1	IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES
2	x
3	MICHAEL W. SOLE, SECRETARY, :
4	FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF :
5	ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, ET AL., :
6	Petitioners :
7	v. : No. 06-531
8	T.A. WYNER, ET AL. :
9	x
10	Washington, D.C.
11	Tuesday, April 17, 2007
12	
13	The above-entitled matter came on for oral
14	argument before the Supreme Court of the United States
15	at 11:20 a.m.
16	APPEARANCES:
17	VIRGINIA A. SEITZ, ESQ., Washington, D.C.; on behalf of
18	Petitioners.
19	PATRICIA A. MILLETT, ESQ., Assistant to the Solicitor
20	General, Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.; on
21	behalf of the United States, as amicus curiae,
22	supporting Petitioners.
23	SETH M. GALANTER, ESQ., Washington, D.C.; on
24	behalf of Respondents.
25	

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1	PROCEEDINGS
2	(11:20 a.m.)
3	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll next hear Case
4	06-531, Sole versus Wyner.
5	Ms. Seitz.
6	ORAL ARGUMENT OF VIRGINIA A. SEITZ
7	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONERS
8	MS. SEITZ: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it
9	please the Court:
10	The court of appeals held that plaintiffs
11	who obtain a preliminary injunction are prevailing
12	parties entitled to fees, even though the district court
13	concluded that the State's nudity ban does not violate
14	the Constitution, that plaintiffs were not entitled to
15	any permanent relief, and that final judgment should be
16	entered against the plaintiffs.
17	This Court's cases have found plaintiffs to
18	be prevailing parties in only two situations, when they
19	win judgment on the merits or enter into a consent
20	decree. And this Court has declined to confer
21	prevailing party status based on interim rulings in
22	ongoing litigation.
23	JUSTICE SCALIA: Ms. Seitz, I'd be curious
24	to get your reaction to one of the points made by
25	opposing counsel, which is that there were really sort

- 1 of two different pieces of litigation at issue here,
- 2 that it was an as-applied challenge that produced the
- 3 preliminary injunction, and what was rejected in the
- 4 final decision was a facial challenge. Is there
- 5 anything to that?
- 6 MS. SEITZ: No, I don't think there is. In
- 7 the preliminary injunction, the district court predicted
- 8 that it would find the nudity ban significantly
- 9 infringed free expression and that the State had less
- 10 restrictive alternatives. That's at page 18a and 19a.
- 11 In the summary judgment decision, the court held that
- 12 the nudity plan's effect on free impression was de
- 13 minimis and it had, that the State had no less
- 14 restrictive alternative. So in both instances the
- 15 underlying legal claim was that as applied to nude
- 16 expression the nudity ban was unconstitutional.
- 17 JUSTICE SOUTER: What do we make of what I
- 18 understand was the court's post hoc statement that what
- 19 was -- the reason for issuing the temporary injunction
- 20 was the perception that there was a content basis at
- 21 work? And what do we make of it in light of the fact --
- 22 I think this is of record; you correct me if I'm wrong.
- 23 what do we make of that in light of the fact that I
- 24 believe it is in the record that I forget the
- 25 appropriate State official said, well, it's true we've

- 1 let you do this in the past, but this is political or
- 2 this looks political, which suggests that there was a
- 3 content basis going on?
- What do we make of the court's statement and
- 5 the record statement by the official in deciding whether
- 6 there really was in effect a separate kind of order
- 7 involved in the preliminary injunction from the order
- 8 that was denied at the end of the case?
- 9 MS. SEITZ: There's a factual answer to that
- 10 and a legal answer, and I'll start with the legal
- 11 answer, which is that the preliminary injunction itself
- 12 states that it is assuming content --
- JUSTICE SOUTER: Oh, I know that. I know
- 14 that.
- 15 MS. SEITZ: And as a legal matter --
- 16 JUSTICE SOUTER: Because that's why I asked,
- what do we make of the court's statement subsequently?
- 18 MS. SEITZ: I think we, as the court of
- 19 appeals did, have to disregard those statements because
- 20 under Rule 65 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure,
- 21 the preliminary injunction itself is the operative
- 22 document, and the bases that it states for the issuance
- 23 of the preliminary injunction are the bases that must
- 24 govern both on judicial review of the injunction and as
- 25 a matter of notice to the parties of the operative

- 1 effect and basis for the injunction. 2 JUSTICE SOUTER: Is that so when there is 3 some evidence in the record that a content basis 4 actually was the criterion? 5 MS. SEITZ: And that's the factual part of 6 my response, which is that this testimony that was 7 relied on which we quote in full in our reply brief, was 8 testimony by the State, a State official who did not make the decision so was not actually aware of why the 9 10 decision was made, and was testimony only to the effect that the demonstration envisioned on February 14th might 11 12 be different than her previous plays, because more 13 people might be expected. 14 Now the court drew from that telephonic 15 testimony a possibility that the reason for the State's 16 denial on February 14 was the content; but in fact, 17 although the court didn't recognize it, it also had 18 before it a decision by the State in 2000 denying her 19 permission to put on her play based on its decision to 20 enforce its nudity ban against her at that time. 21 JUSTICE SOUTER: Now the 2001 order was it
- 22 -- was it? She applied, I think it was in -23 MS. SEITZ: She wrote a letter in 2000
- 24 requesting permission to perform her play --
- JUSTICE SOUTER: Yeah.

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1	MS. SEITZ: Under the same terms that she
2	had under the stipulated settlement from 1998. The
3	State denied her request in a letter indicating that the
4	nudity ban would be enforced against the play.
5	JUSTICE SOUTER: So the factual answer in
6	effect is there isn't enough fact to support the
7	distinction?
8	MS. SEITZ: And and I guess there's in
9	addition a legal elaboration on that factual record,
10	which was this was all occurring in a preliminary
11	injunction hearing that took place 24 hours before the
12	demonstration, telephonic testimony of an ill-prepared
13	State witness. It was never followed up, even though
14	that claim remained live through summary judgment,
15	because the plaintiffs continued to have a claim against
16	an individual defendant for damages.
17	JUSTICE SOUTER: Yeah. But when you got to
18	the summary judgment stage, the particular peace
19	demonstration performance was was behind them. So
20	they're, I'm not sure that it would have been expected
21	to be reinjected into the case.
22	MS. SEITZ: The challenge continued because
23	there was a claim for individual damages from the park

manager. So in order to determine that individual claim

for damages, of course, the plaintiffs could have put in

24

25

- 1 evidence that, in fact, rather than just as a
- 2 preliminary prediction, the injunction was issued to
- 3 prevent content-based discrimination.
- 4 JUSTICE SOUTER: So it wasn't moot after the
- 5 demonstration.
- 6 MS. SEITZ: That was not mooted out.
- 7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: That's one of the
- 8 things that concerns me. I mean in many of these cases
- 9 you have fairly elaborate proceedings over the
- 10 preliminary injunction and the event takes place. I
- 11 would not want to get to a situation where people feel
- 12 the need to artificially keep a case alive simply to
- 13 ensure their entitlement to attorney's fees. So how do
- 14 you protect against that?
- MS. SEITZ: We -- the purpose of the
- 16 attorney's fees provision is to encourage and reward
- 17 meritorious litigation. And at the point at which you
- 18 only have a preliminary injunction, no matter how long
- 19 that preliminary injunction has been in effect, what you
- 20 have is a prediction of success on the merits, a
- 21 balancing of equitable factors that determine interim
- 22 fairness, but you do not have a decision that the
- 23 defendant has violated the Constitution or any Federal
- 24 law.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: But in, but in many cases

- 1 the case will become moot after a period of time and the
- 2 Chief Justice and I have the same concern. The question
- 3 is directed to do we just keep this litigation alive for
- 4 the -- for the ancillary issue of attorney's fees?
- 5 MS. SEITZ: There are significant
- 6 consequences to a finding of liability. And to
- 7 conferring preliminary -- or fees for preliminary
- 8 injunction when you do not have a final determination of
- 9 violation by the State, you're essentially ordering the
- 10 State and local governments who have not been judged
- 11 violators of law or had a full or fair opportunity to
- 12 defend as a matter of law --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, we're asking about
- 14 what rule you propose we adopt and the submission to you
- 15 is that if we have a rule there can never be attorneys
- 16 fees in this instance, that will then create pressure to
- 17 continue the litigation when it's for all practical
- 18 purposes of no real importance to the parties, other
- 19 than to just establish attorney's fees. And that seems
- 20 a waste of resources.
- 21 MS. SEITZ: And but the -- the situation --
- 22 that situation will also obtain if you confer attorney's
- 23 fees and prevailing party status on a plaintiff who only
- 24 has a preliminary injunction.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: But do we have to judge

