

1 IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

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3 TEVA PHARMACEUTICALS :

4 USA, INC., ET AL., :

5 Petitioners :

6 v. : No. 13-854.

7 SANDOZ, INC., ET AL. :

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9 Washington, D.C.

10 Wednesday, October 15, 2014

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12 The above-entitled matter came on for oral
13 argument before the Supreme Court of the United States
14 at 10:04 a.m.

15 APPEARANCES:

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17 Petitioners.

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20 behalf of United States, as amicus curiae.

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22 Respondents.

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1	C O N T E N T S	
2	ORAL ARGUMENT OF	PAGE
3	WILLIAM M. JAY, ESQ.	
4	On behalf of the Petitioners	3
5	ORAL ARGUMENT OF	
6	GINGER D. ANDERS, ESQ.	
7	On behalf of United States,	
8	as amicus curiae	23
9	ORAL ARGUMENT OF	
10	CARTER G. PHILLIPS, ESQ.	
11	On behalf of the Respondents	33
12	REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF	
13	WILLIAM M. JAY, ESQ.	
14	On behalf of the Petitioners	55
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 (10:04 a.m.)

3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We will hear
4 argument first this morning in Case 13-854, Teva
5 Pharmaceuticals v. Sandoz.

6 Mr. Jay.

7 ORAL ARGUMENT OF MR. WILLIAM M. JAY

8 ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONERS

9 MR. JAY: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it
10 please the Court:

11 In our judicial system, the trial judges
12 find the facts. Courts of Appeals review those
13 fact-findings deferentially under Rule 52. The Federal
14 courts apply that familiar standard, even whenever the
15 ultimate question is one of law, but it rests on
16 subsidiary fact-finding.

17 Now, the Federal Circuit says that claim
18 construction is different, that there are no facts in
19 claim construction, but more than a hundred years of
20 practice from this Court makes clear that that's not
21 right. Facts can enter claim construction and they do
22 so when the trial judge does what this Court has
23 instructed her to do, to find what a person of skill in
24 the art already knows as relevant to interpreting the
25 patent.

1 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Can you bring it down to
2 this case and tell -- tell us what are the facts to
3 which the Federal Circuit should have applied clearly
4 erroneous rule?

5 MR. JAY: Certainly, Justice Ginsburg.
6 There are three in our view. The first is that the
7 Federal -- the Federal Circuit failed to defer to the
8 trial court's finding about the presumed meaning of the
9 term "average molecular weight" in the -- in the
10 relevant context.

11 The second is that the trial -- Federal
12 Circuit failed to defer to what the district court
13 expressly found resolving an expert dispute was the
14 import of Figure 1 and where the peak of the curve in
15 Figure 1 appears.

16 And the third is how a person of ordinary
17 skill in the art would have read a piece of the
18 prosecution history.

19 So if I may, I'll begin with why the -- the
20 reference to average molecular weight in the patent and
21 the -- and the specific reference to size exclusion
22 chromatography, the particular technology being used to
23 find that, fits the rule that we're asking this Court to
24 adopt.

25 Before you --

1 JUSTICE KENNEDY: I -- I want you to answer
2 that, but would -- would you say that it's whether a
3 skilled artisan would make this inference? Is that part
4 of the finding?

5 MR. JAY: Part of the finding is the
6 knowledge of a skilled artisan. That's right.
7 Sometimes -- sometimes the finding is just about pure
8 science, how an invention works, what -- what this Court
9 called it in the Winans v. New York and Erie case is
10 terms of art or the state of the art. And the way the
11 state of the art can enter the analysis is when you're
12 using science to construe the patent.

13 So, for example, at this temperature the
14 invention would work; at that temperature the invention
15 would not work. Therefore, you know, the temperature
16 must be Celsius and not Fahrenheit, for example.

17 When you do that, when you're using science
18 and not words or structure as the -- as an
19 interpretative guide, that rests on fact-finding just as
20 much as -- as knowing the meaning of terms of art to
21 people with skill in the art does.

22 Now, the terms of art has a lengthy pedigree
23 in this Court's cases, not just in patent cases,
24 although it's certainly strong in patent cases as well.
25 But in the interpretation of other written instruments,

1 the -- the meaning of terms of art in a community to
2 which -- an interpretative community to which the trial
3 judge does not belong is exactly the kind of thing that
4 trial judges need the input from experts to determine.

5 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, that's not true of
6 terms of art in statutes, is it?

7 MR. JAY: Terms of art in statutes, Justice
8 Alito, are not -- are nonetheless written to be read by
9 the general public. And what -- when they have a --
10 when they have a legal meaning, the determination of
11 that legal meaning is still a question of law.

12 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, some of them are very
13 technical, and I doubt that the -- the general public
14 has any understanding of some very technical terms that
15 appear in statutes. So would they not be read in light
16 of what someone who is knowledgeable in that field would
17 understand the -- the term to mean?

18 MR. JAY: I think it's very rare for
19 Congress to adopt statutes that have terms -- that have
20 terms that are meant to be read by a specialized
21 audience --

22 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, I'll give you an
23 example. The Dodd-Frank Act refers to Tier 1 Capital.
24 Do you think that the average person on the street has
25 any idea what Tier 1 capital is?

1 MR. JAY: I -- I expect that it has an
2 established meaning, but -- although I certainly don't
3 know for sure.

4 JUSTICE ALITO: Among the general public or
5 among people who are knowledgeable in that particular
6 area?

7 MR. JAY: I think when you're interpreting a
8 statute that it's generally clear at least what the
9 right frame of reference is. Now, in the -- in the
10 patent case, what the frame of reference is is itself a
11 question of fact, as this Court said in *Graham v. John*
12 *Deere*. Ascertaining the level of skill in the art, who
13 is the skilled artisan, who is this patent written for,
14 that is itself a factual question, and then figuring out
15 what that -- what that person knows is also a factual
16 question. You know, that's terms of art or the state of
17 the art.

18 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Mr. Jay, could you tell
19 me what you see as the difference between your position
20 and the government's?

21 MR. JAY: I think that the government agrees
22 with us that the answer to the question presented is
23 that Rule 52(a) applies and that clear error review
24 should apply to findings of fact. I think --

25 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: To some, because they

1 differentiate others.

2 MR. JAY: I think that -- I think that our
3 test is largely the same as well, but we disagree on how
4 the test comes out on these facts. We submit that the
5 three fact-findings that I mentioned to Justice Ginsburg
6 at the beginning of the argument are -- they are factual
7 findings. The government agrees that some but not all,
8 and they -- we agree on the ultimate disposition that
9 the Federal Circuit's judgment can't stand.

10 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: If you and the
11 government can't agree, why should we defer to a
12 district court? Why don't we defer, as has been done
13 now forever, to the Federal Circuit and let them review
14 these things de novo?

15 MR. JAY: Respectfully, Justice Sotomayor,
16 what's been done forever is deferring to district courts
17 on matters of subsidiary findings. And I think it's
18 significant that in the first patent case that came to
19 this Court from the Federal Circuit, the new Federal
20 Circuit, Dennison, what this Court did was direct the
21 Federal Circuit to apply deference to subsidiary
22 fact-finding in the context of obviousness. And this
23 Court has --

24 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: What we did -- in
25 Martin, we -- we talked about claim construction being

1 the odd hybrid.

2 MR. JAY: It is an odd hybrid -- well, it is
3 a hybrid. I don't know that it's odd, Justice
4 Sotomayor. I think that it actually fits of a piece
5 with other mixed questions of law and fact. And the
6 universal practice for mixed questions of law and fact
7 is that when they rest on subsidiary fact-finding, you
8 review the fact-finding part deferentially, even when
9 the leap from the fact-finding to the ultimate legal
10 conclusion is a short one.

11 JUSTICE KENNEDY: In the Markman context,
12 the trial judge says to the jury: Now, the construction
13 of the claim is for the court, and the court's
14 construction of the claim is X, Y, Z. Could that
15 determination by the district judge, which is for the
16 trial judge, involve some subsidiary questions of fact
17 as to which he must be given deference?

18 MR. JAY: Sir, I may have missed the --

19 JUSTICE KENNEDY: It's a jury case like
20 Markman and Markman says the construction of the claim
21 is for the court, and the court tells the jury: This
22 claim is to be construed as follows, A, B, C, D. Does
23 that determination, that interpretation by the district
24 court -- would that error contain factual determinations
25 as to which deference must be given to the trial judge?

1 MR. JAY: A claim construction can contain
2 factual determinations. It might not. In many cases it
3 will not, because the ultimate question is a question of
4 law and when it rests just on looking at the words in
5 the patent and applying the canons of claim
6 construction, it remains a pure question of law.
7 When -- when facts enter the analysis, those facts
8 decided by the trial judge in the context of findings
9 are reviewed deferentially.

10 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, is -- is it the same
11 question whether a particular fact has to be submitted
12 to the jury? And whether a particular fact-finding by
13 the judge is entitled to deference or are they -- are
14 they the same question?

15 MR. JAY: They are not the same question,
16 Justice Scalia.

17 JUSTICE SCALIA: I didn't think they were.

18 MR. JAY: This Court resolved the judge/jury
19 question for claim construction in *Markman*, but -- and
20 there were no subsidiary fact-findings of the type that
21 we've been talking about in *Markman*, because
22 Mr. *Markman*'s expert was an expert in document
23 construction. That -- that's not the kind of rule that
24 we're advocating here. We're advocating for deference
25 to classic fact-finding.

1 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: You -- you've
2 referred several times to subsidiary facts. You know,
3 the difference between questions of law and fact has not
4 always been an easy one for the Court to draw. What do
5 you mean by a subsidiary fact?

6 MR. JAY: I simply mean, Justice --
7 Mr. Chief Justice, that the ultimate question this Court
8 said in Markman is a question of law, but it often rests
9 on factual findings, knowledge of the -- excuse me -- of
10 the state of the art and of how the art works. And
11 that's -- that's just as true in other mixed question
12 cases.

13 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, what's your
14 definition of subsidiary fact?

15 MR. JAY: A subsidiary fact is a fact that
16 is not the ultimate question the court is looking at,
17 but one that is an ingredient in that -- in that
18 judgment. So in the context of claim construction, what
19 often happens is the beginning of the analysis is: What
20 is the meaning of this specialized term to people in the
21 art? That may not be controlling because the
22 interpretation of the patent may show, as a legal
23 matter, that that can't be the right meaning because the
24 text of the patent itself, under -- applying the canons
25 of claim construction, for example, or simply applying

1 the patentee's own definition, rule out the ordinary
2 meaning to skilled artisans, making that finding
3 irrelevant. Then it wouldn't be a subsidiary finding of
4 the ultimate claim construction at all.

5 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Then maybe the evidence
6 shouldn't have come in.

7 MR. JAY: I'm sorry, Justice Ginsburg.

8 JUSTICE GINSBURG: The evidence should not
9 have come in.

10 MR. JAY: Well, Justice Ginsburg, the court
11 may not anticipate at the time what the -- what the
12 ultimate outcome is going to be. At the time, the court
13 must make a judgment about which experts to allow. But
14 I think that's an important point, that the judge
15 retains gatekeeping authority, and ultimately the judge
16 will decide how many terms she will allow the parties to
17 dispute and which -- what evidence to take and in what
18 form to take it. So --

19 JUSTICE GINSBURG: If these are -- these are
20 truly fact questions, then what happened to the Seventh
21 Amendment?

22 MR. JAY: I think, Justice Ginsburg, that --
23 first of all, this is not a jury case. But, of course,
24 I'll answer the question for patent cases more broadly,
25 in which some are jury cases. These are subsidiary

1 fact-findings that go to a threshold question for the
2 court and in that respect they're no different than the
3 fact-findings that go into other pretrial judgments that
4 are not for the jury.

5 Rule 52 has been applied to judicial
6 fact-finding in any number of jury cases, pretrial and
7 post-trial matters that don't -- that don't go to the
8 jury. And this Court decided in *Markman* that the
9 ultimate question of claim construction is one of law
10 and thus not for the jury.

11 JUSTICE GINSBURG: And the government's
12 brief said -- and I think you agree with this, but
13 you'll tell me -- that inferences to be drawn from
14 fact-findings get de novo review. And my understanding
15 is that in a typical civil case, a jury finds the facts
16 and can draw inferences from the facts, but here --
17 well, first do you agree with the government that
18 inferences from -- from the facts get de novo review?

19 MR. JAY: No. I don't think I can agree
20 with that, Justice Ginsburg, because that's not what
21 Rule 52 says. And we may be conflating jury cases -- in
22 our colloquy here, we may be conflating jury cases and
23 judicial fact-findings because -- you know, the scope of
24 Rule 52 is set out in the rule itself and in the -- the
25 Advisory Committee Notes in 1937 and this Court's

1 decision in Anderson all talk -- and Pullman Swint as
2 well -- all talk about the inferences to be drawn as
3 being part of the trial judge's role, because the trial
4 judge has heard the entire factual record. The trial
5 judge is in the best position to draw the inferences
6 from the record as -- as well as to resolve direct
7 head-to-head conflicts in the evidence.

8 JUSTICE ALITO: Isn't your --

9 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Jay --

10 JUSTICE ALITO: Go ahead.

11 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- I -- I just want to make
12 sure I understand your answer to what the gap is between
13 a certain kind of fact and then the ultimate question of
14 law. So when an expert gets on the stand and gives
15 testimony about what a person in the field, a skilled
16 artisan in the field, would understand to be the meaning
17 of a particular patent term, and you are saying that
18 that's a -- that's factual and that the decision whether
19 to credit that or not is a factual determination. But
20 how is that different from the ultimate legal question
21 that the Court has to answer, which is kind of the same
22 thing, it's how a person -- a skilled artisan in the
23 field, what -- what that person would understand a
24 patent to mean.

25 MR. JAY: Well, the difference is that the

1 instances, and they will be frequent, where it's not
2 kind of the same thing. Let me -- let me spell that
3 out. The first part of your question is, is what the
4 expert says factual, the meaning to skilled artisans.
5 And it absolutely is, just as it is in this Court's
6 contract and tariff cases where the Court specifically
7 says that the meaning of a term to people in a
8 particular field, to which the judge doesn't belong,
9 that's a fact question, and -- so as to whether there is
10 a specialized meaning.

