1	IN THE SUPREME COURT OF	THE UNITED STATES
2		x
3	JOHN F. HINCK, ET UX.,	:
4	Petitioners	:
5	v.	: No. 06-376
6	UNITED STATES.	:
7		x
8	Wasl	nington, D.C.
9	Mono	day, April 23, 2007
10		
11	The above-en	citled matter came on for oral
12	argument before the Supreme	e Court of the United States
13	at 1:00 p.m.	
14	APPEARANCES:	
15	THOMAS E. REDDING, ESQ., Ho	ouston, Tex; on behalf of the
16	Petitioner.	
17	JONATHAN L. MARCUS, ESQ., 2	Assistant to the Solicitor
18	General, Department of	Justice, Washington, D.C.; on
19	behalf of the Respondent	<u>.</u> .
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21		
22		
23		
24		
25		

1	CONTENTS	
2	ORAL ARGUMENT OF	PAGE
3	THOMAS E. REDDING, ESQ.	
4	On behalf of the Petitioners	3
5	ORAL ARGUMENT OF	
6	JONATHAN L. MARCUS, ESQ.	
7	On behalf of the Respondent	23
8	REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF	
9	THOMAS E. REDDING, ESQ.	
10	On behalf of the Petitioners	48
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		

1	PROCEEDINGS			
2	(1:00 p.m.)			
3	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear argument			
4	next in case 06-376, Hinck versus United States.			
5	Mr. Redding.			
6	ORAL ARGUMENT OF THOMAS E. REDDING			
7	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONERS			
8	MR. REDDING: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it			
9	please the Court:			
10	The Federal Circuit's opinion is simply			
11	wrong. Enactment of section 6404(h) did not repeal			
12	district court and Court of Federal Claims refund			
13	jurisdiction over interest by the Internal Revenue			
14	Service. Both circuits have found that there was			
15	preexisting jurisdiction prior to the enactment of			
16	section 6406(h). Nothing in section 6404(h) expressly			
17	repeals that jurisdiction, and there are many instances			
18	in the code where Congress when it does intend to			
19	expressly limit jurisdiction, will state that in the			
20	enabling statute. Reference to the Tax Court in section			
21	a specific reference to the Tax Court in 6404(h) was			
22	mandated unnecessary by section 7442 and the nature of			
23	the Tax Court. The Tax Court is only given jurisdiction			
24	over those matters where it is specifically set out in			
25	the Tax Code.			

And the established framework of pay and s	1	And th	e established	framework	of	pay-and-s
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- 2 jurisdiction in the district courts and prepayment
- 3 jurisdiction in the Tax Court is a well-established
- 4 framework for tax litigation. That has been accepted
- 5 and enunciated by this Court as far back as the Flora
- 6 opinions. It's a well established pattern of duality of
- 7 jurisdiction in the two forums.
- 8 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But not with respect
- 9 to abatement of interest in particular.
- 10 MR. REDDING: Not with respect to abatement
- 11 of interest, Your Honor, but as a general basis. The
- 12 availability of a prepayment forum that was originally
- 13 enacted to be complementary to the ability to pay and
- 14 sue in order to protect smaller taxpayers, and avoid the
- 15 hardships faced by having to pay in full before having
- 16 access to refund jurisdiction, and in fact perhaps to
- 17 avoid bankruptcy. That is completely consistent with
- 18 the way this section is enacted. Section 6404(h) even
- 19 includes the limitation that only taxpayers with a net
- 20 worth below \$2 million or corporations below \$7 million
- 21 have prepayment access to the Tax Court. And abatement
- 22 by itself is generally a prepayment remedy.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: That's a -- on that
- 24 point, Mr. Redding, it seems odd that given this
- 25 tripartite system, Congress would want only the Tax

- 1 Court to be restricted in the people who could claim the
- 2 abatement, the net worth test applicable in the Tax
- 3 Court on your theory, if there is authority in the
- 4 claims court and in the district courts, they're not
- 5 limited to the net worth restrictions.
- 6 MR. REDDING: That is correct, Your Honor,
- 7 but I do believe that it is consistent with the intent
- 8 of the formation of the Tax Court to provide a
- 9 prepayment forum to especially avoid hardship and the
- 10 potential even of bankruptcy. It's very consistent with
- 11 that pattern to say that the larger taxpayer can afford
- 12 to pay the tax and sue, whereas the smaller taxpayer may
- 13 be in greater need of a prepayment forum. It's also
- 14 consistent with imposing the very short limitation
- 15 period for bringing an action in the Tax Court, because
- 16 there the Government has a very vested interest in being
- 17 able to proceed with collection of the tax.
- 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But why would you
- 19 not want some -- a larger taxpayer to be able to proceed
- 20 in the Tax Court if you can also proceed in the claims
- 21 court?
- MR. REDDING: Your Honor, I can't speak to
- 23 Congress's reasoning behind that but I can understand
- 24 the logic behind saying we're going to create a special
- 25 prepayment remedy that allows the smaller taxpayer an

- 1 expedited means of resolving these issues without having
- 2 to first pay it and sue, whereas the larger taxpayer is
- 3 not put into a hardship position, is not inconvenienced
- 4 as bad by having to follow the old, well-established
- 5 procedures of pay and sue.
- 6 And I will note that 6404(h) does not apply
- 7 only to 6404(e)(1), which is the subsection we're coming
- 8 under. 6404(h) applies to all of the abatement grounds
- 9 under section 6404. And if we were to repeal
- 10 jurisdiction in the district court and the Court of
- 11 Federal Claims over all of those provisions, then we
- 12 would be completely taking away a remedy that has been
- 13 there all along to the larger taxpayers. But to create
- 14 a new remedy that is consistent with the pattern that
- 15 allows a small taxpayer access to a prepayment forum, I
- 16 think is completely consistent with the entire history
- 17 of this court. This court meaning the Tax Court. And
- 18 its purpose.
- 19 In evaluating two statutes that appear to
- 20 either conflict or overlap, I think it is, in reviewing
- 21 whatever doctrine you call it, whatever canon you call
- 22 it of interpretation, it appears to me that what this
- 23 Court has always done is to look to see if the two
- 24 statutes can be harmonized rather than seeing if one
- 25 supersedes the other. And here, considering the

- 1 extension of prepayment jurisdiction to the Tax Court
- 2 merely an additional form of prepayment jurisdiction
- 3 being granted to the Tax Court, is completely consistent
- 4 with the long-standing pattern of pay and sue
- 5 jurisdiction in the district courts, prepayment
- 6 jurisdiction in the Tax Court --
- 7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But you have no
- 8 basis for an abatement-of-interest action apart from
- 9 6404(h), correct? That is the only place you get the
- 10 actual cause of action to sue for abatement of interest?
- 11 MR. REDDING: Abatement as a prepayment
- 12 remedy, yes, Your Honor. Once the IRS has failed to
- 13 abate the interest and you make payment, then you have
- 14 the normal refund -- refund provisions available.
- 15 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But what would you
- 16 cite to -- in response to the prior cases that said you
- 17 had no cause of action for abasement of interest?
- 18 MR. REDDING: Actually, Your Honor, I don't
- 19 believe that's what the cases said. They said you had
- 20 no cause of action that could be pursued under
- 21 6404(e)(1) but even the seminal cases, Horton -- or
- 22 Selman and Horton Homes -- compared a section 6404(e)(1)
- 23 action to a section 6404(e)(2) action and basically said
- 24 you could have brought a refund claim. If you qualified
- 25 under (e)(2) there would have been no impediment to

- 1 bringing that as a refund action because there was a
- 2 clearly established standard. The (e)(2) provision is a
- 3 "must" standard.
- Now, under 6404(h), if it is exclusive over
- 5 abatement jurisdiction, then any taxpayer who would have
- 6 had access to the courts, for example for an (e)(2)
- 7 abatement case, unless they are a small taxpayer they
- 8 will be completely denied any remedy whatsoever.
- 9 JUSTICE SCALIA: Where is (e)(2)? Is it
- 10 reproduced in these materials? I got (e)(1); I don't
- 11 have (e)(2). I don't really like talking about a
- 12 section I don't have in front of me.
- 13 MR. REDDING: I believe all of 6404 was in
- 14 the appendix but I don't have it in front of me. Yes.
- 15 It's -- it's immediate, in the code section it's
- immediately below (e)(1).
- 17 JUSTICE SCALIA: Ah.
- MR. REDDING: But I mean -- I'm sorry, Your
- 19 Honor. That doesn't help you --
- 20 (Laughter.)
- 21 MR. REDDING: -- where it is in the
- 22 materials.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: That's one thing about this
- 24 case I'm sure about.
- 25 (Laughter.)

