matter of how courts review
- 17 a statute. It's also the backdrop against what
- 18 Congress drafted.
- 19 JUSTICE GORSUCH: I accept that -- I
- 20 accept that it's at its highest, but its
- 21 highest, it strikes me, would only -- only get
- you so far normally, unless we have something
- 23 extra to suggest that they must -- need not
- 24 consider the other factors.
- 25 It wouldn't -- it wouldn't take you so

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1 far as to must not and maybe particularly given
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- 2 that Congress has elsewhere said you -- you must
- 3 not consider other factors.
- What do I do about that?
- 5 MR. GROSTIC: Well, in -- in this
- 6 context, Your Honor, we believe this is the
- 7 clearest way that Congress has spoken in the
- 8 Sentencing Reform Act, and it's by --
- 9 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Even though, in --
- when it comes to setting supervised release
- 11 initially, Congress has said you may not
- 12 consider certain factors?
- MR. GROSTIC: Well, in setting
- initially, the language of 3583(c) is "shall
- 15 consider" and then the list of factors.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Yeah -- yeah.
- 17 But -- but --
- 18 MR. GROSTIC: It also there does not
- 19 say "shall not."
- 20 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Correct. But there
- 21 are places where Congress says you may not
- 22 consider certain factors, aren't there?
- 23 MR. GROSTIC: I -- I don't believe so.
- Not -- not in this context.
- 25 JUSTICE JACKSON: And is -- and -- and

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in those situations in other contexts, isn't
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- 2 that statement being made in the context of the
- 3 universe of factors, the world -- the possible
- 4 world of factors, and so they isolate one and
- 5 say: Don't consider this.
- I thought your strongest argument on
- 7 this point was the fact that the reference being
- 8 made here is to a defined set. So we have 10
- 9 factors to begin with. That is the universe.
- 10 And then, in this particular
- 11 circumstance, they leave out two. So it seems
- odd to believe that they still considered -- you
- 13 know, or they still wanted those two to be a
- 14 permissible consideration under those
- 15 circumstances.
- MR. GROSTIC: Yeah, that -- that's
- 17 correct, Your Honor. And -- and I would add
- 18 again that we can look that -- look at that
- 19 provision in comparison to the otherwise
- 20 identical probation statute.
- 21 If Congress truly meant that in both
- 22 contexts anything was permissive, then that
- language in the probation statute, to the extent
- they apply, is essentially the same language
- 25 that we're reading into 3583(c) and (e).

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1 JUSTICE GORSUCH: So, Mr. Grostic, I
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- think what I was thinking of, and I do want your
- 3 help with this, is, you know, Congress has said
- 4 in (a) that the factors set forth in 3553(a) --
- 5 this is 3582(a), I'm sorry -- recognizing
- 6 imprisonment is not an appropriate means of --
- 7 of promoting correction or rehabilitation --
- 8 there, we have clear language saying "may not"
- 9 or "shall not" consider certain things.
- 10 MR. GROSTIC: Well --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: We don't -- we don't
- 12 have that here. So what do we do about that?
- 13 MR. GROSTIC: -- in Tapia, this Court
- 14 did not say that that was an outright bar on
- 15 considering that factor actually.
- 16 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Not for certain --
- it is for certain purposes.
- 18 MR. GROSTIC: Precisely.
- 19 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Right.
- 20 MR. GROSTIC: And -- and so, in Tapia,
- 21 the Court recognized that 3583(c) was a more
- 22 clear way to outright bar considering of a
- 23 factor.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Yeah.
- 25 MR. GROSTIC: 3582(a) works in tandem,

- 1 obviously, with -- with the instructions for
- 2 imposing prison generally.
- 3 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Right. So there we
- 4 have a clear -- clear way of Congress telling us
- 5 certain things are out of bounds.
- 6 MR. GROSTIC: Well, what Congress did
- 7 there is -- is, in imposing prison, tell courts
- 8 they can consider rehabilitative factors.
- 9 JUSTICE GORSUCH: But not for certain
- 10 purposes.
- MR. GROSTIC: But not for -- but not
- 12 for lengthening or imposing --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Yeah, I get all
- 14 that.
- 15 MR. GROSTIC: Right.
- 16 JUSTICE GORSUCH: We're going around
- 17 the same tree here together.
- 18 But -- but we don't have language in
- 19 this statute saying "may not" for any purpose.
- 20 MR. GROSTIC: That's correct. And --
- 21 and I -- our position is, and I believe that
- 22 when Congress drafted against the backdrop of
- the negative implication canon, that this was a
- 24 more clear way than 3582(a) to exclude the --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Okay.

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1 MR. GROSTIC: -- the non-listed
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- 2 factors.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Counsel, I've been
- 4 thinking of this case because I keep going back
- 5 to the question that Justice Alito did, which is
- 6 we have a backdrop that sentencing courts can
- 7 look at almost anything.
- 8 And this is not stopping sentencing
- 9 courts from looking at any evidence whatsoever.
- 10 MR. GROSTIC: Correct.
- 11 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: What it's saying
- 12 instead is: You can't use that evidence for
- 13 certain purposes.
- MR. GROSTIC: That's correct.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: And so it's not
- 16 that it's a list of factors or evidence that you
- 17 can or cannot use. It's more what purpose
- 18 you're using that evidence for, correct?
- 19 MR. GROSTIC: That's correct. And --
- and just as in the initial sentencing context,
- if a court, say -- say, refused -- said I don't
- 22 believe that deterrence is a proper purpose of
- 23 sentencing, I refuse to consider it, that would
- 24 be error because it would have refused to follow
- 25 Congress's direction to --

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1 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: As to purpose. I
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- 2 think of this -- we do -- courts do this all the
- 3 time with hearsay. We tell courts you can't use
- 4 hearsay for the purpose of the truth of the
- 5 matter, but you could use it for all -- for a
- 6 lot of other reasons, correct?
- 7 MR. GROSTIC: Correct.
- 8 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: And we do the same
- 9 thing with propensity evidence. You can look at
- 10 propensity evidence. You just can't use it
- 11 to -- for the purpose of -- of proof of
- 12 propensity, but you can use it for -- to prove
- 13 intent --
- MR. GROSTIC: Correct.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- or knowledge or
- 16 a lot of other reasons. So it's not -- what you
- 17 are basically saying is you can use anything you
- 18 want, District Court Judge; you just can't use
- 19 it for this purpose.
- 20 MR. GROSTIC: Correct.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: All right.
- MR. GROSTIC: And that follows from --
- 23 from the structure of the entire statute. As --
- 24 as Justice Jackson brought up, the initial
- 25 sentencing, (a)(2)(A) is satisfied. The

- 1 supervised release is imposed for these
- 2 additional purposes.
- 3 3583(d) instructs courts about how to
- 4 consider what conditions they might impose. It
- 5 also omits (a)(2)(A) because, again, this is not
- 6 for a retributive purpose.
- 7 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: And you said
- 8 earlier that you don't mind -- it is a magic
- 9 words requirement. When we admit hearsay, don't
- 10 use it for the truth. We say, if you're using
- it for the truth, you've committed error. Are
- 12 you using it for another purpose? You're okay.
- MR. GROSTIC: Right. And -- and,
- again, I know that that's -- I'm not supposed to
- say this is magic words, and it isn't magic
- 16 words, except to the extent about how courts are
- 17 reviewing what a district court does. The same
- 18 as in any other appellate context, we look at
- 19 the words that the court used.
- 20 But the fundamental point is that the
- 21 words reflect a purpose. They reflect that
- 22 Congress said, in this context, we're taking
- 23 retribution off the table. That was done for
- 24 the initial -- the initial offense. Nothing can
- 25 change about the person's conduct that would

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1 make the need to punish that original offense
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- 2 more stark now. And if there is new conduct
- 3 that needs retributive punishment, the proper
- 4 course is a new prosecution.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Now, going to --
- 6 MR. GROSTIC: It's not a supervised
- 7 release --
- 8 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- Justice
- 9 Gorsuch's point, throughout the sentencing
- 10 factors, the Court routinely has said use all
- 11 the 3553(a) factors. But it chose here not to
- do that, so there has to be a purpose for that.
- MR. GROSTIC: Correct.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Pardon the pun of
- 15 using "purpose" in another way.
- MR. GROSTIC: Of course, Your Honor.
- 17 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But, if it had
- wanted to say everything's there, it could have
- 19 said it the way it did it everywhere else,
- 20 correct?
- 21 MR. GROSTIC: Correct. And -- and, in
- 22 fact, in -- in -- again, in Guzman Chavez, the
- 23 Court noted by listing things in a -- in a -- in
- an aligned series, a group or associated series,
- 25 and -- and omitting others, that means the