11 But where there is no specialized meaning or
12 any specialized meaning is irrelevant because the patent
13 itself, through the process of document construction,
14 tells you what the answer is -- so, for example, here's
15 the ordinary meaning of this term, but that won't work
16 in the context of this patent because it would run up
17 against the canon of claim differentiation. That won't
18 in this patent because it would make the invention not
19 work. That wouldn't work in this patent because then
20 the preferred embodiment in the -- in the specification
21 wouldn't -- wouldn't be encompassed.

22 JUSTICE KAGAN: So what you're saying is
23 that in certain cases the factual finding truly is the
24 legal determination, but that in other cases, other
25 matters can come in to drive a wedge between the two.

1 MR. JAY: Correct. And I think that this is
2 a case where the out -- the facts come very close to
3 pointing to the correct outcome because --

4 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Two -- two cases, and this
5 is part of Justice Kagan's question, I think. Case one:
6 District judge says a reasonable police officer would
7 think this is probable cause. Case two: A person
8 skilled in the art would think that this was an average
9 molecular weight. Do the courts give the same deference
10 or lack of deference in each case.

11 MR. JAY: I think, as I understand your
12 question, Justice Kennedy, in each question the person
13 on the stand is actually opining about the ultimate
14 question. But if -- if I may, in each case -- for
15 example, if the -- if the question is did the police
16 officer see the gun, that -- that may rest on a
17 credibility finding about whether the police officer is
18 telling the truth or lying. The resolution of that
19 question may be absolutely dispositive of whether there
20 was probable cause or not, on and off. One way there's
21 probable cause; the other there isn't. But it's still
22 an underlying factual finding as the Court said in --

23 JUSTICE SCALIA: But to say -- to say -- I
24 don't -- I don't agree with your response to Justice
25 Kagan. To say that the -- that the fact-finding will be

1 dispositive of the legal question is not to say that it
2 is the same as the legal question, which is what I think
3 you responded. I don't think it's the same as the legal
4 question. The legal question is are you liable for
5 violating this patent. And indeed, it -- it may be
6 that -- that given a particular meaning that is
7 established by a factual finding, the outcome is -- is
8 virtually dictated, but it is not the same. It is not
9 the same question.

10 MR. JAY: I do agree that it's not the same.
11 It's not even -- it's not even the same as the ultimate
12 question of claim construction. But the -- the step
13 from the factual finding to the claim construction may
14 rest on something as simple as this: There is nothing
15 else in this patent to get me, the judge, off of the
16 ordinary meaning of this term to people with skill in
17 the art.

18 JUSTICE KAGAN: But how would you define the
19 standard? I mean, it's absolutely true what Justice
20 Scalia says, that at a certain level of generality there
21 is a gap. But I thought that in order to determine
22 liability, what the court has to acquire into is how a
23 person with ordinary skill in the relevant art at the
24 time of the invention would understand the claim. And
25 that seems like exactly the question that the expert is

1 testifying to.

2 MR. JAY: The expert is not testifying to
3 how the person of ordinary skill would understand the
4 patent writ at large. And the patent -- that is the
5 ultimate question for the Court. What the expert is --
6 can testify to and what Dr. Grant testified to in this
7 case is how particular terms in the patent have a
8 recognized meaning with -- within the art. The art is
9 not going to take a position on how the doctrine of
10 claim differentiation applies, for example, but the
11 skilled artisan can testify about what the established
12 meaning of the particular term is.

13 JUSTICE BREYER: So let me try this and if
14 you don't agree with it, just say no and I'll stop.
15 Okay?

16 MR. JAY: Okay.

17 JUSTICE BREYER: I thought the classical
18 distinction is pretty much what I think Justice Scalia
19 was driving at, that there are a certain number of
20 factual questions where the question is of the kind,
21 does this label belong on this thing, this thing being
22 not in dispute. It might be a South African yellow
23 canary up there. The statute might use the word "South
24 African yellow canary." But we are not certain whether
25 that is a South African yellow canary.

1 If we call in a bird expert who looks at it
2 and says it is, that is a question of fact. If we call
3 in a lawyer to say how are these words being used in the
4 statute and does that fit within it, then it is a
5 question of law.

6 MR. JAY: I think that that's basically
7 right, Justice Breyer. Though in this case, we have an
8 expert who came in to testify about why these terms have
9 a particular meaning.

10 JUSTICE BREYER: Yes. But we also have the
11 Federal Circuit in the two cases where you disagree with
12 the government accepting the fact that, in fact, the
13 experts or the lawyer who talked to the patent guy did
14 use the wrong words. They accept that. And then what
15 they say is, well, in their view it is that that didn't
16 really concern the Federal Circuit, but for the weight
17 that the judge gave when trying to interpret the terms
18 in the patent.

19 MR. JAY: Well --

20 JUSTICE BREYER: And that at least is a
21 legal question. Have I got that right basically, what
22 the argument is?

23 MR. JAY: That's more or less what they've
24 said.

25 JUSTICE BREYER: And what do you say in

1 response?

2 MR. JAY: I -- I say two important things in
3 response. One is that in predicting what the Federal
4 Circuit would do under the correct standard, I don't
5 think you can disaggregate the pieces of its incorrect
6 analysis because it rested on the -- on the view that
7 everything went in favor of Respondents and nothing went
8 in favor of Petitioners here.

9 But the second thing -- this is also very
10 important -- on the -- you alluded, Justice Breyer, to
11 the prosecution history piece, but that skips over the
12 very important piece, what the specification, the use of
13 size exclusion chromatography as the technique in the
14 specification teaches. And as the district court found,
15 page 43a-44a of the petition appendix, the presumed
16 meaning of that term "average molecular weight" when you
17 -- when you're using this technology is peak average
18 molecular weight. And the -- there are other
19 technologies such as osmometry and light scattering that
20 give rise to a different presumed meaning of what
21 average molecular weight is, because they produce
22 different measurements. But the only kind of peak
23 average that you can read from the chromatogram is peak
24 average molecular weight.

25 And the Federal Circuit went right by the

1 finding that the presumed meaning would be peak average
2 molecular weight and gave -- essentially treated the
3 three possibilities, peak, number and weight average, as
4 though they were equal. But that's not what the
5 district court found in the context of this technology.

6 JUSTICE ALITO: In a recent law review
7 article written by two authors, one of whom is a -- is
8 the deputy solicitor in the Patent and Trademark Office,
9 the office -- the authors said that they surveyed a very
10 large number of cases to try to find any in which the
11 difference between de novo review and clear error review
12 of factual questions by the Federal Circuit made a
13 difference in the outcome and they couldn't find any
14 case in which this fascinating legal debate had a
15 practical significance.

16 Now, you want to introduce a level of
17 complication to this. The Federal Circuit says de novo
18 for everything, and you want the court -- you want the
19 Federal Circuit now to struggle to determine which are
20 factual questions as to which there's clear error
21 review, which ones get de novo review, whether it's the
22 ultimate question. Is it worthwhile as a practical
23 matter?

24 MR. JAY: It is, Justice Alito. I'd like --
25 like to respond to your question and then, if I may, to

1 reserve my time for rebuttal unless you have follow-up.

2 First of all, does it matter? It does
3 matter. It matters in cases like this, and I don't know
4 whether the study that Your Honor referred to would pick
5 up this case because that's -- that's precisely the
6 problem. If you read the Federal Circuit's opinion in
7 this case, you -- it makes no reference to the
8 fact-findings as fact-findings and you would not
9 understand, for example, the finding that I was just
10 alluding to about presumed meaning because it's not
11 referred to anywhere.

12 There are a host of cases like that. There
13 have been for years. And more systematically, as
14 Professor Menell points out in his amicus brief, I think
15 pages 17 to 18, the de novo standard produces the
16 problem that encourages the Federal Circuit to blow
17 right by the skilled artisan's perspective. It doesn't
18 talk about it; it doesn't talk about the evidence that
19 supports it. So that's one point.

20 Another point is about whether the Federal
21 Circuit could handle this. This is the -- this is the
22 standard, disaggregating subsidiary factual questions
23 from ultimate legal questions, that courts of appeals
24 apply all the time and that the regional courts of
25 appeals did in fact apply before the Federal Circuit

1 came along. The best example of that is the Harries
2 case we've cited in our brief written by Judge Hand.

3 So to apply that standard practice we think
4 would not be unduly disruptive to the Federal Circuit,
5 and it would not insulate every single claim
6 construction from review. It simply would make the --
7 have facts treated as facts.

8 If I may, I'd like to reserve the balance of
9 my time.

10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Jay.

11 Ms. Anders.

12 ORAL ARGUMENT OF GINGER D. ANDERS

13 ON BEHALF OF THE UNITED STATES,

14 AS AMICUS CURIAE

15 MS. ANDERS: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it
16 please the Court:

17 Just to start with the distinction between
18 factual findings and legal inferences here, we think
19 that factual findings are those that are based, at least
20 in part, on evidence that is outside the patent and its
21 prosecution history and that concern matters that are
22 distinct from the patent itself. So those could be
23 factual findings about what kind of data a particular
24 scientific technique produces or how the inventions,
25 prior inventions in the field worked. Those are factual

1 findings.

2 We then think that when the district court
3 takes those findings and now it can understand the --
4 the concepts that are described in the patent because
5 it's made those findings, when the district court takes
6 those findings and then looks at the patent and asks how
7 would a person of skill in the art interpret the words
8 in this patent in light of all the pieces of the patent
9 document and the canons of claim construction, those
10 inferences that it draws are legal ones.

11 So I think to take -- to take the size
12 exclusion chromatography as an example of this because
13 it's probably easier to discuss it concretely, I think
14 what happened there was that the district court made a
15 factual finding that when SEC is used the type of data
16 that -- that just is spit out is -- produces peak
17 molecular weight, and if you wanted to produce any other
18 measure of molecular weight you would need to do more
19 calculations. That's the factual finding that the
20 district court made.

21 It then took a look at the patent document
22 and said, in light of that, what inference can I draw
23 from the specifications referenced to SEC, and the legal
24 inference that it drew was that probably the patent
25 meant to refer to peak molecular weight when it used the

1 term "molecular weight." And I think the court of
2 appeals understood the factual finding in the same way
3 that the district court did. I think it accepted that
4 when you use SEC, the data that comes out is MP and you
5 would need further calculations to produce other types
6 of data. But what the --

7 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Why do you reject what
8 Mr. Jay tells us were also fact-findings?

9 MS. ANDERS: I'm sorry, Justice Ginsburg?

10 JUSTICE GINSBURG: I think you have just
11 told us that the peak, that that's a fact-finding. But
12 you don't accept the other two things that Mr. Jay
13 characterized as fact-findings. Can you tell us why
14 not?

15 MS. ANDERS: Well, to take SEC first, I
16 think what -- I think we agree --

17 JUSTICE SCALIA: To take what first?

18 MS. ANDERS: SEC, which is the use of size
19 exclusion chromatography in the specification.

20 I think we agree that it's a fact-finding to
21 say that -- that if you use SEC, then peak molecular
22 weight is produced and that you'd need further
23 calculations to do other things. The district court
24 then made a legal inference where it said because --
25 because the specification uses SEC, we know that -- that

1 the patent, in the context of the patents-in-suit -- and
2 this is a quote from the district court's opinion: "In
3 the context of the patents-in-suit, the meaning of
4 'average molecular weight' must be peak molecular
5 weight."

6 That's a legal inference because it's --
7 it's taking one part of the document and using it to
8 interpret another part of the document. The Court in
9 Markman said that that is classic textual analysis, when
10 you look at the patent and you say, this part of the
11 specification tells me something about the claims.

12 So we think with respect to SEC what the
13 Federal Circuit did was it disagreed with the legal
14 inference that the -- that the district court made.

15 JUSTICE KAGAN: But suppose an expert just
16 says, in my field skilled artisans think that molecular
17 weight means the following. Is that a -- and then the
18 district court accepts that finding. Is that a factual
19 determination in your view? Because I think Mr. Jay
20 would say it is.

21 MS. ANDERS: I think -- well, first of all,
22 that's not what the district -- what the expert
23 testified to here and what the district court found, so
24 I think we disagree about what the district court
25 actually said in its opinion.

1 But if that were what the expert testified
2 to, then I think that would be a statement of fact, that
3 in -- in the world we understand generally that SEC
4 means MP. I think that would be a finding of fact.

5 But I would make two points about that. The
6 first is that there is then a significant legal analysis
7 that the district court has to do to figure out how to
8 construe the patent, and I think that's particularly
9 clear in the context of indefiniteness, which is what
10 this case is about, that even if the district court has
11 some evidence that generally artisans might understand a
12 term in a particular way, the court then has to look at
13 the claims themselves, the terms that -- that surround
14 the term we're trying to construe, the specification,
15 the embodiments in the specification, the prosecution
16 history. It has to look at all of that and decide,
17 given all of that, would a person of skill in the art be
18 reasonably certain about how to construe this patent.

19 So that is a legal inquiry that the court
20 would have to do after receiving the fact-finding.

21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Under your view, two
22 different district courts construing the same patent
23 could come out to opposite results based on a subsidiary
24 factual finding, and neither of those would be clearly
25 erroneous, and yet on a public patent that is going to

1 bind a lot of other people, people won't know what to
2 do. You have two different interpretations of the
3 patent. What happens then?

4 MS. ANDERS: Well, I think that concern is
5 overstated for -- for two -- two reasons. I think the
6 first is that it's -- it's pretty unlikely that that
7 scenario is going to occur, and the second is that, even
8 in the rare circumstances in which it did, there are
9 reasons to think that that's not actually a -- a problem
10 from a policy standpoint.

11 So -- so just to elaborate on that, I think
12 because -- because this inquiry needs to remain
13 primarily legal, because even after the court makes
14 fact-findings, it needs to engage in a contextual
15 analysis of the patent as a whole in light of the canons
16 of claim construction, we think that the legal questions
17 are generally going to predominate in the --

18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, that's just
19 kind of avoiding the question. I mean, you can easily
20 envision this case coming up differently in the district
21 court depending upon what district courts find as the,
22 you know, accepted understanding to artisans.