1	MR.	REDDING:	Т	apologize,	Your	Honor.	but.	Т

- 2 do not have that. It is in the appendix to the
- 3 petition, the entire code section is set out.
- 4 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Is that the one that says
- 5 "interest abated with respect to erroneous refund
- 6 check"? Or am I reading wrong?
- 7 MR. REDDING: Yes, Sir, it is.
- 8 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But the one I'm
- 9 looking at just has (e)(1). Did you have a page number?
- 10 JUSTICE SOUTER: At page 42 of the appendix,
- 11 all -- all there is is subsection 1.
- 12 JUSTICE SCALIA: That's right.
- MR. REDDING: Well, Your Honor, I have the
- 14 code section in front of me now but I still do not have
- 15 the reference in the appendix. I apologize but I simply
- 16 don't have it, Your Honor.
- 17 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Can I go back to
- 18 something you just said, that I thought you said that
- 19 the people would have no remedy if the Tax Court -- were
- 20 the only forum for abatement claims? And it would be
- 21 the exclusive forum but nobody -- it wouldn't deny
- 22 access to anyone.
- MR. REDDING: Your Honor --
- 24 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Abatement claim, if you
- 25 read this as the Government does, is one place where you

- 1 go, and the Tax Court but everyone who has an abatement
- 2 claim could go there. So who's being cut out?
- 3 MR. REDDING: Well no, Your Honor, everyone
- 4 cannot go there. You can only go there if you're a
- 5 taxpayer, an individual taxpayer with a net worth of
- 6 less than \$2 million.
- 7 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Oh, yes. Yes.
- 8 And I had asked you before well doesn't it seem, it
- 9 seems strange that Congress would want to limit the
- 10 authority of the -- of the court where most people go
- 11 and have no limit for the wealthier taxpayers.
- 12 MR. REDDING: Your Honor, again, my -- my
- 13 view of that is the Congress intended to limit the
- 14 special relief of prepayment jurisdiction to the smaller
- 15 taxpayers. But the availability of a pay and sue remedy
- 16 was already in existence and continues in existence and
- 17 those wealthier taxpayers generally can afford to pay
- 18 the liability in full and sue.
- 19 A prepayment forum which delays the
- 20 collection of the tax to the Government, you know, the
- 21 Government has a special interest there in restricting
- 22 access to that relief so that it can proceed with
- 23 collection. And again, it just makes logical sense that
- 24 as to a larger taxpayer the ability to pay and sue
- 25 should be a sufficient remedy. Generally speaking --

- 1 JUSTICE GINSBURG: I thought Congress was
- 2 operating on the assumption that no court could hear an
- 3 abatement claim?
- 4 MR. REDDING: Your Honor, that comes largely
- 5 from the legislative history, the House Committee report
- 6 addressing interestingly, subsection (h). And
- 7 subsection (h), since it applies only to prepayment
- 8 abatement claims specifically, I think then you, then
- 9 that legislative history makes sense. Because in that
- 10 same page in the legislative history --
- 11 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Well, give me a decision
- 12 of the claims court or a district court that said courts
- 13 have authority to abate the interest before Congress
- 14 enacted this legislation.
- 15 MR. REDDING: I don't believe there is a
- 16 specific case out there that I can cite to you where it
- 17 has happened. It is -- it is reflected in both Horton
- 18 Homes and Selman that that availability existed with
- 19 respect to (e)(2) to --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Is it fair to say that
- 21 Congress acted on the assumption that there was no right
- 22 to the abatement with -- and to the payment -- unless it
- 23 enacted the statute?
- MR. REDDING: Your Honor, I don't believe
- 25 so. Again, because that legislative history that's

- 1 referred to is restricted, the House Committee report is
- 2 restricted only to the subsection creating the Tax Court
- 3 prepayment jurisdiction. It is not relevant to the rest
- 4 of the amendments to section 6404. And I note that in
- 5 doing so Congress also did not make the restriction on
- 6 the \$2 million/\$7 million net worth relative to the
- 7 rights being granted under the other provisions of 6404.
- 8 JUSTICE SCALIA: It's easy to see why the
- 9 only cases you have relate to (e)(2) rather than (e)(1).
- 10 (E)(2) which we don't have in the materials, but I have
- 11 gotten a copy of it.
- 12 And (e)(1) says that the Secretary "may"
- 13 abate the assessment of all or any part. And those
- 14 cases that denied it said this is discretionary; he
- 15 doesn't have to. (E)(2) on the other hand, interest
- 16 abated with respect to erroneous refund check, says the
- 17 Secretary "shall" abate the assessment. So really,
- 18 (e)(2) doesn't -- doesn't do you any good at all with
- 19 respect to whether there was a cause of action before
- 20 (h) was adopted.
- 21 MR. REDDING: Well -- Your Honor, I
- respectfully disagree because 6404(h) applies to (e)(2)
- 23 as much as it does to (e)(1). And any taxpayer that
- 24 would have met the net worth requirements -- or whether
- 25 or not they met the net worth requirements that are now

- 1 in (h), could have brought a refund suit under (e)(2)
- 2 previously.
- 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, sure. But --
- 4 but that's just saying, if -- you used to have the
- 5 entitlement under (e)(2) and you're saying well, you
- 6 could bring cases under (e)(2). But 6404(h) allows you
- 7 to bring cases under (e)(1). It would follow a fortiori
- 8 that you could bring them for (e)(2) as well, but that
- 9 doesn't prove that you could bring them under (e)(1) in
- 10 the claims court or the district court.
- 11 MR. REDDING: No it does not, Your Honor.
- 12 What I'm trying to address is the intent to repeal the
- 13 preexisting jurisdiction, again because 6404(h) does not
- 14 apply just to (e)(1), where there might be a question
- 15 about whether or not they could have brought the case
- 16 previously, although jurisdiction existed. Clearly they
- 17 could have brought their case under (e)(2).
- 18 JUSTICE SCALIA: I see. What you're saying
- 19 is that cases that used to be bringable under (e)(2)
- 20 would now be bringable only under (h) which would in
- 21 effect be an implicit repeal of (e)(2).
- MR. REDDING: Of (e)(2) --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: At least as far as suits
- 24 elsewhere than in the Tax Court.
- MR. REDDING: That's correct. And

- 1 additionally further limit it solely to the small
- 2 taxpayer. The larger taxpayer who had a prior remedy
- 3 would have none.
- 4 JUSTICE BREYER: It seems to apply just to
- 5 abuse of discretion.
- 6 MR. REDDING: I'm sorry, Your Honor?
- 7 JUSTICE BREYER: Doesn't the new statute
- 8 just apply to abuse of discretion?
- 9 MR. REDDING: No, Your Honor, it does not.
- 10 It creates the standard under which the Tax Court may
- 11 review any interest abatement claim under section --
- JUSTICE BREYER: It says you have
- 13 jurisdiction to determine whether it's an abuse of
- 14 discretion. Maybe I'm reading the wrong place. 6404 --
- 15 MR. REDDING: Yes, Your Honor, that is the
- 16 standard it applies to.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Right. Well that standard
- 18 doesn't apply to the (e)(2). It has nothing to do with
- 19 it; (e)(2) says if it's a refund, abate; if not, not.
- 20 It's not a question of abuse of discretion or not.
- 21 MR. REDDING: Well I think it's the standard
- 22 on which they are to review the Government's action.
- 23 And I believe I cannot cite the case but there are cases
- 24 that hold that a violation of law is a per se abuse of
- 25 discretion. There are also other subsections --

- 1 subsections under 6404 which are made provisions in
- 2 other 6404 subsections, which are must provisions.
- 3 There are about five different subsections under 6404
- 4 that provide for interest abatement.
- 5 Again, I come back to the long-established
- 6 pattern of having prepayment jurisdiction in the Tax
- 7 Court and postpayment refund jurisdiction in the
- 8 district courts and Court of Federal Claims. It's a
- 9 well established system, and adding a new prepayment
- 10 form of relief into the Tax Court in no way should be
- 11 implied to be a repeal of the long-established refund --
- 12 pay and sue refund jurisdiction that normally exists.
- 13 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But if you went into
- 14 the district court and claimed that the failure to abate
- 15 interest was an abuse of discretion, what would you rely
- 16 on for the -- for the cause of action?
- 17 MR. REDDING: If the failure to abate
- 18 interest was an abuse of discretion under (e)(1) you
- 19 would rely on (e)(1) for the cause of action. The right
- 20 is created by the other subsections of (h) -- I mean of
- 21 6404.
- 22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I thought the prior
- 23 cases consistently, consistently said that there was no
- 24 judicial review because it was "may abate" and that it
- 25 was only with the arrival of 6404(h)(1) that there was a

- 1 cause of action for abuse of discretion?
- 2 MR. REDDING: Yes, Your Honor, but I believe
- 3 what they actually said is that there was jurisdiction
- 4 to hear it but there was not a justiciable standard that
- 5 could be applied with regard to (e)(1). However, once
- 6 Congress came in and says to the Tax Court you're going
- 7 to apply this standard, there is a standard of review.
- 8 That now indicates Congress did not intend it to be
- 9 solely discretionary, and that the district courts or
- 10 Court of Federal Claims would look to the general common
- 11 law; it would look to precedents, such as the APAA
- 12 abuse-of-discretion standard is consistently used
- 13 throughout the court systems in --
- 14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So you want to look
- 15 at 6404(h)(1) saying now we have a standard, but you
- 16 don't want the other stuff that goes along with
- 17 6404(h)(1), which is it's in the Tax Court; you got to
- 18 have less than \$2 million, blah, blah, blah?
- 19 MR. REDDING: That is correct, Your Honor.
- 20 The abuse of discretion standard is a common law
- 21 standard which has been carried over into -- into this
- 22 statute. But to create a --
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: But it didn't exist
- 24 before this statute. I mean, the lower courts as I
- 25 understand it said, routinely, yes, you can have

