SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE	UNITED STATES
	_
SIMON A. SOTO, INDIVIDUALLY AND ON)
BEHALF OF ALL OTHERS SIMILARLY)
SITUATED,)
Petitioner,)
v.) No. 24-320
UNITED STATES,)
Respondent.)

Pages: 1 through 72

Place: Washington, D.C.

Date: April 28, 2025

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4	BEHALF OF ALL OTHERS SIMILARLY)
5	SITUATED,)
6	Petitioner,)
7	v.) No. 24-320
8	UNITED STATES,)
9	Respondent.)
10		-
11		
12	Washington, D.C.	
13	Monday, April 28, 2025	
14		
15	The above-entitled matter ca	ame on for
16	oral argument before the Supreme Co	ourt of the
17	United States at 11:32 a.m.	
18		
19	APPEARANCES:	
20	TACY F. FLINT, ESQUIRE, Chicago, I	llinois; on behalf
21	of the Petitioner.	
22	CAROLINE A. FLYNN, Assistant to the	e Solicitor General,
23	Department of Justice, Washing	ton, D.C.; on behalf
24	of the Respondent.	
25		

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1	PROCEEDINGS
2	(11:32 a.m.)
3	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear
4	argument next in Case 24-320, Soto versus
5	United States.
6	Ms. Flint.
7	ORAL ARGUMENT OF TACY F. FLINT
8	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER
9	MS. FLINT: Mr. Chief Justice, and may
10	it please the Court:
11	This case starts and ends with the
12	text of the Combat-Related Special Compensation
13	statute. Because that statute grants the
14	secretary concerned authority to settle claims
15	for CRSC, the Barring Act does not apply.
16	A statute grants settlement authority
17	if it authorizes a specific government official
18	to do two things: determine whether a claim is
19	valid and determine the amount due.
20	Settlement authority does not exist if
21	a statute merely creates a substantive right to
22	payment. The grant of authority to a specific
23	official to administratively determine the
24	validity of the claim and the amount due is the
25	toughstone

1	The CRSC statute does that. Start
2	with subsection (d). It provides for the
3	secretary of a military department to consider
4	whether a veteran is eligible for CRSC using
5	CRSC-specific procedures and criteria. Because
6	subsection (d) authorizes the secretary to
7	consider whether a veteran is eligible for CRSC,
8	it authorizes a specific government official to
9	determine whether the claim is valid.
10	Then subsections (a) and (b) say the
11	secretary concerned shall determine the amount
12	of CRSC owed, meaning a specific official is
13	authorized to determine the amount due. The
14	CRSC statute in this way grants the secretary
15	concerned all authority needed to determine
16	validity and amount due, so the Barring Act does
17	not apply.
18	Other military compensation statutes
19	that the government has pointed to don't have
20	all of these provisions requiring a particular
21	government official to use particular procedures
22	to determine an individual's entitlement to a
23	particular benefit.
24	All of this is in the CRSC statute
25	because CRSC is different from a lot of other

- 1 forms of military compensation. Only veterans
- who prove that they have a combat-related
- disability are entitled to it. And Congress
- 4 provided that the secretary of the military
- 5 department where the veteran served is the
- 6 appropriate official to make that CRSC-specific
- 7 determination.
- 8 Other statutes establish substantive
- 9 entitlements to benefits. They don't designate
- 10 a particular government official to determine
- 11 validity of the claim and the amount due.
- I welcome the Court's questions.
- 13 JUSTICE THOMAS: And yet the
- 14 government argues that if we agree with you,
- 15 there would be a considerable number of other
- 16 statutes that would confer settlement --
- 17 settlement authority.
- 18 MS. FLINT: Right. Yes, Justice
- 19 Thomas. The government has pointed to a number
- of statutes that it says have some similarities
- 21 to Section 1413a.
- JUSTICE THOMAS: So how do you
- 23 disagree -- I mean, where do you think the
- 24 government is wrong? Because, in your argument,
- 25 you indicate that there -- there are no

1 other statutes at least in the defense area. 2 MS. FLINT: Right. So some of the statutes they point to, such as the basic pay 3 statute, that's the kind of statute I was 4 referring to that establishes who's entitled to 5 6 the compensation and how much is owed. 7 That -- those statutes don't say anything about a specific government official 8 9 determining validity and amount due. 10 Some of the other statutes they point 11 to authorize an official to determine one fact, 12 such as whether a service member is presumed dead for purposes of the survivor annuity 13 14 benefit plan. 15 That too, you know, authority to 16 determine a fact, a predicate fact, that may be 17 relevant to whether a claim is valid and the 18 amount due, but that is not complete authority 19 to determine validity and amount due on a claim. So looking through the statutes they 20 21 have cited, we've struggled to find, you know, 2.2 many of them that actually satisfy what we view 23 as the test for settlement authority: an official with authority to determine validity 24 25 and the amount due.

JUSTICE KAGAN: When -- when you say 1 2 you've struggled, I mean, do you see any of them? I think there are about 50 statutes in 3 the government's brief. I think there are. 4 One, two, three --5 6 MS. FLINT: Right. 7 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- five? Are there any that essentially would be taken down with a 8 decision in your favor? 9 10 MS. FLINT: So we identified one in 11 our brief, the death gratuity statute, section 12 1479. That authorizes a -- for purposes of 13 immediate payment of death gratuities, it 14 authorizes regional command to determine 15 which -- whether a beneficiary is entitled to 16 the death gratuity and certify the amount due. 17 That sounds like settlement authority to us. 18 There's one other one that authorizes 19 the military to pay additional subsistence 20 payment if the secretary concerned determines 21 the requirements for eligibility an amount due, 2.2 that may be another one. 23 I think -- I completely agree with 24 you, Justice Kagan. There were about 50 statutes. I've -- in my best review while we

- were working on the brief and this week
- 2 preparing for today, those are the two that I
- 3 found that seemed close.
- Why are we talking about these? Of
- 5 course, none of these statutes are part of this
- 6 case, because the government's theory is that
- 7 the Court should not read Section 1413a
- 8 literally because of the risk that these other
- 9 statutes will create a destabilization in their
- 10 terms of military pay.
- If one or two of these statutes
- 12 actually does confer settlement authority, that
- doesn't sound like destabilization to me. I
- 14 mean, if this is even an appropriate way to read
- 15 Section 1413a by reference to other statutes --
- 16 I don't think that it is. I don't think that's
- 17 the way we do statutory interpretation.
- But, if it's even appropriate, we
- 19 haven't gotten to the point of massive upheaval.
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Well, they --
- 21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, I think
- 22 it's appropriate in the sense that if a ruling
- that this is enough to get past the Barring Act
- 24 based on this statute, the idea is that would
- 25 sort of open the barn door, getting around a

- 1 statute that is critically important to the --
- 2 the -- protecting the public fisc.
- Now anytime you say your claim is
- 4 barred, obviously, you know, there's -- there's
- 5 maybe injustice or something else, but it is a
- 6 significant opening of the -- of the barn door.
- 7 I mean, is there -- is there any statute that
- 8 has an open-ended mandate to pay that doesn't
- 9 have -- that is similar to -- to this statute?
- 10 MS. FLINT: That displaces the Barring
- 11 Act?
- 12 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Yeah, yeah,
- 13 yeah.
- 14 MS. FLINT: There are at least two
- 15 statutes that have been cited in the briefs in
- 16 this case that don't limit the time to file
- 17 claims but that are recognized to displace the
- 18 Barring Act.
- 19 One is the Uniformed Services
- 20 Employment and Reemployment Rights Act discussed
- 21 by the Federal Circuit in Hernandez versus
- 22 Department of Air Force. The Federal Circuit in
- that case noted that that statute displaces the
- 24 Barring Act even though it does not use the term
- 25 "settle" and does not limit when claims can be

- 1 filed.
- Now that statute did say explicitly
- 3 that claims could be filed before or after its
- 4 effective date. But the point is Congress did
- 5 not -- Congress clearly did not limit the time
- 6 that claims could be filed.
- 7 Another statute that the government
- 8 has cited on page 25 of its brief is the postal
- 9 service statute. This authorizes the postal
- 10 service to settle claims against it. That
- 11 statute too imposes no limitation on the time
- 12 for claims to be pursued.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Is there anything else
- 14 at issue here other than the statute of
- 15 limitations? In other words, is there any
- difference between the Barring Act and 1413a
- 17 that would matter to anybody other than the
- 18 statute of limitations, or is -- really, that's
- what we're talking about?
- MS. FLINT: That is really what we're
- 21 talking about, the statute of limitations.
- 22 And there's plenty of reason why
- 23 Congress would have chosen not to limit the time
- for claims to be filed under the CRSC statute.
- One of them is, you know, a main -- a principal

- 1 reason for statutes of limitations is for claims
- 2 to be filed close in time to the facts that
- 3 support them to avoid stale claims.
- 4 That is not at issue with the CRSC
- 5 statute. By design, this statute authorizes
- 6 claims to be filed now no matter when the injury
- 7 occurred that supports the claim.
- 8 So it is clear that Vietnam veterans,
- 9 individuals who were injured in combat in
- 10 Vietnam, could file a claim today in 2025 and be
- 11 awarded CRSC notwithstanding the distance in
- 12 time. So that --
- 13 JUSTICE BARRETT: It would be like, I
- don't know how many hundreds of thousands of
- dollars that might be, that would be a lump sum
- 16 then that the Vietnam veteran would be entitled
- 17 to because of the retrospective?
- 18 MS. FLINT: The payment is cut off at
- 19 the enactment of the CRSC statute.
- JUSTICE BARRETT: Okay.
- 21 MS. FLINT: So a Vietnam veteran would
- 22 not be entitled to payment back before the
- 23 statute.
- JUSTICE BARRETT: So what is that?
- 25 2006, something like that? '08?