23 And again, each of those opposite results,
24 neither one may be clearly erroneous.

25 MS. ANDERS: Well, I think another point is

1 that district courts I think have a way, have ample
2 tools to try to avoid that scenario from occurring.
3 They can, when there are seriatim cases, there can be
4 pre-trial coordination in the same district so that --
5 so that the situation doesn't arise. Of course,
6 preclusion will -- will prevent a patentee from having
7 an issue of claim construction decided against it and
8 then coming back and trying to relitigate the issue.

9 JUSTICE BREYER: What do we do when there's
10 a bus accident on a technical thing and different people
11 who were injured sue in different places at different
12 times? Same problem, isn't it?

13 MS. ANDERS: I'm --

14 JUSTICE BREYER: Same problem. I mean, you
15 can think of a thousand cases like that where -- where
16 you have a big bus accident, technical problem with the
17 motor, different place -- people from different places
18 who are victims and they sue in different places at
19 different times. Juries or tried to the bench, they
20 could reach different factual conclusions.

21 MS. ANDERS: I think that is exactly
22 right and I think --

23 JUSTICE BREYER: All right. So what do we
24 do --

25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: No. It's because

1 you have a patent which is a public document that is
2 binding the world in terms of what other inventors can
3 do and another inventor looking at it can say, well,
4 what can I do?

5 JUSTICE BREYER: Right.

6 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: He doesn't know.
7 That is very different than just a particular negligence
8 case that comes up.

9 JUSTICE BREYER: Yeah, I was actually
10 curious what we did, because I can think of examples in
11 antitrust, I can think of examples in corporate law, I
12 can think of examples versus every area of the law,
13 where often it does happen, as the Chief Justice says,
14 it could -- the different factual things have enormous
15 public implications.

16 What I was interested in and asked because I
17 wanted to know, what are the legal devices for dealing
18 with that?

19 MS. ANDERS: Well, I would make two points.
20 I think that, first, because of the way preclusion
21 works, it only runs against the patentee. All right.
22 So if the patentee loses on an issue of claim
23 construction or indefiniteness, he cannot then
24 relitigate that issue, but other -- other accused
25 infringers can relitigate it and try to build a better

1 record.

2 We actually think that that -- that keeps
3 this from being a policy problem, the possibility that
4 you could have a subsequent decision that reaches a
5 different conclusion.

6 JUSTICE SCALIA: I guess a deed is a private
7 document that's -- has public effect, right? It
8 prevents certain people from trespassing on the property
9 that is conveyed, and I suppose that could be construed
10 in the various courts that reach different results. So
11 the mere fact that -- that this binds the public is --
12 is not conclusive.

13 MS. ANDERS: I think that is right. And of
14 course in the patent system now, there's a -- there's
15 toleration of a certain amount of disuniformity and I
16 think that is because we generally think that there are
17 other values that -- that supersede that uniformity.
18 So, for instance, you could have, in the case of
19 infringement, you can have two different accusers in
20 different suits; one makes a better record than the
21 other, and the patent could be held to infringe one
22 product but not infringe another materially similar
23 product.

24 JUSTICE ALITO: And you say that factual
25 findings that are subject to clear error review must be,

1 quote, "in some sense distinct from the meaning or
2 validity of the patent." I don't understand what that
3 means when the issue is the meaning or validity of the
4 patent. If the evidence is -- is relevant, then it
5 is -- there is a connection. So what does that mean, in
6 some sense distinct?

7 MS. ANDERS: Well, it means that the
8 district court is making a finding based on -- based on
9 science, based on expertise, somebody's -- somebody's
10 expertise in the field and making a finding about a
11 matter that isn't just what does this term mean in the
12 patent. It's making a more broad finding.

13 So for instance, what does this type of
14 scientific process, what type of data does it produce?
15 You can say that's related to the patent because of
16 course the patent uses SEC and one question is what kind
17 of data does it produce. But it is also a finding of
18 fact to say, as a general matter, the way science works
19 is that SEC produces MP without further calculation.

20 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, that sounds like every
21 factual finding. It sounds like you're saying that
22 anything that is a factual issue is subject to clear
23 error review. But I thought you were saying something
24 less than that.

25 MS. ANDERS: Well, I think that is a factual

1 finding, but then what the district court has to do is
2 take that information which allows it to assume the --
3 the perspective of a skilled artisan and then decide
4 what it tells it about the patent itself. And that's a
5 question of looking at -- at the document itself. So
6 the fact that the patent uses SEC, does that raise an
7 inference about what the term "molecular weight" in the
8 patent means or not. That's a question of textual
9 analysis.

10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
11 Ms. Anders.

12 Mr. Phillips.

13 ORAL ARGUMENT OF CARTER G. PHILLIPS

14 ON BEHALF OF RESPONDENTS

15 MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice,
16 and may it please the Court:

17 It seems to me that the two questions that
18 were asked in the opening portions to my colleagues and
19 friends -- one came from Justice Alito, one came from
20 you, Mr. Chief Justice -- are matters that this Court
21 already has effectively decided in the Markman case and
22 are the reason why de novo review is appropriate under
23 these circumstances.

24 In effect, Justice Alito asked the question
25 is all of this worth the candle, because the debate

1 between the government and the Petitioner in this case
2 and the difficulty of trying to decide which facts do
3 you defer to and which ones don't you defer to and when
4 is it a credibility determination, when is it not. This
5 Court said unanimously more than 15 years ago in Markman
6 that all of those kinds of issues get subsumed within
7 the fundamental question of how best to interpret the
8 patent, and that that's the ultimate question and that's
9 a legal question, and therefore, all of the disputes,
10 factual in nature or however you want to describe them,
11 get subsumed within that. It seems to me the final --
12 the ultimate conclusion from that then is whatever
13 determination is made is ultimately subject to de novo
14 review.

15 JUSTICE BREYER: I think that Markman just
16 dealt with judge/jury, not which court gets the fact up
17 -- decides the facts basically, which is where I do
18 start. So if you want to -- but if I take that as a
19 given, then I'd say why should you treat fact matters
20 here any different than any other case. The main reason
21 for letting the district judge, I've always thought,
22 decide facts as an initial matter in a technical case is
23 because there are all kinds of facts, you know. We
24 happen to have some particularly odd definitional ones
25 here, but there are all kinds of facts. In technical

1 cases, there are all kinds of facts. And the
2 traditional reason is you've seen the witnesses -- but
3 there is one thing he's done that the -- that the court
4 of appeals has not done, and in a technical case, it
5 seems to me that makes an enormous difference. He sat
6 there the whole time and listened to these experts talk.

7 MR. PHILLIPS: Actually, that's not true.

8 JUSTICE BREYER: And that, I think, is a
9 very powerful reason for saying in a technical case,
10 don't overturn the judge's factual findings whether they
11 are -- particularly scientific matters, but no
12 particularly here -- unless those three judges who will
13 not even read the whole record normally and certainly
14 won't hear those witnesses, don't let them do it unless
15 they are convinced that it is clearly erroneous.

16 Now, that's the argument, and I would like
17 to say that's different from a statute.

18 MR. PHILLIPS: Right. But it's not --

19 JUSTICE BREYER: Whether or not it is
20 different from the -- it's different from -- it's the
21 same as any technical case. Now, why is this different?

22 MR. PHILLIPS: I think, Judge, that's the
23 question the Chief Justice asked, which isn't it
24 possible and isn't it likely when we gave you the
25 example of seven district courts interpreting three --

1 JUSTICE BREYER: But I mean, that same
2 thing, as we know, could happen in dozens of -- of
3 technical cases.

4 MR. PHILLIPS: Right. But --

5 JUSTICE BREYER: And you go on importance, I
6 could make up some important hypotheticals. You want
7 trivial ones, I'll make some of those. You want to put
8 a definition on a thing, fine. You know, we can all
9 both -- and you're probably better than I am at it. And
10 you say is that the only answer that patents are somehow
11 different?

12 MR. PHILLIPS: Yes. Patent claim
13 construction is different. I think that's exactly what
14 this Court said in Markman --

15 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Can we go -- can we go
16 back to the question? If it's technical, it's all right
17 for the judge to find the fact. I thought in our
18 Seventh Amendment cases we have rejected the notion that
19 if an issue is difficult, technical, the judge can
20 decide it even though it's a fact.

21 MR. PHILLIPS: Right. No. There are lots
22 of -- there are lots of technical issues that juries are
23 allowed to decide. What the -- what the Court
24 recognized in Markman was that the nature of the inquiry
25 under claim construction -- and it's important to just

1 step back for a second and put it in context.

2 Claim construction is based, first, on the
3 plain language of the claims. Regardless of whether
4 they are written for scientists or not, you're supposed
5 to start with the plain and ordinary meaning of the
6 claim language itself. And then as construed through
7 the specifications, which are, again, designed to
8 provide a reasonably clear exegesis of what the patent
9 and the invention is, what the claims mean. And then
10 you have the prosecution history, which can, in some
11 instances, be complicated.

12 But in this particular instance where the
13 very specific word in this patent was inquired about by
14 two patent examiners, experts in the subject matter, and
15 asked what does average molecular weight -- excuse me --
16 mean in this context, they got the answer peak asked in
17 the exact same context they got the answer weight. And
18 what is -- I mean, the notion in that circumstance that
19 this is not indefinite under the -- in this situation
20 seems to me completely indefensible.

21 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Phillips --

22 MR. PHILLIPS: And that --

23 JUSTICE KAGAN: I'm sorry.

24 MR. PHILLIPS: No, go ahead.

25 JUSTICE KAGAN: Is your argument that there

1 are no subordinate factual determinations in these kinds
2 of cases or as you opened by saying, as your argument,
3 sure, there are factual determinations; we can come up
4 with a zillion of them, but it's not worth the candle to
5 figure out which is which.

6 MR. PHILLIPS: It's not -- it's not worth
7 the candle because all you're going to do is create a
8 cottage industry of trial lawyers fighting with the
9 judge about which bucket some particular evidence fits
10 into and whether you can -- whether it's --

11 JUSTICE BREYER: But normally, normally is
12 not difficult to distinguish the one from the other.
13 Sometimes it is. But in the cases where it isn't, which
14 I think are vast, did that dial read 7? I have 4
15 witnesses who said it did, and I have 3 witnesses who
16 said it read 5. And now let's complicate that, but it
17 all has to do with what happened in a laboratory at a
18 particular time. Are we going to have the 3 people from
19 the Federal Circuit going in and second-guessing the
20 judge without giving him any weight on that kind of
21 factual question, which I suspect, I have no reason to
22 believe it won't, will turn up comparatively just as
23 often?

24 MR. PHILLIPS: Justice Breyer, I think
25 that -- I mean, I don't want to go to war with your -- I

1 don't want to go to war with your hypothetical.

2 JUSTICE BREYER: I want the answer. I want
3 the answer.

4 MR. PHILLIPS: The problem with the
5 hypothetical is that it assumes that there -- that there
6 will be instances in which the question of pure science
7 is a matter about which there is disagreement. And
8 that --

9 JUSTICE BREYER: What happened in --

10 MR. PHILLIPS: And it's very, very uncommon
11 and that's why it's not worth -- this Court -- this
12 Court said it specifically in *Markman*. It said, "Our
13 experience in interpreting documents teaches us that
14 they will rarely, if ever, be resolved."

15 And the evidence we have from the patent
16 office is never resolved on the basis of differences of
17 opinion by an expert under -- under these circumstances.
18 So as I was saying before, what are you doing? You're
19 creating a cottage industry --

20 JUSTICE KAGAN: But Mr. Phillips, if that's
21 your argument, I mean, then you'd just have to deal with
22 Rule 52(a) because Rule 52(a) sets out the very blanket
23 rule. It doesn't say except where it's not worth the
24 candle. It just says what it says, that these are
25 matters for the trial court.

1 MR. PHILLIPS: But if -- but if, as this
2 Court said in *Markman*, treating interpretative issues as
3 purely legal and the reason for doing that is to avoid
4 the problem the Chief Justice identified, which is that
5 otherwise, you're going to end up with a single document
6 that is binding on the rest of the world having
7 inconsistent meanings and, therefore, it is different.
8 It is different from every other issue in patent law,
9 and I think it's different from every other issue of
10 litigation. It is a --

11 JUSTICE GINSBURG: The same way it's
12 different from obviousness because the other side said,
13 well, why shouldn't the fact law division for claim
14 construction be the same as it is for obviousness.

15 MR. PHILLIPS: Right. And the reason is, is
16 that obviousness carries with it a whole slew of
17 additional factual questions that ultimately will
18 predominate whereas -- and also begins with the
19 proposition this is what the claim means. All right.
20 So you start with that as a given, which is a pure
21 question of law.

22 The obviousness issue at that point can turn
23 on the success of the -- of the product, can turn on how
24 the market responded to it. Those are lots and lots of
25 pure factual issues that this Court had already

1 recognized in John Deere -- Graham v. John Deere, and
2 said, you know, there's no reason to have pure question
3 of law even if at the end of the day there is a question
4 of law.

5 What I took Markman to mean -- I'm going to
6 go back to that same language -- treating interpretative
7 issues as purely legal is that there are -- is that
8 it's -- it is, it's literally not worth the candle, that
9 the right way to analyze it. The only way effectively
10 to provide notice to the world is to have one court
11 that's expert make the final judgment. That's the other
12 part of the analysis, it seems to me at least, worth a
13 little bit of comment, which is which is the better body
14 for making this decision?

15 You say, Justice Breyer, you like the
16 district court because the district court, 1, may have
17 the opportunity to -- to listen to the witnesses,
18 although in this case, claim construction was done
19 strictly on the papers. There were no witnesses who
20 testified.

21 But number 2, if you go back to what the
22 ultimate inquiry is, which is what does the term mean in
23 the context of the patent, which is what Markman says,
24 so it's got to be against the claim language, the
25 specification and the prosecution history, what -- what

1 are we -- what is the undertaking there, under those
2 circumstances, treating it -- giving that kind of a
3 decision-making process, which is something Federal
4 Circuit does every day.