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1 negative implication has force and also noted --
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- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: That's why the
- 3 negative implication has so much force here,
- 4 which is --
- 5 MR. GROSTIC: Correct.
- 6 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- if Congress
- 7 didn't want to eliminate something from
- 8 consideration -- a purpose from consideration,
- 9 it had a way that it used throughout all of the
- sentencing provisions, but it chose explicitly
- 11 to exclude something here.
- 12 MR. GROSTIC: Correct. And -- and as
- in -- as in Guzman Chavez, there was no
- 14 catch-all provision at the end to say consider
- these and these others to the extent they apply.
- 16 Nothing like that.
- 17 And -- and colloquially even, if I --
- if I may, it would be -- what -- what -- the
- 19 government's position here is, courts, you must
- 20 make sure you deter, you must make sure that you
- 21 promote -- that you protect the public, you must
- 22 make sure that you rehabilitate, and, courts,
- you can decide to punish someone if you want to
- or if you find that it's warranted here.
- 25 And I don't know how courts would be

- 1 quided by that. I don't know what
- 2 considerations they would -- that -- that would
- 3 be appropriate to decide that. What we have
- 4 are -- are established ways to impose
- 5 rehabilitative punishment. They're in an
- 6 initial prosecution.
- 7 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: All right. Thank
- 8 you, counsel.
- 9 JUSTICE ALITO: Would you agree that
- 10 the purpose of general deterrence is to cause
- 11 people to respect the law and obey the law?
- MR. GROSTIC: To obey the law,
- 13 absolutely. I -- I do agree with that.
- JUSTICE ALITO: All right. So how
- 15 can -- again, we have a contradiction in this --
- in your -- in the way you read this statute.
- 17 The judge shall take into account what's needed
- 18 to afford adequate deterrence to criminal
- 19 conduct, but the judge cannot take into --
- 20 cannot do this, cannot revoke or modify
- 21 supervised release to promote respect for the
- 22 law.
- MR. GROSTIC: The need to repote --
- 24 promote respect for the law in (a)(2)(A),
- 25 because of what it's next to and how we read

- 1 that statute together, still reflects that
- 2 retributive purpose.
- JUSTICE ALITO: But isn't that built
- 4 into the idea of deterrence?
- 5 MR. GROSTIC: Not the retributive
- 6 purpose itself. Deterrence can --
- 7 JUSTICE ALITO: No, but to cause -- to
- 8 cause people to respect the law and obey the
- 9 law.
- 10 MR. GROSTIC: In a sense, but in
- 11 (a)(2)(A), quote Congress has used "respect for
- 12 the law" differently, and -- and we know that
- simply because of the way that they drafted the
- statute, that these are separate purposes that
- 15 courts need to fulfill.
- 16 I -- I mean, under any analysis, we --
- 17 I -- I -- I think we all agree that Congress
- 18 must have done something here. And if we
- 19 conclude that (a)(2)(A) and (a)(2)(B) are
- 20 necessarily involved in the same thing anytime
- we consider (a)(2)(B), then Congress has done
- nothing. (a)(2)(B), every time we consider it,
- will involve considering (a)(2)(A).
- JUSTICE JACKSON: Mr. Grostic, can --
- 25 can I get you to react to the thought that maybe

- 1 what Congress was doing was reacting to
- 2 potential concerns about constitutional
- 3 problems? And -- and what I mean by that is
- 4 that we have a system in which judges impose
- 5 penalties subject to limitations in the form of,
- 6 say, the statute of maximum, right? You can
- 7 only impose a -- a -- a term of imprisonment up
- 8 to a certain point.
- 9 When Congress crafted this statute to
- 10 allow for supervised release and then permitted
- 11 revocation, unless retribution, punishment, is
- 12 sort of removed from the supervised release
- dynamic, wouldn't you run into a potential
- 14 problem of having people being sentenced -- or
- 15 at least this would be an argument that the
- 16 defense would make -- people being sentenced in
- 17 the supervised release realm above the statutory
- 18 maximum because now what we're doing is
- 19 punishing people, not just someone who gets the
- 20 stat max for the initial offense, but then
- 21 you're tacking on an extra two years, three
- years, whatever it is, in the revocation realm?
- 23 And so part, I think, of what Congress
- 24 might have been trying to do was to avoid that
- 25 kind of problem by indicating very clearly that

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in supervised release, we're really not about
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- 2 punishment. We're not trying to go -- you know,
- 3 run into the same kinds of concerns that you
- 4 would have if you were allowing people to go
- 5 above the statutory maximum.
- 6 MR. GROSTIC: I -- I think that's
- 7 possible, Your Honor. I -- I have hesitation,
- 8 which I will explain.
- 9 JUSTICE JACKSON: Yes.
- 10 MR. GROSTIC: One, I do think it's
- 11 possible because of the -- the considerations,
- the serious constitutional questions this Court
- identified in Cornell Johnson.
- 14 My hesitation in -- in -- in just
- agreeing to Your Honor's question is that when
- 16 Congress initially drafted 3583(e), there was no
- 17 revocation provision. It was terminate, modify,
- 18 extend, or refer to a new prosecution. So, in
- 19 that context, there was no need to adopt a need
- 20 for retributive punishment.
- 21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
- 22 counsel.
- Justice Thomas, anything further?
- 24 Justice Alito?
- 25 JUSTICE ALITO: Suppose a district

- 1 judge reads the kind of opinion you would like
- 2 us to write and says: Well, how am I going to
- 3 comply with this, okay? I'm going to write out
- 4 in advance everything that I'm going to say and
- 5 I'm going to be sure never to use the magic
- 6 words, plus I'm going to put a disclaimer on --
- 7 whenever I -- I -- I do this, I'm going to have
- 8 a -- a standard disclaimer: I am not taking
- 9 into account this particular provision of the
- 10 statute.
- Is the district court home free then?
- 12 MR. GROSTIC: I -- I mean, I believe
- it would be for appellate review, but the more
- important thing from reading this Court's
- opinion would hopefully be that the district
- 16 court, acting conscientiously, as our -- as
- our -- in my experience, our judges do actually
- 18 reorient their -- their analysis away from the
- 19 retributive factors and towards the permissible
- 20 factors.
- 21 JUSTICE ALITO: Reorients -- the judge
- 22 reorients his or her consideration away from the
- 23 seriousness of the offense but directs it to the
- 24 nature and circumstances of the offense.
- 25 Reorients it away from promoting respect for the

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1 law. No, you can't do that, but you can try to
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- 2 promote deterrence.
- 3 MR. GROSTIC: Yes, Your Honor. The --
- 4 the -- the purposes of sentencing -- deterrence,
- 5 protecting the public, and -- and
- 6 rehabilitating -- would be the reorientation.
- 7 JUSTICE ALITO: You want us to write
- 8 an opinion saying, Judges, when you are revoking
- 9 or modifying supervised release, do not try to
- 10 promote respect for the law?
- 11 MR. GROSTIC: Do not consider
- 12 (a)(2)(A) because, in that context, promoting
- 13 respect for the law reflects the retributive
- 14 purpose because of the -- the -- the context in
- 15 which it's written.
- 16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 17 Sotomayor?
- 18 Justice Kagan?
- JUSTICE KAGAN: So, I mean, there are
- 20 hypotheticals that we could throw at you all day
- 21 reflecting some kind of mishmash of these
- 22 factors, and -- and I think that that's the
- 23 concern. So, if you were saying simply,
- 24 quickly, to district courts what they should do,
- 25 what they shouldn't do, what would that be? And

- 1 also, if you were providing that same kind of
- 2 guidance to appellate courts, especially given,
- 3 in the first couple of years, they're going to
- 4 be looking at sentences that happened even
- 5 before any opinion we would write, what would
- 6 that be?
- 7 MR. GROSTIC: So, on the first
- 8 question, Your Honor, about what directions to
- 9 district courts, two points. The first would be
- 10 a clear statement of the three permissible
- 11 purposes, what their meaning is, and to -- to
- 12 follow those, to direct the -- the analysis
- 13 towards those purposes.
- 14 And I do believe that there's a
- 15 helpful under -- underpinning to all of those,
- which is forward-looking, what needs to happen
- for the future for this person, not -- it's
- obviously based on nature and circumstances,
- 19 their history and characteristics, what has
- 20 happened before, but not because you did this
- 21 before, now we need to do this in response.
- Just what is needed to protect the public, to
- 23 deter, and to rehabilitate.
- 24 And then, for courts of appeals, I
- 25 take -- I take Your Honor's question to heart

- 1 because it is this interim period, I think,
- 2 that's the most important. After Tapia, we
- 3 haven't seen a --
- 4 JUSTICE KAGAN: I mean, that was my
- 5 experience in Tapia. I actually paid some close
- 6 attention to what was happening --
- 7 MR. GROSTIC: Mm-hmm.
- 8 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- and the first
- 9 couple of years, people were having a hard time
- 10 figuring it out, and courts of appeals were
- 11 going different ways, and then it just
- 12 completely ended --
- 13 MR. GROSTIC: Right.
- 14 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- because district
- 15 courts just started doing the things that we had
- 16 said to do.
- 17 MR. GROSTIC: Right. And that's my
- 18 experience as well. So in that interim period
- is kind of the most important of reviewing what
- 20 the district courts have said, ensuring that
- 21 they comply with -- with the -- the factors that
- 22 are listed.
- In that interim period, unless a
- 24 court -- if a court cites an (a)(2)(A) purpose
- 25 and unless it has made clear I didn't mean those