1 MS. FLINT: 2008 --2 JUSTICE BARRETT: 2008? MS. FLINT: -- is the version of the 3 statute under which Corporal Soto is entitled to 4 5 CRSC. 6 JUSTICE BARRETT: But, if you kept 7 going forward, I mean, so let's say 2008 forward, I mean, it could be a lump sum if it 8 9 were, you know, 40 years, if it was 2048. 10 MS. FLINT: Well, certainly, 11 Your Honor is right that, you know, as we go 12 forward, there will be more years back to 2008. It's unlikely, however, or impossible, frankly, 13 14 that we would have claims going all the way back 15 to 2008, you know, forever. These -- the --16 JUSTICE BARRETT: You mean because of 17 lifespan? 18 MS. FLINT: Yeah, because of lifespan, 19 that necessarily limits when people can seek CRSC. And beyond that, of course, this is now a 20 statute that's been around for a while. 21 2.2 When it was initially enacted in 2008, 23 you know, people didn't know about it, the 24 population that's seeking these benefits are by 25 definition individuals who have a combat-related

- disability, which, as the amici point out, makes
- 2 the application process much more burdensome
- 3 potentially.
- 4 This has now been around for a while.
- 5 You know, we don't have to -- we shouldn't
- 6 expect for the --
- 7 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Isn't there a lump
- 8 sum limit on payment?
- 9 MS. FLINT: There's not a lump sum
- 10 limit.
- 11 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Isn't it limited
- 12 to \$10,000?
- MS. FLINT: This lawsuit --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Am I thinking of a
- 15 different case?
- MS. FLINT: You're right, but this
- lawsuit, the reason the \$10,000 limit applies in
- 18 this lawsuit is that the suit was filed under
- 19 the Little Tucker Act --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Okay.
- 21 MS. FLINT: -- which limits claims to
- \$10,000. That's not because of the statute.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Okay. So
- 24 there's -- there's an upper limit there?
- MS. FLINT: For this lawsuit.

1	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Yeah.
2	MS. FLINT: There could be larger
3	claims under the CRSC statute.
4	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I see.
5	JUSTICE ALITO: I think you started to
6	say that there is something about this situation
7	that would might have made Congress think
8	that in this particular situation, unlike most
9	other situations, there's no need for a statute
10	of limitations, but I didn't quite understand
11	your answer to to that problem.
12	MS. FLINT: Sure.
13	JUSTICE ALITO: What is it?
14	MS. FLINT: Well, one of the main
15	purposes of a statute of limitations doesn't
16	apply here because we know that claims are going
17	to be filed related to injuries that occurred
18	potentially decades ago. The flame the form
19	that the Department of Defense uses actually
20	includes World War I as an incident of combat
21	that someone could have been injured in. So
22	we're talking about going back a long way. That
23	doesn't mean the benefits will go back that far.
24	JUSTICE BARRETT: Right.
25	JUSTICE ALITO: Well, no. My

1	MS. FLINT: The facts
2	JUSTICE ALITO: my question my
3	question is not what what can be inferred
4	from the statute. My question is what might
5	have motivated Congress to think you know,
6	generally, we want to have a statute of
7	limitations for submission of claims to the
8	government or for many other things, but in this
9	particular situation, we don't want that.
10	MS. FLINT: Right.
11	JUSTICE ALITO: And that's what I
12	don't understand your answer to.
13	MS. FLINT: Another reason, a reason
14	why they might not have wanted it here, is CRSC
15	and one other form of benefit called Concurrent
16	Retirement and Disability Pay, these are the two
17	benefits that are exceptions from what's called
18	the ban on concurrent receipt, which means most
19	veterans may not receive retired pay and
20	disability compensation at the same time. But
21	two groups of veterans have this exception:
22	CRSC recipients and CRDP recipients.
23	Now CRDP is paid immediately upon
24	eligibility. There's no application process.
25	Once you satisfy eligibility, you start getting

- 1 it. Not true for CRSC. Of course, you have to
- 2 apply. You have to prove that your disability
- 3 is combat-related.
- 4 Making the benefits go back to the
- 5 beginning of eligibility in this way makes it
- 6 parallel to CRDP. CRSC recipients and CRDP
- 7 recipients are on the same footing because they
- 8 both get benefits from the beginning of
- 9 eligibility.
- 10 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: What should we
- 11 make of the waiver provision?
- MS. FLINT: In the Barring Act?
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Mm-hmm. In other
- words, it's not strictly limited to six years.
- There's a provision that authorizes waivers to
- 16 go back further. And I'd just like you to
- 17 address that, what you think --
- 18 MS. FLINT: Right.
- 19 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: -- or how that
- 20 factors in, if at all.
- MS. FLINT: Well, that, of course,
- 22 only applies to claims that are settled under
- 23 the Barring Act. Of course, we don't think our
- 24 claim is, so the waiver provision doesn't come
- 25 into play.

1	And, of course, it's quite different
2	to have entitlement as of right to payments
3	going back to when eligibility began. That's
4	quite different from having the opportunity to
5	pursue a discretionary waiver under a statute
6	that, in our view, doesn't apply in the first
7	place.
8	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: And then, on how
9	to read the statutes together, the government
LO	points to the GAO Red Book, which talks about
L1	this and then says, going back to 1982, Red Book
L2	says: In the absence of legislation expressly
L3	placing the authority elsewhere, claims
L4	settlement jurisdiction under 3702 controls.
L5	And I think their point there is that
L6	that was the accepted understanding that
L7	Congress would have been operating under. And
L8	so, if we're guessing or speculating about what
L9	the language means, that probably doesn't
20	satisfy what the settled understanding of
21	express displacement was. Do you want to
22	respond to that?
23	MS. FLINT: Sure. So I respectfully
24	disagree with the suggestion that express
25	displacement doesn't isn't satisfied by the

- 1 text of 1413a.
- 2 So 1413a speaks expressly about
- 3 authorizing the secretary concerned to determine
- 4 the validity and amount due on claims. Now it
- 5 does not use the word "settle." It does use the
- 6 word "determine." It doesn't use the word
- 7 "settle."
- 8 But nobody thinks that -- the
- 9 government's brief makes this clear. The
- 10 Federal Circuit agreed. Nobody thinks the word
- "settle" is required for another statute to
- displace the Barring Act. I don't think that's
- what the GAO Red Book from 1982 was saying. I
- don't think it was saying the word "settle" was
- 15 required. And if it was, I think it's, you
- 16 know, mistaken. That's necessary, that makes
- sense, because of this Court's case law saying
- 18 we don't use magic words requirements.
- Now the government has suggested,
- okay, you don't have to use the word "settle,"
- 21 but you should use a word more like it than the
- 22 words in the CRSC statute.
- Well, in this Court's recent cases, in
- Lac du Flambeau from a couple terms ago, in
- 25 Kurtz from last term, in the sovereign immunity

- 1 context, the Court has said that's wrong. I
- 2 mean, first, Congress does not have to use a
- 3 particular word. Second, even if Congress has
- 4 used a particular word in a variety of statutes
- 5 like, you know, there are some statutes that use
- 6 the word "settle," that does not foreclose
- 7 Congress from using a different word the next
- 8 time. We don't require --
- 9 JUSTICE KAGAN: Which word are you
- 10 using?
- MS. FLINT: The word --
- 12 JUSTICE KAGAN: I mean, which word do
- 13 you -- are you pointing to here? Because
- 14 whatever -- you -- you might -- yes, we don't
- demand magic words, but this is a peculiarly
- indirect way of giving settlement authority to
- 17 the secretary concerned.
- MS. FLINT: Well, subsection (d), I
- 19 think, is actually fairly direct, to
- 20 respectfully disagree. It says --
- 21 JUSTICE KAGAN: I mean, subsection
- 22 (d), I mean, that -- that's your best
- 23 subsection, but even there, the secretary
- 24 concerned kind of comes in midway through. It's
- 25 really -- it's really a provision about the