5 JUSTICE BREYER: I mean, it isn't that I
6 like it better. It is that Rule 52(a) says that
7 fact-finding of the district court should be overturned
8 only for clear error. And once I start down this road,
9 well, that's true on some facts and not other facts,
10 and -- and I get into this. See, I'm not an expert. I
11 don't see where the stopping place is. I don't see how
12 to manage the system and I am moved by the fact that the
13 lawyers here are pretty much -- who know patent law are
14 pretty much in favor of district courts as far as amici
15 are concerned. They're pretty much in favor of district
16 courts making the fact-finding. So -- so I don't think
17 where to go to start drawing the lines you want to draw.

18 MR. PHILLIPS: I'm -- I'm not sure I -- I
19 agree with your assessment about how comfortable the
20 world is with the district courts making fact-finding in
21 the patent context. My experience is --

22 JUSTICE BREYER: I don't know. Rule 52(a)
23 and that's the -- what do I do about that?

24 MR. PHILLIPS: And it seems to me Markman
25 answered 52(a). Markman says it's a pure question of

1 law and it should all be treated as a pure question of
2 law in order to guarantee uniformity and to provide
3 adequate notice to the world.

4 JUSTICE ALITO: So if a patent is --

5 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Can I clarify a point
6 that you made in response a little earlier? You said
7 that this was not a hearing. It is a hearing, but is it
8 always on papers?

9 MR. PHILLIPS: Doesn't have to be. But in
10 this context, this was all done on the basis of the
11 submitted declarations and -- and depositions.

12 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So there was no live
13 hearing.

14 MR. PHILLIPS: There was no live hearing on
15 this, no.

16 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, Markman hearings
17 certainly have expert testimony, don't they?

18 MR. PHILLIPS: They can. They don't have
19 to. You don't have to have Markman --

20 JUSTICE KENNEDY: When they do have expert
21 testimony, you want it to say that that's -- it doesn't
22 involve any findings of fact to which the court of
23 appeals must defer.

24 MR. PHILLIPS: Yes. I mean, I think that's
25 the right answer. And the reason for it is, is that,

1 again, you've got to put it in context. And if you use
2 the government's theory, it's particularly striking
3 which is if it's a dispute about a scientific principle
4 apart from the patent, they're virtually -- that doesn't
5 happen. I mean, you can read the first 25 pages of
6 Grant's declaration. There is no disagreement between
7 anything he said and anything that our experts said on
8 any of those general principles of law.

9 It is only when you get to the
10 interpretation in the context of the patent, which is
11 language he uses repeatedly, and then tries to -- tries
12 to take his interpretation, his reading of the patent,
13 elevate it to a finding of fact and giving deference to
14 the decision-making of the district court.

15 JUSTICE SCALIA: So what do you want the
16 district court to do? Do you want the district court,
17 nonetheless, even though what it finds is not going to
18 be given any deference, do you want them to listen to
19 witnesses?

20 MR. PHILLIPS: Of course.

21 JUSTICE SCALIA: Or to take at least written
22 testimony where there's what you say is a rare
23 scientific question comes up?

24 MR. PHILLIPS: No --

25 JUSTICE SCALIA: Even if it's going to be

1 decided by the court of appeals, why should the -- why
2 should the district court have any witnesses at all?

3 JUSTICE KENNEDY: And why should it say that
4 if you want also just to follow the same question
5 just -- not to separate conclusions of law -- findings
6 of fact and conclusions of law, that's all out.

7 MR. PHILLIPS: Well, in reality --

8 JUSTICE KENNEDY: No findings of fact at
9 all.

10 MR. PHILLIPS: Well, I mean, actually, the
11 claim construction analysis is just a claim construction
12 analysis when she goes through it. She doesn't -- the
13 district judge didn't accord findings of fact,
14 conclusions of law analysis to it in the first place.
15 She just analyzed each of the claims including the
16 average molecular weight.

17 JUSTICE SCALIA: So this district judge
18 should not have even taken this testimony; is that it?

19 MR. PHILLIPS: Well, no, I think it's
20 perfectly sensible to take the testimony.

21 JUSTICE SCALIA: Why? Why?

22 MR. PHILLIPS: Because it helps to inform
23 even the district judge's understanding of what the
24 patent is about in order to be able to apply the claim
25 language, the specification, and the prosecution

1 history.

2 Remember, at the end, all you're talking
3 about is if you can't figure it out from everything else
4 that's in front of you, which you should be able to,
5 will there be a situation where there is some testimony
6 about a scientific principle, apart from the patent,
7 that could get you there, and the situation is virtually
8 unheard of. The patent office says no.

9 JUSTICE ALITO: Mr. Phillips, can I try this
10 out and see if you agree with me.

11 If a patent is like public law, if it's like
12 a statute or like a rule, then factual findings
13 regarding the meaning of that patent are not entitled to
14 clear error review.

15 MR. PHILLIPS: Right.

16 JUSTICE ALITO: Any more than factual
17 findings regarding the meaning of a statute are -- or
18 the Constitution are entitled to plain error review.
19 What was the original understanding of the Second
20 Amendment? That's a factual question, but it's not
21 subject to plain error review. What did Congress intend
22 if you think Congress intended things? That's a factual
23 question, but it's not subject to plain error review.

24 Now, on the other hand, if a patent is
25 private law, if it's like a deed or if it's like a

1 contract, then Rule 52(a) comes into play.

2 Do you agree with that?

3 MR. PHILLIPS: Yes, I agree with that. As
4 I've said all along --

5 JUSTICE ALITO: So it all turns on which --
6 how we --

7 MR. PHILLIPS: Which one you think it's
8 closer to.

9 JUSTICE ALITO: Okay.

10 MR. PHILLIPS: But actually, I think Markman
11 answered that, because I think Markman recognized that
12 this is a public document that is going to be binding on
13 third parties, and that therefore ought to be construed
14 as a matter of law in order to ensure the stare decisis
15 component of it. And they rejected it. Remember, the
16 Court -- this Court specifically rejected the
17 alternative argument put forward, I think by the
18 government's lawyer, suggesting that you can use
19 collateral estoppel and other methods of dealing with
20 fact-findings or fact determinations. This Court said
21 no, that's not adequate. You need stare decisis in
22 order to guarantee the kind of uniformity that only the
23 Federal Circuit can apply --

24 JUSTICE BREYER: How many patents do they
25 issue a year, do you have any rough idea?

1 MR. PHILLIPS: I'm sorry. How many patents?

2 JUSTICE BREYER: How many patents are issued
3 every year? Roughly. Do you have any idea?

4 MR. PHILLIPS: I don't. The SG's lawyer
5 would almost certainly be in a better position to answer
6 that. But obviously it's a significant number of them.

7 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Phillips, there might be
8 very different kinds of factual determinations that are
9 relevant to patentability than are relevant to
10 interpretation of a statute, so let me just give you
11 one. I mean, suppose that the validity of a patent
12 depended on when a particular invention was made. You
13 know, was it done in 1980 or was it done in 2000.

14 MR. PHILLIPS: Right, the priority date.

15 JUSTICE KAGAN: And that was absolutely
16 critical to your determination of whether a patent was
17 valid. But that seems like so within the province of
18 the trial court and --

19 MR. PHILLIPS: You mean -- or the jury.

20 JUSTICE KAGAN: How do I deal with that?

21 MR. PHILLIPS: Yes, but that's -- that's the
22 priority date and the priority date's always been
23 recognized as a question of fact. I mean, the court --

24 JUSTICE KAGAN: So a question of fact which
25 the trial court ought to get deference on, no?

1 MR. PHILLIPS: Yes, absolutely. But that's
2 not -- that's not a claim construction issue.

3 That's just a question of what is the
4 priority date for purposes of -- you have to go outside
5 the patent to get that. Because you've got to be -- you
6 have to find out at what point other things were
7 available, you know, how does it react to other filings
8 that would have been made?

9 JUSTICE KAGAN: I see, but are you saying
10 that there aren't similar things that could arise within
11 the context of claim construction, just different
12 people's view of what the facts on the ground are? You
13 know, is molecular weight usually measured in
14 kilodaltons or something else.

15 MR. PHILLIPS: Yes, but that's the whole
16 point. There isn't any disagreement about that. Most
17 of the -- of those kinds of issues that are completely
18 distinct from the patent itself where you're not just
19 trying to figure out the language of the patent, there
20 are very few differences of opinion about it. Everybody
21 acknowledged, even the Federal Circuit acknowledged that
22 suggesting that average weight was -- implied average
23 molecular weight, weight average molecular weight was
24 implied by the reference to kilodaltons, right, was a
25 misstatement of law. It was a misstatement of science.

1 But I think quite rightly, then drew the
2 precise legal conclusion that I would hope this Court
3 would affirm, which is that when a patent holder
4 identifies flatly inconsistent positions in the
5 prosecution history in order to get two separate patents
6 issued, one using a measure for one and one using a
7 measure for the other, where -- where, just to be clear
8 about this, this patent is all about molecular weight.
9 The whole purpose of this was to get --

10 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Mr. Phillips, why do you
11 think that the court below just didn't make that
12 holding? To be frank with you, and I read the
13 background of this case, your intuitive or your reaction
14 was my own.

15 MR. PHILLIPS: Right.

16 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But they didn't. They
17 didn't actually say that clearly enough. And I'm going
18 to ask on rebuttal what Mr. Jay would say if they said
19 that. Is that an issue of law? If you have
20 inconsistent positions in patent prosecution, you're
21 bound.

22 MR. PHILLIPS: Yes. I mean, I think
23 that's -- I mean, whether you can -- whether it's an
24 estoppel, I don't know, but whether it's the best way to
25 interpret the patent, regardless of what else there is

1 in the record and the evidence, I think that's one place
2 where the Solicitor General and we are in complete
3 agreement, that the one thing you cannot do is take
4 fundamentally inconsistent positions in the prosecution
5 history, create a record that says, average weight means
6 -- average molecular weight means weight and average
7 molecular weight means peak, when the whole purpose of
8 this exercise is to get the weight into a certain range
9 of kilodaltons in order to protect it against toxicity.

10 I mean, that's the whole patent. You would
11 have thought in the ordinary course, if I were writing a
12 patent, and I thought everything turned on average
13 molecular weight, I might actually bother to define the
14 term.

15 JUSTICE BREYER: All right. That may be
16 true, but what you -- and I know I'm not going to get an
17 answer from you, because I know what the answer would
18 be.

19 MR. PHILLIPS: Well, you always get an
20 answer from me.

21 JUSTICE BREYER: My question is, where are
22 we going if we start carving out one aspect of the
23 patent litigation, namely the construction, and say that
24 fact matters underlying that, root facts, even when they
25 are one witness versus another, are for the court on

1 review to decide, but in all other matters, they're
2 really clear error. I don't know where I'm going with
3 that, because I'm not an expert in this area. But you
4 see that I'm nervous about it?

5 MR. PHILLIPS: I do. And I guess what I
6 would suggest, Justice Breyer, and hopefully this is an
7 answer to your question, is that the Federal Circuit has
8 followed this path for well more than 20 years.

9 JUSTICE BREYER: Oh, you've seen the figures
10 in here. The figures are they followed the path and
11 they reverse non-stop and it's, like, 30 percent or 40
12 percent of all the cases get reversed.

13 MR. PHILLIPS: But those numbers have
14 continued to come down, and the reason they've continued
15 to come down is that there was an enormous fight between
16 both the district courts and the Federal Circuit about
17 the methodology of claim construction. But the en banc
18 decision of the Federal Circuit in Phillips made it very
19 clear, you look at the claims, the specification, the
20 prosecution history, the learned treatises and
21 dictionaries, and as a last recourse, if need be, you
22 can even turn to experts to help you understand it.

23 And nobody -- and I'm not discouraging,
24 Justice Scalia, the use of experts. I mean, there is
25 reason to testify. Anybody who wants to understand

1 certain kinds of patents are going to want to have
2 experts come in. I can guarantee you parties are not
3 going to present these cases to the judge without coming
4 in with a tutorial that provides a very good explanation
5 of how that patent operates.

6 All of that's legitimate. And I would give
7 a district court, if I were the Federal Circuit, the
8 deference that the district judge is otherwise entitled
9 to based on the strength of the argument to kind of --
10 the kind of lesser deference courts pay to courts -- to
11 administrative agencies in certain circumstances.

12 JUSTICE GINSBURG: You're talking about
13 Skidmore.

14 MR. PHILLIPS: Skidmore, thank you. I was
15 looking for the word, but it wasn't coming to me.

16 You know, the notion that you're entitled
17 to whatever deference the -- the power of your logic
18 gets you to. But if you use that test here where, as I
19 said, Justice Sotomayor --

20 JUSTICE SCALIA: If you're right, we'll say
21 the same thing. I mean, you could call that deference
22 if you like, but --

23 MR. PHILLIPS: Well, it's a measure of --
24 but at least it gives the district court an incentive to
25 do harder work in order to be in a position to lay claim

1 to more deference.

2 But what we do know here is that the -- the
3 fundamental -- the prosecution history creates to my
4 mind an insolubly ambiguous patent and there's no way
5 out of that box. And then what the district -- what the
6 court of appeals said is, is there anything in the SEC
7 calibration data or the shifting of this and that that
8 somehow makes this suddenly become definite enough, and
9 the answer to that is no, none of that does anything
10 except suggest to a person of skill in the art that peak
11 could potentially have been a legitimate way to
12 interpret that.

13 But none of that gets you out of the box.
14 And indeed, every time their expert testified to this he
15 kept saying, well, it's because the prosecution history
16 refers to peak. But that's only because he discounted
17 the other half of the prosecution history that referred
18 explicitly and completely to the weight.