- 1 jurisdiction, but you have no claim for relief because
- 2 there is no, no law to apply. This is a totally
- 3 discretionary matter of the Commissioner's grace. So
- 4 Congress perhaps didn't grasp the subtle distinction
- 5 between no jurisdiction and
- 6 you-can-walk-in-the-door-but-you-go-out-the-next-door,
- 7 because there is no justiciable claim. And it provided
- 8 peculiarly in the Tax Court for relief that was not
- 9 available anyplace before.
- 10 MR. REDDING: I understand and that's
- 11 basically the Fifth Circuit's view, Your Honor. I do
- 12 not agree with that view. I think that the Congress was
- 13 merely expanding the existing structure of prepayment
- 14 jurisdiction for the Tax Court --
- 15 JUSTICE GINSBURG: The Fifth Circuit -- I
- 16 thought the Fifth Circuit went your way.
- 17 MR. REDDING: Pardon?
- 18 JUSTICE GINSBURG: I thought the Fifth
- 19 Circuit went your way.
- MR. REDDING: It did, Your Honor. I'm
- 21 sorry. The Federal Circuit -- analyzed it as you have.
- 22 I do not believe that that is the correct analysis. I
- 23 think the Fifth Circuit has this one right. What you
- 24 have is a grant of jurisdiction to the United States Tax
- 25 Court for a prepayment forum of relief which is

- 1 consistent with the existing pattern, and in no other
- 2 instance where that has been done has there been an
- 3 implied repeal.
- 4 JUSTICE SCALIA: Mr. -- Mr. Redding, let me
- 5 come back to the phantom (e)(2) which we have finally
- 6 traced down.
- 7 MR. REDDING: I apologize, Your Honor.
- 8 JUSTICE SCALIA: I am not sure that (h)
- 9 would impliedly repeal (e)(2), because (e)(2) is
- 10 mandatory. There isn't any question under (e)(2)
- 11 whether there has been an abuse of discretion. There is
- 12 no discretion. It is mandatory to the extent that the
- 13 Administrative Procedure Act would govern (e)(2), it
- 14 would be for a violation of law not for abuse of
- 15 discretion.
- 16 So when (h) says the Tax Court shall have
- 17 jurisdiction to determine whether "the Secretary's
- 18 failure to abate interest was an abuse of discretion," I
- 19 would take that to apply only to (e)(1), which says the
- 20 Secretary "may" abate and not to (e)(2) which says the
- 21 Secretary "shall" abate. There is no question of -- of
- 22 discretion in (e)(2) at all.
- MR. REDDING: I understand that argument,
- 24 Your Honor. And --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: It was a pretty good

- 1 argument, I thought.
- 2 (Laughter.)
- 3 MR. REDDING: I agree, Your Honor. I would
- 4 note to the Court, though, that 6404(d) is also a
- 5 may-abate provision which is in the code. 6404(a) is
- 6 also a permissive abatement provision, and those
- 7 provisions would clearly be covered by it. I -- when it
- 8 says it may -- may review a failure to abate interest
- 9 under 6404, I read that as encompassing all of 6404 and
- 10 creating their standard for review. I do not review
- 11 that as a new standard that applies.
- 12 JUSTICE SCALIA: What about those other
- 13 sections, (c) and (d), which say the Secretary "is
- 14 authorized"? Have there been cases which, which said
- 15 that you could sue for -- for his failure to make use of
- 16 that?
- MR. REDDING: Your Honor, I've been able to
- 18 find no case --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: It's the same as with (e)?
- MR. REDDING: Yes, Your Honor.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: As with (e)(1).
- 22 MR. REDDING: Yes, Your Honor. There's no
- 23 clear history of cases.
- 24 I would also submit, Your Honor, that
- 25 because of the established pattern of pay and sue versus

- 1 prepayment jurisdiction and the necessity to make a
- 2 specific reference to the Tax Court in any grant of
- 3 jurisdiction in the Tax Code in order to enable the Tax
- 4 Court to have jurisdiction, that if this is the ruling
- of this Court with regard to 6404(h), it is going to
- 6 raise a question every time prepayment jurisdiction is
- 7 extended to the Tax Court over any matter as to whether
- 8 that somehow now becomes exclusive of the conventional
- 9 pay and sue remedy.
- 10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Of course, there's a
- 11 fundamental difference on this particular question
- 12 between pay and sue and sue --
- MR. REDDING: Prepay.
- 14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: -- prepay, because
- 15 if you -- in the district court if you're paying and
- 16 suing you're not really subject to the accrual of
- 17 interest, right?
- 18 MR. REDDING: No, Your Honor, that is not
- 19 correct.
- 20 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: If I owe the IRS
- 21 1,000 dollars and they send me a bill and I paid the
- 22 1,000 dollars, they've got the money, I don't. So I
- 23 don't owe interest on that, do I?
- MR. REDDING: Your Honor, may I reflect it
- 25 back to the facts in this case. The time period with

- 1 respect to which abatement is requested occurs many
- 2 years before the IRS ever sent the taxpayer a bill. The
- 3 errors and delays complained of in this case occurred
- 4 during the course of the partnership level examination
- 5 and proceedings. The taxpayer at that time doesn't even
- 6 have a notice of what the adjustments are going to be,
- 7 let alone what his tax liability is. In a partnership
- 8 case, the partnership level determinations are made at
- 9 the partnership level. The Government then, without any
- 10 further notice to the taxpayer, is free to make the
- 11 computation of the taxpayer's liability and send him a
- 12 bill.
- During the pendency of the proceedings at
- 14 the partnership level, there is virtually no way to
- 15 tell, except as to what the outside maximum liability
- 16 might be if the Government prevails, what your liability
- 17 is going to be. And if --
- 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So you are saying
- 19 the initial bill includes the interest?
- MR. REDDING: Absolutely, Your Honor, that's
- 21 being asked to be relieved of in this case.
- 22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But I suppose it's
- 23 still -- in the Tax Court situation it's still accruing?
- MR. REDDING: Well, yes. It's accruing
- 25 during the course of the Tax Court proceeding. And

- 1 again, even there for an individual if the time period
- 2 involved was prior to the assessment, the pay, the being
- 3 able to pay it and cut off the interest really wouldn't
- 4 make sense.
- 5 Basically, Your Honor, I believe that -- I
- 6 believe that this case really rests on what I think the
- 7 Fifth Circuit summarized quite well when it says that it
- 8 makes more sense in this case to simply believe the
- 9 Congress, quote, "simply intended" -- "simply chose to
- 10 extend concurrent jurisdiction to the Tax Court over a
- 11 certain class of claims." And that's all it really has
- 12 done here. It has implemented and expanded the
- 13 conventional jurisdiction of the Tax Court as a
- 14 prepayment forum before you do have to pay the liability
- 15 to resolve a dispute with the Internal Revenue Service.
- 16 There is no reason, I don't believe, to see
- 17 this as a major departure from the existing structure of
- 18 pay and sue jurisdiction versus prepayment jurisdiction.
- 19 This is just a well established plan that's been in the
- 20 code for many, many years.
- 21 Mr. Chief Justice, if the Court has no other
- 22 questions I would reserve my remaining time for
- 23 rebuttal.
- 24 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
- 25 Mr. Redding.

1	Mr. Marcus.
2	ORAL ARGUMENT OF JONATHAN L. MARCUS
3	ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENT
4	MR. MARCUS: Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice,
5	and may it please the Court:
6	The court of appeals correctly held that the
7	Tax Court has exclusive jurisdiction over actions
8	challenging interest abatement determinations under
9	section 6404(e)(1). The language, structure and history
LO	of the interest abatement review statute supports the
L1	court of appeals' decision as do principles of sovereign
L2	immunity. Under Petitioner's theory the specific
L3	restrictions on the remedy that Congress created may be
L4	avoided by the simple expedient of filing a challenge in
L5	another forum. Nothing in the interest abatement review
L6	statute or this Court's precedent permits that result.
L7	The place to start is the language of the
L8	interest abatement review statute. Section 6404(h)
L9	provides the Tax Court shall have jurisdiction over an
20	interest abatement action brought by taxpayers who meet
21	the net worth limitations set out in another part of the
22	code and who file their claim within 180 days of the
23	Secretary's mailing of a final determination not to
24	abate interest.