2.0

- 1 Secretary of Defense stating general standards,
- 2 and then it kind of -- it seems to sort of
- 3 assume that the secretary of the military
- 4 department has some role in this but without
- 5 really giving the secretary of the department
- 6 the authority to settle.
- 7 MS. FLINT: I read subsection (d)
- 8 differently. First, the fact that it authorizes
- 9 the Secretary of Defense to establish procedures
- and criteria to resolve CRSC claims, that alone
- is significant. That tells you we're outside of
- the procedural world that applies to the Barring
- 13 Act. There is a whole set of regulatory
- 14 structure -- regulatory provisions dealing with
- 15 claims settled under the Barring Act, and they
- don't apply to CRSC claims, which are settled
- 17 under these specific procedures.
- 18 Second, subsection (d) says veterans
- 19 apply, that's submit a claim, and their
- 20 application is to be considered by the secretary
- of the military department or the secretary
- 22 concerned. I read -- that's fairly explicit.
- 23 It is to be considered by the secretary
- 24 concerned.
- 25 And then that consideration is

2.1

- determinative because subsection (a) tells the
- 2 secretary concerned to pay eligible retirees
- 3 eligible under the consideration of the
- 4 secretary concerned under subsection (d). Then
- 5 amount due, that comes right out of (a) and (b).
- 6 Subsection (a) says pay an amount determined
- 7 under subsection (b), the secretary concerned
- 8 shall pay an amount determined under subsection
- 9 (b). Subsection (b) says determine -- here's
- 10 how you determine the amount to be paid under
- subsection (a), paid by the secretary concerned.
- 12 So those provisions work together to
- 13 establish it's the secretary concerned
- 14 determining the payment amount.
- 15 And another thing about payment
- amount, subsection (d) says it's the secretary
- of the military department, the secretary
- 18 concerned, who determines which disabilities are
- 19 combat-related that determines payment amount
- to. Subsection (b)(1) says explicitly payment
- 21 is based only on disabilities that are
- 22 combat-related.
- 23 So the determinations of the secretary
- 24 concerned under subsection (d), which are --
- 25 that's an authority that is stated explicitly

2.2

- 1 for the secretary concerned under subsection
- 2 (d). Those determinations are dispositive.
- 3 They show --
- 4 JUSTICE ALITO: What about the
- 5 situation where -- the situation where the
- 6 veteran owes a lot of money to the government?
- 7 Can the payment amount be regarded as having
- 8 been settled before that offset is taken into
- 9 account?
- 10 MS. FLINT: Well, the CRSC statute is
- about settling claims for CRSC, so the result of
- 12 that process is how much CRSC is this person
- 13 owed.
- Now, if the -- if they're owed, let's
- say, you know, \$100, and if they in turn owe
- 16 \$500 so that the entire \$100 payment amount is
- offset, that means they won't be paid \$100 in
- 18 cash. Instead, they will be paid \$100 in
- 19 reduction of their otherwise existing debt.
- 20 That goes to payment, not --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Ms. Flint --
- MS. FLINT: -- not to settlement.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- on that, though,
- the government makes a big deal about offsets in
- 25 its brief and understandably so.

1 In your understanding of the statute, 2 who does the offsets? How are they accounted 3 for? Because I think it's one thing to determine the validity of the claim; it's 4 another thing then to say whether there are 5 offsets. And then -- and then it's a third 6 7 thing still to say pay. And you've got in -- in the statute a good deal of language, as you 8 9 pointed out with Justice Kagan, on the first step, determine the validity of the claim, and 10 maybe on the third, the authority to pay. 11 12 But somebody's got to do the business in the middle, and who does it and how under 13 14 your understanding of the statute? 15 MS. FLINT: Right. So the business in 16 the middle first includes the amount due on the 17 CRSC claim, and that is part of settlement. 18 JUSTICE GORSUCH: I got that on 1. 19 MS. FLINT: Oh, that's in 1. Okay. 20 JUSTICE GORSUCH: I'm giving -- I'm 21 giving you that. 2.2 MS. FLINT: Sorry. 23 JUSTICE GORSUCH: All right. But -but 2, the -- the \$500 that the -- the veteran 24 happens to owe the department for whatever 25

- 1 reason, who does that and how before the
- 2 secretary of the relevant military department is
- 3 authorized to pay?
- 4 MS. FLINT: Right. The CRSC statute
- 5 doesn't specify who needs to do that.
- 6 JUSTICE GORSUCH: That's why I'm
- 7 asking the question.
- 8 MS. FLINT: The -- the way --
- 9 the way it works in real life is DFAS does that.
- 10 The guidance actually even talks about this
- 11 context, the guidance that the Secretary of
- 12 Defense promulgated for -- for CRSC claims. The
- guidance says that the DFAS considers offsets in
- 14 the context of paying claims of overpayment.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I was looking at
- 16 all the statutes that the government concedes,
- 17 like the uniform, et cetera, that don't use the
- 18 word "settlement." None of them talk about
- offsets. I'm not sure the Bearing Act talks
- about offsets.
- 21 MS. FLINT: That's exactly right.
- None of these statutes talk about offsets.
- 23 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: All -- all of the
- offsets have been imposed by regulatory
- 25 direction, correct?

- 1 MS. FLINT: Yes, or there are some
- other statutes that refer to offsets, but you're
- 3 exactly right, Justice Sotomayor, none of these
- 4 statutes addressing settlement deal with offsets
- 5 one whit.
- 6 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: And --
- 7 MS. FLINT: That's not part of the
- 8 settlement process.
- 9 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- at least, if
- that's going to be an issue, you're not raising
- 11 it. You accept that the -- the secretary of
- defense's procedures to offset CRSC benefits
- 13 applies?
- MS. FLINT: Right. Offsetting
- procedures, if they apply, I don't have any
- 16 quibble with that.
- 17 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Okay.
- JUSTICE JACKSON: You're just saying
- 19 that this is not a -- that this is not a
- 20 material omission from this statute from the
- 21 standpoint of determining whether it confers
- 22 settlement authority?
- MS. FLINT: That's exactly right,
- Justice Jackson. And, as Justice Sotomayor's
- 25 question aptly noted, one way we absolutely know

- 1 it's not a material omission is that there's no
- 2 such reference in the Barring Act either.
- 3 Offsets are simply not part of establishing
- 4 settlement authority.
- 5 JUSTICE JACKSON: Can you help me just
- 6 to understand a pure factual and legal point?
- 7 Because I'm trying to understand it.
- 8 In the Barring Act, when there's a
- 9 six-year statute of limitations, do we know from
- 10 when it accrues, or does it work backwards from
- 11 the person's application?
- MS. FLINT: It works -- the six years
- works backwards from the time the claim was --
- 14 the application was filed.
- 15 JUSTICE JACKSON: The application was
- 16 filed?
- MS. FLINT: Yes.
- JUSTICE JACKSON: So you get six -- so
- 19 we -- we don't have to care -- it's not a
- 20 prospective thing, like when did it start
- 21 accruing? It's just whenever the application
- 22 comes in, if there were a statute of limitations
- 23 applicable here --
- MS. FLINT: Right.
- JUSTICE JACKSON: -- it would just go

- 1 back six years?
- 2 MS. FLINT: It would just go back six
- 3 years. We all agree Corporal Soto is entitled
- 4 to compensation going forward and going back six
- 5 years. It's just that we think he's entitled to
- 6 an additional 30 months because the six-year
- 7 cutoff under the Barring Act should not apply
- 8 here.
- 9 JUSTICE JACKSON: Doesn't apply.
- 10 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But he can't start
- 11 the application process until he's gotten a VA
- 12 rating, correct?
- MS. FLINT: That's right. A VA rating
- 14 is required.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: And so it doesn't
- really matter when it occurred, when the injury
- 17 occurred. He has to apply for the VA rating and
- 18 he can't control how long they're going to take.
- 19 MS. FLINT: That's right.
- 20 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: And so, if the VA
- 21 has a huge backlog of which exists right now,
- he's now barred from recovering not from his own
- fault but because of the VA process?
- MS. FLINT: That's potentially true.
- In our view, we think eligibility begins at the

- 1 effective date of the VA rating decision rather
- 2 than the date the rating decision is issued,
- 3 but --
- 4 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Either way --
- 5 MS. FLINT: Either way --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Yeah.
- 7 MS. FLINT: -- a delay is critical.
- 8 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Whatever the
- 9 effective date. I don't know what that means
- 10 because I don't know if they say it and then put
- it in writing or not, but the point is that,
- 12 unlike other benefits where eligibility is
- determined by the incident, when you're injured,
- here, it's outside of your control when you can
- 15 file.
- MS. FLINT: That's exactly right.
- 17 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: It's in the VA's
- 18 control.
- JUSTICE JACKSON: But I guess --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: That was your
- 21 answer to --
- 22 JUSTICE JACKSON: But there is --
- there is a -- could be in some cases a pretty
- 24 significant difference, and I'm just trying to
- 25 understand it.