19 And it's in that context that I would hope
20 that this Court, if it decides to go past de novo, if it
21 thinks this exercise is worth the candle, will go beyond
22 just simply saying there's a new standard to be applied
23 and analyze each of the facts of the -- that have been
24 put before the Court by the Petitioner, and make a
25 determination because it's -- one, it would be very

1 helpful to know what the indefiniteness standard means
2 in light of last year's decision in Nautilus and that
3 can be elucidated here. But two, it seems to me that,
4 whatever else you want to say about this, this is a
5 hopelessly indefinite set of claims. It is not entitled
6 to protection. It should be regarded -- it should be
7 regarded as invalid, and my client should be able to go
8 forward with the generics that would bring this medicine
9 to -- at less expense to the population.

10 If there are no further questions, Your
11 Honors.

12 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
13 Mr. Jay, 3 minutes.

14 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF WILLIAM M. JAY

15 ON BEHALF OF PETITIONERS

16 MR. JAY: Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice. I
17 would like to make, I think, five points.

18 One is in response to Mr. Phillips's
19 suggestion that there aren't going to be many cases with
20 contested facts. This is a case with contested facts.
21 This is a case in which -- let's talk about figure one
22 in particular because we didn't touch on that as much in
23 the top half of the argument.

24 The meaning of figure one is crucial to the
25 Federal Circuit because it said its understanding of

1 figure one was that it made it hard to credit our
2 interpretation of the patent. But there was directly
3 opposed scientific evidence in the district court, would
4 the peak shift or would it not shift. Dr. Ryu said,
5 page 375a of the joint appendix, no, it wouldn't. The
6 district court found as a fact that, yes, it would.

7 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Why does the government
8 disagree with you about that?

9 MR. JAY: The government agrees with us
10 100 percent about figure one and I think the government
11 says, and we agree with this as well, the error on
12 figure one is itself a sufficient basis to remand. And
13 what might happen on remand I think you can't
14 necessarily predict because you can't disaggregate the
15 -- all of these de novo conclusions from each other.

16 JUSTICE GINSBURG: From the facts that you
17 say are facts and the government says do not qualify as
18 to their test.

19 MR. JAY: The government says that the SEC
20 point about presumed meaning, and I think -- the
21 government doesn't pay sufficient attention to the
22 presumed meaning fact-finding. But we disagree on that,
23 and on -- relating to the prosecution history.

24 Now, Mr. Phillips alluded to the prosecution
25 history, and, Justice Sotomayor, this gets to your

1 question that you asked me to address. Can the
2 prosecution history by itself answer this case, and the
3 answer is no, it can't. The Federal Circuit couldn't
4 say that it did because when you have a patent that is
5 sufficiently definite in light of the specification,
6 that's the end of the matter.

7 As the Federal Circuit said in Phillips, the
8 prosecution history ranks below the specification as an
9 interpretative aid, and if the patent is sufficiently
10 definite in light of the specification, and we say that
11 it is, and Dr. Grant said that it was -- Dr. Grant
12 referred to a number of things besides what Mr. Phillips
13 just told you about why peak was the more likely
14 meaning. So, for example, number average and weight
15 average are usually seen together, peak by itself.

16 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I'm sorry, you didn't
17 answer my question. If the Federal Circuit just simply
18 said, mistake or not, you said it, you said it was
19 molecular weight, not peak, you're stuck.

20 MR. JAY: It can't say that, Justice
21 Sotomayor, because its own doctrine says -- what you're
22 positing is some kind of disclaimer, and a disclaimer --

23 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: No, I'm positing an
24 estoppel of some sort.

25 MR. JAY: Well, whichever way you see it,

1 that rises -- that requires a clear and convincing
2 standard, a clear and unambiguous standard that they did
3 not apply here, they could not apply here. And in
4 particular what we have now is the '808 patent. These
5 two statements were made 4 years and 6 years after the
6 '808 patent issued. If it was definite when it issued,
7 it's still definite today.

8 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.

9 The case is submitted.

10 MR. JAY: Thank you.

11 (Whereupon, at 11:02 a.m., the case in the
12 above-entitled matter was submitted.)

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A	<p>agreement 51:3</p> <p>agrees 7:21 8:7 56:9</p> <p>ahead 14:10 37:24</p> <p>aid 57:9</p> <p>AL 1:4,7</p> <p>Alito 6:5,8,12,22 7:4 14:8,10 21:6,24 31:24 32:20 33:19,24 43:4 46:9,16 47:5,9</p> <p>allow 12:13,16</p> <p>allowed 36:23</p> <p>allows 33:2</p> <p>alluded 20:10 56:24</p> <p>alluding 22:10</p> <p>alternative 47:17</p> <p>ambiguous 54:4</p> <p>Amendment 12:21 36:18 46:20</p> <p>amici 42:14</p> <p>amicus 1:20 2:8 22:14 23:14</p> <p>amount 31:15</p> <p>ample 29:1</p> <p>analysis 5:11 10:7 11:19 20:6 26:9 27:6 28:15 33:9 41:12 45:11,12 45:14</p> <p>analyze 41:9 54:23</p> <p>analyzed 45:15</p> <p>Anders 1:18 2:6 23:11,12,15 25:9,15,18 26:21 28:4,25 29:13,21 30:19 31:13 32:7,25 33:11</p> <p>Anderson 14:1</p>	<p>answer 5:1 7:22 12:24 14:12,21 15:14 36:10 37:16,17 39:2 39:3 43:25 48:5 51:17,17 51:20 52:7 54:9 57:2,3,17</p> <p>answered 42:25 47:11</p> <p>anticipate 12:11</p> <p>antitrust 30:11</p> <p>Anybody 52:25</p> <p>apart 44:4 46:6</p> <p>appeals 3:12 22:23,25 25:2 35:4 43:23 45:1 54:6</p> <p>appear 6:15</p> <p>APPEARAN... 1:15</p> <p>appears 4:15</p> <p>appendix 20:15 56:5</p> <p>applied 4:3 13:5 54:22</p> <p>applies 7:23 18:10</p> <p>apply 3:14 7:24 8:21 22:24,25 23:3 45:24 47:23 58:3,3</p> <p>applying 10:5 11:24,25</p> <p>appropriate 33:22</p> <p>area 7:6 30:12 52:3</p> <p>argument 1:13 2:2,5,9,12 3:4 3:7 8:6 19:22 23:12 33:13 35:16 37:25 38:2 39:21 47:17 53:9 55:14,23</p> <p>art 3:24 4:17</p>	<p>5:10,10,11,20 5:21,22 6:1,6,7 7:12,16,17 11:10,10,21 16:8 17:17,23 18:8,8 24:7 27:17 54:10</p> <p>article 21:7</p> <p>artisan 5:3,6 7:13 14:16,22 18:11 33:3</p> <p>artisan's 22:17</p> <p>artisans 12:2 15:4 26:16 27:11 28:22</p> <p>Ascertaining 7:12</p> <p>asked 30:16 33:18,24 35:23 37:15,16 57:1</p> <p>asking 4:23</p> <p>asks 24:6</p> <p>aspect 51:22</p> <p>assessment 42:19</p> <p>Assistant 1:18</p> <p>assume 33:2</p> <p>assumes 39:5</p> <p>attention 56:21</p> <p>audience 6:21</p> <p>authority 12:15</p> <p>authors 21:7,9</p> <p>available 49:7</p> <p>average 4:9,20 6:24 16:8 20:16,17,21,23 20:24 21:1,3 26:4 37:15 45:16 49:22,22 49:23 51:5,6,6 51:12 57:14,15</p> <p>avoid 29:2 40:3</p> <p>avoiding 28:19</p>	<p>37:1 41:6,21</p> <p>background 50:13</p> <p>balance 23:8</p> <p>banc 52:17</p> <p>based 23:19 27:23 32:8,8,9 37:2 53:9</p> <p>basically 19:6 19:21 34:17</p> <p>basis 39:16 43:10 56:12</p> <p>beginning 8:6 11:19</p> <p>begins 40:18</p> <p>behalf 1:16,20 1:21 2:4,7,11 2:14 3:8 23:13 33:14 55:15</p> <p>believe 38:22</p> <p>belong 6:3 15:8 18:21</p> <p>bench 29:19</p> <p>best 14:5 23:1 34:7 50:24</p> <p>better 30:25 31:20 36:9 41:13 42:6 48:5</p> <p>beyond 54:21</p> <p>big 29:16</p> <p>bind 28:1</p> <p>binding 30:2 40:6 47:12</p> <p>binds 31:11</p> <p>bird 19:1</p> <p>bit 41:13</p> <p>blanket 39:22</p> <p>blow 22:16</p> <p>body 41:13</p> <p>bother 51:13</p> <p>bound 50:21</p> <p>box 54:5,13</p> <p>Breyer 18:13,17 19:7,10,20,25 20:10 29:9,14 29:23 30:5,9</p>
		B		
		<p>B 9:22</p> <p>back 29:8 36:16</p>		

<p>34:15 35:8,19 36:1,5 38:11 38:24 39:2,9 41:15 42:5,22 47:24 48:2 51:15,21 52:6 52:9 brief 13:12 22:14 23:2 bring 4:1 55:8 broad 32:12 broadly 12:24 bucket 38:9 build 30:25 bus 29:10,16</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">C</p> <p>C 2:1 3:1 9:22 calculation 32:19 calculations 24:19 25:5,23 calibration 54:7 call 19:1,2 53:21 called 5:9 canary 18:23,24 18:25 candle 33:25 38:4,7 39:24 41:8 54:21 canon 15:17 canons 10:5 11:24 24:9 28:15 capital 6:23,25 carries 40:16 CARTER 1:21 2:10 33:13 carving 51:22 case 3:4 4:2 5:9 7:10 8:18 9:19 12:23 13:15 16:2,5,7,10,14 18:7 19:7 21:14 22:5,7 23:2 27:10 28:20 30:8</p>	<p>31:18 33:21 34:1,20,22 35:4,9,21 41:18 50:13 55:20,21 57:2 58:9,11 cases 5:23,23,24 10:2 11:12 12:24,25 13:6 13:21,22 15:6 15:23,24 16:4 19:11 21:10 22:3,12 29:3 29:15 35:1 36:3,18 38:2 38:13 52:12 53:3 55:19 cause 16:7,20,21 Celsius 5:16 certain 14:13 15:23 17:20 18:19,24 27:18 31:8,15 51:8 53:1,11 certainly 4:5 5:24 7:2 35:13 43:17 48:5 characterized 25:13 Chief 3:3,9 11:1 11:7,13 23:10 23:15 27:21 28:18 29:25 30:6,13 33:10 33:15,20 35:23 40:4 55:12,16 58:8 chromatogram 20:23 chromatograp... 4:22 20:13 24:12 25:19 Circuit 3:17 4:3 4:7,12 8:13,19 8:20,21 19:11 19:16 20:4,25 21:12,17,19</p>	<p>22:16,21,25 23:4 26:13 38:19 42:4 47:23 49:21 52:7,16,18 53:7 55:25 57:3,7,17 Circuit's 8:9 22:6 circumstance 37:18 circumstances 28:8 33:23 39:17 42:2 53:11 cited 23:2 civil 13:15 claim 3:17,19,21 8:25 9:13,14 9:20,22 10:1,5 10:19 11:18,25 12:4 13:9 15:17 17:12,13 17:24 18:10 23:5 24:9 28:16 29:7 30:22 36:12,25 37:2,6 40:13 40:19 41:18,24 45:11,11,24 49:2,11 52:17 53:25 claims 26:11 27:13 37:3,9 45:15 52:19 55:5 clarify 43:5 classic 10:25 26:9 classical 18:17 clear 3:20 7:8,23 21:11,20 27:9 31:25 32:22 37:8 42:8 46:14 50:7 52:2,19 58:1,2 clearly 4:3 27:24</p>	<p>28:24 35:15 50:17 client 55:7 close 16:2 closer 47:8 collateral 47:19 colleagues 33:18 colloquy 13:22 come 12:6,9 15:25 16:2 27:23 38:3 52:14,15 53:2 comes 8:4 25:4 30:8 44:23 47:1 comfortable 42:19 coming 28:20 29:8 53:3,15 comment 41:13 Committee 13:25 community 6:1 6:2 comparatively 38:22 complete 51:2 completely 37:20 49:17 54:18 complicate 38:16 complicated 37:11 complication 21:17 component 47:15 concepts 24:4 concern 19:16 23:21 28:4 concerned 42:15 conclusion 9:10 31:5 34:12 50:2 conclusions 29:20 45:5,6</p>	<p>45:14 56:15 conclusive 31:12 concretely 24:13 conflating 13:21 13:22 conflicts 14:7 Congress 6:19 46:21,22 connection 32:5 Constitution 46:18 construction 3:18,19,21 8:25 9:12,14 9:20 10:1,6,19 10:23 11:18,25 12:4 13:9 15:13 17:12,13 23:6 24:9 28:16 29:7 30:23 36:13,25 37:2 40:14 41:18 45:11,11 49:2,11 51:23 52:17 construe 5:12 27:8,14,18 construed 9:22 31:9 37:6 47:13 construing 27:22 contain 9:24 10:1 contested 55:20 55:20 context 4:10 8:22 9:11 10:8 11:18 15:16 21:5 26:1,3 27:9 37:1,16 37:17 41:23 42:21 43:10 44:1,10 49:11 54:19 contextual 28:14 continued 52:14</p>
---	--	---	---	---