JUSTICE KENNEDY: If -- if the history of

25

- 1 this issue had been such that before the enactment of
- 2 this section the courts of appeals were divided -- or
- 3 the courts were divided as to whether or not there was
- 4 jurisdiction in the Court of Claims and in the district
- 5 court, would your position be different?
- 6 MR. MARCUS: No, our position would be the
- 7 same. We would first look to the statutory language of
- 8 section 6404(e)(1) and that provision provides that the
- 9 Secretary may abate interest when there is an error or
- 10 delay committed by an IRS employee in the performance of
- 11 a ministerial act, and that "may" language contrasts
- 12 with other provisions that have mandatory language that
- 13 requires the Secretary to abate. In addition, if you
- 14 look at the nature of the --
- 15 JUSTICE KENNEDY: So it's, so it's only (h)
- 16 that gives any court any jurisdiction at all?
- 17 MR. MARCUS: That's correct.
- 18 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Even though in our
- 19 hypothetical world some courts of general jurisdiction
- 20 thought that they did have jurisdiction?
- 21 MR. MARCUS: That's correct, Justice
- 22 Kennedy. Up until 1986 the IRS didn't even have the
- 23 authority to abate in these circumstances.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Did (h) apply to (e)(2) as
- 25 well as to (e)(1)? Does it apply only to discretionary

- 1 abatement provisions?
- MR. MARCUS: No, it's our position it
- 3 applies only to discretionary abatement determinations
- 4 by the Secretary. The language -- typically when abuse
- of discretion standard is imposed, it presupposes that
- 6 the decision being reviewed involves an exercise of
- 7 discretion.
- 8 JUSTICE SCALIA: So what happens with
- 9 (e)(2)? You use the pay and sue provisions?
- 10 MR. MARCUS: Yes, you could use it, although
- 11 it typically comes up when the Government has filed an
- 12 action to recover an erroneous refund. It's usually
- 13 raised as a defense. But you could bring it that way.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, isn't it an abuse --
- 15 isn't it an abuse of discretion for the Secretary to
- 16 fail to do what the statute tells him he absolutely
- 17 must?
- 18 MR. MARCUS: I think as a technical matter,
- 19 Justice Kennedy, that's correct. But I don't think
- 20 that's the natural way to read the statute, and when
- 21 Congress imposed that abuse of discretion standard it
- 22 assumed that the decisions that were being -- that were
- 23 subject to review involved the exercise of a discretion.
- 24 JUSTICE SCALIA: I don't think it's a -- I
- 25 don't even think it's technically correct. How is it an

- 1 abuse of discretion? He has no discretion. He must do
- 2 it. How could you say he has abused his discretion?
- 3 What discretion?
- 4 MR. MARCUS: Well I think some cases --
- 5 there is some case law that has said that when there is
- 6 an error of law committed by a lower court that can
- 7 constitute an abuse of discretion. But in our view
- 8 again that's not the natural reading of the standard
- 9 that Congress put in. And also, if you look at the
- 10 legislative history, Justice Kennedy, you'll see that
- 11 Congress was focused on the absence of a judicial remedy
- 12 with respect to determinations by the Secretary that
- 13 involve an exercise in discretion.
- 14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But what the cases
- 15 said prior to 6404(h) when they asked for interest
- 16 abatement was not that we don't have jurisdiction to
- 17 consider that claim. They would just say there's no
- 18 standard to apply, so it's committed to agency
- 19 discretion by law. Then all of a sudden 6404(h) comes
- 20 along and gives you a standard, so that removes that
- 21 objection. What's wrong with that?
- MR. MARCUS: I think that's -- with respect,
- 23 I think the Fifth Circuit's reasoning is too clever by
- 24 half. The Fifth Circuit basically extracted one piece
- of section 6404(h)'s integrated whole and held that

- 1 there now is a refund cause of action that's not subject
- 2 to the specific restrictions.
- 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, that's because
- 4 of the way that Congress enacted the language. It
- 5 doesn't say that the Tax Court and only the Tax Court
- 6 shall have jurisdiction. It says the Tax Court shall
- 7 have jurisdiction. That is a, in many respects a
- 8 preferred forum and they're saying you can bring it
- 9 there as well, but it doesn't take away the jurisdiction
- 10 that the prior courts had recognized.
- 11 MR. MARCUS: Well, I think you need to look
- 12 at what the state of the law was when Congress enacted
- 13 this provision and think about what Congress would have
- 14 wanted to do. If Congress had wanted to reverse those
- 15 decisions that had said there was no cause -- no refund
- 16 cause of action for interest abatement, they could have
- 17 easily referenced the refund statute and said there is a
- 18 refund action available. They also could have specified
- 19 that the Court of Federal Claims or the district courts
- 20 can exercise jurisdiction over interest abatement
- 21 issues.
- 22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Don't you think it's
- 23 kind of strange, though, if you have the interest
- 24 abatement is available only for a particular category of
- 25 taxpayer and not others?

1 MR. MARCUS: No. 2 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: If you have a net 3 worth of two million and one dollar you can't get any 4 interest abatement, but if it's \$2 million you can. 5 MR. MARCUS: I don't think, I don't think it's anomalous. I think if you consider the concept of 6 7 interest under the Tax Code, the way it works under the 8 Tax Code is interest accrues on an unpaid tax liability from the time the tax is due until the time the tax is 9 10 paid. So the amount of underpayment is the amount the 11 taxpayer is borrowing from the Government. The interest 12 that accrues on that underpayment is not a penalty; it's 13 just a charge basically for the time value of money. 14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Right, but you abate 15 it in some cases, but you don't abate it in the others. 16 MR. MARCUS: Right. But I think -- I think 17 the idea was that Congress was concerned that some 18 taxpayers, taxpayers that fall within the net worth 19 limitations, might be in positions where they are less 20 well-positioned to pay the full tax liability up front. 21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: That's what I 22 thought, too. But then your friend explained that in 23 the initial bill is where the interest is contained in a

lot of these cases and in this case in particular.

it's not as if you have the opportunity to pay it in

24

25

- 1 advance to stop the accrual of interest. Just you get
- 2 the bill and you find out, you know, you owe a 1,000
- 3 dollars and \$300 of it is interest.
- 4 MR. MARCUS: I don't think that's correct,
- 5 Your Honor. The way this is -- the interest that's
- 6 abatable is -- the taxpayer is in full control of
- 7 whether that interest runs or not. If the taxpayer pays
- 8 his full tax liability on time, interest doesn't accrue,
- 9 so there's no interest to abate. Or --
- 10 JUSTICE SCALIA: But he doesn't even know
- 11 what his tax liability is, especially in a partnership
- 12 situation.
- MR. MARCUS: Well, the taxpayer --
- 14 JUSTICE SCALIA: He makes the partnership
- 15 calculation, it goes to the IRS, and then they figure
- 16 out what the tax is. And meanwhile, you know, the
- 17 interest is running.
- 18 MR. MARCUS: Well, Justice Scalia, first of
- 19 all, the taxpayer is in the best position to know what
- 20 their tax liability is. If a taxpayer is going to make
- 21 certain investments, they should understand what the tax
- 22 consequences are.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: This is quite a different
- 24 argument. You're saying, you know, he should have paid
- 25 the full tax in the first place, not he could have paid

- 1 the interest that he knew was accruing.
- 2 MR. MARCUS: Right. But he could have
- 3 prevented that, the abatable interest, from accruing.
- 4 This abatable interest doesn't accrue until the taxpayer
- 5 receives notice from the IRS that there is a problem
- 6 with the return. So the -- in other words, that first
- 7 period from the time the underpayment is made until the
- 8 IRS notifies the taxpayer, that, that interest is not
- 9 subject to abatement. That automatically accrues and
- 10 there is no remedy. Congress has created no remedy for
- 11 that period, and there's just a period, there's a
- 12 provision in section --
- 13 JUSTICE SCALIA: Excuse me. I didn't
- 14 understand that. Say that again? There's no abatement
- 15 for the interest that accrues until you're notified of
- 16 what the --
- MR. MARCUS: Until you're notified, until
- 18 the IRS notifies you that they are looking further at
- 19 your return. They might not at that point tell you
- 20 precisely how much you owe, but you're on notice that
- 21 the IRS is looking into your return further and that you
- 22 can at that point make a payment or put down a deposit
- 23 that doesn't compromise your ability as a taxpayer to go
- 24 into the Tax Court, but it does stop the accrual of
- 25 abatable interest.

- 1 JUSTICE SOUTER: But you don't know how much
- 2 to pay, do you? I mean, when they send you the notice
- 3 they don't send a notice that says, we're looking into
- 4 this and we think you're going to end up owing \$5,000,
- 5 do they? They don't give you a figure.
- 6 MR. MARCUS: Again, they don't necessarily
- 7 tell you exactly how much you owe, but it's the
- 8 taxpayer's --
- JUSTICE SOUTER: Well, they don't -- do they
- 10 name a figure at all --
- MR. MARCUS: They sometimes do.
- 12 JUSTICE SOUTER: -- when they give you the
- 13 initial notice?
- MR. MARCUS: They sometimes do, and then at
- 15 18 months, at 18 months under subsection (g), under 18
- 16 months under a provision that was acted in 1998, the IRS
- 17 has to at 18 months tell you how much you owe;
- 18 otherwise, the interest cannot continue to accrue after
- 19 that 18-month period. But you should -- but it is the
- 20 taxpayer's responsibility to know what their tax
- 21 liability is. And they can also --
- JUSTICE SOUTER: That's true. That's true.
- 23 But you can make that argument. That argument, if you
- 24 accepted it, would be an argument for having no
- 25 amendment to subsection (h) at all.