- 1 all preliminary and judgments alike? I mean, in some
- 2 cases, the preliminary injunction is the thing. For
- 3 example, suppose in this case, the demonstrators had
- 4 said yeah, we went in with a -- with a broad challenge
- 5 but we knew all we wanted was that peace demonstration,
- 6 and we got it; so we're -- that's enough. We're not
- 7 going to fight on.
- 8 MS. SEITZ: The fact that a plaintiff gets
- 9 his or her way temporarily based on a preliminary
- 10 junction does not mean that the defendant has violated
- 11 that plaintiff's constitutional rights or that that
- 12 would be the resolution of the --
- 13 JUSTICE BREYER: Who -- who -- where does it
- 14 say you have to have done that? My statute here says in
- 15 any action to enforce a provision of 1983 -- the TRO or
- 16 whatever was such an action. It says the court in its
- 17 discretion may allow the prevailing party an attorneys'
- 18 fee. Well, did they prevail fail or not? They got what
- 19 they wanted. And it was such an action. Doesn't say
- 20 anything about whether you have been declared horrible
- 21 or wonderful or violator or not a violator. It says did
- 22 they get what they want in the action? Answer, yes.
- 23 End of matter.
- Now what's wrong with reading it that way?
- MS. SEITZ: To prevail you must prevail on a

- 1 legal claim.
- 2 JUSTICE BREYER: Yeah, they got the legal
- 3 claim. The legal claim is we want to have our
- 4 demonstration on February 14; we have a right to do it
- 5 and therefore issue an order. You said no, don't issue
- 6 the order, because they don't. And therefore, they won.
- 7 MS. SEITZ: Respectfully, that's not a legal
- 8 claim.
- 9 JUSTICE BREYER: It is not?
- 10 MS. SEITZ: The underlying legal claim is
- 11 that the State's denial of the permit was
- 12 unconstitutional.
- 13 JUSTICE BREYER: Yeah. But what about the
- 14 legal claim we are under the law entitled to a
- 15 preliminary injunction.
- 16 MS. SEITZ: That is a type of relief you are
- 17 seeking but it's based on an underlying legal claim.
- 18 JUSTICE SCALIA: It is not a determination,
- 19 is it, that they have a right to hold a demonstration?
- MS. SEITZ: It is --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: It is just a determination
- 22 that we don't know at this point enough to say that you
- 23 don't have a right.
- MS. SEITZ: It is a product of an equitable
- 25 balancing that determines interim fairness --

1 JUSTICE BREYER: Well I thought, where it 2 say that in the statute that you have to have that particular kind of a claim? 3 4 MS. SEITZ: I think this Court's cases have 5 interpreted the word prevail and prevailing parties to 6 mean you must prevail on the merits of a legal claim. 7 The only instance in which that is not true is in a consent decree scenario and in a consent decree what you 8 have is a defendant assuming legal responsibility for 9 10 providing relief on the merits that resolves a claim. CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So what do you do in 11 a situation of mootness where there's -- you know, 12 13 they'd be happy to pursue the claim to establish that 14 they prevail on a permanent junction as well as a 15 preliminary one, but the case has become moot. Are they 16 automatically disentitled to attorneys' fees in that 17 case? 18 MS. SEITZ: A claim that is never resolved cannot be the basis of prevailing party status. And 19 20 that's what your hypothetical poses. And I also think 21 it's not correct to say there is no point in continuing 22 with litigation in that setting. In a private attorney 23 general setting, there is a value to having at the end 24 of litigation a decision --25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, there may be a

- 1 pint to pursuing it but I'm not sure it's one that the
- 2 locality governments -- I mean if you ask them the
- 3 question, would you rather be liable for attorney's fees
- 4 where you lose in a preliminary injunction but then the
- 5 case becomes moot, or would you rather have to face
- 6 individual officer liability to prevent the case from
- 7 becoming moot? Or would you rather face ongoing
- 8 litigation to prevent the case from becoming moot
- 9 because there's too much invested in the fees -- they
- 10 might choose the former.
- 11 MS. SEITZ: Well in this case, of course,
- 12 the State officials decided to defend the
- 13 constitutionality of their nudity ban to the end. It
- 14 was important to them.
- 15 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, the plaintiffs
- 16 decided to challenge it to the end. But I'm suggesting
- 17 that if they know they might -- it might result in a
- 18 loss of attorneys fees, when all they really wanted was
- 19 a particular demonstration, others might pursue it
- 20 differently.
- 21 MS. SEITZ: There are significant
- 22 countervailing considerations, and one is that under the
- 23 rule you're proposing, state and local governments would
- 24 be fearful about enforcing perfectly valid laws in
- 25 emergency situations for fear of being penalized with

- 1 fees. Then they have no fair chance --
- 2 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, you are saying the
- 3 Chief Justice is proposing a rule. I think he was
- 4 asking you -- you want to just give us all or nothing.
- 5 And we're suggesting that it just doesn't make systemic
- 6 good sense to insist that every preliminary injunction
- 7 be carried through to a final adjudication for
- 8 attorney's fees. And we are asking is there some midway
- 9 ground. And you, you've so far -- you can structure the
- 10 argument the way you want, but you so far are -- in
- 11 effect telling me absolutely not.
- 12 MS. SEITZ: I -- I think that because of the
- 13 rule I distill from this Court's case which is that you
- 14 can't prevail on a claim that's not decided, it's hard
- 15 for me to see what the middle ground would be. We do of
- 16 course have the alternative ground for decision in this
- 17 case which is that a claim, a preliminary junction
- 18 that's issued in ongoing litigation whose prediction on
- 19 the merits is later essentially proven to be false by
- 20 subsequent litigation, can't be the basis for prevailing
- 21 party --
- JUSTICE BREYER: So what do you think, when
- 23 this was enacted, to make up an example that it is as
- 24 horrifying as I can think, where the Ku Klux Klan was
- 25 riding in the South, and a group of civil rights

- 1 demonstrators wanted to make certain they could have
- 2 their demonstration outside the jail and they go to the
- 3 judge and says the sheriff is involved in this, the
- 4 whole town is; we want an injunction tomorrow.
- 5 Tomorrow. Right now. So -- and we don't really care
- 6 that much about the end of it, but we'll -- we'll go
- 7 ahead and litigate it if you want. Now they get their
- 8 injunction. They have the demonstration; it's over. I
- 9 would have thought if there was a situation for which
- 10 1983 was written, it's that one.
- MS. SEITZ: And if in fact it is clear that
- 12 there is no issue law in that setting.
- 13 JUSTICE BREYER: Oh, there is. The other
- 14 side has a lot of arguments. And they each have
- 15 arguments. There are plenty of issues of law.
- 16 MS. SEITZ: Then you just articulated why
- 17 that plaintiff should not be considered a prevailing
- 18 party without taking the position that that is capable
- 19 of repetition, but evading review situation, arguing
- 20 that in effect the judgment is based totally on law and
- 21 converting it essentially to a judgment on the merits,
- 22 or otherwise coming to a final judgment on a claim, so
- 23 that the plaintiff would have --
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: But why should a
- 25 plaintiff do that when the plaintiff's position is we

- 1 got precisely what we wanted; this is not going to be --
- 2 this is a one-time only demonstration. We're not going
- 3 to repeat this.
- 4 Why force litigation, especially when we can
- 5 say in this case, you lost on the merits? The judge
- 6 made a prediction. Turned out that -- that that was
- 7 wrong.
- MS. SEITZ: To -- to impose attorney's fees
- 9 on a defendant, it's not simply about what the plaintiff
- 10 gets, whether the plaintiff gets what he wants, but it
- 11 is also about what the justification is for forcing the
- 12 state and local government to pay fees.
- And the purpose of the Civil Rights Act is
- 14 to impose such fees against violators of civil rights
- 15 and for the benefit of victims of similar rights
- 16 violation, and not simply on those whom it is predicted
- 17 will have a substantial likelihood of success on the
- 18 merits.
- 19 JUSTICE GINSBURG: So you get a case that
- 20 involves a student. And -- and something like the
- 21 DeFunis case. The student is admitted to the law school
- 22 event. They have much controversy over this affirmative
- 23 action program. The student graduates. And -- but the
- 24 student has prevailed up until that time.
- 25 MS. SEITZ: I don't believe the student has