<p>52:14 contract 15:6 47:1 controlling 11:21 conveyed 31:9 convinced 35:15 convincing 58:1 coordination 29:4 corporate 30:11 correct 16:1,3 20:4 cottage 38:8 39:19 counsel 55:12 58:8 course 12:23 29:5 31:14 32:16 44:20 51:11 court 1:1,13 3:10,20,22 4:12,23 5:8 7:11 8:12,19 8:20,23 9:13 9:21,21,24 10:18 11:4,7 11:16 12:10,12 13:2,8 14:21 15:6 16:22 17:22 18:5 20:14 21:5,18 23:16 24:2,5 24:14,20 25:1 25:3,23 26:8 26:14,18,23,24 27:7,10,12,19 28:13,21 32:8 33:1,16,20 34:5,16 35:3 36:14,23 39:11 39:12,25 40:2 40:25 41:10,16 41:16 42:7 43:22 44:14,16 44:16 45:1,2</p>	<p>47:16,16,20 48:18,23,25 50:2,11 51:25 53:7,24 54:6 54:20,24 56:3 56:6 court's 4:8 5:23 9:13 13:25 15:5 26:2 courts 3:12,14 8:16 16:9 22:23,24 27:22 28:21 29:1 31:10 35:25 42:14,16,20 52:16 53:10,10 create 38:7 51:5 creates 54:3 creating 39:19 credibility 16:17 34:4 credit 14:19 56:1 critical 48:16 crucial 55:24 curiae 1:20 2:8 23:14 curious 30:10 curve 4:14</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">D</p> <p>D 1:18 2:6 3:1 9:22 23:12 D.C 1:9,16,19,21 data 23:23 24:15 25:4,6 32:14 32:17 54:7 date 48:14,22 49:4 date's 48:22 day 41:3 42:4 de 8:14 13:14,18 21:11,17,21 22:15 33:22 34:13 54:20 56:15 deal 39:21 48:20</p>	<p>dealing 30:17 47:19 dealt 34:16 debate 21:14 33:25 decide 12:16 27:16 33:3 34:2,22 36:20 36:23 52:1 decided 10:8 13:8 29:7 33:21 45:1 decides 34:17 54:20 decision 14:1,18 31:4 41:14 52:18 55:2 decision-maki... 42:3 44:14 decisis 47:14,21 declaration 44:6 declarations 43:11 deed 31:6 46:25 Deere 7:12 41:1 41:1 defer 4:7,12 8:11,12 34:3,3 43:23 deference 8:21 9:17,25 10:13 10:24 16:9,10 44:13,18 48:25 53:8,10,17,21 54:1 deferentially 3:13 9:8 10:9 deferring 8:16 define 17:18 51:13 definite 54:8 57:5,10 58:6,7 definition 11:14 12:1 36:8 definitional 34:24 Dennison 8:20</p>	<p>Department 1:19 depended 48:12 depending 28:21 depositions 43:11 deputy 21:8 describe 34:10 described 24:4 designed 37:7 determination 6:10 9:15,23 14:19 15:24 26:19 34:4,13 48:16 54:25 determinations 9:24 10:2 38:1 38:3 47:20 48:8 determine 6:4 17:21 21:19 devices 30:17 dial 38:14 dictated 17:8 dictionaries 52:21 difference 7:19 11:3 14:25 21:11,13 35:5 differences 39:16 49:20 different 3:18 13:2 14:20 20:20,22 27:22 28:2 29:10,11 29:11,17,17,18 29:19,20 30:7 30:14 31:5,10 31:19,20 34:20 35:17,20,20,21 36:11,13 40:7 40:8,9,12 48:8 49:11 differentiate 8:1 differentiation 15:17 18:10</p>	<p>differently 28:20 difficult 36:19 38:12 difficulty 34:2 direct 8:20 14:6 directly 56:2 disaggregate 20:5 56:14 disaggregating 22:22 disagree 8:3 19:11 26:24 56:8,22 disagreed 26:13 disagreement 39:7 44:6 49:16 disclaimer 57:22 57:22 discounted 54:16 discouraging 52:23 discuss 24:13 disposition 8:8 dispositive 16:19 17:1 dispute 4:13 12:17 18:22 44:3 disputes 34:9 disruptive 23:4 distinct 23:22 32:1,6 49:18 distinction 18:18 23:17 distinguish 38:12 district 4:12 8:12,16 9:15 9:23 16:6 20:14 21:5 24:2,5,14,20 25:3,23 26:2 26:14,18,22,23 26:24 27:7,10</p>
---	--	---	--	--

27:22 28:20,21 29:1,4 32:8 33:1 34:21 35:25 41:16,16 42:7,14,15,20 44:14,16,16 45:2,13,17,23 52:16 53:7,8 53:24 54:5 56:3,6	effectively 33:21 41:9 elaborate 28:11 elevate 44:13 elucidated 55:3 embodiment 15:20 embodiments 27:15 en 52:17 encompassed 15:21 encourages 22:16 engage 28:14 enormous 30:14 35:5 52:15 ensure 47:14 enter 3:21 5:11 10:7 entire 14:4 entitled 10:13 46:13,18 53:8 53:16 55:5 envision 28:20 equal 21:4 Erie 5:9 erroneous 4:4 27:25 28:24 35:15 error 7:23 9:24 21:11,20 31:25 32:23 42:8 46:14,18,21,23 52:2 56:11 ESQ 1:16,18,21 2:3,6,10,13 essentially 21:2 established 7:2 17:7 18:11 estoppel 47:19 50:24 57:24 ET 1:4,7 Everybody 49:20 evidence 12:5,8 12:17 14:7	22:18 23:20 27:11 32:4 38:9 39:15 51:1 56:3 exact 37:17 exactly 6:3 17:25 29:21 36:13 examiners 37:14 example 5:13,16 6:23 11:25 15:14 16:15 18:10 22:9 23:1 24:12 35:25 57:14 examples 30:10 30:11,12 exclusion 4:21 20:13 24:12 25:19 excuse 11:9 37:15 exegesis 37:8 exercise 51:8 54:21 expect 7:1 expense 55:9 experience 39:13 42:21 expert 4:13 10:22,22 14:14 15:4 17:25 18:2,5 19:1,8 26:15,22 27:1 39:17 41:11 42:10 43:17,20 52:3 54:14 expertise 32:9 32:10 experts 6:4 12:13 19:13 35:6 37:14 44:7 52:22,24 53:2 explanation 53:4 explicitly 54:18	expressly 4:13 <hr/> F <hr/> fact 7:11,24 9:5 9:6,16 10:11 11:3,5,14,15 11:15 12:20 14:13 15:9 19:2,12,12 22:25 27:2,4 31:11 32:18 33:6 34:16,19 36:17,20 40:13 42:12 43:22 44:13 45:6,8 45:13 47:20 48:23,24 51:24 56:6 fact-finding 3:16 5:19 8:22 9:7,8,9 10:12 10:25 13:6 16:25 25:11,20 27:20 42:7,16 42:20 56:22 fact-findings 3:13 8:5 10:20 13:1,3,14,23 22:8,8 25:8,13 28:14 47:20 facts 3:12,18,21 4:2 8:4 10:7,7 11:2 13:15,16 13:18 16:2 23:7,7 34:2,17 34:22,23,25 35:1 42:9,9 49:12 51:24 54:23 55:20,20 56:16,17 factual 7:14,15 8:6 9:24 10:2 11:9 14:4,18 14:19 15:4,23 16:22 17:7,13 18:20 21:12,20 22:22 23:18,19	23:23,25 24:15 24:19 25:2 26:18 27:24 29:20 30:14 31:24 32:21,22 32:25 34:10 35:10 38:1,3 38:21 40:17,25 46:12,16,20,22 48:8 Fahrenheit 5:16 failed 4:7,12 familiar 3:14 far 42:14 fascinating 21:14 favor 20:7,8 42:14,15 Federal 3:13,17 4:3,7,7,11 8:9 8:13,19,19,21 19:11,16 20:3 20:25 21:12,17 21:19 22:6,16 22:20,25 23:4 26:13 38:19 42:3 47:23 49:21 52:7,16 52:18 53:7 55:25 57:3,7 57:17 field 6:16 14:15 14:16,23 15:8 23:25 26:16 32:10 fight 52:15 fighting 38:8 figure 4:14,15 27:7 38:5 46:3 49:19 55:21,24 56:1,10,12 figures 52:9,10 figuring 7:14 filings 49:7 final 34:11 41:11 find 3:12,23
<hr/> E <hr/> E 2:1 3:1,1 earlier 43:6 easier 24:13 easily 28:19 easy 11:4 effect 31:7 33:24				

<p>4:23 21:10,13 28:21 36:17 49:6 finding 4:8 5:4,5 5:7 12:2,3 15:23 16:17,22 17:7,13 21:1 22:9 24:15,19 25:2 26:18 27:4,24 32:8 32:10,12,17,21 33:1 44:13 findings 7:24 8:7,17 10:8 11:9 23:18,19 23:23 24:1,3,5 24:6 31:25 35:10 43:22 45:5,8,13 46:12,17 finds 13:15 44:17 fine 36:8 first 3:4 4:6 8:18 12:23 13:17 15:3 22:2 25:15,17 26:21 27:6 28:6 30:20 37:2 44:5 45:14 fit 19:4 fits 4:23 9:4 38:9 five 55:17 flatly 50:4 follow 45:4 follow-up 22:1 followed 52:8,10 following 26:17 follows 9:22 forever 8:13,16 form 12:18 forward 47:17 55:8 found 4:13 20:14 21:5 26:23 56:6 frame 7:9,10</p>	<p>frank 50:12 frequent 15:1 friends 33:19 front 46:4 fundamental 34:7 54:3 fundamentally 51:4 further 25:5,22 32:19 55:10</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">G</p> <hr/> <p>G 1:21 2:10 3:1 33:13 gap 14:12 17:21 gatekeeping 12:15 general 1:19 6:9 6:13 7:4 32:18 44:8 51:2 generality 17:20 generally 7:8 27:3,11 28:17 31:16 generics 55:8 GINGER 1:18 2:6 23:12 Ginsburg 4:1,5 8:5 12:5,7,8,10 12:19,22 13:11 13:20 25:7,9 25:10 36:15 40:11 53:12 56:7,16 give 6:22 16:9 20:20 48:10 53:6 given 9:17,25 17:6 27:17 34:19 40:20 44:18 gives 14:14 53:24 giving 38:20 42:2 44:13 go 13:1,3,7 14:10 36:5,15</p>	<p>36:15 37:24 38:25 39:1 41:6,21 42:17 49:4 54:20,21 55:7 goes 45:12 going 12:12 18:9 27:25 28:7,17 38:7,18,19 40:5 41:5 44:17,25 47:12 50:17 51:16,22 52:2 53:1,3 55:19 good 53:4 government 7:21 8:7,11 13:17 19:12 34:1 56:7,9,10 56:17,19,21 government's 7:20 13:11 44:2 47:18 Graham 7:11 41:1 Grant 18:6 57:11,11 Grant's 44:6 ground 49:12 guarantee 43:2 47:22 53:2 guess 31:6 52:5 guide 5:19 gun 16:16 guy 19:13</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">H</p> <hr/> <p>half 54:17 55:23 hand 23:2 46:24 handle 22:21 happen 30:13 34:24 36:2 44:5 56:13 happened 12:20 24:14 38:17 39:9 happens 11:19</p>	<p>28:3 hard 56:1 harder 53:25 Harries 23:1 head-to-head 14:7 hear 3:3 35:14 heard 14:4 hearing 43:7,7 43:13,14 hearings 43:16 held 31:21 help 52:22 helpful 55:1 helps 45:22 history 4:18 20:11 23:21 27:16 37:10 41:25 46:1 50:5 51:5 52:20 54:3,15 54:17 56:23,25 57:2,8 holder 50:3 holding 50:12 Honor 22:4 Honors 55:11 hope 50:2 54:19 hopefully 52:6 hopelessly 55:5 host 22:12 hundred 3:19 hybrid 9:1,2,3 hypothetical 39:1,5 hypotheticals 36:6</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">I</p> <hr/> <p>idea 6:25 47:25 48:3 identified 40:4 identifies 50:4 implications 30:15 implied 49:22 49:24</p>	<p>import 4:14 importance 36:5 important 12:14 20:2,10,12 36:6,25 incentive 53:24 including 45:15 inconsistent 40:7 50:4,20 51:4 incorrect 20:5 indefensible 37:20 indefinite 37:19 55:5 indefiniteness 27:9 30:23 55:1 industry 38:8 39:19 inference 5:3 24:22,24 25:24 26:6,14 33:7 inferences 13:13 13:16,18 14:2 14:5 23:18 24:10 inform 45:22 information 33:2 infringe 31:21 31:22 infringement 31:19 infringers 30:25 ingredient 11:17 initial 34:22 injured 29:11 input 6:4 inquired 37:13 inquiry 27:19 28:12 36:24 41:22 insolubly 54:4 instance 31:18 32:13 37:12 instances 15:1</p>
--	---	--	---	--