- 1 MR. MARCUS: Right, but that's the idea.
- 2 Until 18 -- until 1986 there was no authority at all for
- 3 the Secretary to abate, and then Congress gave the
- 4 Secretary that authority as a matter of grace in 1986,
- 5 to extend this relief to forgive the accrual of
- 6 interest. I mean, after all this is money --
- 7 JUSTICE SOUTER: And the question is, why is
- 8 the grace confined to some taxpayers and not to others?
- 9 MR. MARCUS: The short answer is because
- 10 Congress has said that, said that, and the Congress
- 11 decided to impose the net worth limitation.
- 12 JUSTICE SOUTER: It'd have said it if we
- 13 accept your view of the exclusivity of the amendment to
- 14 (h).
- 15 MR. MARCUS: Right. And typically when
- 16 Congress imposes restrictions on a remedy this Court
- 17 reads that -- reads that as an intentional --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Is there any other instance
- 19 in the law? I mean there probably is, but what
- 20 surprised me about that is this: Imagine we have two
- 21 citizens and they are identical in every respect in
- 22 terms of their claim, they each believe the Government
- owes them \$50,000. They each have identically strong
- 24 claims. And Congress passes a law and says one of you
- 25 can come into court and the other can't. Now suppose it

- 1 said the poor person can't come into court. Do you
- think there wouldn't be a constitutional problem there?
- 3 Remember, they have the same claim for the same amounts,
- 4 with the same precise strength of their argument. But
- 5 we say rich people can go in -- so why did you do that?
- 6 We say poor people don't have as much stake in society.
- 7 They don't have -- now suppose you heard such an
- 8 argument. How long would it take you to feel there's a
- 9 constitutional problem?
- 10 MR. MARCUS: Well, I think there has to be a
- 11 rational basis for drawing --
- 12 JUSTICE BREYER: No. No. The rational
- 13 basis is that the poor person doesn't have the stake in
- 14 society that a rich person does.
- MR. MARCUS: Well, I don't think --
- 16 JUSTICE BREYER: Worthless. Okay. Now I
- 17 guess, if you can't keep the poor person out for such a
- 18 reason then you can't keep the rich person out for such
- 19 a reason. So you tell me what the rationale is in
- 20 keeping the rich person out any more than the poor
- 21 person. They have the same claim, same amount, same
- 22 cause. The cause, by the way, was that some bureaucrat
- 23 in the IRS forgot to send a notice so nobody knew what
- 24 was happening. That was the cause. And the reason it
- 25 didn't get abated is a different bureaucrat got mixed

- 1 up, okay? Same claims.
- 2 MR. MARCUS: Keep in mind, this is -- what
- 3 you're talking about is money -- this is interest that's
- 4 running on money that the taxpayer is borrowing from the
- 5 Government. This is money that the Government is
- 6 legally entitled to as of the date it was originally
- 7 due.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Yeah.
- 9 MR. MARCUS: And so this is money that the
- 10 taxpayer is borrowing. A large net, high net worth
- 11 taxpayer can invest that money elsewhere and may well
- 12 even make out even better.
- JUSTICE BREYER: But at the end of the day,
- 14 the claim happens to be interest worth \$5,000. The IRS
- 15 abused its discretion under the statute in failing to
- 16 write a check for \$5,000 to both. What we do is we
- 17 allow one of them to bring a lawsuit to get the 5,000,
- 18 and we say to the other one, you can't bring the lawsuit
- 19 to get the 5,000.
- Now my question is, what's the basis for
- 21 that distinction?
- 22 MR. MARCUS: And the rational basis is that
- 23 Congress believed that taxpayers of a high net worth,
- 24 there would be no hardship, but -- in them not having a
- 25 cause of action.

- 1 JUSTICE BREYER: Why would there be no
- 2 hardship?
- MR. MARCUS: Because they can use the money,
- 4 invest the money.
- JUSTICE BREYER: And so can a poor person.
- 6 MR. MARCUS: Well, but they're not as well
- 7 positioned as the wealthy taxpayer, to invest that --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: The next thing you know,
- 9 they will enact a progressive income tax.
- 10 (Laughter.)
- 11 JUSTICE SCALIA: Where will we all be then?
- 12 JUSTICE BREYER: This, by the way, this has
- 13 nothing to do with the progressive income tax. What I
- 14 have not seen anywhere is the use of wealth, totally
- 15 different from the dollar value of a claim, to shut the
- 16 courthouse door. I'm just saying, is there such a case
- 17 anywhere, and if there is no such case, then I'd say I
- 18 wonder about this assumption. The assumption that the
- 19 reason that you cannot keep the courthouse door open to
- 20 everyone is because what?
- 21 MR. MARCUS: Well, first of all, there are
- 22 other examples. There's --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Well what?
- MR. MARCUS: This is derived from,
- 25 ultimately derived from the Equal Access to Justice Act,

- 1 there are attorneys' fees provisions, that also exist in
- 2 the Tax Code, and those net worth limitations apply to
- 3 --
- JUSTICE BREYER: We know, attorneys' fees
- 5 you give to poor people more than to rich people. That
- 6 makes sense. That has nothing to do with having a
- 7 formal rule saying you cannot enter the courthouse.
- 8 JUSTICE SCALIA: Is it a
- 9 cannot-enter-the-courthouse provision here, or is it --
- 10 as I understand your case, it is that it remains
- 11 discretionary with the Secretary with respect to people
- 12 who have more money, but it is not discretionary with
- 13 respect to people who have less money.
- MR. MARCUS: That's correct.
- 15 JUSTICE BREYER: I don't understand.
- 16 JUSTICE SCALIA: So one has a cause of
- 17 action and the other doesn't have a cause of action.
- 18 And the difference you're making between the two is
- 19 you're permitting the Secretary to waive the interest
- 20 with respect to the rich. You're requiring him to do it
- 21 with respect to the poor. Isn't that the difference?
- 22 MR. MARCUS: That's correct. There is an
- 23 administrative claim that --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Wait. That might be the
- answer.

- 1 JUSTICE KENNEDY: And the poor do not have
- 2 the incentive or even the ability to defer paying a tax,
- 3 where the people that have large bank accounts may, and
- 4 investments, may well profit by just paying the interest
- 5 to the Government.
- 6 MR. MARCUS: That's exactly right. And
- 7 Justice Breyer, if you want, if you --
- 8 JUSTICE BREYER: Wait. Wait. There are two
- 9 separate things. I want to understand this. In other
- 10 words, the Secretary does not have the power to abate
- 11 the interest in respect to the rich person?
- MR. MARCUS: No. He does have the
- 13 authority.
- 14 JUSTICE BREYER: Oh.
- 15 JUSTICE SCALIA: But it's permissive, not
- 16 mandatory.
- MR. MARCUS: Yeah, the Secretary has the
- 18 authority to abate interest with for wealthy --
- 19 JUSTICE BREYER: But he doesn't have -- he
- 20 can do it -- in the first case with the rich person, he
- 21 can abuse his discretion?
- MR. MARCUS: With respect to taxpayers who
- 23 meet the net worth limitations.
- JUSTICE BREYER: In other words, in the one
- 25 case Congress has passed a law saying with a poor person

- 1 you cannot abuse your discretion, but with a rich person
- 2 you can abuse your discretion. That's what the
- 3 underlying substantive statute says?
- 4 MR. MARCUS: And there's another provision
- 5 --
- 6 JUSTICE BREYER: Where does it say --
- 7 JUSTICE SCALIA: They are not really saying
- 8 that. They're saying it's totally within your
- 9 discretion. You can't possibly abuse your discretion
- 10 when you have total discretion. They're just saying,
- 11 you know, do it if you want, don't do it if you don't.
- 12 MR. MARCUS: That's right. It's a matter of
- 13 administrative grace for the taxpayers who
- 14 are --
- 15 JUSTICE SOUTER: No. But the standard of
- 16 discretion is the same for the poor and the rich, isn't
- 17 it? The only difference is that the poor can get into
- 18 court and the rich cannot.
- 19 MR. MARCUS: They have an enforceable right.
- JUSTICE SOUTER: So it's a question of
- 21 remedy, not standing.
- MR. MARCUS: Right. There's a judicial
- 23 remedy in one case and only an administrative remedy in
- 24 the other.
- 25 JUSTICE ALITO: Is that the poverty line?

## Official

- 1 MR. MARCUS: And if there's another
- 2 provision in the tax -- I'm sorry, Justice Alito.
- JUSTICE ALITO: Is a net worth of \$2 million
- 4 the poverty line now?
- 5 (Laughter.)
- MR. MARCUS: Not that I'm aware of.
- 7 JUSTICE ALITO: So what is -- so what's the
- 8 rationale? This isn't treating the rich and the poor
- 9 differently, is it?
- 10 MR. MARCUS: It's treating exceedingly high
- 11 net worth individuals and corporations differently from
- 12 everyone else.
- 13 JUSTICE ALITO: Someone with a net worth of
- 14 \$1.5 million couldn't invest the money in the interim?
- 15 MR. MARCUS: They could. Congress chose to
- 16 draw the line where it used this provision that was
- 17 already in place under the Equal Access to Justice Act.
- 18 It referred to that provision --
- 19 JUSTICE GINSBURG: This was for purposes of
- 20 attorneys' fees?
- 21 MR. MARCUS: Right, the provision that
- 22 applies to attorneys' fees. Congress has also imposed
- 23 this provision in a burden shifting provision in the Tax
- 24 Code, section 7491. If the Court wants to get a better
- 25 idea of what Congress's concern for what it called the

- 1 average taxpayer, or the smaller taxpayers, it can look
- 2 at the legislative history. There was a hearing in
- 3 March of 1995 that's cited on page 98 of the
- 4 supplemental appendix to the cert petition, and that was
- 5 the Court of Federal Claims' decision. It's footnote
- 6 19. It refers to a hearing in March 1995. And if you
- 7 read through that, you can see where that concern for
- 8 the -- for average taxpayers and lower net worth
- 9 taxpayers came from.
- 10 Nothing in section 6404(h) gives rise to an
- 11 inference that Congress intended to establish additional
- 12 remedies in the district courts and Court of Federal
- 13 Claims. To the contrary, this Court has consistently
- 14 applied the rule that when Congress creates a specific
- 15 remedy, it intends that remedy to be exclusive. That
- 16 rule is fully applicable here. Otherwise, the specific
- 17 restrictions Congress imposed on the remedy could be
- 18 defeated by bringing the claim in a different forum.
- 19 This case --
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Wouldn't it have been so
- 21 simple if Congress just said the Tax Court shall have
- 22 exclusive jurisdiction, instead of just saying
- 23 jurisdiction?
- 24 MR. MARCUS: That might have made it
- 25 simpler, Justice Ginsburg, but it accomplished the same