- 1 prevailed within the meaning of Section 19(a). The
- 2 student has been predicted to be likely to prevail and
- 3 has received an interim fairness -- an interim
- 4 adjustment based on considerations of fairness.
- 5 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But can't fight on
- 6 because first, the student had gotten everything that he
- 7 wanted and the case is moot. The student has graduated.
- 8 MS. SEITZ: In that situation, I think the
- 9 benefit is capable of repetition for debating review or
- 10 of utilizing the class action --
- 11 JUSTICE GINSBURG: On if you had a class
- 12 action. He had a single action, and he's graduated.
- MS. SEITZ: But there are tools a plaintiff
- 14 can use to prevent this kind of case from becoming moot
- 15 where there is an important need to have an issue
- 16 decided.
- 17 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Apart from the class
- 18 action, what -- what else is there?
- 19 MS. SEITZ: 65(a)(3) which allows
- 20 consolidation of a merits determination.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Oh. Yeah.
- MS. SEITZ: I reserve the reminder of my
- 23 time?
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, I mean, what if --
- 25 what if there's nothing else he can do? What -- what

- 1 horrible does he face? He faces a horrible of having to
- 2 pay for his own litigation, just like the rest of us do.
- I mean this is an extraordinary benefit
- 4 we're talking about here, getting -- getting your
- 5 attorney's fees paid. I -- it doesn't seem to me that
- 6 we're casting this, this person into the underworld.
- 7 MS. SEITZ: And there's no basis for
- 8 awarding fees against the innocent state and local
- 9 government not determined to have committed a violation.
- 10 May I reserve the balance?
- 11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, Counsel.
- We'll hear from Ms. Millett. Ms. Millett.
- ORAL ARGUMENT OF PATRICIA A. MILLETT,
- ON BEHALF OF UNITED STATES,
- 15 AS AMICUS CURIAE SUPPORTING PETITIONERS
- 16 MS. MILLETT: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it
- 17 please the Court.
- This Court has held repeatedly that
- 19 liability for attorney's fees and liability for
- 20 violation of Federal law go hand in hand. A preliminary
- 21 injunction does not determine that there has been a
- 22 violation of Federal law.
- 23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Are you on the all
- 24 or nothing team this morning?
- 25 (Laughter.)

- 1 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Is it -- can a 2 preliminary injunction never be the basis for an award 3 of attorney's fees? 4 MS. MILLETT: I won't say never in this 5 narrow circumstance. And that is when, when a 6 preliminary injunction results in a definitive and 7 determinative ruling of law such as Thornburgh versus 8 Obstetricians -- College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, or the steel mill seizure case from this 9 10 Court. It came up on a preliminary injunction but this 11 Court made a dispositive and controlling ruling of constitutional law. And assuming that that declaration 12 13 is then followed up by a change in behavior by the 14 defendant compelled as result of the ruling, that would 15 be enough. But --16 JUSTICE SCALIA: Excuse me. How can that
- 17 be, that a preliminary injunction resolves a dispositive
- 18 question of law? Does that happen?
- 19 MS. MILLETT: Well it happened -- it
- 20 happened in this Court and -- and -- and there were
- 21 dissenters. But there -- it happened in this Court's
- 22 case in the Thornburgh case. It came up on a
- 23 preliminary junction. This Court determined there were
- 24 no disputed questions of fact and it was only a contest
- 25 of law what the Court said is that when they have done

- 1 that we can make dispositive ruling of law. But I think
- 2 that's an unusual situation and what's critical is that
- 3 when --
- 4 JUSTICE SCALIA: But it wasn't the issuance
- 5 of the preliminary injunction that resolved it, it was
- 6 the appeal to this Court where we -- we resolved a
- 7 question of law.
- 8 MS. MILLETT: This Court resolved a question
- 9 of law on the merits. The debate in that opinion
- 10 between the majority and the dissents was that the --
- 11 the dissent said majority should only decide whether it
- 12 was an abuse of discretion to issue the preliminary
- 13 injunction.
- 14 And, I mean -- it, it, it can become sort of
- 15 the same thing if an error in law is necessarily an
- 16 abuse of discretion, but when -- when a superior court's
- 17 made a definitive --
- 18 JUSTICE BREYER: What is the law in respect
- 19 to this, which is right on the point you're arguing,
- 20 that two parties have this kind of suit and the
- 21 government party -- they settle it, and giving
- 22 everything that the plaintiff conceivably wants, but at
- 23 the end they say: We don't admit we violated the law.
- 24 Can you get attorney's fees there or not.
- 25 MS. MILLE TT: If it's a consent decree.

- 1 JUSTICE BREYER: It's a consent decree, but
- 2 no admission of a violation of law.
- 3 MS. MILLE TT: No, that's right. This
- 4 Court, while repeatedly stating, including unanimously
- 5 just two years ago, that the central justification for
- 6 attorney's fees is that the defendant is a violator of
- 7 Federal law, has found that it will also permit
- 8 attorney's fees in the consent decree situation, but
- 9 that's because there you have a defendant who is not
- 10 fighting and continuing to resist any form of final
- 11 relief, has instead agreed to provide final relief that
- 12 runs to a plaintiff, in favor of a plaintiff, and that
- 13 advances the purpose of Federal law.
- 14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I have never
- 15 understood why that's an issue. Can't the parties -- it
- 16 seems to me an exception that isn't consistent with the
- 17 theory. Why can't the parties just agree on attorney's
- 18 fees in the settlement agreement and the consent decree
- 19 and then it wouldn't have to be an issue?
- MS. MILLETT: I think, I think that in
- 21 reality certainly a party can say, I'm not entering into
- 22 a consent decree if we're not going to resolve
- 23 attorney's fees now or if we're going to have a fight
- 24 over them. So they certainly have that power because
- 25 it's largely a contract, although one enforced by

- 1 courts. I'm only trying to be candid with this Court's
- 2 precedent, which is also recognized in Mayer versus
- 3 Gagne. For some reason, maybe they reserved the
- 4 question there to be disputed in court whether you'd be
- 5 responsible for attorney's fees.
- But I do think That's much more of a side
- 7 show because that can all be dealt with through the
- 8 contract elements of the consent agree. And really what
- 9 you're talking about when a court is coercively imposing
- 10 attorney's fees on a defendant is that the defendant has
- 11 a right to not pay those unless they have been found to
- 12 be a violator of Federal law or have agreed to through
- 13 contract to deal with that issue.
- 14 JUSTICE SOUTER: Okay, but the argument is
- 15 undercut, as you yourself say, by the settlement rule.
- 16 Don't we have the settlement rule simply because we want
- 17 to promote settlements? We don't want litigation to go
- 18 on and on and on simply because somebody wants to
- 19 establish a right to attorney's fees. And doesn't that
- 20 same reasoning apply here when there is a preliminary
- 21 injunction and that's all the person wants. By the same
- 22 reasoning that we accept a settlement, why shouldn't we
- 23 accept a preliminary injunction as being a sufficient
- 24 determination of rights to justify fees because we don't
- 25 want it to go on and on and on when nobody has any issue

- 1 of substance involved, but is just litigating for the
- 2 sake of establishing a right to fees later?
- 3 MS. MILLETT: I have three answers to that.
- 4 First of all, there are two parties here. The defendant
- 5 has a right not to be assessed attorney's fees, which
- 6 are a form of final relief not interim relief, without a
- 7 final decision that they violated on the merits.
- 8 JUSTICE SOUTER: But the only attorney's
- 9 fees that would be assessed would be attorney's fees
- 10 attributable to the preliminary injunction.
- 11 MS. MILLETT: That's right, but they have a
- 12 right not to pay anything if they haven't done anything
- 13 wrong.
- 14 JUSTICE SOUTER: They have been found
- 15 subject to a preliminary injunction. The playing field
- 16 is no longer even.
- MS. MILLETT: They haven't been found to be
- 18 -- there may be a Presumption or a substantial
- 19 likelihood they're going to lose, but that doesn't
- 20 always come out. And there's not even always a
- 21 substantial likelihood --
- 22 JUSTICE SCALIA: The point is you wouldn't
- 23 mind putting that on a resume, that you have been
- 24 subjected to a preliminary injunction.
- MS. MILLETT: No --