<p>37:11 39:6 instructed 3:23 instruments 5:25 insulate 23:5 intend 46:21 intended 46:22 interested 30:16 interpret 19:17 24:7 26:8 34:7 50:25 54:12 interpretation 5:25 9:23 11:22 44:10,12 48:10 56:2 interpretations 28:2 interpretative 5:19 6:2 40:2 41:6 57:9 interpreting 3:24 7:7 35:25 39:13 introduce 21:16 intuitive 50:13 invalid 55:7 invention 5:8,14 5:14 15:18 17:24 37:9 48:12 inventions 23:24 23:25 inventor 30:3 inventors 30:2 involve 9:16 43:22 irrelevant 12:3 15:12 issue 29:7,8 30:22,24 32:3 32:22 36:19 40:8,9,22 47:25 49:2 50:19 issued 48:2 50:6 58:6,6 issues 34:6</p>	<p>36:22 40:2,25 41:7 49:17</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">J</p> <hr/> <p>Jay 1:16 2:3,13 3:6,7,9 4:5 5:5 6:7,18 7:1,7,18 7:21 8:2,15 9:2 9:18 10:1,15 10:18 11:6,15 12:7,10,22 13:19 14:9,25 16:1,11 17:10 18:2,16 19:6 19:19,23 20:2 21:24 23:10 25:8,12 26:19 50:18 55:13,14 55:16 56:9,19 57:20,25 58:10 John 7:11 41:1,1 joint 56:5 judge 3:22 6:3 9:12,15,16,25 10:8,13 12:14 12:15 14:4,5 15:8 16:6 17:15 19:17 23:2 34:21 35:22 36:17,19 38:9,20 45:13 45:17 53:3,8 judge's 14:3 35:10 45:23 judge/jury 10:18 34:16 judges 3:11 6:4 35:12 judgment 8:9 11:18 12:13 41:11 judgments 13:3 judicial 3:11 13:5,23 juries 29:19 36:22 jury 9:12,19,21</p>	<p>10:12 12:23,25 13:4,6,8,10,15 13:21,22 48:19 Justice 1:19 3:3 3:9 4:1,5 5:1 6:5,7,12,22 7:4 7:18,25 8:5,10 8:15,24 9:3,11 9:19 10:10,16 10:17 11:1,6,7 11:13 12:5,7,8 12:10,19,22 13:11,20 14:8 14:9,10,11 15:22 16:4,5 16:12,23,24 17:18,19 18:13 18:17,18 19:7 19:10,20,25 20:10 21:6,24 23:10,15 25:7 25:9,10,17 26:15 27:21 28:18 29:9,14 29:23,25 30:5 30:6,9,13 31:6 31:24 32:20 33:10,15,19,20 33:24 34:15 35:8,19,23 36:1,5,15 37:21,23,25 38:11,24 39:2 39:9,20 40:4 40:11 41:15 42:5,22 43:4,5 43:12,16,20 44:15,21,25 45:3,8,17,21 46:9,16 47:5,9 47:24 48:2,7 48:15,20,24 49:9 50:10,16 51:15,21 52:6 52:9,24 53:12 53:19,20 55:12 55:16 56:7,16</p>	<p>56:25 57:16,20 57:23 58:8</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">K</p> <hr/> <p>Kagan 14:9,11 15:22 16:25 17:18 26:15 37:21,23,25 39:20 48:7,15 48:20,24 49:9 Kagan's 16:5 keeps 31:2 Kennedy 5:1 9:11,19 16:4 16:12 43:16,20 45:3,8 kept 54:15 kilodaltons 49:14,24 51:9 kind 6:3 10:23 14:13,21 15:2 18:20 20:22 23:23 28:19 32:16 38:20 42:2 47:22 53:9,10 57:22 kinds 34:6,23,25 35:1 38:1 48:8 49:17 53:1 know 5:15 7:3 7:16 9:3 11:2 13:23 22:3 25:25 28:1,22 30:6,17 34:23 36:2,8 41:2 42:13,22 48:13 49:7,13 50:24 51:16,17 52:2 53:16 54:2 55:1 knowing 5:20 knowledge 5:6 11:9 knowledgeable 6:16 7:5 knows 3:24 7:15</p>	<hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">L</p> <hr/> <p>label 18:21 laboratory 38:17 lack 16:10 language 37:3,6 41:6,24 44:11 45:25 49:19 large 18:4 21:10 largely 8:3 law 3:15 6:11 9:5,6 10:4,6 11:3,8 13:9 14:14 19:5 21:6 30:11,12 40:8,13,21 41:3,4 42:13 43:1,2 44:8 45:5,6,14 46:11,25 47:14 49:25 50:19 lawyer 19:3,13 47:18 48:4 lawyers 38:8 42:13 lay 53:25 leap 9:9 learned 52:20 legal 6:10,11 9:9 11:22 14:20 15:24 17:1,2,3 17:4 19:21 21:14 22:23 23:18 24:10,23 25:24 26:6,13 27:6,19 28:13 28:16 30:17 34:9 40:3 41:7 50:2 legitimate 53:6 54:11 lengthy 5:22 lesser 53:10 let's 38:16 55:21 letting 34:21 level 7:12 17:20</p>
---	--	--	--	---

<p>21:16 liability 17:22 liable 17:4 light 6:15 20:19 24:8,22 28:15 55:2 57:5,10 lines 42:17 listen 41:17 44:18 listened 35:6 literally 41:8 litigation 40:10 51:23 little 41:13 43:6 live 43:12,14 logic 53:17 look 24:21 26:10 27:12,16 52:19 looking 10:4 11:16 30:3 33:5 53:15 looks 19:1 24:6 loses 30:22 lot 28:1 lots 36:21,22 40:24,24 lying 16:18</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">M</p> <p>M 1:16 2:3,13 3:7 55:14 main 34:20 making 12:2 32:8,10,12 41:14 42:16,20 manage 42:12 market 40:24 Markman 9:11 9:20,20 10:19 10:21 11:8 13:8 26:9 33:21 34:5,15 36:14,24 39:12 40:2 41:5,23 42:24,25 43:16 43:19 47:10,11 Markman's</p>	<p>10:22 Martin 8:25 materially 31:22 matter 1:12 11:23 21:23 22:2,3 32:11 32:18 34:22 37:14 39:7 47:14 57:6 58:12 matters 8:17 13:7 15:25 22:3 23:21 33:20 34:19 35:11 39:25 51:24 52:1 mean 6:17 11:5 11:6 14:24 17:19 28:19 29:14 32:5,11 36:1 37:9,16 37:18 38:25 39:21 41:5,22 42:5 43:24 44:5 45:10 48:11,19,23 50:22,23 51:10 52:24 53:21 meaning 4:8 5:20 6:1,10,11 7:2 11:20,23 12:2 14:16 15:4,7,10,11 15:12,15 17:6 17:16 18:8,12 19:9 20:16,20 21:1 22:10 26:3 32:1,3 37:5 46:13,17 55:24 56:20,22 57:14 meanings 40:7 means 26:17 27:4 32:3,7 33:8 40:19 51:5,6,7 55:1 meant 6:20</p>	<p>24:25 measure 24:18 50:6,7 53:23 measured 49:13 measurements 20:22 medicine 55:8 Menell 22:14 mentioned 8:5 mere 31:11 methodology 52:17 methods 47:19 mind 54:4 minutes 55:13 missed 9:18 misstatement 49:25,25 mistake 57:18 mixed 9:5,6 11:11 molecular 4:9 4:20 16:9 20:16,18,21,24 21:2 24:17,18 24:25 25:1,21 26:4,4,16 33:7 37:15 45:16 49:13,23,23 50:8 51:6,7,13 57:19 morning 3:4 motor 29:17 moved 42:12 MP 25:4 27:4 32:19</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">N</p> <p>N 2:1,1 3:1 nature 34:10 36:24 Nautilus 55:2 necessarily 56:14 need 6:4 24:18 25:5,22 47:21 52:21</p>	<p>needs 28:12,14 negligence 30:7 neither 27:24 28:24 nervous 52:4 never 39:16 new 5:9 8:19 54:22 non-stop 52:11 normally 35:13 38:11,11 Notes 13:25 notice 41:10 43:3 notion 36:18 37:18 53:16 novo 8:14 13:14 13:18 21:11,17 21:21 22:15 33:22 34:13 54:20 56:15 number 13:6 18:19 21:3,10 41:21 48:6 57:12,14 numbers 52:13</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">O</p> <p>O 2:1 3:1 obviously 48:6 obviousness 8:22 40:12,14 40:16,22 occur 28:7 occurring 29:2 October 1:10 odd 9:1,2,3 34:24 office 21:8,9 39:16 46:8 officer 16:6,16 16:17 Oh 52:9 Okay 18:15,16 47:9 once 42:8 ones 21:21 24:10</p>	<p>34:3,24 36:7 opened 38:2 opening 33:18 operates 53:5 opining 16:13 opinion 22:6 26:2,25 39:17 49:20 opportunity 41:17 opposed 56:3 opposite 27:23 28:23 oral 1:12 2:2,5,9 3:7 23:12 33:13 order 17:21 43:2 45:24 47:14,22 50:5 51:9 53:25 ordinary 4:16 12:1 15:15 17:16,23 18:3 37:5 51:11 original 46:19 osmometry 20:19 ought 47:13 48:25 outcome 12:12 16:3 17:7 21:13 outside 23:20 49:4 overstated 28:5 overturn 35:10 overturned 42:7</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">P</p> <p>P 3:1 page 2:2 20:15 56:5 pages 22:15 44:5 papers 41:19 43:8 part 5:3,5 9:8 14:3 15:3 16:5</p>
--	---	--	---	--

<p>23:20 26:7,8 26:10 41:12 particular 4:22 7:5 10:11,12 14:17 15:8 17:6 18:7,12 19:9 23:23 27:12 30:7 37:12 38:9,18 48:12 55:22 58:4 particularly 27:8 34:24 35:11,12 44:2 parties 12:16 47:13 53:2 patent 3:25 4:20 5:12,23,24 7:10,13 8:18 10:5 11:22,24 12:24 14:17,24 15:12,16,18,19 17:5,15 18:4,4 18:7 19:13,18 21:8 23:20,22 24:4,6,8,8,21 24:24 26:1,10 27:8,18,22,25 28:3,15 30:1 31:14,21 32:2 32:4,12,15,16 33:4,6,8 34:8 36:12 37:8,13 37:14 39:15 40:8 41:23 42:13,21 43:4 44:4,10,12 45:24 46:6,8 46:11,13,24 48:11,16 49:5 49:18,19 50:3 50:8,20,25 51:10,12,23 53:5 54:4 56:2 57:4,9 58:4,6 patentability 48:9</p>	<p>patentee 29:6 30:21,22 patentee's 12:1 patents 36:10 47:24 48:1,2 50:5 53:1 patents-in-suit 26:1,3 path 52:8,10 pay 53:10 56:21 peak 4:14 20:17 20:22,23 21:1 21:3 24:16,25 25:11,21 26:4 37:16 51:7 54:10,16 56:4 57:13,15,19 pedigree 5:22 people 5:21 7:5 11:20 15:7 17:16 28:1,1 29:10,17 31:8 38:18 people's 49:12 percent 52:11 52:12 56:10 perfectly 45:20 person 3:23 4:16 6:24 7:15 14:15,22,23 16:7,12 17:23 18:3 24:7 27:17 54:10 perspective 22:17 33:3 petition 20:15 Petitioner 34:1 54:24 Petitioners 1:5 1:17 2:4,14 3:8 20:8 55:15 Pharmaceutic... 1:3 3:5 Phillips 1:21 2:10 33:12,13 33:15 35:7,18 35:22 36:4,12</p>	<p>36:21 37:21,22 37:24 38:6,24 39:4,10,20 40:1,15 42:18 42:24 43:9,14 43:18,24 44:20 44:24 45:7,10 45:19,22 46:9 46:15 47:3,7 47:10 48:1,4,7 48:14,19,21 49:1,15 50:10 50:15,22 51:19 52:5,13,18 53:14,23 56:24 57:7,12 Phillips's 55:18 pick 22:4 piece 4:17 9:4 20:11,12 pieces 20:5 24:8 place 29:17 42:11 45:14 51:1 places 29:11,17 29:18 plain 37:3,5 46:18,21,23 play 47:1 please 3:10 23:16 33:16 point 12:14 22:19,20 28:25 40:22 43:5 49:6,16 56:20 pointing 16:3 points 22:14 27:5 30:19 55:17 police 16:6,15 16:17 policy 28:10 31:3 population 55:9 portions 33:18 positing 57:22 57:23</p>	<p>position 7:19 14:5 18:9 48:5 53:25 positions 50:4 50:20 51:4 possibilities 21:3 possibility 31:3 possible 35:24 post-trial 13:7 potentially 54:11 power 53:17 powerful 35:9 practical 21:15 21:22 practice 3:20 9:6 23:3 pre-trial 29:4 precise 50:2 precisely 22:5 preclusion 29:6 30:20 predict 56:14 predicting 20:3 predominate 28:17 40:18 preferred 15:20 present 53:3 presented 7:22 presumed 4:8 20:15,20 21:1 22:10 56:20,22 pretrial 13:3,6 pretty 18:18 28:6 42:13,14 42:15 prevent 29:6 prevents 31:8 primarily 28:13 principle 44:3 46:6 principles 44:8 prior 23:25 priority 48:14 48:22,22 49:4 private 31:6</p>	<p>46:25 probable 16:7 16:20,21 probably 24:13 24:24 36:9 problem 22:6,16 28:9 29:12,14 29:16 31:3 39:4 40:4 process 15:13 32:14 42:3 produce 20:21 24:17 25:5 32:14,17 produced 25:22 produces 22:15 23:24 24:16 32:19 product 31:22 31:23 40:23 Professor 22:14 property 31:8 proposition 40:19 prosecution 4:18 20:11 23:21 27:15 37:10 41:25 45:25 50:5,20 51:4 52:20 54:3,15,17 56:23,24 57:2 57:8 protect 51:9 protection 55:6 provide 37:8 41:10 43:2 provides 53:4 province 48:17 public 6:9,13 7:4 27:25 30:1 30:15 31:7,11 46:11 47:12 Pullman 14:1 pure 5:7 10:6 39:6 40:20,25 41:2 42:25</p>
--	---	--	--	--