- 1 result by imposing the specific restrictions that it
- 2 did. And again, it would have -- there's another --
- 3 there are two other provisions in the Tax Code where
- 4 Congress -- where the Tax Court effectively has -- one
- of the provisions where the Tax Court has exclusive
- 6 jurisdiction under section 6330(d), where also it
- 7 doesn't specify that -- the Congress didn't specify the
- 8 Tax Court has exclusive jurisdiction but it does. And
- 9 it's another case where there's an administrative
- 10 determination, it doesn't go to the underlying
- 11 substantive tax liability.
- 12 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But the difference
- 13 -- the difference is that the district court, the claims
- 14 court already have jurisdiction for pay and sue claims,
- 15 if you pay the IRS you can sue to get a refund. And so
- 16 this isn't as if we're looking at something that says
- 17 the Tax Court has jurisdiction and trying to use that as
- 18 a wedge to get other jurisdiction. There's already a
- 19 grant of jurisdiction. The problem was, there was no
- 20 standard of review for these "may abate" claims, and all
- 21 of a sudden we find in this provision there is a
- 22 standard of review, it's abuse of discretion, and that
- 23 fills the void. Why can't they just use that?
- MR. MARCUS: Well, again, Mr. Chief Justice,
- 25 I don't think it was just a matter of not being a

- 1 standard of review. I think it was a matter of this
- 2 being -- of intent by Congress to have this just be a
- 3 matter of administrative grace. And again, if you
- 4 contrast the language of the different --
- 5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But I thought what
- 6 you had argued before when people would try to seek this
- 7 relief was that there's no standard of review to hold
- 8 the Secretary's exercise of discretion up against.
- 9 MR. MARCUS: I think that was one of the
- 10 reasons that the Government cited, but I think there was
- 11 others as well.
- 12 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But one thing you
- 13 never said was that there was no jurisdiction, because
- 14 there is jurisdiction in the district court. If you've
- 15 paid money to the IRS and you want it back, you can
- 16 bring a refund action.
- 17 MR. MARCUS: If you have a legal entitlement
- 18 to it, and the point is you didn't have a legal
- 19 entitlement to it before. That's what the courts held,
- 20 and Congress responded to that, not by saying you do
- 21 have a legal entitlement to this through a refund
- 22 action, which they easily could have said if they wanted
- 23 to reject those prior decisions, but instead they
- 24 created a limited remedy in the Tax Court. I don't see
- 25 how you can read that limited remedy in the Tax Court to

- 1 give rise to a broader remedy that doesn't have those
- 2 restrictions that Congress imposed on the Tax Court
- 3 remedy.
- 4 So it should be -- I think 6404(h) should be
- 5 read as an integrated whole and you can't just extract
- 6 one piece and then bring that over, as the Fifth Circuit
- 7 said, to apply to a refund action. I don't think that's
- 8 the proper way to interpret the statute.
- 9 JUSTICE BREYER: I now think maybe I don't
- 10 agree on this point that there are different standards,
- 11 because it does say in this abuse of discretion. And
- 12 indeed that's a normal administrative standard, and so
- 13 as you read this you would think that the IRS does not
- 14 have any legal power substantively to abuse its
- 15 discretion in refusing to bring an abasement -- refusing
- 16 to abate the interest. So far do you agree?
- 17 MR. MARCUS: I'm sorry, Justice Breyer?
- 18 That Congress --
- 19 JUSTICE BREYER: Once they make clear the
- 20 standard is abuse of discretion, it only makes clear
- 21 what's there in the law anyway, that administrative
- 22 authorities do not have the authority to abuse their
- 23 discretion. Now, sometimes we don't review that in the
- 24 courts. That doesn't make it legal. It just means you
- 25 can't catch them out in court.

- 1 MR. MARCUS: Right.
- 2 JUSTICE BREYER: So there's a standard that
- 3 applies to everybody. Then all that this does, to go
- 4 back to it is it closes the courthouse door. Now I want
- 5 to know what your rationale was for doing that. It had
- 6 nothing to do with the standards that applied. It has
- 7 to have something to do with why one class of people by
- 8 wealth are kept out of court. I think if it were the
- 9 other way around it wouldn't last for three seconds, and
- 10 the only reason maybe I don't think about it as hard
- 11 this way because I think, well, privilege is involved,
- 12 et cetera. But when you force me to think about it, I
- 13 want to know what the reason is.
- MR. MARCUS: Well, I don't think it's right
- 15 to characterize it as the closing of the courthouse
- 16 door. Congress opened the courthouse door in a limited
- 17 fashion in 1996. That's what happened. There was no
- 18 courthouse door opened in 1986 --
- JUSTICE BREYER: I'll accept that
- 20 characterization. Now you give me the reason why we've
- 21 opened the courthouse door to individuals who are alike
- 22 in every respect but for their net worth? Now give me
- 23 that, the same reason? I always want to know what the
- 24 specific reason is, the specific rationale. And I'm not
- 25 saying there isn't one. I just want to know what it is.

- 1 MR. MARCUS: Justice Breyer, I don't know if
- 2 I can give you a better one than I gave before. But
- 3 it's that high net worth taxpayers are better positioned
- 4 to pay their full tax liability up front and to handle
- 5 the accumulation of interest in the event that there is
- 6 some delay in the processing of their return.
- 7 JUSTICE KENNEDY: They're exactly alike but
- 8 for their ability to earn interest in different ways.
- 9 MR. MARCUS: Yes.
- 10 JUSTICE SCALIA: And I would not concede, as
- 11 you seem to have, that the consequence of (h) is simply
- 12 to open the door. I think the category of decisions
- 13 that are committed to agency discretion by law within
- 14 the meaning of the APA are agency decisions as to which
- 15 the term "abuse of discretion" makes no sense. There's
- 16 no such thing. It is totally committed to agency
- 17 discretion. It's only other decisions that are not
- 18 committed to agency discretion by law where you -- where
- 19 the discretion can be abused. If you look at it that
- 20 way, it isn't a matter of closing the door to one
- 21 category and opening it to another; it's a matter of
- 22 different substantive laws applying to the two, to the
- 23 two classes. Anyway, I choose to look at it that way.
- 24 You can talk about closing --
- MR. MARCUS: That's a fine way of looking at

- 1 it, Justice Scalia.
- 2 (Laughter.)
- 3 MR. MARCUS: The other -- the other anomaly
- 4 the Fifth Circuit identified was the taxpayer -- a
- 5 taxpayer seeking a refund having to split off his
- 6 claims. This too is not a significant anomaly. The
- 7 vast majority of taxpayers seek redetermination of their
- 8 tax liability in the Tax Court and those taxpayers must
- 9 split their claims because the interest abatement claim
- 10 doesn't ripen until the taxpayer's underlying liability
- 11 has been assessed. Moreover, the interest abatement
- 12 question is distinct from the taxpayer's underlying
- 13 liability.
- 14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: They don't bring it
- 15 as this additional claim after they get the final
- 16 determination? They start a whole separate action for
- 17 interest abatement?
- 18 MR. MARCUS: That's -- if they -- if they
- 19 got -- if they got relief on their refund claim, if they
- 20 prevail on their refund claim there would be no need to
- 21 do that. The interest would automatically abate. But if
- they were unsuccessful they could still pursue an
- 23 interest abatement claim on the grounds that the IRS
- 24 committed an error in delay in performing a material
- 25 act.

- 1 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Is it part of the
- 2 same proceeding or is it a separate proceeding?
- MR. MARCUS: Well, it would be -- it would
- 4 be a proceeding that would follow the proceeding on the
- 5 underlying liability.
- 6 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: No, I'm sure it
- 7 follows it. But I mean, you're making the claim that
- 8 it's no big deal that you have to go to the district
- 9 court to get your refund and then go to the Tax Court to
- 10 get the interest abatement, which does seem like a big
- 11 deal to me. And you say, well, in the Tax Court you
- 12 have to do it separately, too. But it seems to me, that
- if it's the same proceeding, it's not much -- the
- 14 argument --
- 15 MR. MARCUS: It's not as inconvenient --
- 16 well, it, it may be inconvenient but it's a necessary
- 17 consequence of the exclusive review scheme the Congress
- 18 set up. And there is no reason -- to take that policy
- 19 concern and have that trump the statutory language and
- 20 the regime that Congress clearly established.
- 21 JUSTICE GINSBURG: And there is no linkage
- 22 between the two, with -- it's one thing to split a claim
- 23 when they have common elements, but the interest
- 24 abatement has nothing to do with the substantive
- 25 underlying -- substantive liability?