- 1 JUSTICE SCALIA: It's not a black mark on
- 2 your name, is it?
- 3 MS. MILLETT: No.
- 4 JUSTICE SCALIA: You haven't violated any
- 5 Federal law.
- 6 MS. MILLETT: This is a case in point.
- 7 JUSTICE SOUTER: But it does mean, it does
- 8 mean that somebody with a burden to establish an
- 9 entitlement to the injunction has carried the burden.
- 10 MS. MILLETT: Well, the test is the
- 11 prevailing party, not the substantially likely to
- 12 prevail party. And the other reason --
- 13 JUSTICE SOUTER: Then let's not have it in
- 14 the settlement case.
- MS. MILLETT: Well, again settlements can be
- 16 dealt with through the settlement, as part of the
- 17 settlement process. But I think --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: They are voluntary, these
- 19 settlements, aren't they? So you could at least say
- 20 that the innocent person who gets stuck with attorney's
- 21 fees for settling gets what he asked for, right? It's
- 22 voluntary.
- MS. MILLETT: Well, that's what I tried to
- 24 explain to Justice Breyer.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: That may be, but that's not

- 1 the way the statute is written.
- 2 JUSTICE STEVENS: Would this case be
- 3 different if the defendant had consented to the entry of
- 4 a preliminary injunction?
- 5 MS. MILLETT: No, I don't think so, and I
- 6 don't think courts as a matter of judicial economy want
- 7 to tell the government every time we agree not to
- 8 oppose, to stay the removal of an alien, that we somehow
- 9 would get a bill.
- 10 JUSTICE STEVENS: So if this had been, if
- 11 they had entered into a consent decree covering just the
- one event on the front burner, that would have been?
- 13 MS. MILLETT: A consent decree is a final
- 14 resolution of a claim that legally obligates the
- 15 defendant, final relief that runs in favor of the
- 16 plaintiff.
- JUSTICE STEVENS: But if they consented to
- 18 the entry of a preliminary injunction, why wouldn't that
- 19 be equally binding?
- MS. MILLETT: Because it is not a final
- 21 resolution. Preliminary injunctions are important.
- 22 They're of value to the parties. But there's a
- 23 trade-off in getting it. The reason courts can give
- 24 them is they aren't committed to final relief. They
- aren't committed to final obligation, and they can

- 1 decide when --
- 2 JUSTICE STEVENS: Well, they were able to go
- 3 ahead with their one demonstration that precipitated the
- 4 litigation, and they would have been able to do it the
- 5 same way if they had a consent decree instead of having
- 6 the other side not fight very vigorously in opposition
- 7 to the preliminary.
- 8 MS. MILLETT: The defendant who'S been fully
- 9 vindicated at the end of the case shouldn't have to
- 10 write checks to two attorneys instead of just their own.
- 11 There's a fundamental fairness element here.
- 12 But also on the judicial economy --
- JUSTICE STEVENS: But then why isn't the
- 14 attorney -- if there were a consent decree -- I don't
- 15 understand the difference.
- 16 MS. MILLETT: Because the defendant's in the
- 17 control of the fairness issue in the consent decree and
- 18 is not in this situation.
- But the other situation, concern, is concern
- 20 about judicial economy. And there's arguments in the
- 21 amicus briefs on the other side that preliminary
- 22 injunctions are common. But remember, this is -- the
- 23 central justification is that the plaintiff is a private
- 24 attorney general who doesn't just do what they want to
- do, but either resolves the issue of law or obtains

- 1 enduring changes in defendant's behavior that are of
- 2 utility to the community at large. Contrary to --
- 3 JUSTICE KENNEDY: We have when election
- 4 season comes many, many requests for injunctions, and
- 5 after the election is over the case just goes away.
- 6 Nobody is interested.
- 7 MS. MILLETT: That is not --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Under your position, all
- 9 of these matters must be contested until final judgment
- 10 before attorney's fees are available.
- 11 MS. MILLETT: That is not the United States
- 12 Government's experience when it's been involved in a lot
- 13 of voting cases. Lots of them get fought until the end,
- 14 and this Court's decision in Brown versus Choate
- 15 recognizes these are capable of repetition, yet evading
- 16 review. Now, if the private plaintiff doesn't want to
- do the work of a private attorney general, that's their
- 18 choice. No one says you have to stay. It's just, if
- 19 you want attorney's fees, you have to accept a
- 20 preliminary injunction for what it is. It's very
- 21 beneficial, but it is not a resolution on the merits
- 22 that obligates the defendant to provide a form of final
- 23 relief, not interim relief, to you.
- 24 And this Court itself has expressed
- 25 significant concerns about having voting cases being run

- 1 up on preliminary injunctions at the last minute and the
- 2 impact that can have on voting, and we shouldn't
- 3 encourage that.
- 4 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Ms. Millett, did I
- 5 hear your legal test a while ago is an enduring change
- 6 in the defendant's behavior? Is that your standard?
- 7 MS. MILLETT: Enduring more in -- not in the
- 8 transient sense of preliminary injunction. Obviously,
- 9 things change on the outside world. But in the form of
- 10 final relief and permanent relief, and that's what this
- 11 Court's cases have said time and again. Not only must
- 12 the defendant be a violator of Federal law, but in
- 13 Ferrari, in Texas Teachers versus Darwin, in Hanrahan
- 14 and Hewitt, the Court has made clear that it is final, a
- 15 resolution of a dispute, a final judgment, the settling
- 16 of a problem that makes someone a prevailing party. And
- 17 "prevailing party," as this Court explained in
- 18 Buckhannon, is a term of art. As we say on pages 11 to
- 19 12 of our brief, "That term of art, as defined in the
- 20 relevant dictionaries at the time, was not just that you
- 21 won something, but that you won at the end of the suit."
- 22 And that's a question of basic fundamental
- 23 fairness to plaintiffs. Remember, there's going to be
- 24 countervailing judicial economy concerns. If you tell
- 25 governmental entities that they're going to have to

- 1 take -- may I finish -- have to take emergency appeals
- 2 from every interlocutory order and revisit stays to
- 3 avoid liability for attorney's fees.
- 4 Thank you.
- 5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
- 6 Ms. Millett.
- 7 Now we'll hear from you, Mr. Galanter.
- 8 ORAL ARGUMENT OF SETH M. GALANTER
- 9 ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENTS
- 10 MR. GALANTER: Mr. Chief Justice and may it
- 11 please the Court:
- 12 Respondents went into Federal court because
- 13 State officials told them their protest would be illegal
- 14 and they left Federal court with a preliminary
- 15 injunction that prohibited State interference with their
- 16 protest.
- 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: No, no. They left
- 18 Federal court having lost on the permanent injunction.
- MR. GALANTER: Well, Your Honor, 20-some
- 20 months later they lost on another component of their
- 21 case, where they were seeking permanent relief to enjoin
- 22 the facial applicability of the regulations.
- 23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Their legal, their
- 24 legal claim was that these regulations were invalid
- 25 under the First Amendment. And they lost on that legal

- 1 claim.
- MR. GALANTER: At the end of the case, Your
- 3 Honor, yes. But at the preliminary injunction stage,
- 4 one -- their claim for relief was a violation of the
- 5 First Amendment and there was evidence at the
- 6 preliminary injunction stage that --
- 7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, they succeeded
- 8 in filing their complaint as well, but they don't get
- 9 attorney's fees for that, because they were successful
- 10 at the filing complaint stage.
- MR. GALANTER: That's true, Your Honor. But
- 12 what they obtained on February 13, 2003, was the relief
- 13 they sought.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: What if they got a TRO
- 15 instead of a preliminary injunction?
- MR. GALANTER: We're not suggesting that
- 17 TROs --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: I know you aren't. Why
- 19 not?
- MR. GALANTER: Well, there are structural
- 21 differences between the two.
- 22 JUSTICE SCALIA: What are the two? I mean,
- 23 they prevailed. They have a TRO here, something of
- 24 value.
- 25 MR. GALANTER: There was not the adversaries