<p>43:1 purely 40:3 41:7 purpose 50:9 51:7 purposes 49:4 put 36:7 37:1 44:1 47:17 54:24</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Q</p> <p>qualify 56:17 question 3:15 6:11 7:11,14 7:16,22 10:3,3 10:6,11,14,15 10:19 11:7,8 11:11,16 12:24 13:1,9 14:13 14:20 15:3,9 16:5,12,12,14 16:15,19 17:1 17:2,4,4,9,12 17:25 18:5,20 19:2,5,21 21:22,25 28:19 32:16 33:5,8 33:24 34:7,8,9 35:23 36:16 38:21 39:6 40:21 41:2,3 42:25 43:1 44:23 45:4 46:20,23 48:23 48:24 49:3 51:21 52:7 57:1,17 questions 9:5,6 9:16 11:3 12:20 18:20 21:12,20 22:22 22:23 28:16 33:17 40:17 55:10 quite 50:1 quote 26:2 32:1</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">R</p>	<p>R 3:1 raise 33:6 range 51:8 ranks 57:8 rare 6:18 28:8 44:22 rarely 39:14 reach 29:20 31:10 reaches 31:4 react 49:7 reaction 50:13 read 4:17 6:8,15 6:20 20:23 22:6 35:13 38:14,16 44:5 50:12 reading 44:12 reality 45:7 really 19:16 52:2 reason 33:22 34:20 35:2,9 38:21 40:3,15 41:2 43:25 52:14,25 reasonable 16:6 reasonably 27:18 37:8 reasons 28:5,9 rebuttal 2:12 22:1 50:18 55:14 receiving 27:20 recognized 18:8 36:24 41:1 47:11 48:23 record 14:4,6 31:1,20 35:13 51:1,5 recourse 52:21 refer 24:25 reference 4:20 4:21 7:9,10 22:7 49:24 referenced 24:23</p>	<p>referred 11:2 22:4,11 54:17 57:12 refers 6:23 54:16 regarded 55:6,7 regarding 46:13 46:17 regardless 37:3 50:25 regional 22:24 reject 25:7 rejected 36:18 47:15,16 related 32:15 relating 56:23 relevant 3:24 4:10 17:23 32:4 48:9,9 relitigate 29:8 30:24,25 remain 28:12 remains 10:6 remand 56:12 56:13 Remember 46:2 47:15 repeatedly 44:11 requires 58:1 reserve 22:1 23:8 resolution 16:18 resolve 14:6 resolved 10:18 39:14,16 resolving 4:13 respect 13:2 26:12 Respectfully 8:15 respond 21:25 responded 17:3 40:24 Respondents 1:22 2:11 20:7 33:14</p>	<p>response 16:24 20:1,3 43:6 55:18 rest 9:7 16:16 17:14 40:6 rested 20:6 rests 3:15 5:19 10:4 11:8 results 27:23 28:23 31:10 retains 12:15 reverse 52:11 reversed 52:12 review 3:12 7:23 8:13 9:8 13:14 13:18 21:6,11 21:11,21,21 23:6 31:25 32:23 33:22 34:14 46:14,18 46:21,23 52:1 reviewed 10:9 right 3:21 5:6 7:9 11:23 19:7 19:21 20:25 22:17 29:22,23 30:5,21 31:7 31:13 35:18 36:4,16,21 40:15,19 41:9 43:25 46:15 48:14 49:24 50:15 51:15 53:20 rightly 50:1 rise 20:20 rises 58:1 road 42:8 ROBERTS 3:3 11:1,13 23:10 27:21 28:18 29:25 30:6 33:10 55:12 58:8 role 14:3 root 51:24 rough 47:25</p>	<p>Roughly 48:3 rule 3:13 4:4,23 7:23 10:23 12:1 13:5,21 13:24,24 39:22 39:22,23 42:6 42:22 46:12 47:1 run 15:16 runs 30:21 Ryu 56:4</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">S</p> <p>S 2:1 3:1 Sandoz 1:7 3:5 sat 35:5 saying 14:17 15:22 32:21,23 35:9 38:2 39:18 49:9 54:15,22 says 3:17 9:12 9:20 13:21 15:4,7 16:6 17:20 19:2 21:17 26:16 30:13 39:24,24 41:23 42:6,25 46:8 51:5 56:11,17,19 57:21 Scalia 10:10,16 10:17 16:23 17:20 18:18 25:17 31:6 44:15,21,25 45:17,21 52:24 53:20 scattering 20:19 scenario 28:7 29:2 science 5:8,12 5:17 32:9,18 39:6 49:25 scientific 23:24 32:14 35:11 44:3,23 46:6</p>
--	--	--	--	--

56:3 scientists 37:4 scope 13:23 SEC 24:15,23 25:4,15,18,21 25:25 26:12 27:3 32:16,19 33:6 54:6 56:19 second 4:11 20:9 28:7 37:1 46:19 second-guessing 38:19 see 7:19 16:16 42:10,11,11 46:10 49:9 52:4 57:25 seen 35:2 52:9 57:15 sense 32:1,6 sensible 45:20 separate 45:5 50:5 seriatim 29:3 set 13:24 55:5 sets 39:22 seven 35:25 Seventh 12:20 36:18 SG's 48:4 shift 56:4,4 shifting 54:7 short 9:10 show 11:22 side 40:12 significance 21:15 significant 8:18 27:6 48:6 similar 31:22 49:10 simple 17:14 simply 11:6,25 23:6 54:22 57:17 single 23:5 40:5	Sir 9:18 situation 29:5 37:19 46:5,7 size 4:21 20:13 24:11 25:18 Skidmore 53:13 53:14 skill 3:23 4:17 5:21 7:12 17:16,23 18:3 24:7 27:17 54:10 skilled 5:3,6 7:13 12:2 14:15,22 15:4 16:8 18:11 22:17 26:16 33:3 skips 20:11 slew 40:16 solicitor 1:18 21:8 51:2 somebody's 32:9 32:9 sorry 12:7 25:9 37:23 48:1 57:16 sort 57:24 Sotomayor 7:18 7:25 8:10,15 8:24 9:4 43:5 43:12 50:10,16 53:19 56:25 57:16,21,23 sounds 32:20,21 South 18:22,23 18:25 specialized 6:20 11:20 15:10,11 15:12 specific 4:21 37:13 specifically 15:6 39:12 47:16 specification 15:20 20:12,14 25:19,25 26:11	27:14,15 41:25 45:25 52:19 57:5,8,10 specifications 24:23 37:7 spell 15:2 spit 24:16 stand 8:9 14:14 16:13 standard 3:14 17:19 20:4 22:15,22 23:3 54:22 55:1 58:2,2 standpoint 28:10 stare 47:14,21 start 23:17 34:18 37:5 40:20 42:8,17 51:22 state 5:10,11 7:16 11:10 statement 27:2 statements 58:5 States 1:1,13,20 2:7 23:13 statute 7:8 18:23 19:4 35:17 46:12,17 48:10 statutes 6:6,7,15 6:19 step 17:12 37:1 stop 18:14 stopping 42:11 street 6:24 strength 53:9 strictly 41:19 striking 44:2 strong 5:24 structure 5:18 struggle 21:19 stuck 57:19 study 22:4 subject 31:25 32:22 34:13 37:14 46:21,23	submit 8:4 submitted 10:11 43:11 58:9,12 subordinate 38:1 subsequent 31:4 subsidiary 3:16 8:17,21 9:7,16 10:20 11:2,5 11:14,15 12:3 12:25 22:22 27:23 subsumed 34:6 34:11 success 40:23 suddenly 54:8 sue 29:11,18 sufficient 56:12 56:21 sufficiently 57:5 57:9 suggest 52:6 54:10 suggesting 47:18 49:22 suggestion 55:19 suits 31:20 supersede 31:17 supports 22:19 suppose 26:15 31:9 48:11 supposed 37:4 Supreme 1:1,13 sure 7:3 14:12 38:3 42:18 surround 27:13 surveyed 21:9 suspect 38:21 Swint 14:1 system 3:11 31:14 42:12 systematically 22:13	18:9 24:11,11 25:15,17 33:2 34:18 44:12,21 45:20 51:3 taken 45:18 takes 24:3,5 talk 14:1,2 22:18 22:18 35:6 55:21 talked 8:25 19:13 talking 10:21 46:2 53:12 tariff 15:6 teaches 20:14 39:13 technical 6:13 6:14 29:10,16 34:22,25 35:4 35:9,21 36:3 36:16,19,22 technique 20:13 23:24 technologies 20:19 technology 4:22 20:17 21:5 tell 4:2,2 7:18 13:13 25:13 telling 16:18 tells 9:21 15:14 25:8 26:11 33:4 temperature 5:13,14,15 term 4:9 6:17 11:20 14:17 15:7,15 17:16 18:12 20:16 25:1 27:12,14 32:11 33:7 41:22 51:14 terms 5:10,20,22 6:1,6,7,14,19 6:20 7:16 12:16 18:7 19:8,17 27:13
<hr/> T <hr/>				
T 2:1,1 take 12:17,18				

30:2	31:2,13,16,16	39:25 48:18,25	unanimously	versus 30:12
test 8:3,4 53:18	32:25 34:15	tried 29:19	34:5	51:25
56:18	35:8,22 36:13	tries 44:11,11	uncommon	victims 29:18
testified 18:6	38:14,24 40:9	trivial 36:7	39:10	view 4:6 19:15
26:23 27:1	42:16 43:24	true 6:5 11:11	underlying	20:6 26:19
41:20 54:14	45:19 46:22	17:19 35:7	16:22 51:24	27:21 49:12
testify 18:6,11	47:7,10,11,17	42:9 51:16	understand 6:17	violating 17:5
19:8 52:25	50:1,11,22	truly 12:20	14:12,16,23	virtually 17:8
testifying 18:1,2	51:1 55:17	15:23	16:11 17:24	44:4 46:7
testimony 14:15	56:10,13,20	truth 16:18	18:3 22:9 24:3	
43:17,21 44:22	thinks 54:21	try 18:13 21:10	27:3,11 32:2	W
45:18,20 46:5	third 4:16 47:13	29:2 30:25	52:22,25	want 5:1 14:11
Teva 1:3 3:4	thought 17:21	46:9	understanding	21:16,18,18
text 11:24	18:17 32:23	trying 19:17	6:14 13:14	34:10,18 36:6
textual 26:9	34:21 36:17	27:14 29:8	28:22 45:23	36:7 38:25
33:8	51:11,12	34:2 49:19	46:19 55:25	39:1,2,2 42:17
thank 23:10	thousand 29:15	turn 38:22 40:22	understood 25:2	43:21 44:15,16
33:10,15 53:14	three 4:6 8:5	40:23 52:22	undertaking	44:18 45:4
55:12,16 58:8	21:3 35:12,25	turned 51:12	42:1	53:1 55:4
58:10	threshold 13:1	turns 47:5	unduly 23:4	wanted 24:17
theory 44:2	Tier 6:23,25	tutorial 53:4	unheard 46:8	30:17
thing 6:3 14:22	time 12:11,12	two 15:25 16:4,4	uniformity	wants 52:25
15:2 18:21,21	17:24 22:1,24	16:7 19:11	31:17 43:2	war 38:25 39:1
20:9 29:10	23:9 35:6	20:2 21:7	47:22	Washington 1:9
35:3 36:2,8	38:18 54:14	25:12 27:5,21	United 1:1,13,20	1:16,19,21
51:3 53:21	times 11:2 29:12	28:2,5,5 30:19	2:7 23:13	wasn't 53:15
things 8:14 20:2	29:19	31:19 33:17	universal 9:6	way 5:10 16:20
25:12,23 30:14	today 58:7	37:14 50:5	USA 1:4	25:2 27:12
46:22 49:6,10	told 25:11 57:13	55:3 58:5	use 18:23 19:14	29:1 30:20
57:12	toleration 31:15	type 10:20 24:15	20:12 25:4,18	32:18 40:11
think 6:18,24	tools 29:2	32:13,14	25:21 44:1	41:9,9 50:24
7:7,21,24 8:2,2	top 55:23	types 25:5	47:18 52:24	54:4,11 57:25
8:17 9:4 10:17	touch 55:22	typical 13:15	53:18	we'll 53:20
12:14,22 13:12	toxicity 51:9		uses 25:25 32:16	we're 4:23 10:24
13:19 16:1,5,7	Trademark 21:8	U	33:6 44:11	10:24 27:14
16:8,11 17:2,3	traditional 35:2	ultimate 3:15	usually 49:13	we've 10:21 23:2
18:18 19:6	treat 34:19	8:8 9:9 10:3	57:15	wedge 15:25
20:5 22:14	treated 21:2	11:7,16 12:4		Wednesday 1:10
23:3,18 24:2	23:7 43:1	12:12 13:9	V	weight 4:9,20
24:11,13 25:1	treating 40:2	14:13,20 16:13	v 1:6 3:5 5:9	16:9 19:16
25:3,10,16,16	41:6 42:2	17:11 18:5	7:11 41:1	20:16,18,21,24
25:20 26:12,16	treatises 52:20	21:22 22:23	valid 48:17	21:2,3 24:17
26:19,21,24	trespassing 31:8	34:8,12 41:22	validity 32:2,3	24:18,25 25:1
27:2,4,8 28:4,5	trial 3:11,22 4:8	ultimately 12:15	48:11	25:22 26:4,5
28:9,11,16,25	4:11 6:2,4 9:12	34:13 40:17	values 31:17	26:17 33:7
29:1,15,21,22	9:16,25 10:8	unambiguous	various 31:10	37:15,17 38:20
30:10,11,12,20	14:3,3,4 38:8	58:2	vast 38:14	45:16 49:13,22

49:23,23,23 50:8 51:5,6,6,7 51:8,13 54:18 57:14,19 went 20:7,7,25 whichever 57:25 WILLIAM 1:16 2:3,13 3:7 55:14 Winans 5:9 witness 51:25 witnesses 35:2 35:14 38:15,15 41:17,19 44:19 45:2 word 18:23 37:13 53:15 words 5:18 10:4 19:3,14 24:7 work 5:14,15 15:15,19,19 53:25 worked 23:25 works 5:8 11:10 30:21 32:18 world 27:3 30:2 40:6 41:10 42:20 43:3 worth 33:25 38:4,6 39:11 39:23 41:8,12 54:21 worthwhile 21:22 wouldn't 12:3 15:19,21,21 56:5 writ 18:4 writing 51:11 written 5:25 6:8 7:13 21:7 23:2 37:4 44:21 wrong 19:14	<hr/> Y <hr/> Y 9:14 Yeah 30:9 year 47:25 48:3 year's 55:2 years 3:19 22:13 34:5 52:8 58:5 58:5 yellow 18:22,24 18:25 York 5:9	40 52:11 43a-44a 20:15		
	<hr/> Z <hr/> Z 9:14 zillion 38:4	<hr/> 5 <hr/> 5 38:16 52 3:13 13:5,21 13:24 52(a) 7:23 39:22 39:22 42:6,22 42:25 47:1 55 2:14		
	<hr/> 0 <hr/> 1	<hr/> 6 <hr/> 6 58:5		
	1 4:14,15 6:23 6:25 41:16 10:04 1:14 3:2 100 56:10 11:02 58:11 13-854 1:6 3:4 15 1:10 34:5 17 22:15 18 22:15 1937 13:25 1980 48:13	<hr/> 7 <hr/> 7 38:14		
	<hr/> 2 <hr/> 2 41:21 20 52:8 2000 48:13 2014 1:10 23 2:8 25 44:5	<hr/> 8 <hr/> 808 58:4,6		
	<hr/> 3 <hr/> 3 2:4 38:15,18 55:13 30 52:11 33 2:11 375a 56:5			
<hr/> X <hr/> x 1:2,8 9:14	<hr/> 4 <hr/> 4 38:14 58:5			