1 Here, we have 30 months if we count 2 back six years. That is the difference between 3 your preferred rule and the government's rule. MS. FLINT: That's right. 4 5 JUSTICE JACKSON: I suppose, you know, 6 it could be that someone doesn't get this rating 7 from, you know, a long, long, long time, and the count back to when the statute was effective, 8 9 which is the date that you say is the starting point in terms of how -- how much it covers. 10 11 MS. FLINT: For people who -- who were 12 eligible before the -- the --13 JUSTICE JACKSON: Yes. 14 MS. FLINT: -- who satisfied other requirements for eligibility. 15 16 JUSTICE JACKSON: Correct. 17 MS. FLINT: Right. 18 JUSTICE JACKSON: So, you know, it 19 could be a long time in some instances if there 20 is no statute of limitations operating, and I just -- I guess I'm circling back to Justice 21 Alito's question of, you know, are we certain 2.2 23 that Congress intended for that entire span to 24 be covered and why would you think in this 25 circumstance they would want -- Congress would

- 1 want that.
- MS. FLINT: Well, of course, the best
- 3 indication of Congress's intent is the -- is the
- 4 text. In Section 1413a, it is best read to
- 5 authorize determination of validity and amount
- 6 due. Section -- the Barring Act, you know,
- 7 if -- if another statute authorizes that, the
- 8 Barring Act doesn't apply. So that's the
- 9 clearest indication.
- 10 But, as I discussed with Justice Alito
- 11 earlier, there are ample reasons why Congress
- 12 would have chosen in this context not to -- not
- 13 to use that six-year statute of limitations --
- 14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank --
- MS. FLINT: -- for this population.
- 16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
- 17 counsel.
- 18 Justice Thomas?
- 19 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, I -- I must be
- dense on this point, but I don't know what those
- 21 ample reasons are. Maybe you can tell me.
- Is there some -- some reason to think
- that in this situation, the claimant is less
- 24 capable of realizing that the claimant is
- 25 eligible for this than in other situations so

- 1 that there's something similar to the tolling
- 2 rule that would suggest that a statute of
- 3 limitations is not appropriate here?
- 4 That's what I'm -- I'm not asking for
- 5 this as a policy matter. I'm just trying to
- 6 figure out why Congress might have wanted to do
- 7 what you think they clearly did in the statute.
- 8 MS. FLINT: Well, other forms of
- 9 military compensation, the most relevant one is
- 10 CRDP, automatically are paid as soon as the
- 11 veteran entitled to it is eligible.
- 12 Treating the CRSC statute this way
- makes it the same. So Congress views CRDP as
- appropriately provided to a veteran every month
- in which he's eligible. That same
- 16 application -- that same policy, the same
- 17 congressional intent applies here too.
- 18 JUSTICE ALITO: All right. Thanks.
- 19 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 20 Sotomayor?
- 21 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Is there something
- 22 special about the conditions that would make a
- veteran not know he or she is eligible? I mean,
- there are certain PTSD you may not know. There
- are other conditions you may not know are

1 militarily related, correct? 2 MS. FLINT: Absolutely. And, I mean, 3 one thing that separates CRSC from other forms of compensation also is the application 4 requirement. So a veteran needs to know that 5 this benefit exists, and, of course, this is 6 7 only relevant to veterans, as Your Honor was suggesting, who have combat-related 8 disabilities, including disabilities like PTSD, 9 10 which, as our amici point out, is a particular 11 problem for this kind of bureaucratic 12 interaction. So the need to apply is unique to this 13 14 statute. That sets it apart. And the need to 15 apply is also especially burdensome to the 16 population that the statute exists to serve. 17 not imposing this time limitation for this, you 18 know, unusual form of statute for this 19 particularly deserving but by definition 20 combat-related disabled population makes perfect 21 sense to me. 2.2 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Thank you. CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: 23 Justice Kagan? Justice Gorsuch? 24

Justice Kavanaugh.

1 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: So, on page 34 of 2 the government's brief they say that other than 3 this case and one other federal claims case, there's no comptroller general, Department of 4 Defense, or judicial decision that finds section 5 6 3702(b)(1)'s limitations period inapplicable to 7 any form of military compensation in Title 10 or Title 37. I just want -- is that accurate? 8 9 MS. FLINT: I don't have a -- a -- I don't have a basis to dispute it. 10 11 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Okay. And then 12 they say from there that you're not suggesting that GAO and the Department of Defense have been 13 14 wrong to apply that limitation to all those 15 other forms of military compensation. Is that 16 accurate? 17 MS. FLINT: That's right. We think 18 this statute is written the way it is to 19 displace the Barring Act. That's part of why we don't think the 50 statutes that we talked about 20 earlier, Justice Kagan, are much of a concern 21 2.2 here, because this statute is written 23 differently from those other statutes. And 24 we're not arguing that this is a broad-based 25 change.

JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Right. And then
they -- we've repeated this, but then they say
you're viewing this as unique and, therefore,

you need a clear statement, but we've covered

- 5 that ground, so I'll let you go with that.
- 6 Thank you.

- 7 MS. FLINT: Thank you, Justice
- 8 Kavanaugh.
- 9 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 10 Barrett?
- 11 Justice Jackson?
- 12 JUSTICE JACKSON: And -- and it's my
- 13 understanding that there are other
- 14 circumstances, other statutes in the veterans'
- 15 disability area that don't have statute of
- 16 limitations, is that right?
- MS. FLINT: I'm not aware of one.
- JUSTICE JACKSON: You don't know?
- 19 Okay.
- 20 MS. FLINT: There definitely are other
- 21 statutes that displace the Barring Act that
- 22 don't have statutes of limitations.
- JUSTICE JACKSON: That displace the
- 24 Barring Act --
- MS. FLINT: Yes.

1	JUSTICE JACKSON: and therefore
2	allow claims without a statute of limitations?
3	MS. FLINT: Right. It is not the case
4	that every single statute that has ever
5	displaced the Barring Act has its own separate
6	statute of limitations. That is not the case.
7	Other statutes that displace the
8	Barring Act that don't use its six-year statute
9	of limitations also don't impose their own
LO	statute of limitations.
L1	So CRSC might be the only disability
L2	compensation, military disability compensation
L3	statute that has been found to apply in that
L4	way, but it's not the only statute that applies
L5	in that way.
L6	JUSTICE JACKSON: Thank you.
L7	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
L8	counsel.
L9	Ms. Flynn?
20	ORAL ARGUMENT OF CAROLINE A. FLYNN
21	ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENT
22	MS. FLYNN: Mr. Chief Justice, and may
23	it please the Court:
24	The text of 3702(a)(1)(A) expressly
2.5	provides that claims of military service members

- 1 for various forms of unpaid compensation are to
- 2 be settled under 3702 and its six-year
- 3 limitations period.
- 4 Petitioner is nonetheless arguing that
- 5 claims for this form of military compensation,
- 6 CRSC, are not subject to that time bar because
- 7 the CRSC statute contains its own settlement
- 8 mechanism without providing its own time limit.
- 9 Text, history, and context resolve
- 10 this case. Dating back 200 years, claims for
- 11 all kinds of military pay and benefits,
- including retired pay, have been settled under
- 3702 and its predecessors, and since 1940, those
- 14 pay claims have been subject to the time bar.
- 15 Congress enacted the CRSC statute,
- which essentially restores retired pay for some
- members, against that uniform practice. Yet
- 18 Congress did not use any of the clear hallmark
- 19 language that had been recognized to displace
- 20 3702, including by simply using the word
- 21 "settle" or simply providing a different timing
- 22 rule. It follows that the CRSC statute should
- 23 be read harmoniously with 3702 and that
- 24 statute's limitations period, which the
- 25 secretary of defense may waive.