- 1 that exists in a preliminary injunction. And I think
- 2 the distinction --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: But it's just prevails. If
- 4 you think "prevails" means you come out of there with
- 5 anything that's worth something that has a contempt
- 6 citation behind it, I don't see why a TRO wouldn't
- 7 qualify.
- 8 MR. GALANTER: We're not suggesting that as
- 9 the basic rule. What we are suggesting is that if you
- 10 obtain a preliminary injunction, in part because
- 11 Congress recognized the difference between TROs and
- 12 preliminary injunctions and placed preliminary
- 13 injunctions and permanent injunctions together as the
- 14 kinds of orders that had --
- 15 JUSTICE ALITO: What if you get a
- 16 preliminary injunction and then at the permanent
- injunction stage the basis for the preliminary
- 18 injunction is reversed. Let's say the preliminary
- 19 injunction here was based on the ground that the
- 20 decision was content-based, a factual decision, and at
- 21 the permanent injunction stage the court finds that it
- 22 was not content-based.
- MR. GALANTER: Then we would not be
- 24 prevailing. But I have to point out the district court
- 25 in this case expressed --

1 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Even though you got what 2 you wanted? You got to put on the show. 3 I thought that at the end of the line, the judge said your First Amendment rights have not been 4 5 violated, the nudity ordnance can be enforced. If you 6 had come back again, say the next week, and said, we 7 want to do another peace symbol, after the court has 8 ruled on the permanent junction and you lost, you certainly couldn't prevail when you're coming back with 9 10 another as-applied, when the court has said this 11 ordnance is good and doesn't violate the First 12 Amendment. 13 That's correct. But if there were an 14 intervening fact, if they permitted a performance of 15 "Hair" and then said, but we'll enforce the nudity 16 prohibition against your protest, then we would be able 17 to come back. 18 The final judgment in this case does not 19 preclude future as-applied challenges, either 20 content-based or arbitrary, and the district court 21 recognized that when it made very clear that it did not 22 reverse or repudiate its preliminary injunction ruling 23 simply because we lost the permanent junction. 24 JUSTICE GINSBURG: I thought this court 25 said, and correct me if I'm wrong, that you wanted to

- 1 put on a demonstration that would be like the plays,
- 2 that would be hidden from public view because you have a
- 3 curtain or whatever around it. And then the judge said,
- 4 oh no, that's not what they wanted, they didn't want it
- 5 to be hidden from you view, they wanted people to see
- 6 their demonstration, so if that's what they want to do,
- 7 they don't have any First Amendment protection.
- 8 MR. GALANTER: That is what was at the end.
- 9 I would just point out that at the preliminary
- 10 injunction stage, you have to remember Ms. Weyer had
- 11 been permitted to put on her play, not hiding it,
- 12 several years before. There was testimony suggesting
- 13 that one of the differences in the result, the refusal
- 14 to allow the anti-war protest, was because it was an
- 15 anti-war protest. And the district court makes it
- 16 clear, in our brief in opposition appendix at page 4a.
- 17 He says: "The court did not revisit or reverse its
- 18 earlier decision regarding the same legal issue.
- 19 But I think all this just goes to the point
- 20 for that this case presents some interesting issues, but
- 21 that the per se rule that the Petitioners press, that
- 22 you can never get --
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Let's stay with this case
- 24 because your interest is in getting fees in this case.
- 25 Suppose you had lost the preliminary injunction and then

- 1 you won at the end of the line. Certainly you would be
- 2 prevailing throughout, right?
- 3 MR. GALANTER: We would obviously be a
- 4 prevailing party. But under Hens ley --
- 5 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Even though you lost on
- 6 the preliminary injunction?
- 7 MR. GALANTER: Yes. Under Hensley versus
- 8 Eckert, this Court has made clear you can win on some
- 9 claims, lose in others.
- 10 JUSTICE STEVENS: But you would get
- 11 attorney's fees for the preliminary injunction work,
- 12 even though you lost on that?
- MR. GALANTER: We would get attorney's fees
- 14 for the reasonable work that ended up leading to the
- 15 success. District courts have for decades now parsed
- 16 through these legal records, subject to review by the
- 17 court of appeals.
- 18 JUSTICE GINSBURG: That parsing, is there
- 19 any doubt that if you won on the main, in the main bout,
- 20 that you would get your fees for your entire
- 21 representation?
- MR. GALANTER: Yes, there is doubt, Your
- 23 Honor. The court does look for whether these fees are
- 24 reasonable.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Not that. But would you

- 1 not get -- would the judge say you don't get a penny for
- 2 the effort you made to achieve the preliminary
- 3 injunction because you lost, you lost it, even though in
- 4 hindsight I could see that that was the wrong decision,
- 5 you should have had it?
- 6 MR. GALANTER: Well, Your Honor, under
- 7 Hensley you look to see whether they're related or
- 8 unrelated claims. This Court has adopted --
- 9 JUSTICE GINSBURG: They're obviously
- 10 related. It's the same thing. I need -- I have a short
- 11 time to answer the preliminary injunction. The judge
- 12 said: You haven't shown probability of success on the
- 13 merits, or denies it. You win. I thought that there
- 14 wasn't any doubt that you could get your fees for the
- 15 successful result from the time you filed the complaint
- 16 until the final judgment.
- MR. GALANTER: We would hope a court would
- 18 find that an as-applied challenge and a facial challenge
- 19 were sufficiently related that we'd be entitled to fees
- 20 for both. But what I have to stress --
- 21 JUSTICE SCALIA: Even though you lost on the
- 22 preliminary injunction? The fees that you reasonably
- 23 expended in seeking a preliminary injunction, even
- 24 though you lost, you'd be able to charge to the other
- 25 side?

- 1 MR. GALANTER: If I had won the final --
- 2 JUSTICE SCALIA: Yes or no? I think you can
- 3 answer yes or no.
- 4 MR. GALANTER: Yes.
- 5 JUSTICE SCALIA: Okay.
- 6 MR. GALANTER: But I would like to caution
- 7 that that would be eligible for fees, but the court
- 8 would go through it and say how much of this were rated
- 9 to your final win, was it reasonable.
- 10 JUSTICE SCALIA: No. No. No. How much of
- 11 it related to the preliminary -- you mean anything that
- 12 related only to the preliminary injunction you would be
- 13 denied?
- 14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: All the work you did
- 15 to show irreparable harm, balance of the equities, not
- 16 on the merits, you're saying that's off the table?
- 17 MR. GALANTER: Well, it -- no, Your Honor,
- 18 because those very things are also needed at a permanent
- 19 injunction.
- JUSTICE ALITO: But you've got five hours
- 21 billed -- you bill for five hours to write the brief
- 22 that you submit at the preliminary injunction stage.
- 23 You could get those fees later if you won at the
- 24 permanent injunction stage, could you not?
- MR. GALANTER: Probably. And we certainly

- 1 would get the money we did for writing the complaint.
- 2 And one of our counts for the complaint here was exactly
- 3 for the preliminary injunction that we obtained.
- 4 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Counsel, your
- 5 approach, just as there are problems from the judicial
- 6 economy perspective with your friend's approach, but
- 7 doesn't your approach require the States to fight tooth
- 8 and nail on the preliminary injunction because they're
- 9 running the risk if they lose there, they're going to
- 10 pay fees even if they prevail later? As opposed to, as
- 11 is often the case, they might say, you know, we consent
- 12 to the entry of the preliminary injunction or we
- 13 don't -- you know, we're going to save our energy.
- 14 Doesn't it require them to fight every possible stage,
- 15 including appeal and so on?
- MR. GALANTER: Well, two things, Your Honor.
- 17 As I think I made clear to Justice Alito, if the
- decision is reversed or repudiated by the district
- 19 court, there would now -- we would not be prevailing
- 20 parties. We would simply have gotten this benefit. But
- 21 --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: I don't know what you mean,
- 23 if the decision on what? On the preliminary injunction?
- MR. GALANTER: Yes.
- 25 JUSTICE SCALIA: Is repudiated by the

- 1 district -- how is it repudiated? What do you envision?
- MR. GALANTER: Well, in the hypothetical
- 3 where the same facts, the same law, and the district
- 4 court says I was wrong, that would be the kind of
- 5 repudiation.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: In a later case, you mean?
- 7 MR. GALANTER: In the course of the
- 8 proceedings in the same case, Your Honor. But --
- 9 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, he doesn't
- 10 have to say he's wrong. What often happens is as it is
- 11 here, he say's I've got 24 hours, I don't have a brief
- 12 from the other side, I kind of make the best guess I
- 13 can. And then later on after an adversary presentation
- 14 and an evidentiary hearing, he issues a different
- 15 ruling. As here, he doesn't have to say I was wrong on
- 16 my 24-hour off-the-cuff quess. It's just that I'm
- 17 better informed. Is that repudiation or not?
- 18 MR. GALANTER: No, Your Honor, it's not.
- 19 And here, in fact he said the opposite. He said I
- 20 wasn't wrong, these were based on different legal
- 21 theories. And --
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Where -- can you -- I
- 23 thought what he said was -- I thought they wanted a
- 24 demonstration that was going to be secure from public
- 25 view, and instead I understand now that's not -- that