- 1 MR. MARCUS: That's correct, Justice
- 2 Ginsburg. It involves questions about administrative
- 3 problems that might arise during the processing of the
- 4 taxpayer's case. A ministerial act, the failure to
- 5 transfer a file when a taxpayer moves from one
- 6 jurisdiction to another, or after, or notice of
- 7 deficiency if the agent just delays in issuing the
- 8 notice because he forgot about it and it just sat on his
- 9 desk for a couple of days. Those are the kinds of
- 10 issues that -- that come up in the interest abatement
- 11 actions.
- 12 If the Court has no further questions the
- 13 court of appeals should be affirmed. Thank you.
- 14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
- 15 Mr. Marcus.
- Mr. Redding, you have four minutes
- 17 remaining.
- 18 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF THOMAS E. REDDING,
- 19 ON BEHALF OF PETITIONERS
- 20 MR. REDDING: If I may, there are a couple
- 21 of brief points I would like to make. In the
- 22 legislative history of the 6404(h) it concludes with the
- 23 statement that no inference should be made from that
- 24 legislation as to other courts' jurisdiction. I think
- 25 that should be taken very seriously. As to the

- 1 claim-splitting issue --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Who said that?
- 3 MR. REDDING: That's in the House committee
- 4 report, Your Honor. As to claim splitting, it is
- 5 actually a horrendous problem when you're talking
- 6 especially about partnership-related cases. I will note
- 7 that there are several hundred cases below waiting the
- 8 outcome of this case. As in the Cramer and Weiner
- 9 opinions that came out of the Fifth Circuit, the Court
- 10 can note that there are claims for interest abatement,
- 11 abatement not under 6404, but that interest was
- 12 overcharged by applying the penalty rate of interest.
- 13 There is a refund claim for the penalty portion of the
- 14 interest.
- 15 There is also a refund claim that the tax
- 16 was assessed outside the statute of limitations; that's
- 17 clearly a refund claim. None of those claims would be
- 18 encompassed under 6404(h). These taxpayers would have
- 19 had to have completely split their claims, asked for an
- 20 interest abatement in the Tax Court for abuse of
- 21 discretion on 6404(e)(1).
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: But the point that
- 23 Mr. Marcus just made, that the issue is discrete on
- 24 interest abatement, and it involves mishandling within
- 25 the Internal Revenue processing, and it's not like other

- 1 questions that have to do with the -- with the
- 2 intricacies of the Internal Revenue Code.
- 3 MR. REDDING: That's only relatively true to
- 4 6404(e)(1), Your Honor. But I will note that under
- 5 6404(a), where cases are now coming out of the Tax Court
- 6 for the first time, because it now has jurisdiction
- 7 under (h), it provides authority for the Commissioner to
- 8 abate interest where the IRS has erroneously or
- 9 illegally assessed the tax liability after the statute
- 10 of limitations runs or whether it's simply an erroneous
- 11 assessment. Those claims have nothing to do with
- 12 discretion, and they are not really just ancillary to
- 13 the tax liability; they arise out of the substantive
- 14 challenge to the liability itself. The Woodral case
- 15 that has come out -- which is the, I think the first of
- 16 the 6404(a) cases -- was an assertion that the
- interest had been charged after the tax had been paid.
- 18 Now that's not a discretionary abatement; that's an
- illegal assessment of interest and that's a 6404(h)
- 20 claim now.
- 21 Previously it would have been strictly a
- 22 refund claim under 16 -- under 1346.
- I would also note that in terms of the being
- 24 able to pay it to cut off the interest accrual, that in
- 25 these cases, these cases that are before the Court, the

- 1 F quality -- the document the Government first sent out
- 2 proposing adjustments to the partnership level, if you
- 3 had computed the liability based on what the
- 4 Government's position was, the ultimate tax liability
- 5 including interest to any point in time would have been
- 6 at least three times the amount that results from the
- 7 Tax Court decision.
- 8 It's just ludicrous to say the taxpayer
- 9 should be expected to take whatever the Government's
- 10 proposed adjustments are, compute what his maximum
- 11 liability may be, and pay it in advance or post a bond
- 12 in advance in order to cut off the interest accrual.
- 13 That argument just doesn't -- in my mind does not fly,
- 14 Your Honor.
- 15 This -- this Court in Bob Jones University
- 16 did address the pay and sue versus prepayment
- 17 jurisdiction issue in terms of constitutionality and due
- 18 process.
- 19 And -- and basically said that as long as there is a pay
- 20 and sue remedy available, the taxpayer has no due
- 21 process rights to a prepayment remedy, but that the
- 22 Court might have come down differently had there been no
- 23 remedy available in terms of pay and sue.
- 24 I would also note that both the Tax Court,
- 25 the district courts, the Court of Federal Claims and the

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1	appellate courts have long reviewed other discretionary
2	acts within the Tax Code by the Commissioner where no
3	standard is set forth on an abuse of discretion
4	standard, such as the authorization of the Commissioner
5	to abate certain penalties where the taxpayer has sought
6	an independent appraisal on the overvaluation penalty
7	under 6659. Those cases have been reviewed for years by
8	the Tax Court and by the district courts in refund cases
9	on an abuse of discretion standard. It is the Federal
10	common law standard for reviewing an abuse of
11	discretion.
12	The determinations in Horton and Selman
13	Homes are unique in holding that it is totally
14	discretionary.
15	Thank you, Your Honor.
16	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
17	The case is submitted.
18	(Whereupon, at 1:56 p.m., the case in the
19	above-entitled matter was submitted.)
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	•	ı	ı	ı
A	14:20,24 15:15	27:18 34:25	28:10 33:21	18:23 19:1
abasement 7:17	15:18 16:1,20	36:17,17 42:16	51:6	23:2 29:24
43:15	18:11,14,18	42:22 43:7	amounts 33:3	31:23,23,24
abatable 29:6	25:4,14,15,21	46:16	analysis 17:22	33:4,8 47:14
30:3,4,25	26:1,7 37:21	actions 23:7	analyzed 17:21	48:18 51:13
abate 7:13 11:13	38:1,2,9 41:22	48:11	ancillary 50:12	arrival 15:25
12:13,17 14:19	43:11,14,20,22	acts 52:2	anomalous 28:6	asked 10:8
15:14,17,24	45:15 49:20	actual 7:10	<b>anomaly</b> 46:3,6	21:21 26:15
18:18,20,21	52:3,9,10	adding 15:9	answer 32:9	49:19
19:8 23:24	abused 26:2	addition 24:13	36:25	assertion 50:16
24:9,13,23	34:15 45:19	additional 7:2	anyplace 17:9	assessed 46:11
28:14,15 29:9	abuse-of-discr	40:11 46:15	anyway 43:21	49:16 50:9
32:3 37:10,18	16:12	additionally	45:23	assessment
41:20 43:16	accept 32:13	14:1	<b>APA</b> 45:14	12:13,17 22:2
46:21 50:8	44:19	address 13:12	<b>APAA</b> 16:11	50:11,19
52:5	accepted 4:4	51:16	apart 7:8	Assistant 1:17
<b>abated</b> 9:5 12:16	31:24	addressing 11:6	apologize 9:1,15	assumed 25:22
33:25	access 4:16,21	adjustments	18:7	assumption 11:2
abatement 4:9	6:15 8:6 9:22	21:6 51:2,10	<b>appeals</b> 23:6,11	11:21 35:18,18
4:10,21 5:2 6:8	10:22 35:25	administrative	24:2 48:13	attorneys 36:1,4
7:10,11 8:5,7	39:17	18:13 36:23	appear 6:19	39:20,22
9:20,24 10:1	accomplished	38:13,23 41:9	APPEARAN	authorities
11:3,8,22	40:25	42:3 43:12,21	1:14	43:22
14:11 15:4	accounts 37:3	48:2	appears 6:22	authority 5:3
19:6 21:1 23:8	accrual 20:16	adopted 12:20	appellate 52:1	10:10 11:13
23:10,15,18,20	29:1 30:24	advance 29:1	appendix 8:14	24:23 32:2,4
25:1,3 26:16	32:5 50:24	51:11,12	9:2,10,15 40:4	37:13,18 43:22
27:16,20,24	51:12	affirmed 48:13	applicable 5:2	50:7
28:4 30:9,14	accrue 29:8 30:4	afford 5:11	40:16	authorization
46:9,11,17,23	31:18	10:17	applied 16:5	52:4
47:10,24 48:10	accrues 28:8,12	agency 26:18	40:14 44:6	authorized
49:10,11,20,24	30:9,15	45:13,14,16,18	<b>applies</b> 6:8 11:7	19:14
50:18	accruing 21:23	agent 48:7	12:22 14:16	automatically
abatement-of	21:24 30:1,3	<b>agree</b> 17:12 19:3	19:11 25:3	30:9 46:21
7:8	accumulation	43:10,16	39:22 44:3	availability 4:12
ability 4:13	45:5	<b>Ah</b> 8:17	<b>apply</b> 6:6 13:14	10:15 11:18
10:24 30:23	act 18:13 24:11	alike 44:21 45:7	14:4,8,18 16:7	available 7:14
37:2 45:8	35:25 39:17	<b>Alito</b> 38:25 39:2	17:2 18:19	17:9 27:18,24
<b>able</b> 5:17,19	46:25 48:4	39:3,7,13	24:24,25 26:18	51:20,23
19:17 22:3	acted 11:21	allow 34:17	36:2 43:7	average 40:1,8
50:24	31:16	allows 5:25 6:15	applying 45:22	avoid 4:14,17
above-entitled	action 5:15 7:8	13:6	49:12	5:9
1:11 52:19	7:10,17,20,23	amendment	appraisal 52:6	avoided 23:14
absence 26:11	7:23 8:1 12:19	31:25 32:13	April 1:9	aware 39:6
absolutely 21:20	14:22 15:16,19	amendments	argued 42:6	B
25:16	16:1 23:20	12:4	argument 1:12	back 4:5 9:17
<b>abuse</b> 14:5,8,13	25:12 27:1,16	<b>amount</b> 28:10	2:2,5,8 3:3,6	Dack 4.3 9.17