- 1 words for what it seems like, I meant it for
- this other purpose, I mean, at that point, we're
- 3 into something like normal harmless error
- 4 procedural reasonableness review, which is, when
- 5 a court relies on an impermissible factor,
- 6 considers an impermissible factor, which is what
- 7 the statute says they're not permitted to do,
- 8 that's reversible.
- 9 But, again, even at that point, we're
- 10 talking about a vacatur to send it back to the
- 11 district court. If it really did mean to impose
- the same sentence for the permissible purposes,
- it can do so and re-explain.
- 14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 15 Gorsuch?
- 16 JUSTICE GORSUCH: It seems to me the
- 17 upshot of the opinion we would write is say:
- Don't use the word "punishment," but you can use
- 19 the words "protect the public, adequately deter,
- and the history of this defendant."
- Is -- is that the gist of what -- what
- we'd essentially be doing here?
- 23 MR. GROSTIC: I -- I believe
- 24 that's -- those are -- those are kind of the key
- touchstones, yes. And that, again, is towards

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1 reorienting district courts away from punishment
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- 2 in this context and courts --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Yeah, I just don't
- 4 know what it says -- what it means to reorient
- 5 away from punishment when you're saying: I --
- 6 I'm sending you back to prison in order to
- 7 protect the public --
- 8 MR. GROSTIC: I -- I -- and --
- 9 JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- or "given" -- or
- 10 "given the history of what you've done."
- MR. GROSTIC: And I understand that,
- 12 Your Honor.
- 13 JUSTICE GORSUCH: What's the delta
- between that and saying: I am punishing you?
- MR. GROSTIC: To -- to a defendant, it
- 16 may mean very little.
- 17 In the context of how district courts
- 18 are managing their docket and -- and the
- 19 supervision docket, it's -- I -- I believe it's
- 20 quite important because, at this point, under
- 21 the Sixth Circuit's rule, district courts can
- 22 treat a supervised release revocation the same
- as in an initial sentencing, where they can
- 24 punish the offender for what's happened before,
- 25 no matter what has changed in the meantime.

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JUSTICE GORSUCH: Well, they -- they
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- 2 can't go beyond what -- the -- the factual
- 3 findings of the jury to issue a new sentence.
- 4 That's not permissible. We dealt with that in
- 5 Haymond, for example, right? We're now dealing
- 6 in the context of supervised release.
- 7 And it just -- and magic words, I -- I
- 8 appreciate some words are important, but I --
- 9 I -- I -- I struggle with synonyms. And a
- 10 synonym to "protecting the public" might be
- 11 "punishment." A synonym to "punishment" might
- be "you're a bad person," which I can say.
- 13 Your -- your history, you're a bad person,
- 14 you've done bad things. I need to deter crime.
- 15 Punishment.
- 16 Thank you. I -- I -- I get it.
- 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 18 Kavanaugh?
- 19 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: When you consider
- the nature and circumstances of the offense,
- 21 which you can and are supposed to, what if the
- 22 district judge says: Well, I'm considering the
- 23 nature and circumstances of the offense, and it
- 24 was a serious offense?
- MR. GROSTIC: I believe if they stop

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there that that's reversible error because
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- 2 there's no indication that it means anything
- 3 other than relying on the (a)(2)(A) factor.
- 4 If a court is careful and says: This
- 5 was a serious offense and, therefore, I'm not --
- 6 I'm not trying to punish you, but I -- I
- 7 conclude that you need to be -- that -- that I
- 8 need to revoke your supervision so that we can
- 9 protect the public, and that's clear in the
- 10 transcript, I believe that the district court
- 11 would have made clear that it's not relying on
- 12 an impermissible factor.
- But the -- the -- again, the core here
- is what is the district court trying to do.
- 15 And -- and I -- I do appreciate the
- 16 hypotheticals. I think it's helpful to -- to --
- 17 to tease out the edges of this. But, at the
- same time, this is in a sense normal appellate
- 19 review in -- in the sentencing context too. Has
- 20 the court relied on this or not? Has the court
- 21 considered this or not?
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: I guess my
- 23 question also gets to my -- when I read
- 24 (a)(2)(A), I think, the -- of the three things
- 25 there, the first two, seriousness of the offense

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1 and respect for the law, are almost completely
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- 2 overlapping with other factors that you're
- 3 supposed to consider.
- 4 So that leads me to think what's left
- 5 is, as Justice Gorsuch just said, the just
- 6 punishment. As long as you -- avoid the word
- 7 "punishment" or "punish," you should be okay.
- 8 MR. GROSTIC: And -- and two responses
- 9 to that.
- 10 One, I do think that the -- the
- 11 additional text is important, which is the need
- to reflect the seriousness of the offense, the
- 13 need to promote respect for -- reflecting the
- seriousness of the offense, I believe, does
- bring that back into something akin to
- 16 retribution and punishment.
- 17 But, secondly -- and -- and I -- I
- 18 know I'm repeating myself to some extent here.
- 19 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: That's okay.
- 20 MR. GROSTIC: But Congress was doing
- 21 something here when they listed these factors
- 22 separately. And when they omitted this one,
- 23 I -- again, I think we can all agree Congress
- 24 must have been doing something.
- 25 And so the -- the sense that because

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1 there is a sense that perhaps they overlap or
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- 2 surplusage, that's something Congress must have
- 3 been aware of, and yet they chose to surgically
- 4 remove this particular purpose --
- 5 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Thank you.
- 6 MR. GROSTIC: -- from this context.
- 7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 8 Barrett?
- 9 JUSTICE BARRETT: So mine is a
- 10 practical question as well. I mean, I -- I
- 11 think Justice Sotomayor is right that we often
- 12 consider evidence for some purposes, not others.
- 13 And hearsay is a great example of
- 14 that. But I think the questions that you're
- 15 getting show a distinction between this
- 16 circumstance and hearsay because, with hearsay,
- it's essentially you can consider it for any
- other purpose, assuming other evidentiary rules
- 19 don't bar it, except for the truth of the matter
- asserted.
- 21 And, here, it's just saying you can't
- 22 consider it for this one purpose, but you can
- 23 consider it for these other synonymous purposes.
- 24 So it's like in a hearsay rule, if you could say
- 25 you can't consider it for the truth of the

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1 matter asserted, but think of all the synonyms
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- 2 you want for "truth."
- So, you know, we've -- we've pointed
- 4 out the difficulties for the district judge,
- 5 we've pointed out the difficulties it will pose
- 6 on appellate review. What is the advantage to
- 7 the defendant? Because, if you can consider it
- 8 for these other overlapping purposes, like the
- 9 nature and circumstances of the offense, is it
- 10 really going to affect the length of the
- 11 sentence? Like, why is this important?
- 12 MR. GROSTIC: So I -- I believe
- 13 sometimes it will have the same result but not
- 14 always, and I can point to two examples, I
- 15 think.
- The first is conditions may have
- 17 changed since the offense in a significant way
- where the need to protect the public, the need
- 19 to deter has dropped significantly.
- 20 One example would be the defendant's
- 21 incapacitation or something like it. Another
- would be the defendant's extreme rehabilitation
- 23 since the offense.
- 24 JUSTICE BARRETT: But let me just stop
- 25 you right there. I thought it was nature and

- 1 circumstances of the offense. It sounds like
- 2 you're talking about nature and circumstances
- 3 surrounding the violation of supervised release.
- 4 MR. GROSTIC: That's correct, Your --
- 5 so (a)(1) requires considering the nature and
- 6 circumstances of the offense and the history and
- 7 characteristics of the offender. In all of
- 8 that, there could be a significant change since
- 9 the offense, is -- is my point here.
- 10 If there is that significant change,
- 11 then a court may think: Well, to reflect the
- 12 need to -- to just -- provide just punishment,
- 13 regardless of what's changed with the defendant,
- 14 I need to impose a significant punishment.
- But, because this defendant has shown
- that they're rehabilitated, because this
- 17 defendant is incapacitated, once I take that off
- the table, there's really very little need to
- 19 impose incarceration. That would be one
- 20 difference.
- 21 The other and very practical
- 22 difference, I think, for Petitioner Leaks is
- 23 when someone has a state court sentence or a
- 24 federal court sentence for the same conduct.
- 25 I -- I -- I understand that the