- 1 wasn't what they wanted from the start.
- 2 So on the premise on which I was operating,
- 3 I was right, that they were going to do it just like the
- 4 plays. But what they really planned to do, and did do,
- 5 I was wrong because those facts were not before me. Had
- 6 those facts been before me, they would have lost on the
- 7 preliminary injunction.
- 8 MR. GALANTER: I don't believe that that's
- 9 the fairest reading of the district court's subsequent
- 10 orders in this case. What the district court made clear
- 11 was that his as-applied holding, that the plays and the
- 12 war protests were being treated differently. Remember
- 13 that it's --
- JUSTICE STEVENS: Yes, but assume the
- 15 district court thought he was right at the preliminary
- 16 injunction, and ruled otherwise at the permanent
- 17 junction. But what if the court of appeals when it
- 18 reviews the fee application, thinks he was wrong both
- 19 times?
- MR. GALANTER: Well, Your Honor, we would
- 21 suggest that the person in the best position to
- 22 understand what the district court was doing --
- JUSTICE STEVENS: Is the district court.
- MR. GALANTER: Yes, Your Honor.
- 25 JUSTICE STEVENS: But maybe the court of

- 1 appeals is in the best position to determine whether
- 2 they made an error of law or not.
- 3 MR. GALANTER: Yes. And obviously they
- 4 review errors of law, questions of law --
- 5 JUSTICE STEVENS: And if they think he made
- 6 an error of law, what should they do?
- 7 MR. GALANTER: If he had made an error of
- 8 law in the preliminary injunction ruling that, on
- 9 de novo review, and reversed, then --
- 10 JUSTICE STEVENS: No, there's no reverse.
- 11 It's too late. They've had the demonstration so it's
- 12 all over. But in reviewing the fee application, the
- 13 court of appeals concludes that the district judge --
- 14 the decision represented an incorrect premise of law and
- 15 therefore, he did make an error. Would that control or
- 16 would the district judge's view of the validity of his
- 17 own decision control?
- MR. GALANTER: We would suggest the latter,
- 19 Your Honor, in part to avoid the fees on fees litigation
- 20 problems. I mean, other than the per se rule of --
- 21 JUSTICE KENNEDY: In other words, to avoid
- fees on fees, we do something that's wrong?
- MR. GALANTER: No, Your Honor. It's not
- 24 wrong. It's consistent with the text and the policies
- 25 underlying --

- JUSTICE BREYER: I thought that it -- am I
- 2 wrong about that? I thought that if, A, he goes in, he
- 3 gets a preliminary injunction, he says the law is da,
- 4 da, da, the judge says you're right, that's what it is,
- 5 preliminary injunction. And now it's continued up on
- 6 appeal, the appellate court says you're wrong about the
- 7 law. You got it, you had the event, but you're
- 8 absolutely wrong, the law did not support you. I
- 9 thought under those circumstances you were not
- 10 prevailing and you couldn't get it. Is that the law or
- 11 not?
- MR. GALANTER: It is the law, Your Honor.
- 13 What I'm suggesting, though, is that --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: I thought the hypothetical
- 15 was different, was, the case proceeds to final judgment
- 16 on the merits; and at that point -- okay -- at that
- 17 point, the issue of whether the preliminary injunction
- 18 was valid or not comes up, not in the direct appeal from
- 19 the preliminary injunction.
- 20 MR. GALANTER: I --
- 21 JUSTICE SCALIA: Assume you win on the
- 22 merits.
- JUSTICE STEVENS: It's a direct appeal on
- 24 the fee issue.
- MR. GALANTER: Yes, Your Honor. What my --

- 1 if I may, I agree with Justice Breyer's hypothetical
- 2 that if you're appealing the merits and the court of
- 3 appeals says something which shows that the -- the
- 4 preliminary injunction should not have been issued,
- 5 we're not a prevailing party. I agree with
- 6 Justice Scalia that if you're appealing from the
- 7 preliminary injunction and the court of appeals
- 8 reverses, then you're not the prevailing party. But
- 9 Justice Stevens, what I would suggest to you and to
- 10 Justice Kennedy was, we shouldn't be adjudicating
- 11 whether the preliminary injunction was correctly entered
- 12 at the fees stage. If there is --
- 13 JUSTICE BREYER: Is there any authority for
- 14 that? Because it does seem to me wrong, that where a
- 15 person has got a preliminary injunction and it's legally
- 16 unsupportable, and then he gets the fee but then they
- 17 appeal that and the court of appeals determines it's
- 18 legally unsupportable, he never should have gotten it,
- 19 I'd be surprised if there is a case that awards the fee
- 20 in those circumstances, but maybe there is. What is it?
- 21 MR. GALANTER: Well, I mean, the courts of
- 22 appeals have adopted different standards. I can't point
- 23 to one --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Is there any case you can
- 25 think of that under those circumstances let's him have

1 the attorney's fees? 2 MR. GALANTER: I can't point to one. 3 JUSTICE BREYER: No, I would be surprised. 4 MR. GALANTER: But the --5 JUSTICE BREYER: The other thing that I 6 wonder about this case is, are you the prevailing party? 7 And the reason I ask that is because when I look through 8 the record it seems to me your clients are very interesting. They have their point of view. And their 9 10 point of view, one of their points of view was that the 11 state said you can have this demonstration, just wear a skimpy swimming suit. No. Well, you can have the 12 13 demonstration maybe, I'm not sure of this, but we're 14 going to put up a cloth so other people who don't want 15 to see you don't have to see you. And there your client 16 said, we won't pay any attention to the cloth. At least 17 we didn't in the past. And then looking at that I 18 thought, well, maybe what they got was, they got a preliminary injunction or a TRO, whatever you want to 19 20 call it, but it didn't stop the State from putting up 21 the cloth. It was pretty clear the State would, and it 22 should have been pretty clear that they were going to 23 ignore it, which they did. 24 And why is this any different than having 25 won an injunction to say okay, you can demonstrate, but

- 1 in your swimming suit? In other words, they didn't want
- 2 this. They didn't want what they got. Now, what's the
- 3 response to that?
- 4 MR. GALANTER: They did get what they
- 5 wanted. They wanted to be nude. They wanted to make
- 6 sure they weren't escorted off the beach or arrested.
- 7 And that's exactly what happened. They had an order
- 8 that protected that.
- Now, the screen was there, and there's
- 10 material disputes of fact about what they were told
- 11 about the screen by whom. But the court's order did not
- 12 say stay behind the screen. They were not in violation
- 13 of the court order.
- But I think this goes to the more general
- 15 point, how can you tell when someone prevails, and this
- 16 Court has already established that. You obtain some
- 17 relief through a court award that materially changes the
- 18 relationship.
- 19 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Did the court order
- 20 provide for a screen?
- 21 MR. GALANTER: The court order that -- no.
- 22 The court order said that the State was not prohibited
- 23 from using the means it had in the past. So it
- 24 clarified what the State was not prohibited from doing.
- 25 It did not impose any requirement on the plaintiffs.

- 1 JUSTICE SCALIA: That included a screen.
- MR. GALANTER: It did, Your Honor, but it
- 3 didn't order the screen.
- 4 JUSTICE SCALIA: But your people didn't want
- 5 a screen.
- 6 MR. GALANTER: That's correct, Your Honor.
- 7 JUSTICE SCALIA: So they didn't get what
- 8 they asked for.
- 9 MR. GALANTER: They didn't get removed from
- 10 the beach or arrested for being nude either, Your Honor,
- 11 so they did get what they wanted.
- 12 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, that's only because,
- 13 I guess the other side didn't take the action that they
- 14 could have taken if they didn't -- if they didn't apply
- 15 the screen.
- MR. GALANTER: Your Honor, when you obtain
- 17 the court award, just as if you obtain a court award to
- 18 get on a ballot or to hold a parade, or to wear a tee
- 19 shirt, I mean, you get that --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Did they conduct the
- 21 demonstration with a screen or without a screen?
- MR. GALANTER: I'm sorry?
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Did they conduct the
- 24 demonstration with or without a screen?
- MR. GALANTER: They did not use the screen.