1	Petitioner instead asks this Court to
2	parse the various details that the CRSC statute
3	does cover and conclude that they implicitly add
4	up to to what would be a highly unusual
5	result: a congressional intent to subject the
6	Department of Defense to open-ended retroactive
7	liability.
8	But the mine run of military pay
9	statutes include the same kinds of details.
LO	Indeed, that's true of the statutes governing
L1	the death gratuity benefit, which Petitioner has
L2	agreed in his reply brief and I believe my
L3	friend agreed today would convey independent
L4	settlement authority under his test.
L5	But we know that can't be right
L6	because then Congress's recent amendment of the
L7	death gratuity statute to provide a time limit
L8	applicable only to miners would be inexplicable.
L9	That illustrates that Petitioner's
20	function-based standard does not capture
21	congressional intent and threatens destabilizing
22	results.
23	I welcome the Court's questions.
24	JUSTICE THOMAS: Other than using the
2.5	word "settle " how would you draft this statute

- 1 CRSC statute, to confer settlement authority?
- 2 MS. FLYNN: So I think, if Congress
- 3 had provided in the very first subsection that
- 4 the secretary concerned may settle and pay, that
- 5 would be the straightforward way to do it that
- 6 it had used in other military contexts.
- 7 I think other kind of hallmark --
- JUSTICE THOMAS: Well, let's -- let's
- 9 leave the word "settle" out. How would you
- 10 draft it?
- MS. FLYNN: So --
- 12 JUSTICE THOMAS: You said -- you say
- in your brief that this isn't -- there's no
- 14 magic words requirement. So what words other
- than "settle" would you use?
- 16 MS. FLYNN: So we believe that there
- 17 are hallmark-like formulations that Congress has
- 18 used. Often just the word "settle," but there
- 19 are other examples, like speaking of claims
- 20 being allowed or disallowed or referring to a
- 21 finding being final and conclusive.
- 22 But we do reject the idea that there
- is a function-based test where you sort of look
- to whether -- whether the details of program
- administration provided in a statute add up to

- 1 a -- something that looks like making 2 determinations relevant to eligibility or determinations relevant to how much will 3 ultimately be paid out. 4 We just don't think that's how 5 6 Congress has -- has acted when it wants to 7 displace the sort of specialized accounting 8 authority and especially here, where, as Justice 9 Kagan sort of alluded to, the upshot of having 10 3702 apply in this context really is just 11 whether or not the six-year time bar applies. 12 You would expect Congress to have just said something about what kind of timing rule it 13 wanted either for retroactive benefits or 14 15 otherwise, and we just don't see anything about 16 timing in this provision. 17 JUSTICE JACKSON: So is your argument 18 that the only thing that gets picked up under your rule is the time bar? In other words,
- your rule is the time bar? In other words,
 would -- are all of the other CS -- whatever the
 name of the statute is -- are all of the other
 statutory requirements still in effect?
- MS. FLYNN: Of the CRSC statute?
- JUSTICE JACKSON: Yes.
- MS. FLYNN: Yes, we agree that

- 1 everything in the CRSC statute is read
- 2 harmoniously with 3702.
- 3 The other key thing that -- that 3702
- 4 does, which might be more important in other
- 5 contexts, is that it says who has ultimate
- 6 authority for settling claims. In the military
- 7 context, just as a matter of how things work on
- 8 the ground, there are so many cross-delegations
- 9 between the Secretary of Defense and the
- 10 secretaries concerned. For instance, the
- 11 Secretary of Defense has delegated his 3702
- 12 settlement authority to process claims to the
- 13 secretaries concerned, but in turn, the
- 14 secretaries concerned have delegated their
- accounting function, so that's the calculation
- 16 and payment functions, over to DFAS, which is at
- 17 the D -- DOD level.
- So, here, like, this dispute really
- does just come down to whether the statute of
- 20 limitations, which DOD has interpreted as a -- a
- 21 sort of -- an ability to go back a certain
- 22 number of years and awarding retroactive
- 23 benefits, whether or not that applies to this
- 24 kind of military compensation.
- 25 JUSTICE JACKSON: But doesn't --

1	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: What
2	JUSTICE JACKSON: doesn't it also
3	come down to the meaning of "settle"? Because,
4	in order to harmonize these two statutes, I
5	think you have to look at the fact that the
6	Barring Act says, except as provided in another
7	statute, all claims shall be settled as follows
8	And so we have to determine whether
9	the other statute actually confers settlement
LO	authority. And I guess I'm just trying to
L1	understand what your test or criteria are for
L2	settlement.
L3	Your your friend on the other side
L4	was very clear that settlement in their view is
L5	determining whether a claim is valid and
L6	determining the amount due, both of which occur
L7	under the CRSC statute.
L8	You seem to suggest that something
L9	more is necessary. Maybe it's the words, I
20	don't know, but what what more is necessary
21	to settle a claim from the government's
22	perspective?
23	MS. FLYNN: So what what needs to
24	be located in the statute is one of those
25	hallmark formulations or for Congress to

- 1 otherwise make its intent unmistakably clear
- 2 that it wants to displace the 3702 regime.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: But why --
- 4 JUSTICE GORSUCH: No, I -- I --
- 5 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- why isn't this
- 6 clear --
- 7 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Please.
- 8 JUSTICE KAGAN: Why isn't this clear
- 9 enough, is -- is -- is my question. I mean,
- 10 this isn't the most obvious way to convey
- 11 settlement authority, but, on the other hand,
- the (d) provision does say to a retiree, you
- 13 know, you may apply to the secretary of a
- 14 military department to make the eligibility
- determination, and then subsection (a) says that
- secretary shall pay the appropriate amount to a
- 17 person who has been found eligible.
- 18 So it seems as though, even though
- 19 it's a little bit backhanded in the way this is
- 20 phrased, you have everything that's necessary to
- 21 convey settlement authority here.
- MS. FLYNN: So I have a few responses
- 23 to that. The first is that this Court was very
- 24 clear in Illinois Surety that payment authority
- 25 is different from settlement authority. They're

- considered different. 1 2 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, I was just 3 saying you have both. You have the --4 MS. FLYNN: Yeah. JUSTICE KAGAN: -- the secretary shall 5 6 pay, and you also have a statement that makes it 7 clear that the way this is expected to work is that the retiree applies to the secretary 8 9 concerned to determine eligibility, so determine the validity of the claim. 10 11 MS. FLYNN: And what I'd say about the 12 application is that is also just -- I'm going to rely heavily on contextual considerations here, 13 14 but a statute -- the military pay statute that 15 involves an application is also not unusual. 16 And so my point is that Congress would 17 not have thought that adding that detail along 18 with the other details that it talked about --19 JUSTICE KAGAN: I'm sorry, could you 20 say again what's not unusual? 21 MS. FLYNN: To have an application 2.2 process that Congress provides -- and we
- JUSTICE KAGAN: An application

through the --

discuss this in our brief and we're going

23

- 1 process, but this specifically says go apply to
- 2 the secretary of the department, right?
- 3 MS. FLYNN: Yes. And I --
- 4 JUSTICE KAGAN: He or she is going to
- 5 be the one who's going to determine your
- 6 eligibility and thus is going to determine the
- 7 validity of your claim. And, once it says that,
- 8 like, really, what more do you need, other than
- 9 something along the lines of, well, you should
- 10 have said it in the active voice rather than the
- 11 passive voice or something?
- MS. FLYNN: So I can point to, I mean,
- 13 at least one other statute, the basic needs
- 14 allowance. This is at 37 U.S.C. 402b; b is part
- of the section heading. That also has an
- 16 application required, and that one is also one
- that says the secretary concerned shall pay to
- each member who is eligible under subsection (b)
- 19 a basic needs allowance in the amount determined
- for such member under subsection (c).
- 21 I think that meets all of what
- 22 Petitioner is saying is necessary, which I think
- 23 basically just comes down to whether a specific
- 24 person is named when you're setting forth
- 25 eligibility and calculation rules.