- 1 statute allows the supervising court to make a
- 2 new judgment on its own about whether additional
- 3 time in custody or modifying supervised release
- 4 is necessary to fulfill the three permissible
- 5 purposes, but they may well conclude: Well, the
- 6 punishment's done, that other sentence also
- 7 fulfills the three permissible purposes,
- 8 concurrent time is sufficient.
- 9 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 10 Jackson?
- 11 JUSTICE JACKSON: So, Mr. Grostic,
- just to sort of flesh that out some, I mean, I
- 13 perceive and I think sentencing theory perceives
- 14 a difference between retributive purposes and
- 15 other purposes.
- And so, even though there may be
- overlap in some of the discussions that we've
- had, suppose you have a defendant who is on
- 19 supervised release and discovers that he is
- 20 terminally ill, terminally ill, six months to
- 21 live. And he stops calling his probation
- 22 officer. He stops doing all the things. And
- 23 the probation officer comes back to court and
- 24 says: I -- think this person's supervised
- 25 release should be revoked because they are not

- doing what it is that you've required on
- 2 supervised release. Absolutely a basis for
- 3 revocation.
- 4 But then the question becomes, from
- 5 the judge's perspective, it's not going to make
- 6 any difference if I incarcerate this guy for the
- 7 last six months of his life because he's not
- 8 going to be able to commit other crimes, he's
- 9 not -- it's not going to protect the public in
- 10 any way.
- 11 A judge who was imposing supervised
- 12 release revocation for retributive purposes,
- even though the statute says you don't do that,
- 14 would say it doesn't matter. What you've done
- is violated the conditions, and for that, you
- need to be punished and, therefore, back to
- 17 jail.
- 18 A judge who is looking at the statute
- 19 and says retribution is off the table might
- 20 determine not to do those things because the
- 21 other purposes of punishment would not be
- 22 fulfilled given this person's circumstances. Is
- that a concrete example of how you can separate
- 24 out retributive purposes from other purposes and
- 25 sentence differently as a result?

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1 MR. GROSTIC: Yes, I -- I believe so.
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- 2 And -- and, specifically, I think that relates
- 3 to the promoting respect for the law in
- 4 (a)(2)(A), which is, even if there hasn't been
- 5 an offense here, because there was a court order
- 6 that was violated, in -- in some sense, that's
- 7 disrespecting the law, and so (a)(2)(A), even if
- 8 there wasn't an offense in -- in -- in Your
- 9 Honor's example committed here, would allow for
- 10 punishment to promote --
- 11 JUSTICE JACKSON: If punishment was on
- 12 the table --
- 13 MR. GROSTIC: Correct.
- 14 JUSTICE JACKSON: -- you could still
- impose punishment.
- 16 MR. GROSTIC: That would -- that would
- 17 be on the table, but --
- JUSTICE JACKSON: Thank you.
- MR. GROSTIC: -- but -- but,
- otherwise, no.
- 21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
- counsel.
- Ms. Hansford.

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| 1 | ORAL ARGUMENT OF MASHA G. HANSFORD |
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| 2 | ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENT |
| 3 | MS. HANSFORD: Mr. Chief Justice, and |
| 4 | may it please the Court: |
| 5 | Section 3583(e) does not displace a |
| 6 | district court's broad discretion to think about |
| 7 | any considerations it finds helpful at a |
| 8 | sentencing or sentence modification proceeding. |
| 9 | Section 3583(e)(3) authorizes a court to revoke |
| 10 | supervised release "after considering certain |
| 11 | factors." That language makes clear that a |
| 12 | court is required to consider the enumerated |
| 13 | factors, but it does not prohibit the court from |
| 14 | considering others. |
| 15 | To take an example, if a judge tells |
| 16 | her law clerk that the clerk may turn in his |
| 17 | bench memo after considering the petitioner's |
| 18 | brief, the respondent's brief, and the reply |
| 19 | brief, that does not suggest that the law clerk |
| 20 | is forbidden from also considering the amicus |
| 21 | briefs. And if a college physics department |
| 22 | announces that a student may declare a physics |
| 23 | major after completing Physics 101, Physics 103, |
| 24 | and Physics 104, that does not suggest the |
| 25 | student is forbidden from also taking Physics |

- 1 102. Just like Section 3583(e), those
- 2 instructions set a floor, not a ceiling.
- 3 Petitioners argue that because the
- 4 Section 3553(a)(2)(A) factors reflect
- 5 retribution, they don't belong in a supervised
- 6 release revocation proceeding. And the colloquy
- 7 with Justice Jackson was getting at a similar
- 8 idea. But Congress knows how to limit a
- 9 sentencing decision to one that serves
- 10 particular purposes, and it uses express
- 11 language to do so. Congress did not use that
- 12 type of language here.
- Nor would it make sense for the Court
- 14 to prohibit -- for Congress to prohibit a court
- from considering the (a)(2)(A) factors, which,
- 16 as the discussion this morning emphasized,
- include the need to promote respect for the law
- in determining what to do about the breach of
- 19 trust that court-ordered supervision that
- 20 reflects and in light of the deep overlap
- 21 between the factors, and I think the colloquy
- 22 this morning well illustrated that that would
- really raise profound workability problems and,
- 24 at best, would devolve into a reverse magic
- 25 words requirement.

| 1 | I welcome the Court's questions. |
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| 2 | JUSTICE THOMAS: Why would you why |
| 3 | would Congress write a provision like this in |
| 4 | such a roundabout way? |
| 5 | MS. HANSFORD: I think the reason that |
| 6 | Congress listed only certain factors were |
| 7 | because those were the factors that it thought |
| 8 | would be the primary considerations across the |
| 9 | board. So, of course, Congress was not drafting |
| 10 | this provision just for the revocation section. |
| 11 | In fact, when it was drafting it, the revocation |
| 12 | provision, $(e)(3)$, wasn't even in the statute. |
| 13 | But the way the statute reads now is |
| 14 | the list of factors is in the umbrella paragraph |
| 15 | at (e), and it covers the whole range of |
| 16 | actions, terminating the term of supervision |
| 17 | early, extending the term of supervision, |
| 18 | modifying the conditions of supervision, as well |
| 19 | as revocation. And I think that the discretion |
| 20 | that Congress gave courts reflects that in some |
| 21 | of those circumstances, a court may not think |
| 22 | that the $(a)(2)(A)$ factors, to the extent they |
| 23 | do work beyond the other factors, need to be |
| 24 | considered. |
| 25 | JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I'm |

| 1 | JUSTICE THOMAS: You mentioned |
|----|--|
| 2 | workability. What role should that play in our |
| 3 | assessment of the arguments here, in our |
| 4 | interpretation of these provisions? |
| 5 | MS. HANSFORD: I think the profound |
| 6 | unworkability of Petitioner's rule, which would |
| 7 | require parsing what a court is doing in |
| 8 | extricating the promoting respect from the law |
| 9 | from deterrence and incapacitation |
| 10 | considerations that are intimately intertwined, |
| 11 | I think should give the Court a lot of pause |
| 12 | from reading the text to say that. |
| 13 | Now especially here, where |
| 14 | Petitioner's textual argument is really an |
| 15 | argument of negative implication. I think that |
| 16 | Petitioners are suggesting the wrong negative |
| 17 | implication, so the argument doesn't get off the |
| 18 | ground. But, before drawing the inference |
| 19 | Petitioners seek, I I think the Court should |
| 20 | take cognizance of the fact that this would be a |
| 21 | really bizarre thing for Congress to do in this |
| 22 | way. |
| 23 | JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Counsel, I I'm |
| 24 | having a little problem with this workability |
| 25 | argument because there's four circuits, one of |

- 1 them pretty large, the Ninth, but the Fourth,
- 2 the Fifth, the Ninth -- I can't remember the
- 3 fourth one -- and the Tenth, all of whom have
- 4 the rule you say is unworkable, they seem to be
- 5 functioning fine.
- 6 MS. HANSFORD: I think the experience
- 7 in those circuits well reflects the workability
- 8 problems here. First of all, most of the
- 9 circuits --
- 10 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: What is the
- 11 workability problem? The district court says
- 12 something wrong. You have to object. Now the
- three people here objected or at least two of
- 14 them objected, and the district court decided
- that instead of saying I'm doing it for dual
- purposes, which would have made this a harmless
- 17 error case, said no, I'm not doing it for
- deterrence, incapacitation, or rehabilitation;
- 19 I'm doing it for punishment.
- 20 So the -- but, if it had been objected
- 21 to, it would have been fine. If it had not been
- 22 objected to, we're in harmless error territory.
- 23 And -- and I don't understand that those courts
- have had a problem with this.
- 25 MS. HANSFORD: I think the workability