1 JUSTICE SCALIA: And since they didn't use 2 the screen, the State was not prohibited from arresting 3 them; is that correct? 4 MR. GALANTER: That's correct. 5 JUSTICE SCALIA: So they did not get what 6 they asked for. Mainly a prohibition against the state 7 interfering with the kind of demonstration they wanted, 8 which was one without a screen. You say they didn't get 9 that. 10 11 MR. GALANTER: They didn't get that, but 12 they got something more than they had when they went in, 13 which was, they got the right to be naked on the beach, 14 which would have otherwise subjected them to arrest. 15 And, I mean --16 JUSTICE SCALIA: The state had no problem 17 with that. In the past the State had let them do that, 18 as long as they had the screen. 19 MR. GALANTER: It wouldn't let them do that 20 this time even with the screen. It sent them a letter 21 saying you may not appear on the beach nude. And I mean, obviously, at some times you don't get --22 23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So the State 24 prevailed to some extent as well. They prevailed to the 25 extent of getting in the order that they can do what

- 1 they had done, which is erect a screen.
- 2 MR. GALANTER: They -- yes. They
- 3 narrowed --
- 4 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So they're entitled
- 5 to some -- I mean, if -- this is not a reciprocal
- 6 switching thing, but I mean, it does go to the question
- 7 of whether or not you are the prevailing party when your
- 8 opponents have prevailed to a significant extent as
- 9 well.
- 10 MR. GALANTER: With respect, even if we had
- 11 sought and obtained a permanent injunction that allowed
- 12 us to protest but not behind the screen, we'd be a
- 13 prevailing party, although the defendants by their
- 14 successful advocacy would have narrowed the scope of the
- 15 injunction.
- 16 JUSTICE STEVENS: Let me ask you this. Is
- 17 it correct that an underlying principle of law that
- 18 justified your claim for relief and your actual relief
- 19 was that there's some First Amendment right to
- 20 demonstrate in the nude?
- MR. GALANTER: Yes, Your Honor, that was an
- 22 underlying part of that.
- JUSTICE STEVENS: And what is the support in
- 24 our cases for that proposition, if any?
- MR. GALANTER: Well, I think this Court's

- 1 cases in Barnes, the nude dancing cases suggest that
- 2 expressive activity combined with nudity is protected by
- 3 the First Amendment. Judge Calabrese in the Second
- 4 Circuit wrote an extensive opinion in a case called
- 5 Tunic versus Zapper, where he surveys this Court's
- 6 cases, and finds that occasionally there may be for
- 7 artistic or political reasons a right to be nude as part
- 8 of more expressive conduct. But I'd like to maybe --
- 9 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But that was also a --
- 10 that was the demonstration or the show arrangement under
- 11 the -- was it the Brooklyn Bridge or the Williamsburg
- 12 Bridge?
- 13 MR. GALANTER: It was on the streets of New
- 14 York, Your Honor, yes.
- 15 JUSTICE GINSBURG: At 6 a.m.
- 16 MR. GALANTER: Yes, Your Honor. But to take
- 17 this back just one step, to the notion that we either
- 18 not need something that's sort of enduring or merits
- 19 based in order to obtain relief. Maher versus Gagne
- 20 suggested, a court doesn't need to resolve the merits in
- 21 order for a party to be prevailing.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: But see, it's so
- 23 extraordinary for somebody to make the other side pay
- 24 for his attorney. We don't even do that -- we don't
- 25 even do that for guilty people when they -- when the

- 1 other side wins. So they have violated the law. We
- 2 still don't make them pay the other side's attorney's
- 3 fees. Now you want us to pay your client's attorney's
- 4 fees even though you're not dealing with a guilty party,
- 5 because ultimately the court found no, there really,
- 6 this person didn't violate the law.
- 7 That is -- you know, that's double
- 8 indemnity. I mean, it's multiplying the extraordinary
- 9 departure from our usual practice, which is that each
- 10 side pays his own. It's one thing to say well, if
- 11 you're a bad actor, in certain circumstances, civil
- 12 rights cases, we'll make you pay the other side. But
- 13 it's another thing to say if you're -- if you're not a
- 14 bad actor in a civil rights case but you're unlucky
- 15 enough to get hit with a preliminary injunction, we'll
- 16 make you pay for the other side. It just grates
- 17 that that -- it ain't fair.
- 18 JUSTICE STEVENS: It's not just a question
- 19 of weaker, but what Congress intended when they wrote a
- 20 statute authorizing these fees.
- 21 JUSTICE SCALIA: I assume that Congress
- 22 doesn't often do things that are grossly unfair. And if
- 23 there are various interpretations, one of which is not
- 24 grossly unfair, that's the one we should --
- JUSTICE STEVENS: And these trump the

- 1 literal language very definitely. 2 MR. GALANTER: Speaking of the language, we 3 have here when Congress enacted in 1970 -- in 1998 -- in 1976, just two years before this Court had interpreted 4 5 another civil rights attorney's fees statute. In that 6 one, however, Congress had actually required a final 7 order before attorney's fees would be awarded. JUSTICE BREYER: Well, before you leave 8 that, I wonder if -- there's one other thing floating 9 around in my mind. I might as well bring it up. The 10 word is prevailing, and if I go with you on the ground 11 12 that it's flexible and can apply to all kinds of things, 13 at least you have to really be prevailing, is there a 14 good faith element in that? That is to say, if your 15 clients when they went in to get this order and they got 16 it, and at that time they had no intention of following 17 what they had to do. Rather, they had every intention 18 of going out and tearing down the curtain. Does that 19 enter into the determination of whether they are really
- 21 fees, if you're bringing the ethical element into it?

20

MR. GALANTER: I think, Your Honor, that --

a prevailing party who ought to get their attorney's

- 23 well, first of all, the preliminary injunction itself
- 24 was an equitable remedy. Unclean hands could have gone
- 25 into that question, and yes, in determining the amount

- of fees, again, equity can be considered. The good
- 2 faith of the parties, just as the complete bad faith of
- 3 a plaintiff, this Court has held, permits fees to be
- 4 awarded for the defendants.
- 5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: You can't go into
- 6 court with the objective of just getting preliminary
- 7 relief, can you? I mean, you have to have an underlying
- 8 claim of illegality and, that seeks permanent relief,
- 9 right?
- 10 MR. GALANTER: That's true, Your Honor.
- 11 Although you can go into court knowing that --
- 12 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Knowing that --
- 13 MR. GALANTER: -- you're only going to be
- 14 getting --
- 15 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: -- preliminary
- 16 injunction.
- 17 MR. GALANTER: And everyone here -- excuse
- 18 me. And everyone here knew that absent an appeal, this
- 19 was the final word on the February 14th --
- 20 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: On the February
- 21 14th, but your client sought further relief.
- MR. GALANTER: Yes. But it also sought it
- 23 as a discrete claim for relief in the complaint, this
- 24 very injunction.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: You get costs? The

- 1 phrase is "attorney's fees as part of costs". So, do
- 2 you get costs for up to the preliminary injunction?
- 3 MR. GALANTER: Yes, Your Honor. The
- 4 district court in this case awarded us costs and also
- 5 awarded the other side costs. And that's actually --
- 6 JUSTICE GINSBURG: So you would split the
- 7 costs?
- 8 MR. GALANTER: He found we were both
- 9 prevailing parties in the case. And that's also
- 10 consistent with this Court's decision in Hensley, which
- 11 says you look at a case and the unrelated claims; you
- 12 can find that the plaintiffs are prevailing parties on
- 13 some, the defendants are prevailing parties on others,
- 14 and order cross awards of attorney's fees.
- 15 JUSTICE GINSBURG: So this defendant, having
- 16 succeeded in being the winner in the whole case, didn't
- 17 get costs for the whole case; is that what you're
- 18 telling me?
- 19 MR. GALANTER: They were awarded -- they
- 20 sought and were awarded all their costs for the entire
- 21 case, or they sought their costs for the entire case.
- 22 It was reduced by the district court as a matter of
- 23 equity. But they -- not because -- not parsing it out
- 24 among various parties to the case.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: So they were entitled to