1	I'd also say that it's a little I
2	mean, a little odd for Congress to say we're
3	displacing the Barring Act by, you know, naming
4	a particular Department of Defense official to
5	be making these determinations when, before this
6	was transferred to the Secretary of Defense, the
7	Barring the 3702 authority, GAO was the one
8	making the who had the 3702 authority. So
9	there was always kind of a divergence between
LO	the sort of administration of this pay and these
L1	organic statutes setting authorizing the
L2	forms of payment and GAO with its authority
L3	under 3702. But, as came up earlier, there was
L4	no finding that any other form of military pay
L5	or compensation was not subject to the six-year
L6	time bar.
L7	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Counsel,
L8	what what is the concern you have broader
L9	beyond beyond this particular statute? I
20	mean, to be eligible for benefits here, you have
21	to have gotten a Purple Heart, be disabled as a
22	result of armed conflict, hazardous service,
23	performance of duty under conditions of war.
24	I I can't believe there are people
25	in Congress saying, you know, we're giving too

- 1 much money to Purple Heart recipients, so let's
- 2 tighten it up. I mean, what is the -- there
- 3 must be a bigger concern that the department is
- 4 worried about.
- 5 MS. FLYNN: Yes. And so, you know, as
- 6 I think we -- we suggested in our brief, we're
- 7 not saying that or suggesting there might be a
- 8 staggering amount of liability based under this
- 9 particular type of benefit, and there is also a
- 10 waiver authority where this time bar can be
- 11 waived for individuals with CRSC claims or other
- 12 claims.
- 13 What -- I -- I would submit that our
- 14 primary concern here is this kind of -- if there
- were an adoption of the kind of function-based
- 16 test the Petitioner is asking for where you look
- 17 statute by statute and say, well, is there an
- 18 eligibility determination not in the passive
- 19 voice but assigned to a person, is it a
- 20 sufficiently important eligibility
- 21 determination, because I took my friend to say
- 22 some were not sufficiently important, do we
- think this calculation function is assigned to
- that person or not, we might be in a world where
- 25 we have lots of different military pay

- 1 compensation statutes --
- 2 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, you
- 3 might be --
- 4 MS. FLYNN: -- that are now going to
- 5 be awarded --
- 6 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I was going to
- 7 say you might be, but is it the judgment of the
- 8 department that you are? I mean, the -- these
- 9 aren't -- it's not a magic words argument, I
- 10 understand that, but, you know, they do have
- 11 words here that are pretty close to the ones
- 12 that are in the Barring Act.
- MS. FLYNN: So we -- I can point this
- 14 Court to the six statutes that I believe meet
- 15 Petitioner's test, as least as clarified in the
- 16 reply brief.
- I imagine even if I'm wrong about
- that, there would certainly be litigation about
- 19 it. There will be litigation about other
- 20 provisions that start to seem similar enough to
- 21 this one or the next one that gets decided. And
- then we're in a world where we just really can't
- 23 predict what kind of open-ended retroactive
- 24 liability the Department of Defense is facing.
- Which to repeat what I said earlier,

- we're aware of no other military pay or
- 2 compensation statute that opens up the
- 3 department in that way. And so I -- I -- you
- 4 know, we -- we want to be careful --
- 5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: You're not
- 6 aware of anyone that opens the department in the
- 7 way that you -- you argue this one does?
- 8 MS. FLYNN: Right, to -- to open-ended
- 9 liability for payments in the past, with no kind
- 10 of -- of time bar.
- 11 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Is that -- so you
- 12 say there are six.
- MS. FLYNN: Yes.
- 14 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Your friend says
- 15 there are two. I want to hear what the six are.
- 16 And do all of them contain statutes of
- 17 limitations or are some of them lacking too?
- 18 MS. FLYNN: SO the six provisions I'm
- 19 pointing to -- so the first is the death
- 20 gratuity statute --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Yeah.
- 22 MS. FLYNN: -- which is one
- 23 my Petitioner --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I'm sorry, say
- 25 that again.

- 1 JUSTICE GORSUCH: The death --
- 2 MS. FLYNN: Sorry. The death gratuity
- 3 statutes. So those provisions are at 10 U.S.C.
- 4 1475 through 1480.
- 5 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Right. You don't
- 6 need to cite them. Just give them to me. So
- 7 death -- death gratuity.
- 8 MS. FLYNN: Yes.
- 9 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Subsistence, I think
- 10 you've -- Ms. Flint also suggested.
- 11 MS. FLYNN: See, I'm not sure -- I
- 12 take her word for that.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: You're not sure
- 14 about that one. Okay.
- MS. FLYNN: I'm not sure about that.
- 16 So I guess that would make it seven, but sure.
- 17 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Just quickly -- just
- 18 tick off the others.
- 19 MS. FLYNN: Okay. So a certain form
- 20 of the disability retirement pay. This is at 10
- 21 U.S.C. 1204. The next would be disability
- 22 severance pay. Those relevant provisions are 10
- 23 U.S.C. 1203 and 1216. Involuntary discharge
- separation pay, in 10 U.S.C. 1174.
- 25 And one of the forms of transitional

- 1 compensation to dependents of members separated
- 2 for dependent abuse, the exceptional eligibility
- 3 provisions, and those are located at 10 U.S.C.
- 4 1059(1).
- 5 But if I could go back to the death
- 6 gratuity --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Before --
- 8 MS. FLYNN: -- provision for --
- 9 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Before we get to
- 10 that --
- MS. FLYNN: Yep.
- 12 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Do those contain
- 13 statutes of limitations or not?
- MS. FLYNN: None except for the death
- 15 gratuity provision, which is the one that I --
- where I want to make the point about how that
- one shows the Petitioner's test can't be right.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Okay. Go ahead.
- MS. FLYNN: So that one does have a
- 20 statute of limitations that Congress added in
- 21 the 2025 NDAA, I believe. And before, it had no
- 22 statute of limitations and the understanding was
- 23 that the Barring Act applied.
- 24 Congress then added a statute of
- 25 limitations that is only applicable to

- 1 beneficiaries or survivors who are under the age
- 2 of 21 --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Right.
- 4 MS. FLYNN: -- and essentially gives
- 5 them more time. That would be inexplicable --
- 6 JUSTICE GORSUCH: I got that.
- 7 MS. FLYNN: -- if Congress didn't
- 8 understand that.
- 9 JUSTICE GORSUCH: I understand the
- 10 point.
- 11 And I just want to be clear. Is the
- 12 government taking the position that should it
- lose in this case, it will also lose in those
- 14 six other cases, or are you reserving the right
- 15 to distinguish them?
- MS. FLYNN: We are absolutely
- 17 reserving the right to distinguish them. Our
- 18 point is more that I certainly think there would
- 19 be questions about them and there would be sort
- of fine-tune parsing of whether, you know, do
- 21 you have to look outside of this provision to
- 22 find something else.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Okay. But we're
- 24 down from 50 to six or two.
- MS. FLYNN: Well, it also just

- 1 depends, I suppose, on what you find to be
- 2 the -- the relevant line.
- 3 So here, I mean, I'm not sure that
- 4 this statute even meets Petitioner's test,
- 5 because one of the things that Petitioner is
- 6 saying is -- or my friend is saying is that the
- 7 responsibility to calculate the amount has to be
- 8 specifically assigned to a named person.
- 9 I'm not sure the statute does that.
- 10 It speaks in the passive voice about the
- 11 determination to be determined.
- 12 And so if we think this one counts,
- 13 then is that close -- you know, then what does
- 14 that mean for the other ones?
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Thank you. Thank
- 16 you.
- JUSTICE BARRETT: Ms. Flynn, can I --
- 18 oh.
- 19 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Sorry.
- 20 JUSTICE BARRETT: Can I just step back
- 21 for a minute? We rephrase the question
- 22 presented here to say that a claim for
- compensation under 1413a would count as a claim
- 24 for retired pay under the Barring Act.
- MS. FLYNN: Yes.

1	JUSTICE BARRETT: Do you think we were
2	right to do that? I mean, is it clear that the
3	claim for this kind of compensation is retired
4	pay?
5	MS. FLYNN: Yes. So the Federal
6	Circuit found this in its decision. And of
7	course, you know, I want to just preface that I
8	also agree understand this Court to have
9	taken this issue out of the question presented.
10	But the Federal Circuit's reasoning,
11	which we agree with, is that the way CRSC works
12	is that, because of the concurrent receipt bar
13	that my friend referenced, the background rule
14	is that some members who are entitled to both
15	retired pay and disability compensation have to
16	waive some amount. And that usually means
17	they're waiving retired pay because disability
18	compensation isn't taxable.
19	What this is saying is that that rule
20	still applies, but we're just going to give you
21	a separate income stream to make up for a
22	portion of that that's connected with the
23	disability that's combat-related under this
24	definition.
25	And so it essentially restores

- 1 retirement pay that these -- these members would
- 2 have otherwise had to give up. It's calculated,
- 3 tied to what retired pay they would have
- 4 otherwise had to give up, and it's also paid out
- of the military retirement fund, which is how
- 6 retired pay is paid.
- 7 So we think those considerations mean
- 8 this is a claim involving retired pay within the
- 9 meaning of the --
- 10 JUSTICE BARRETT: And is there any
- 11 argument that the litany of other statutes that
- 12 you cite might not fall within the Barring Act
- for that separate reason, that, you know, the
- 14 Barring Act applies to pay allowances, travel,
- transportation, you know, et cetera, on the
- 16 list?
- But you think they all would qualify,
- 18 under your understanding, under those -- but
- 19 that -- but that the implications of this would
- 20 be it's just entirely inapplicable?
- I guess what I'm saying is: Is there
- 22 a reason to think the Barring Act might not
- apply to those anyway because they don't fall in
- these categories?
- 25 MS. FLYNN: I don't think there is a

- 1 reason. First is that, given the phrase
- 2 "involving," you know, it's not strictly those
- 3 categories. But the basic needs allowance is an
- 4 allowance. I talked about disability
- 5 retirement. I think that would be considered
- 6 involving retired pay. The disability severance
- 7 pay is pay, so -- and --
- 8 JUSTICE BARRETT: So you see the
- 9 Barring Act as just sweeping very broadly -- the
- word involving these categories, it would pull
- 11 all those things in anyway?
- MS. FLYNN: Yes. And that has been
- the background understanding against which
- 14 Congress would have been legislating in 2002 and
- then in 2008, when it created and expanded this
- 16 program.
- 17 JUSTICE ALITO: You have said that if
- 18 the Court were to disagree with you about this
- 19 particular statute, the government would argue
- 20 that there's -- there are grounds for
- 21 distinguishing those other six statutes that you
- 22 mentioned.
- 23 Is there one feature that would
- 24 provide the basis for that distinction or, if
- 25 not, on what ground would you distinguish those?