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1 problem is extricating even in the judge's own
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- 2 mind the factors that are required to be
- 3 considered, like the nature and circumstances of
- 4 the offense and deterrence, incapacitation, from
- 5 promoting respect for the law.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Give me --
- 7 MS. HANSFORD: Justice Sotomayor, I
- 8 would direct you to take a look at pages 96, 98,
- 9 216 to 217, and 219 to 220 of the Joint
- 10 Appendix, which shows how the judges in these
- 11 cases were thinking about those factors, and
- they were all completely intertwined in their
- 13 mind.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: All right. Let's
- 15 go back --
- MS. HANSFORD: The pattern of --
- 17 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- to Justice
- 18 Thomas's question, which is I see Section
- 19 3553(a)(2) normally directs district courts to
- 20 consider all the relevant facts in evidence.
- 21 That includes the four purposes, okay?
- 22 Why would Congress have written this
- 23 provision, taking out two factors, only two
- factors, one of which is not pertinent at all,
- so they were being purposeful in what they were

- doing, and there was one factor that they put --
- 2 took out and then put back in. Why would they
- 3 have bothered to put it back in if you're right
- 4 that it was always there? Because, under your
- 5 theory, it was -- whether they took it out the
- 6 first time or not is irrelevant. It could
- 7 always be considered.
- 8 It doesn't make much sense to me that
- 9 Congress was that precise in taking some things
- 10 out and then very precise in putting it back in
- if you think it was always in to start with.
- MS. HANSFORD: So I would say about
- that is I think Congress cared about the floor
- 14 it was setting. Setting the floor a little bit
- 15 higher by adding in a factor means that a court
- 16 must consider --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But why?
- MS. HANSFORD: -- a certain factor --
- 19 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But why?
- 20 MS. HANSFORD: -- in each case. And I
- 21 think --
- 22 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Every time it --
- 23 it has done it in every other situation, it just
- 24 said consider them all.
- 25 MS. HANSFORD: Sure. And I think the

- 1 reason that Congress wanted to give a court
- 2 discretion not to consider the factors in this
- 3 case, to the extent that they add something
- 4 beyond the overlapping factors, is because
- 5 Congress's view of the term of supervised
- 6 release itself, I think, Congress probably
- 7 thought the primary purpose of that term is a
- 8 period of transition as opposed -- and that the
- 9 term of imprisonment often will fully serve the
- 10 retributive ends.
- 11 And so, when Congress was thinking
- 12 about the whole range of actions, including
- 13 terminating the term of supervision early or
- 14 extending the term of supervision or modifying
- the conditions, Congress wanted to give courts
- the flexibility to just think about these kind
- of rehabilitative considerations of how well the
- 18 defendant was doing on --
- 19 JUSTICE JACKSON: But, if they
- 20 overlap, Ms. Hansford, what -- what -- what kind
- of a gift is that? I mean, part of our
- 22 discussion was how much these factors overlap.
- 23 So it seems like a weird thing to say that
- 24 Congress went through all the trouble of
- 25 omitting this factor for the purpose of allowing

- 1 district courts not to consider this thing that
- 2 you say is so intertwined with everything else
- 3 that it's hard to separate out.
- 4 MS. HANSFORD: Yes, and let me
- 5 explain. I think that the -- really, the place
- 6 where that delta is, is the just punishment
- 7 factor that Justice Kavanaugh was referring to,
- 8 because, of course, the provision has three
- 9 factors. And I don't think that a court can
- 10 really ever not think about the seriousness of
- 11 the offense, can ever really not think about
- 12 promoting respect for the law in the context of
- assessing deterrence, and certainly not in
- 14 revocation.
- JUSTICE JACKSON: No, you're arguing
- 16 the intertwinement. What I'm saying is the
- intertwinement undermines your argument that
- 18 Congress omitted this to relieve district courts
- 19 of having to consider those things.
- If they're so intertwined, then why
- 21 would Congress have taken this out?
- MS. HANSFORD: So two points to that.
- 23 First, I want -- or one thing I want
- to do is give you an example of how this might
- 25 work, but I also want to note that even -- that

- 1 the rule that Petitioners are asking for, which
- is a rule that you may not consider the factors,
- 3 is a really troubling one.
- 4 I think that Congress could have
- 5 written a statute --
- 6 JUSTICE JACKSON: Right. What I'm
- 7 trying to understand is the rule that you're
- 8 asking for, which is Congress had a list of four
- 9 purposes. That's the given, the -- the
- 10 beginning point.
- 11 And in this particular section, it
- omitted one, and you say it omitted one to give
- 13 courts the permission not to consider it, but it
- 14 can still allow courts to consider it.
- Ordinarily, when Congress omits
- something, you would think they were taking it
- off the table. So what we have to do is
- 18 understand the circumstances under which
- 19 Congress would indicate you have permission to
- 20 consider something by removing it from the list.
- MS. HANSFORD: So the first thing I
- 22 would say is that this statute is not what gives
- 23 courts permission to consider various factors.
- 24 That is the background rule reflected in 3661
- and decisions like Kimbrough and Concepcion.

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So I think it would be a little bit of
1
      a different situation if this was what was
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 3
      giving courts authority in that particular
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      thing.
                JUSTICE JACKSON: Precisely. But that
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 6
     undermines your -- your argument. It doesn't
7
     help you.
                If the background rule is that you can
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 9
      consider everything and Congress really intended
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      for you to be able to consider this, why would
      they have omitted it from this statute?
11
12
                MS. HANSFORD:
                               Sure. So let me -- I
13
      want -- I want to get back to the language that
     Congress would have used if it wanted to do what
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15
      I think you're suggesting, Justice Jackson.
16
                But just to give an example of how
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      this discretion might matter, consider an
18
      offender who committed -- who committed an
19
      offense and went to prison for, say, a drug
     distribution conspiracy. Got out, is on
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21
      supervision, is doing well on supervision, is
2.2
      complying with the conditions, and is up under
23
      3583(e)(1) asking for early termination.
                I think that the discretion the court
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has given -- that Congress -- I apologize -- has

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1 given the court is to say: We're looking at how
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- 2 you're doing on supervision. You -- I don't --
- 3 I don't -- you're doing well. We don't think we
- 4 need to deter you. You've rehabilitated,
- 5 allowing us to terminate for --
- 6 JUSTICE JACKSON: But we're in
- 7 revocation. We're in revocation, Ms. Hansford.
- 8 We're talking about the revocation scenario.
- 9 MS. HANSFORD: Yes. So the -- so I'm
- 10 giving you an example of where this might make a
- 11 difference. Or at a --
- JUSTICE BARRETT: Ms. --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Can I -- can I ask
- another question, Ms. Hansford, and I think it
- was something that was in part in Justice
- 16 Jackson's questions.
- But, I mean, you're saying that this
- is impossible, it's unworkable, and that seems
- in tension with your own argument.
- In other words, if it's so impossible
- 21 and unworkable to distinguish between the
- 22 mandatory and the prohibited in the way that
- 23 Petitioner wants courts to, it seems as though
- it would be just as impossible and unworkable to
- 25 distinguish between the mandatory and permissive

- 1 in the way you want courts to do.
- 2 So, either way, courts have to make a
- 3 distinction. And for -- you know, it -- it --
- 4 it might be difficult in some circumstances, but
- 5 if it's so impossible, it's so impossible for
- 6 your purposes too.
- 7 MS. HANSFORD: So I -- I don't think
- 8 that's correct, Justice Kagan, because I think
- 9 there's a big difference between the affirmative
- 10 and the negative. The negative rule that
- 11 Petitioners are asking is: You may not consider
- 12 seriousness of the offense. You may not
- 13 consider promoting respect for the law.
- 14 And that is the problem. In my
- 15 example, when the judge is --
- 16 JUSTICE KAGAN: No, but in -- but
- 17 you're saying you have to think about what you
- 18 have to consider and just what -- what you may
- 19 consider. So that suggests that a court is
- 20 capable of distinguishing between the two.
- 21 And once you've decided that the court
- 22 is capable of distinguishing the two, then the
- 23 court is equally capable of distinguishing
- between the mandatory and the prohibited.
- 25 MS. HANSFORD: I don't think the court

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1 would ever be capable of distinguishing between
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- 2 seriousness of the offense in the (a)(2)(A)
- 3 sense and in the (a)(1) sense. And I don't
- 4 think a court is ever capable of
- 5 distinguishing -- of truly disentangling
- 6 promoting respect for the law from deterrence
- 7 and incapacitation.
- I think the one place where that
- 9 discretion that Congress gave here relative to
- 10 the probation statute makes a difference is in
- 11 considering whether something is a just
- 12 punishment. I think that's the one place where
- 13 they might come apart.
- 14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Can I --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: I mean, either way,
- 16 the -- the -- it works the same for the two
- arguments, this question of the difficulty of
- 18 disentangling these things, because you're
- 19 requiring a court also to disentangle these
- things.
- 21 But let me ask you another question,
- 22 which is: When you say something is mandatory,
- what exactly do you mean by that?
- In other words, there are all these
- 25 factors, and Congress says you shall consider