- 1 costs for the entire case?
- 2 MR. GALANTER: Yes, they were, Your Honor.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: And attorney's fees under
- 4 the statute are to be awarded as part of costs?
- 5 MR. GALANTER: Yes, Your Honor.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: So if you're not entitled
- 7 to costs, if the defendant got the full costs, then how
- 8 do you get entitled to attorney's fees when the statute
- 9 puts them together? Because attorney's fees are part of
- 10 costs.
- 11 MR. GALANTER: That's correct. And there
- 12 are many cases where both parties end up getting awarded
- 13 costs. Hensley was one that suggested it was possible.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: But this wasn't --
- MR. GALANTER: No.
- 16 JUSTICE GINSBURG: This was one that the
- 17 state got all of its costs from your client?
- 18 MR. GALANTER: Yes. And our client got
- 19 costs from the state. There were counter awards --
- 20 cross awards of cost, which is not unusual in civil
- 21 litigation with multiple claims.
- But more importantly, I think, when we go
- 23 back and we look at the purposes, not only do we have
- 24 the language here, we also have the recognition, I think
- 25 as I was mentioning to the Chief Justice, that there's

- 1 going to be a lot of situations where core 1983 rights,
- 2 core constitutional rights are at stake where you know
- 3 you're not going to be able to obtain a permanent
- 4 injunction. You may even, as my friends on the other
- 5 side say, ask that the two be consolidated.
- JUSTICE ALITO: What if that's not the case,
- 7 but the plaintiff after getting a preliminary injunction
- 8 just voluntarily dismisses the case? Do they still get
- 9 costs for the preliminary injunction?
- 10 MR. GALANTER: Oh, I think the answer is
- 11 yes. And I think that that's actually something that
- 12 should be encouraged. In this case, the preliminary
- junction was relatively cheap, as litigation goes. To
- 14 encourage them to continue, particularly since the core
- 15 relief they sought had become moot. Yes, there was
- 16 additional relief they sought, or it could, in a
- 17 hypothetical could seek. But absent an appeal, that
- 18 part of the case is over and there's no real need to
- 19 continue to litigate it.
- 20 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I know you were
- 21 asked this question and your answer may have just
- 22 slipped by me. Why, if you had asked for a TRO, why
- 23 would you not be entitled to fees on that?
- 24 MR. GALANTER: We think that Congress's
- 25 distinction as far as putting preliminary injunctions

- 1 and permanent injunctions in one category and TROs in
- 2 another for purposes of appealability, reflect kind of a
- 3 congressional judgment about which is -- which mechanism
- 4 is intended to alter the kind of substantial rights.
- 5 And absent the rights to appeal, absent the
- 6 adversariness, the heavier focus on irreparable
- 7 injuries, unlike at the preliminary injunction stage,
- 8 those are all things that we think make TROs generally
- 9 ineligible to affect prevailing party status.
- 10 JUSTICE SOUTER: Because the TRO case,
- 11 characteristically the other side isn't heard, so you
- 12 haven't prevailed.
- MR. GALANTER: That is one way to view it,
- 14 Your Honor. Without the adversariness at the hearing,
- 15 there really was no one to prevail over. Whereas
- 16 here --
- 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: No. I thought you
- 18 prevailed in the sense that you secured relief. That's
- 19 how you articulated it up to this point.
- MR. GALANTER: Well, this Court has
- 21 certainly described some relief as the threshold of
- 22 prevailing. I'm simply suggesting that there may be
- 23 other kinds of orders, as this Court suggested in
- 24 Hanrahan versus Hampden, that are just not sufficiently
- 25 -- they don't have a sufficient change in the legal

- 1 relationship between the parties to warrant prevailing
- 2 party status, even though they do benefit the
- 3 plaintiffs.
- 4 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, you surely wouldn't
- 5 say that the fact that the other side never shows up
- 6 means that you can't get your attorney's fees.
- 7 MR. GALANTER: No, Your Honor. What I'm
- 8 suggesting --
- 9 JUSTICE SCALIA: So you're a prevailing
- 10 party whether there's an adversary on the other side or
- 11 not.
- 12 MR. GALANTER: What I'm saying is that the
- 13 TRO anticipates that, which is in part why we're not
- 14 suggesting TROs are --
- 15 JUSTICE STEVENS: Yes. But in this very
- 16 case, if you had gotten a TRO instead of a preliminary
- injunction, you'd have exactly the same practical
- 18 situation.
- 19 MR. GALANTER: Yes, Your Honor, but we were
- 20 -- we did have a preliminary injunction. The State
- 21 therefore did have a right to appeal, and a lot of other
- 22 consequences flow from the fact that there --
- 23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: The State did make a
- 24 point, that they were kind of -- this was short notice
- and they were doing the best they could on short notice.

- 1 I mean, they showed up but only sort of.
- MR. GALANTER: With three attorneys, Your
- 3 Honor. And yes -- and we both have our stories about
- 4 why there was short notice. Ours is they only told us a
- 5 week before they weren't going to allow her to protest
- 6 nude. And so we moved as quickly as we could. And this
- 7 is what often happens in election cases, demonstrations,
- 8 parades, religious exercise.
- 9 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But the regulations
- 10 told you weren't allowed to protest nude.
- 11 MR. GALANTER: Your Honor, those same
- 12 regulations had been in effect the four previous times
- 13 she had protested nude. And it was consistent with the
- 14 stipulation they had entered into that her nudity was
- 15 protected by the First Amendment. So again, she was
- 16 certainly entitled to negotiate as she tried to do with
- 17 the State. She was told one week before that she
- 18 wouldn't be allowed to do this. She went to court. She
- 19 got the very relief that she sought and she was able to
- 20 protest in the nude.
- Now in the other cases, you're going to get
- 22 someone who just finds they were denied the right to
- 23 register or to get on the ballot, and that's going to be
- 24 disposed of immediately. It won't be capable of
- 25 repetition by evading review because the person is now

- 1 registered, the election is now over. Maybe that
- 2 candidate won't run again. So we have a whole core of
- 3 First Amendment cases that will be affected if
- 4 Petitioner's per se rule that preliminary injunction is
- 5 never enough goes into play, because then States have
- 6 the unfortunate incentive of pushing the decisions very
- 7 close to the actual event deadline so that even if they
- 8 lose in court, they won't have to pay attorney's fees.
- 9 And I would add that in terms of the broader
- 10 notion, here we have a midlevel state official sending a
- 11 letter to an individual saying we don't think you have
- 12 any First Amendment rights, and if you come, you'll be
- 13 violating a law that's subject to criminal arrest, if
- 14 you come and you're naked, you're going to be subject to
- 15 criminal arrest. Absent Section 1998, it would be
- incredibly difficult for persons in Ms. Wyner's
- 17 situation to find attorneys.
- Thank you, Your Honor.
- 19 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
- 20 Ms. Seitz, you have three minutes remaining.
- 21 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT BY VIRGINIA A. SEITZ
- ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONERS
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Ms. Seitz, would you
- 24 clarify that point about costs? Did your client have to
- 25 pay costs?

1	MS. SEITZ: The plaintiffs were awarded
2	costs incurred on the preliminary injunction. My client
3	was awarded a right to costs on the remainder of the
4	litigation. Those costs were reduced to mirror the
5	precise costs that the plaintiff was awarded on
6	preliminary injunction, so in the end no one received
7	any costs. But costs were allocated for plaintiffs for
8	the preliminary injunction, and defendants for the
9	remainder of the case.
LO	I just want to make one point about the
L1	timing. The time prior to the 2003 demonstration, in
L2	2000 she wrote a letter requesting the right to protest
L3	nude and received a denial letter in response, similar
L 4	to the one she received in 2003. So she was on notice
L5	as of 2000 that we were enforcing the nudity ban against
L 6	her activities.
L7	Second, I want to say that the district
L8	court itself characterized its holding on summary
L9	judgment, quote, "as plaintiffs are unable to show
20	actual success on the merits," page 34a of the appendix.
21	So there's no doubt that what even the court understood
22	its own holding to be was that the prediction in the
23	preliminary injunction had failed to materialize when
24	the court considered the full case on the merits.

And finally, I want to say that awarding

25

1	fees, conferring fees for a plaintiff for obtaining a
2	preliminary injunction essentially requires the State
3	treasury to pay its opponents when, in fact, the State
4	has done nothing but enforce a valid law. And we know
5	that in this case because the case ended up getting
6	litigated to conclusion. But simply because we don't
7	know that in other cases involving preliminary
8	injunctions doesn't mean it isn't true, and that's why
9	it's fundamentally unfair to impose fees on State
10	defendants and local governments that haven't had a full
11	and fair opportunity to defend their legal position.
12	Thank you.
13	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
14	The case is submitted.
15	(Whereupon, at 12:19 p.m., the case in the
16	above-entitled matter was submitted.)
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