1 MS. FLYNN: So I -- we have to take it 2 case by case and look at the, you know, context 3 of that benefit and what came -- so I'm -- I'm mostly saying that I don't know how -- what 4 arguments we would make. I'm sure we would try 5 to find ways, but my -- Your -- I think 6 7 Your Honor is asking is there sort of a lowest common denominator that would make a ruling 8 9 narrow, and I'm just not really sure there is. 10 I suppose you could write an opinion 11 that says, you know, Petitioner flagged six 12 aspects of this statute. All six have to be 13 present. But if you say something like, here, 14 there are these six features, we're not saying 15 what's enough in the future, then I think 16 we're -- we're off to the races. 17 And so I'm -- I'm not sure. Maybe in 18 an application might be a narrowing device, but 19 even then, we pointed to, I think, five others 20 in our brief. I pointed to one here today. not sure -- I'm sure there might be some 21 2.2 applications required by regulation. 23 So I don't think that would 24 meaningfully narrow it --25 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Counsel, you --

1	JUSTICE KAGAN: And those six
2	statutes, do they deal with big programs? Small
3	programs? I mean, what's the extent of the
4	liability that the government is concerned with
5	here?
6	MS. FLYNN: Well, the death gratuity
7	benefit is a hundred thousand dollars to a
8	survivor. You know, I think I can't make
9	very firm pronouncements about what kind of
10	dollar figure we're talking about here, but I
11	think the basic needs allowance is a pretty
12	common type of benefit.
13	Disability severance pay, I and I
14	would also just say that we're not saying the
15	list stops here, again, because we just don't
16	totally know how one once you start going
17	one by one through 10 U.S.C., 37 U.S.C. through
18	those titles of the U.S. Code, what else could
19	be found by an authority to look close enough.
20	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I'm going to go
21	back through all seven of them at some point
22	MS. FLYNN: Sure.
23	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: but were these
24	part of that list of 50 you gave in your brief?
25	MS. FLYNN: So the basic needs

- 1 allowance, we cited, I think, 402(a), and I'm
- 2 citing (b). So we did not cite that one. I
- 3 believe the rest of them we did have them in the
- 4 various --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Well, I know I
- 6 didn't do it, but my law clerk did it and told
- 7 me that the two qualifications that the other
- 8 side puts forth are: Does the statute determine
- 9 the validity of a claim, who's going to do it,
- 10 and who determines the amount due.
- 11 And she claims, confirmed by my law
- 12 clerk, that there were only potentially two of
- those fifty-odd statutes where both features
- 14 were present.
- Do you dispute that? Are you claiming
- that in all seven of these those two features,
- 17 both, are present?
- 18 MS. FLYNN: I think if this statute
- 19 counts, then there's certainly at least -- I --
- 20 I want to be careful of, again, not trying to
- 21 concede that we would lose that case if it were
- 22 to come up.
- But I think -- for instance, let me --
- 24 let me take one where I think -- I believe
- 25 Petitioner disputed whether it would count under

- 1 their test in their reply brief. That's
- 2 disability severance pay.
- 3 So we understand 10 U.S.C. 1216(b)(4),
- 4 which says the Secretary concerned shall have
- 5 all powers, functions, and duties incident to
- 6 the determination of this chapter of payment of
- 7 disability severance pay.
- 8 We think that sounds like a
- 9 calculation authority. I gather Petitioner
- 10 thinks maybe it isn't. But that seems as close
- 11 to a calculation authority as what we have here
- in subsection (a), where it says --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: This has more.
- 14 This says the secretary deciding eligibility and
- 15 then determining the amount.
- MS. FLYNN: Sorry. And so in that
- 17 same provision, it also says that they -- I -- I
- 18 elide to that part, so I was focusing on payment
- 19 that same provision says the Secretary concerned
- 20 shall have all the powers functions and duties
- 21 incident to the determination of this chapter of
- 22 entitlement to and payment of disability
- 23 severance pay.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: All right. Okay.
- 25 Thank you. I'll look for --

1	MS. FLYNN: But I but my point is
2	really just to show the kinds of debates we
3	might be having under the kind of function-based
4	test, whereas before when you do have just
5	looking for certain hallmark language or, I
6	mean, more straightforwardly to just have a
7	timing provision, since that is the upshot of
8	this being a settlement
9	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But
LO	JUSTICE JACKSON: But there are but
L1	there are statutes you say that everybody agrees
L2	displace the Barring Act that don't have a
L3	timing provision. So I'm trying to understand
L4	the relevance in your view of the statute of
L5	limitations.
L6	Are you saying that you cannot be this
L7	kind of settlement statute unless you have a
L8	statute of limitations?
L9	MS. FLYNN: I am not saying that. The
20	two examples, though, that I think Your Honor is
21	referencing is USERRA and the postal service
22	statutes. So those don't have to do with
23	military pay or benefits.
24	The USERRA provision does speak to
25	timing It's a provision giving to the MSDR the

- 1 authority to the adjudicate complaints under
- 2 USERRA, and there is another subsection there
- 3 that talks about the MSPB ordering, you know,
- 4 various forms of relief including monetary
- 5 relief.
- 6 And then the provision at issue says
- 7 that the MSPB will adjudicate complaint --
- 8 adjudicate complaints without regard to whether
- 9 they accrued before, on, or after the effective
- 10 date of that statute.
- 11 So it does speak to timing, and it has
- 12 been --
- JUSTICE JACKSON: Well, it speaks to
- 14 timing to say don't worry about it. And so --
- MS. FLYNN: Right.
- JUSTICE JACKSON: -- I'm trying to
- 17 understand the extent to which you -- you're
- 18 saying that a statute can only confer settlement
- 19 authority and thereby displace the Barring Act
- if it has a statute of limitations or, I guess,
- 21 speaks to timing. Like, what is the relevance
- of the -- the -- the speaking to timing as to
- 23 whether or not this is a settle -- a statute
- that confers settlement authority? I thought
- 25 those were two different concepts.

1 MS. FLYNN: We're not saying that a 2 statute has to have that, but they do tend to go hand in hand, that you have a provision talking 3 about the settlement of claims or the submission 4 of claims to an entity, and then providing a 5 6 timing rule. For instance, like the Military 7 Claims Act, the Foreign Claims Act, other military provisions that we cited in our brief 8 9 that have been found to displace --10 JUSTICE JACKSON: I mean, in the 11 Barring Act itself, it has two separate 12 references to "except as provided," which --13 which -- which makes me think that Congress was 14 thinking about those as different concepts, that -- that except as provided, the government shall 15 -- elsewhere, the government shall settle claims 16 17 in this way. And then later when it talks about the particular statutory -- statute of 18 19 limitations, it has another reference to "except 20 as provided," which it wouldn't have needed if 21 the whole thing turned on whether or not you 2.2 talked about timing or whatnot. 23 MS. FLYNN: Right. And we're -- we're 24 not saying that absolutely you have to have a timing rule, but we're just saying they do tend 25

- 1 to run together because when you are setting up
- 2 a claim settlement process, you, you know --
- JUSTICE JACKSON: They do, but I guess
- 4 it's -- what's really hard for me about your
- 5 argument is I can't really figure out exactly
- 6 what it is you think we need to be looking for
- 7 in order to say the Barring Act applies or it
- 8 doesn't.
- 9 You say something like the word
- 10 "settle," but it doesn't have to be the word
- "settle," but it can't be a function test; it
- 12 has to be words. I -- I don't know what that
- 13 means in real -- real life.
- I mean, the -- the other side says
- what you're looking for is do you have a statute
- 16 that allows -- that authorizes a particular
- 17 entity to determine whether the claim is valid
- 18 and determine whether -- what the amount due is.
- 19 That's a pretty straightforward thing we're
- looking for, and I appreciate that you say we
- 21 can find it in various other statutes. But at
- least it's clear as to what it is they say
- 23 counts as settlement authority.
- Yours, I'm not so sure.
- 25 MS. FLYNN: So we are -- we are saying