- 1 these factors. Now does that mean that the
- 2 factors have to be reflected in the sentence or,
- instead, can the court say: Well, I'm going to
- 4 reflect -- or the revocation, whatever it is, or
- 5 can the court say: Well, this factor seems
- 6 peculiarly relevant here, and I'm going to, you
- 7 know, do something that reflects that factor,
- 8 but this other factor seems completely
- 9 irrelevant, so I'm going to toss that away?
- 10 So what does "mandatory" mean in this
- 11 context?
- 12 MS. HANSFORD: I think "mandatory"
- 13 means that the court must think about it, but it
- does not need to give it a large amount of
- weight.
- 16 JUSTICE KAGAN: I mean, it can
- 17 decide -- it can give it zero weight, right? I
- 18 mean, it has to think about it, but it can say:
- 19 For my purposes, this is irrelevant.
- 20 MS. HANSFORD: Yes, I think -- I think
- 21 that's --
- 22 JUSTICE KAGAN: Yeah. So that's got
- to be the case, right? And once you're in that
- 24 world, the difference between mandatory and
- 25 permissive is vanishingly slim because, in both

- 1 cases, a court is doing the same thing, which is
- 2 saying, like: I'm going to pick up the factor
- 3 and look at it and decide whether it's
- 4 completely irrelevant or whether it's relevant
- 5 and how to take it into account. And once
- 6 that's becomes vanishingly slim, your argument
- 7 begins to seem sort of peculiar.
- 8 MS. HANSFORD: I -- I think the
- 9 difference is fairly thin, especially because
- 10 all the factors are going to be --
- 11 JUSTICE KAGAN: I think I said
- 12 "vanishingly slim."
- 13 (Laughter.)
- MS. HANSFORD: But I -- but -- but I
- don't think it's nonexistent. And so, in the
- 16 early termination of release example I was
- 17 giving, the court might say: I am not going to
- 18 think about how serious your initial -- so I --
- 19 here -- here is the difference.
- In one set of circumstances, the judge
- 21 says: I am going -- I'm going to choose to
- think about whether this is a just punishment.
- 23 And so you're asking for early termination, but
- 24 because your offense was a serious offense and I
- 25 think that the term of imprisonment you served

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1 was kind of on the low end, I'm not going to
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- 2 terminate your sentence early.
- 3 Or the court might say the opposite.
- 4 They might say: You know, I'm a little bit on
- 5 the fence on deterrence and rehabilitation, but
- 6 I think the term of imprisonment you already
- 7 served is on the high end, so I actually am
- 8 going to terminate the sentence early.
- 9 And so that's the just punishment
- 10 piece of it that I think Congress left to be
- 11 discretionary in the supervised release context
- 12 but is required to be considered in the
- 13 probation context. And I think the reason for
- 14 that is that --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Thank you.
- 16 JUSTICE BARRETT: Ms. -- Ms. Hansford,
- 17 let me ask you a question that you probably
- 18 won't like, but it's just a hypothetical.
- 19 If, hypothetically, the government
- 20 loses, are there pitfalls that you would want us
- 21 to take into account in writing an opinion in
- 22 favor of the Petitioner?
- MS. HANSFORD: Yes, absolutely. So I
- 24 think -- I really think that the textual
- 25 argument Petitioner is making is extremely

- 1 troubling and is really unclear what district
- 2 courts should be doing under that rule.
- I really think that the way to capture
- 4 this intuition, to the extent that you have
- 5 Petitioner's intuition that retribution
- 6 shouldn't be doing any additional work, is not
- 7 to take Petitioner's argument that you may not
- 8 consider seriousness of the offense, you may not
- 9 consider respect for the law, you may not
- 10 consider just punishment, but it would be to
- 11 have a provision that is written in the way
- 12 3583(d) is written, that -- to the extent that
- 13 the revocation involves no greater
- 14 deprivation -- so a court may revoke to the
- 15 extent that the revocation involves no greater
- deprivation of liberty than is reasonably
- 17 necessary for the purposes set forth in Sections
- 18 3553(a)(2)(B), (a)(2)(C), and (a)(2)(D). And I
- 19 think that that formulation addresses some of
- 20 the workability concerns because it is not
- 21 saying you just can't consider the other
- 22 factors. It just says you can't do that extra
- 23 work.
- 24 But I think the existence of that
- 25 provision, the very neighboring provision that

- 1 courts set out for conditions -- for conditions
- of release shows that that is not what Congress
- 3 was doing in the language here. Congress had --
- 4 JUSTICE BARRETT: Okay. But I just
- 5 wanted to know, like -- how we should write it
- 6 in a way, if you lose, that would satisfy the
- 7 government that we weren't resolving open
- 8 questions.
- 9 MS. HANSFORD: Yeah. I think the
- 10 least bad approach would be -- would be to adopt
- that formulation in 3583(d). I don't think you
- 12 can get there textually, but I do think that
- 13 that's how you would avoid the -- the -- the
- 14 workability issues.
- 15 I still think that this would not be a
- 16 helpful rule for courts. I think it would still
- 17 devolve to labels and not substance.
- 18 JUSTICE BARRETT: I know. You didn't
- 19 give your argument away.
- 20 MS. HANSFORD: But I -- I also want to
- 21 note that the consideration of just punishment
- is not a factor that necessarily harms the
- 23 defendant. It could also benefit the defendant.
- So, for example, at a revocation
- 25 hearing, consider an offender who has a not very

- 1 serious initial offense but a very, very serious
- 2 violation. The court might look at that
- 3 violation and say: Boy, deterrence concerns are
- 4 off the charts. Rehabilitation, you really need
- 5 a lot of rehabilitation. Incapacitation, really
- 6 important.
- 7 And so I would impose -- I would
- 8 impose a very lengthy term of re-imprisonment,
- 9 but your initial offense is not that bad. And,
- of course, any sanction I impose at a revocation
- is supposed to be justified by reference to your
- 12 initial offense.
- 13 And because your initial offense is
- 14 not that serious, I just don't think that's a
- just punishment. I don't think that's the right
- 16 result.
- 17 And I think Petitioner's argument
- 18 would take that off the table. I think that's a
- 19 reason that Congress did not write the statute
- 20 in that 3583(d) --
- JUSTICE BARRETT: Thank you.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Ms. --
- 23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Your friend --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: I'm sorry, Chief.
- 25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Your friend

- 1 said, I think near the end of his argument, he
- 2 said we can all agree that Congress was doing
- 3 something. Are you part of that "all?"
- 4 (Laughter.)
- 5 MS. HANSFORD: Absolutely, Mr. Chief
- 6 Justice. I think Congress was doing something.
- 7 It was giving the court that additional
- 8 discretion to reflect its view that the term of
- 9 supervision sometimes is really purely
- 10 rehabilitative and sometimes you are just
- looking at does this offender need a GED or does
- he need some sort of housing support, and you're
- not necessarily thinking punitive thoughts when
- 14 you're taking the range of actions.
- But I think, when you get to
- 16 revocation, it becomes a lot harder to think of
- 17 Congress's purpose as primarily rehabilitative
- 18 because one thing that is crystal-clear from the
- 19 statute is that Congress did not think
- imprisonment should be used to rehabilitate.
- 21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well --
- MS. HANSFORD: That, of course, is
- 3582, as this Court recognized in Tapia.
- And so the idea that Congress was
- 25 really trying to further the rehabilitative

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1 purposes of the term of supervised release with
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- 2 re-imprisonment feels really strange.
- 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, I mean,
- 4 the different provisions -- I mean, obviously,
- 5 it's apparent there's a lot of synonyms that
- 6 overlap, but (a) does kind of look backward,
- 7 right? I mean, the -- the offense, the
- 8 punishment. And (b), (c), and (d) are looking
- 9 forward. What's deterrence, protecting the
- 10 public, and all that. And it seems to me that
- in leaving (a) out, Congress meant to focus on
- 12 going forward when you're talking about
- 13 revoking.
- MS. HANSFORD: So, Mr. Chief Justice,
- even if that is what Congress was thinking, I
- think Congress had the ability to act with a
- 17 lighter hand by requiring the things it thought
- were most important or with a heavier hand by
- 19 forbidding all others. And I think the text
- 20 here plainly does the first, particularly when
- 21 you contrast it to the various provisions
- throughout to do what the heavier-handed
- approach would do.
- 24 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, I -- I
- 25 think plain -- "plainly" is -- is a real reach

- 1 in this situation. It is a significant step, I
- 2 think, to just leave (a) off the table.
- 3 MS. HANSFORD: I -- I agree that
- 4 it's a significant step and that it gives courts
- 5 discretion, but I do think that discretion has a
- 6 lot more weight in contexts outside of
- 7 revocation because of the nature of revocation.
- 8 It is very strange -- even if you put limits
- 9 into your opinion against us, it is still very
- strange to tell a court that is sending someone
- 11 to prison that they cannot consider whether that
- 12 term of imprisonment is just.
- 13 And I think, to go back to the
- 14 workability concerns I was discussing with
- Justice Sotomayor, you -- it's really the height
- of absurdity what you see in the courts that are
- 17 trying to apply the rule on the other side. You
- see courts parsing things like, is a reference
- 19 to rule of law suggesting respect for the law?
- Is a reference to whether this result is just
- 21 suggesting just desserts or that this punishment
- is deserved?
- 23 And I think that that's a really
- 24 strange thing to be parsing. Defendants are
- 25 making arguments -- there's a First Circuit case

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1 we cite on page 37 of our brief where the court
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- 2 did what courts primarily do at a revocation
- 3 hearing, which is complained about the number of
- 4 violations and the disrespect for the court that
- 5 those violations reflect, and the defendant
- 6 argued that considering the pattern of
- 7 violations, then flouting court-ordered
- 8 supervision can't be considered because it's a
- 9 form of promoting respect for the law.
- 10 So I think you're either in an absurd
- 11 situation where -- in a topsy-turvy world where
- 12 you're looking at all -- where you're not
- 13 considering kind of the core of the reasons for
- 14 the revocation, or you are just looking for
- 15 magic words. And a court that is actually
- thinking all these things and what the just
- 17 result is in this case is forced to use
- 18 particular words or issue certain disclaimers,
- 19 as Justice Alito indicated --
- 20 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Can I --
- MS. HANSFORD: -- to --
- 22 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: -- can I ask a
- question to go back to Justice Thomas's question
- 24 about workability? Because it's important for
- 25 me what role workability plays here.

| 1 | Is it my understanding, I think, is |
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| 2 | that workability comes into play when we think |
| 3 | about what significance to give the negative |
| 4 | implication canon in this particular case. But |
| 5 | you tell me how you think workability comes in, |
| 6 | or at least that's one key part of it because, |
| 7 | negative implication canon, we often look to |
| 8 | context to determine whether to draw it. The |
| 9 | context here would include, I think, how |
| 10 | workable this is. And, obviously, it's not |
| 11 | completely unworkable, the other side's |
| 12 | position, but your point is its it borders |
| 13 | you used the word "absurd," not workable, magic |
| 14 | words. |
| 15 | Does that come in on negative |
| 16 | implication? |
| 17 | MS. HANSFORD: I I think that's |
| 18 | fair, Justice Kavanaugh, that you can think of |
| 19 | it as part of the context. And I think you can |
| 20 | also think of it as kind of a gut check as was |
| 21 | this really what Congress was intending to do, |
| 22 | or is the fact that it didn't use the much more |
| 23 | direct formulations it used elsewhere really an |
| 24 | indication that it was trying to accomplish |
| 25 | something quite different and just give the |

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1 courts a little bit of discretion, but not tie
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- 2 courts' hands on anything because that, of
- 3 course, is a really big step to tell a court
- 4 that it can't think certain thoughts at
- 5 sentencing.
- 6 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Well, yeah.
- 7 They're probably going to think the thoughts
- 8 anyway.
- 9 (Laughter.)
- MS. HANSFORD: Yes, exactly.
- 11 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: The -- on the
- three things listed in (a)(2)(A), seriousness of
- 13 the offense, respect for the law, and just
- 14 punishment, on the first two, seriousness of the
- offense and respect for the law -- I think I'm
- 16 asked your -- your friend on the other side --
- those are going to be almost completely
- overlapping, I think, with other things listed.
- 19 So -- but then the third one, just
- 20 punishment, maybe not so much. And so how do I
- 21 analyze the case if I think -- I look at
- 22 (a)(2)(A) and think two are completely or
- largely overlapping, and the other one, you
- 24 could draw some kind of line?
- MS. HANSFORD: I think, if you think

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1 that, Justice Kavanaugh, we absolutely win
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- 2 because Petitioner's rule, the negative
- 3 implication Petitioners are considering is you
- 4 may not consider the factors in 3553(a)(2)(A),
- 5 so you may not consider any one of them. And if
- 6 any one of them is impossible, I don't think
- 7 that argument can hold up.
- 8 JUSTICE KAGAN: I -- I don't think
- 9 that that's quite right, Ms. Hansford. I mean,
- 10 think of this as like a Venn diagram. You know,
- 11 you have two circles and they intersect and
- there's some overlap, but as long as you're
- within your circle, you're fine, whether it's
- the non-shaded area or the shaded area.
- But, when you're outside your circle,
- as you would be if you were starting to think
- about just punishment, then you're not fine.
- 18 MS. HANSFORD: I -- I appreciate that
- 19 intuition, Justice Kagan, but I think that if a
- sentence says you may not consider A, B, or C,
- 21 that means that you cannot consider any one of
- 22 them. And I think that the way --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: To the extent --
- MS. HANSFORD: -- to capture --
- 25 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- that they

- 1 overlap --
- 2 MS. HANSFORD: Yeah.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: -- to the extent that
- 4 it's like one and the same thing, you can
- 5 consider it because you can consider all the
- 6 other factors and you're just doing the same
- 7 thing. To the extent it's not the same thing,
- 8 then you can't consider it.
- 9 So, in the area of overlap, you're
- 10 golden. It's in the area of non-overlap that
- 11 you're not.
- MS. HANSFORD: Justice Kagan, I think
- 13 the exact way to capture that intuition if
- 14 that's what Congress was trying to do is, of
- 15 course, a 3583(d) formulation that to the extent
- that the factors reflect more of a deprivation
- 17 of liberty than is reasonably necessary for the
- 18 enumerated purposes, that "to the extent
- 19 language" is critical, and that's what's missing
- 20 here and what is in the nearby provision. And
- 21 that's how I think Congress would do it if it
- 22 was trying to do what you're suggesting.
- 23 And it was trying to do what you're
- 24 suggesting but only for the conditions of
- 25 release. It wanted those not to be increased

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1 based on retributive thoughts.
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- JUSTICE KAGAN: Thank you.
- 3 MS. HANSFORD: But it was not doing
- 4 that for the term of imprisonment itself.
- JUSTICE JACKSON: Ms. Hansford, can I
- 6 just ask you when -- when 3582 -- or sorry,
- 7 3553(a)(2)(A) says to reflect the seriousness of
- 8 the offense, and we've had some question about
- 9 how you can revoke without doing that, what
- offense do you take that to be referring to in
- 11 the revocation scenario? Is it the original
- offense, or is it the offense that the person is
- 13 being brought to the court?
- MS. HANSFORD: It's the original
- 15 offense of conviction. I think the statute is
- 16 consistent in referring to "offense" to mean the
- 17 original offense of conviction.
- JUSTICE JACKSON: So why -- why
- 19 couldn't you base a revocation decision on what
- 20 happened that is leading to revocation and not
- 21 the seriousness of the initial offense? You
- 22 sort of seem to suggest --
- MS. HANSFORD: Yeah.
- 24 JUSTICE JACKSON: -- that there's no
- 25 way you could revoke and send somebody back to

```
1 prison without considering what you're now
```

- 2 saying is the original offense.
- 3 And I don't --
- 4 MS. HANSFORD: Yeah.
- 5 JUSTICE JACKSON: -- understand that.
- 6 MS. HANSFORD: So -- so two points.
- 7 First, I think, on Petitioner's view that this
- 8 is an exclusive universe, the seriousness of the
- 9 violation also couldn't be considered because
- 10 it's now --
- JUSTICE JACKSON: No, I understand.
- 12 I'm talking about your view.
- MS. HANSFORD: Yes. But --
- JUSTICE JACKSON: You're -- you're
- 15 saying that there's no way to take out the
- serious of the offense, and you're now saying
- the seriousness of the offense is the initial
- 18 offense.
- 19 MS. HANSFORD: Yes. And --
- 20 JUSTICE JACKSON: But -- but you
- 21 concede that supervised release is a totally
- 22 different thing than the initial offense.
- MS. HANSFORD: Yeah.
- JUSTICE JACKSON: So why couldn't you
- 25 revoke --

```
1
               MS. HANSFORD: So --
 2
               JUSTICE JACKSON: -- without looking
      at the initial offense?
 3
               MS. HANSFORD: -- two reasons you
 4
     can't revoke without looking at the seriousness
 5
      of the initial offense. 3553(a)(1) also refers
 6
7
      to nature and circumstances of the offense,
     which is that same original offense of
8
 9
     conviction. So the overlap is exactly the same.
      It's the offense in (a)(1) and in (a)(2)(A).
10
11
               And the second --
12
               JUSTICE JACKSON: All right. So -- so
     nature and circumstances is the facts related to
13
14
     the original offense. Seriousness of the
15
     offense is an -- a -- relative
16
     consideration. How serious is this relative to
17
     other kinds of offenses and other people and
18
      whatever?
19
                So, I mean, those are two different
20
      factors in this very statute. They're listed
```

MS. HANSFORD: Sure. So I think the

other reason that a court -- that Congress

differently.