- 1 you need to look for the word "settle" or other
- 2 hallmark formulations that otherwise get across
- 3 Congress's intent to convey this kind of
- 4 specialized accounting authority.
- 5 And the other thing that I would say
- 6 is just that, because, you know, the
- 7 function-based test essentially looks for
- 8 various facets of program administration, we
- 9 just know that can't be the right standard
- 10 because Congress assigned, under the Barring
- 11 Act, the authority to settle claims under all of
- these military pay and compensation statutes,
- 13 because of that conferral of authority in
- 3702(a)(1)(A), we just know that Congress wasn't
- 15 envisioning that the mine run of military pay
- and benefits statutes would be something that
- would displace this regime, because Congress
- specifically envisioned, in 1996 when it added
- 19 this language, that this would be the authority
- 20 under which those kinds of claims should be
- 21 settled.
- 22 So I -- I -- I agree that I'm
- 23 taking -- I'm looking at what Congress could not
- 24 have thought counted to say that means that
- 25 Petitioner's test can't be right, but I think

- 1 that is a very strong contextual consideration,
- 2 at least in the context of military statutes.
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: When you say --
- 4 MS. FLYNN: That --
- 5 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Keep going.
- 6 Sorry.
- 7 MS. FLYNN: I'm finished.
- 8 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: When you say
- 9 "hallmark formulations," just so I make sure we
- 10 have those in mind.
- 11 MS. FLYNN: Yes. So -- and these can
- 12 be seen in the GAO Red Book, the most recent
- version on this issue, as well as the 1982. So
- 14 "settle" or "settlement of claims," claims being
- allowed or allowable or disallowable, reference
- 16 to either the settlement or to, like, certain
- findings or determinations being final and
- 18 conclusive. And then one is, for some executive
- 19 branch entities, the authority to sue or be sued
- 20 or determine the nature and character -- or,
- 21 sorry, character and necessity of their
- 22 expenditures.
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: And that's in the
- 24 GAO Red Book now and in '82 or --
- MS. FLYNN: Yes.

1	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: somewhere.
2	MS. FLYNN: Yes. Yes, and you can
3	you can look at the statutes that
4	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: And what's the
5	as much as I enjoy talking about the GAO Red
6	Book
7	(Laughter.)
8	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: what's the
9	relevance of that? Would you summarize that for
LO	us?
L1	MS. FLYNN: Yes. So GAO used to be
L2	the entity that had this authority, so they had
L3	to figure out what are these regimes that are
L4	going to displace our authority. And GAO was
L5	doing that even before Congress added the
L6	"except as otherwise provided by law" language
L7	in the recodification in 1982. And that's why
L8	we pointed out that the GAO Red Book was the
L9	first edition came out in 1982, right before
20	Congress added that language, which Congress
21	said in the recodification it wasn't intending
22	to make a substantive change. That's in the law
23	itself, and also the revision note said that
24	this "except as otherwise provided by law"
25	language was intended to just be clarifying

1	So it's that the GAO was the one
2	sort of implementing the statute for a long
3	time, and the Comptroller General decisions are
4	what we have as authorities in this area of what
5	counts. And so that's why we're relying on sort
6	of the background administrative practice
7	against which Congress would have
8	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: And the idea is
9	Congress would have spoken more clearly, is your
10	point, general point, there?
11	MS. FLYNN: Yes.
12	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: And
13	MS. FLYNN: In the CRSC statute. Yes.
14	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: And the other
15	point, there's no other form of military
16	compensation where the limitations period is
17	inapplicable, correct?
18	MS. FLYNN: Yeah, where there's no
19	limitations period and there is a like a, you
20	know, mandatory open-ended liability.
21	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Anyone else?
22	All right.
23	Thank you, counsel.
24	MS. FLYNN: Thank you.
25	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Anything

Т	further? Okay.
2	Thank you.
3	Rebuttal, Ms. Flint?
4	REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF TACY F. FLINT
5	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER
6	MS. FLINT: Thank you. I'd like to
7	start where you started, Justice Thomas, and you
8	followed up, Justice Kagan. What's missing?
9	The statute authorizes determination of
10	eligibility. It authorizes determination of
11	amount due. So what's missing?
12	I think the answer I heard was a
13	hallmark formulation. We agree it doesn't have
14	to be the word "settle," but it has to be a
15	hallmark formulation. And then my friend read
16	examples of words that, in the government's
17	view, sound "hallmark" enough.
18	As Justice Jackson's questions aptly
19	call out, I don't know what counts as a hallmark
20	formulation. The way that this Court has
21	instructed to read statutes is read the words
22	that are written in the statute. Don't say
23	there's a small group, one or, you know, about a
24	dozen, I think it was, acceptable terms, and if
25	Congress uses these terms okay: and if it

- doesn't use these terms, then we're not going to
- 2 interpret the statute to have settlement
- 3 authority.
- 4 That's not how this Court has read
- 5 statutes. The court rejected a very similar
- 6 argument in Lac du Flambeau about whether the
- 7 Bankruptcy Code abrogated tribal sovereign
- 8 immunity. The argument was that other statutes
- 9 had made express reference to tribal sovereign
- 10 immunity. And the Court said Congress is
- 11 entitled to do it differently this time. That
- might be the more -- most straightforward way.
- 13 That might be arguably the most obvious way to
- 14 abrogate tribal sovereign immunity. But that
- doesn't mean Congress is foreclosed from doing
- 16 it using different terms.
- 17 Same here. Maybe hallmark
- 18 formulations, "settlement" or otherwise, would
- 19 be the most obvious, most straightforward way to
- 20 write the CRSC statute, but that sure doesn't
- 21 mean it's the only way.
- The way to interpret Section 1413a is
- 23 to read its text, to determine whether it
- 24 authorizes an official to determine the validity
- 25 of CRSC claims and the amount due. And all of

- 1 that is there in the statute.
- Now, to talk about the other statutes
- 3 that my friend has referred to, of course we
- 4 started in the briefs with a few or more dozen;
- 5 we're down to -- I think it was six or seven
- 6 today, that -- that the government thinks may be
- 7 implicated by application of our test. We've
- 8 only found two as -- the same at your law clerk,
- 9 Justice Sotomayor.
- 10 Look, maybe these statutes do displace
- 11 the Barring Act. If a statute has language that
- 12 authorizes an official to determine the validity
- of claims and the amount due, it is proper to
- 14 conclude that the Barring Act is displaced,
- because Section 3702(a) says: If another
- 16 statute provides for settlement of claims, this
- 17 law doesn't apply. A statute that authorizes an
- 18 official to determine the validity and amount
- 19 due on claims is a statute that authorizes
- 20 settlement.
- 21 That is just the definition of
- 22 "settlement" that this Court said was
- well-established as of 1916, and nobody thinks
- has changed in the intervening years.
- 25 So if there is one, two, or six

- 1 military statutes that courts will have to read
- 2 as a result of a victory for Corporal Soto here,
- 3 that is perfectly appropriate. And that
- 4 prospect certainly doesn't support not reading
- 5 the text of Section 1413(a) literally because of
- 6 concerns that it might give rise to, you know,
- 7 more lawsuits in connection with six or seven
- 8 other statutes, or two.
- 9 To address briefly the retired pay
- 10 question that you asked, Justice Barrett. Of
- 11 course we did argue below that we don't think
- 12 that this case involves retired pay. The
- 13 Federal Circuit disagreed with that. I mean,
- 14 that -- I -- I don't think there could be any
- 15 more hallmark or clear formulation of the
- 16 statement that CRSC is not retired pay. That is
- the words in subsection (q) of 1413a.
- 18 That is a pretty obvious way to
- 19 conclude that Section 3702(a)(1) does not apply,
- 20 because this is a benefit that is not retired
- 21 pay, so determination of claims involving this
- 22 benefit are not determinations involving retired
- 23 pay.
- 24 And that would certainly alleviate any
- other concerns, although, of course, we do

1	recognize, as my friend did, that that's not
2	part of the question presented as reformulated
3	by this Court.
4	Just to address very briefly the death
5	gratuity statute that my friend mentioned in the
6	statute of limitations, I respectfully take
7	issue with Ms. Flynn's reading of the death
8	gratuity statute.
9	Section 1479, which is the provision
10	which we have read as potentially authorizing
11	settlement, that relates only to immediate
12	payment of death gratuities under Section 1475.
13	It doesn't implicate the statute of limitations.
14	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
15	counsel. The case is submitted.
16	(Whereupon, at 12:36 p.m., the case
17	was submitted.)
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