21

2.2

- 24 couldn't have meant for that to be excluded is
- 25 that (e)(3) actually ties the maximum term of

```
1 re-imprisonment to the severity of the initial
```

- offense, which is another way it shows that a
- 3 court must be allowed to consider it.
- But, in practice, just to flesh this
- 5 out, why would a court think about the
- 6 seriousness of the offense even beyond the
- 7 requirement to do so, if a -- an -- it -- it
- 8 might cast light on the nature of the violation.
- 9 So consider an offender whose
- 10 violation is carrying a weapon. If that
- 11 offender's initial offense was a murder or
- 12 assault on a domestic partner with a weapon, I
- think that a court would perceive that violation
- very differently than if the underlying offense
- 15 was fraud.
- So the severity of the underlying
- 17 offense can provide critical context in
- 18 assessing the violation and in informing a
- 19 court's decision about what to do about the
- 20 violation.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Ms. Hansford --
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Can I --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- I -- I see
- 24 almost complete overlap with all three. I mean,
- 25 seriousness of offense, as you say, appears

```
1 through the first -- first one, nature and
```

- 2 circumstances of the offense and the history of
- 3 the offender basically.
- 4 The second one, respect for the law,
- 5 deterrence.
- Just punishment seems to me to capture
- 7 all those things, right? Look at the -- look at
- 8 the defendant -- look at his offense, look at
- 9 the need for deterrence and incapacitation to
- 10 protect the -- it's all the same thing. It's
- 11 all the same thing.
- 12 So -- but some courts are doing it.
- 13 They follow this rule. And you -- you say that
- 14 that's proved unworkable. And I -- I -- I --
- 15 I -- I wanted you to spin out how exactly it's
- 16 proven unworkable, because judges are very good
- with words, and when you tell them they can't
- 18 use certain words, that there are certain magic
- words, they will avoid those words. They will
- 20 use synonyms for those words.
- 21 So why -- why should we worry? All
- 22 we're doing is -- is requiring judges to pull
- 23 out a thesaurus.
- MS. HANSFORD: If I may respond?
- 25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Sure.

- 1 MS. HANSFORD: I think that you're
- 2 getting no value by asking justices -- judges to
- 3 pull out a thesaurus.
- 4 JUSTICE GORSUCH: I understand. I
- 5 understand. I understand that it's a
- 6 hoop-jumping exercise.
- 7 MS. HANSFORD: Sure.
- 8 JUSTICE GORSUCH: But some circuits
- 9 have done it. Tell me how it's proven
- 10 unworkable on the ground.
- 11 MS. HANSFORD: So I think that it
- hasn't had a huge practical effect on the ground
- so far. And we did oppose review in this case.
- 14 But I think that part of the reason it hasn't
- had a huge practical effect is that courts have
- 16 generally just found a way to affirm. And,
- frankly, a lot of these have been coming up in
- 18 plain-error posture because most offenders don't
- 19 think to make this objection at all.
- 20 And I -- and other courts have imposed
- 21 other atextual limits that Petitioner disclaims,
- 22 like that it has to be the primary
- 23 consideration, and so just referring to it is
- 24 not enough, but you have to refer to it, I don't
- 25 know, five times. And so I think there have

- 1 been limits.
- I think, as soon as this Court
- 3 announces a different rule, every offender will
- 4 be raising this. And, of course, there are a
- 5 huge number of these revocation proceedings, and
- 6 this will be coming up. There will be a huge
- 7 hoop-jumping exercise that I don't think will
- 8 benefit offenders or affect the substance, but
- 9 there will be a lot of court of appeals work to
- 10 parse the particular words that a district court
- 11 used at a revocation hearing.
- 12 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
- 13 counsel.
- 14 Justice Thomas?
- Justice Alito, anything further?
- 16 Justice Sotomayor?
- 17 Justice Kagan?
- 18 Justice Gorsuch?
- 19 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Just to pick up on
- 20 Justice Barrett's question and what Justice
- 21 Gorsuch was just saying, you know, if you lose,
- 22 I think telling district courts: Just avoid the
- word "punish" or "punishment" and you're good to
- 24 go, and if it's not objected to, it's not plain
- 25 error if you have used it, is probably what

```
1 you're looking for.
```

- 2 But tell me -- tell me if -- tell me
- 3 what else.
- 4 MS. HANSFORD: I mean, I -- I think,
- 5 if the -- you know, if -- if we're losing, we
- 6 would ask this Court to give as specific of
- 7 instructions as possible for what words courts
- 8 should avoid.
- 9 I think the nature of a revocation
- 10 hearing is often it's the court kind of
- instructing the offender on how to do better and
- it's a really particularly strange type of
- 13 hearing to -- for a judge to have to prescript,
- 14 as Justice Alito was indicating.
- 15 And so I do think that whatever the
- 16 magic words are, yes, courts will learn to avoid
- 17 them. But I really think that will skew the
- 18 process, particularly if it suggests that on the
- 19 substance courts should not be considering what
- 20 is --
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Well, I think the
- only magic word is "punish," right? The only
- reverse magic word, as you put it in your brief.
- MS. HANSFORD: The --
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: "Punish" or

```
1 "punishment."
```

- MS. HANSFORD: And -- and I guess one
- 3 other thing I would note about "punish" or
- 4 "punishment" is there is some sense that
- 5 retribution is a hallmark of punishment, but, of
- 6 course, deterrence is another hallmark of
- 7 punishment and -- and -- and another core
- 8 feature of punishment.
- 9 So it's a -- it's a little bit weird
- 10 to have that be the wrong word --
- 11 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Okay.
- 12 MS. HANSFORD: -- because, when
- something is used for deterrence as opposed to
- compensatory purposes, we often think it's
- 15 punitive, like punitive damages.
- So I'm -- I'm not really sure why
- 17 "punish" --
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: I think you're
- 19 arguing again for why you should win, but
- that's -- that's good enough. Thanks.
- MS. HANSFORD: Thank you.
- 22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 23 Barrett?
- 24 Justice Jackson?
- Thank you, counsel.

| 1 | Rebuttal? |
|----|---|
| 2 | REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF CHRISTIAN J. GROSTIC |
| 3 | ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER |
| 4 | MR. GROSTIC: Thank you, Mr. Chief |
| 5 | Justice. |
| 6 | And I I I want to respond to |
| 7 | the the repeated questions about the |
| 8 | hoop-jumping exercise idea and the and the |
| 9 | magic words idea, is there anything really |
| 10 | happening here. |
| 11 | And I I'd start with what this |
| 12 | Court has said in numerous cases in |
| 13 | Granderson, in Roy Lee Johnson, in |
| 14 | Gozlon-Peretz that supervised release was |
| 15 | created for different purposes, both different |
| 16 | purposes than parole that came before and |
| 17 | different purposes than a prison sentence that |
| 18 | it precedes. |
| 19 | And sub subsection (c), 3583(c), is |
| 20 | the codification. It's Congress stating those |
| 21 | purposes. It's where I I believe all of the |
| 22 | court's statements regarding that come from. |
| 23 | And it's that the court shall consider (a)(1), |
| 24 | (a)(2)(B), $(a)(2)(C)$, and and down the line. |
| 25 | In in Tapia, this Court observed |

```
1 that that meant that retribution was off the
```

- 2 table. The Senate report confirms what we see
- 3 in the text, again, that supervised release "may
- 4 not be imposed for purposes of punishment."
- 5 And then, as we follow down through
- 6 3583, everything that Congress wrote follows
- 7 that same beginning. In (d), courts can impose
- 8 conditions but not for (a)(2)(A) purposes.
- 9 My -- my -- my friend on the other
- side does note (a)(2) -- (d)'s statement to the
- 11 extent that that actually introduces a list of
- three different things that the court has to
- 13 satisfy. So I -- I'm not sure that the court
- 14 can really read to the extent that is as
- directly related only to the greater deprivation
- of liberty for those purposes.
- But the important point here is that
- 18 the conditions are unrelated to (a)(2)(A).
- 19 They're only for the other purposes.
- 20 And then, when we get to (e) and the
- 21 options of terminating, modifying, or revoking,
- 22 if an offender while on supervision now has --
- their conduct has indicated some need for a
- 24 change from what the court originally thought
- was appropriate, Congress gave courts tools to

| 1 | do that but, again, for those same purposes and |
|----|--|
| 2 | not the retributive purpose. |
| 3 | That's the core of what Congress was |
| 4 | excluding in the statute. It's what it |
| 5 | Congress said it was doing in the Senate report. |
| 6 | It's what this Court observed in Concepcion and |
| 7 | Tapia. And we'd ask the Court to reverse the |
| 8 | judgments below on that basis. |
| 9 | CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, |
| LO | counsel. |
| L1 | The case is submitted. |
| L2 | (Whereupon, at 11:32 a.m., the case |
| L3 | was submitted.) |
| L4 | |
| L5 | |
| L6 | |
| L7 | |
| L8 | |
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