	I	I	I	
15:5 18:5	<b>bring</b> 13:6,7,8,9	45:12,21	cited 40:3 42:10	<b>come</b> 15:5 18:5
20:25 42:15	25:13 27:8	cause 7:10,17,20	citizens 32:21	32:25 33:1
44:4	34:17,18 42:16	12:19 15:16,19	<b>claim</b> 5:1 7:24	48:10 50:15
<b>bad</b> 6:4	43:6,15 46:14	16:1 27:1,15	9:24 10:2 11:3	51:22
<b>bank</b> 37:3	bringable 13:19	27:16 33:22,22	14:11 17:1,7	comes 11:4
bankruptcy	13:20	33:24 34:25	23:22 26:17	25:11 26:19
4:17 5:10	bringing 5:15	36:16,17	32:22 33:3,21	<b>coming</b> 6:7 50:5
<b>based</b> 51:3	8:1 40:18	cert 40:4	34:14 35:15	Commissioner
basically 7:23	broader 43:1	certain 22:11	36:23 40:18	50:7 52:2,4
17:11 22:5	brought 7:24	29:21 52:5	46:9,15,19,20	Commissioner's
26:24 28:13	13:1,15,17	cetera 44:12	46:23 47:7,22	17:3
51:19	23:20	challenge 23:14	49:4,13,15,17	committed
<b>basis</b> 4:11 7:8	<b>burden</b> 39:23	50:14	50:20,22	24:10 26:6,18
33:11,13 34:20	bureaucrat	challenging 23:8	claimed 15:14	45:13,16,18
34:22	33:22,25	characterizati	<b>claims</b> 3:12 5:4	46:24
<b>behalf</b> 1:15,19		44:20	5:20 6:11 9:20	committee 11:5
2:4,7,10 3:7	C	characterize	11:8,12 13:10	12:1 49:3
23:3 48:19	<b>c</b> 2:1 3:1 19:13	44:15	15:8 16:10	<b>common</b> 16:10
<b>believe</b> 5:7 7:19	calculation	<b>charge</b> 28:13	22:11 24:4	16:20 47:23
8:13 11:15,24	29:15	charged 50:17	27:19 32:24	52:10
14:23 16:2	<b>call</b> 6:21,21	<b>check</b> 9:6 12:16	34:1 40:5,13	compared 7:22
17:22 22:5,6,8	<b>called</b> 39:25	34:16	41:13,14,20	complained
22:16 32:22	cannot-enter-t	Chief 3:3,8 4:8	46:6,9 49:10	21:3
believed 34:23	36:9	5:18 7:7,15 9:8	49:17,19 50:11	complementary
<b>best</b> 29:19	<b>canon</b> 6:21	13:3 15:13,22	51:25	4:13
<b>better</b> 34:12	carried 16:21	16:14 20:10,14	claim-splitting	completely 4:17
39:24 45:2,3	case 3:4 8:7,24	20:20 21:18,22	49:1	6:12,16 7:3 8:8
<b>big</b> 47:8,10	11:16 13:15,17	22:21,24 23:4	class 22:11 44:7	49:19
<b>bill</b> 20:21 21:2	14:23 19:18	26:14 27:3,22	classes 45:23	compromise
21:12,19 28:23	20:25 21:3,8	28:2,14,21	<b>clear</b> 19:23	30:23
29:2	21:21 22:6,8	41:12,24 42:5	43:19,20	computation
<b>blah</b> 16:18,18,18	26:5 28:24	42:12 46:14	<b>clearly</b> 8:2 13:16	21:11
<b>Bob</b> 51:15	35:16,17 36:10	47:1,6 48:14	19:7 47:20	compute 51:10
<b>bond</b> 51:11	37:20,25 38:23	52:16	49:17	computed 51:3
borrowing	40:19 41:9	choose 45:23	<b>clever</b> 26:23	concede 45:10
28:11 34:4,10	48:4 49:8	<b>chose</b> 22:9 39:15	closes 44:4	concept 28:6
<b>Breyer</b> 14:4,7	50:14 52:17,18	<b>Circuit</b> 17:15,16	closing 44:15	concern 39:25
14:12,17 32:18	cases 7:16,19,21	17:19,21,23	45:20,24	40:7 47:19
33:12,16 34:8	12:9,14 13:6,7	22:7 26:24	<b>code</b> 3:18,25	concerned 28:17
34:13 35:1,5	13:19 14:23	43:6 46:4 49:9	8:15 9:3,14	concludes 48:22
35:12,23 36:4	15:23 19:14,23	circuits 3:14	19:5 20:3	concurrent
36:15,24 37:7	26:4,14 28:15	Circuit's 3:10	22:20 23:22	22:10
37:8,14,19,24	28:24 49:6,7	17:11 26:23	28:7,8 36:2	confined 32:8
38:6 43:9,17	50:5,16,25,25	circumstances	39:24 41:3	conflict 6:20
43:19 44:2,19	52:7,8	24:23	50:2 52:2	Congress 3:18
45:1	catch 43:25	<b>cite</b> 7:16 11:16	collection 5:17	4:25 10:9,13
<b>brief</b> 48:21	category 27:24	14:23	10:20,23	11:1,13,21

12:5 16:6,8	13:25 16:19	44:21	Department	50:18 52:1,14
17:4,12 22:9	17:22 20:19	courts 4:2 5:4	1:18	<b>dispute</b> 22:15
23:13 25:21	24:17,21 25:19	7:5 8:6 11:12	departure 22:17	distinct 46:12
26:9,11 27:4	25:25 29:4	15:8 16:9,24	deposit 30:22	distinction 17:4
27:12,13,14	36:14,22 48:1	24:2,3,19	derived 35:24	34:21
28:17 30:10	correctly 23:6	27:10,19 40:12	35:25	<b>district</b> 3:12 4:2
32:3,10,10,16	counsel 52:16	42:19 43:24	desk 48:9	5:4 6:10 7:5
32:24 34:23	couple 48:9,20	48:24 51:25	determination	11:12 13:10
37:25 39:15,22	course 20:10	52:1,8	23:23 41:10	15:8,14 16:9
40:11,14,17,21	21:4,25	Court's 23:16	46:16	20:15 24:4
41:4,7 42:2,20	court 1:1,12 3:9	covered 19:7	determinations	27:19 40:12
43:2,18 44:16	3:12,12,20,21	Cramer 49:8	21:8 23:8 25:3	41:13 42:14
47:17,20	3:23,23 4:3,5	create 5:24 6:13	26:12 52:12	47:8 51:25
Congress's 5:23	4:21 5:1,3,4,8	16:22	<b>determine</b> 14:13	52:8
39:25	5:15,20,21	created 15:20	18:17	<b>divided</b> 24:2,3
	6:10,10,17,17	23:13 30:10	difference 20:11	doctrine 6:21
<b>consequence</b> 45:11 47:17		42:24	36:18,21 38:17	document 51:1
	6:17,23 7:1,3,6 9:19 10:1,10	1	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	
consequences 29:22	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	creates 14:10 40:14	41:12,13	doing 12:5 44:5 dollar 28:3
consider 26:17	11:2,12,12 12:2 13:10,10		<b>different</b> 15:3 24:5 29:23	35:15
	13:24 14:10	creating 12:2 19:10		
28:6			33:25 35:15	dollars 20:21,22
considering	15:7,8,10,14	cut 10:2 22:3	40:18 42:4	29:3
6:25	16:6,10,13,17	50:24 51:12	43:10 45:8,22	door 35:16,19
<b>consistent</b> 4:17	17:8,14,25		differently 39:9	44:4,16,16,18
5:7,10,14 6:14	18:16 19:4	<b>d</b> 3:1 19:13	39:11 51:22	44:21 45:12,20
6:16 7:3 18:1	20:2,4,5,7,15	date 34:6	disagree 12:22	draw 39:16
consistently	21:23,25 22:10	day 34:13	discrete 49:23	drawing 33:11
15:23,23 16:12	22:13,21 23:5	days 23:22 48:9	discretion 14:5	duality 4:6
40:13	23:6,7,11,19	deal 47:8,11	14:8,14,20,25	due 28:9 34:7
constitute 26:7	24:4,5,16 26:6	decided 32:11	15:15,18 16:1	51:17,20
constitutional	27:5,5,6,19		16:20 18:11,12	<b>D.C</b> 1:8,18
33:2,9	30:24 32:16,25	decision 11:11	18:15,18,22	
constitutionali	33:1 38:18	23:11 25:6	25:5,7,15,21	
51:17	39:24 40:5,12	40:5 51:7	25:23 26:1,1,2	e 1:15 2:1,3,9
contained 28:23	40:13,21 41:4	decisions 25:22	26:3,7,13,19	3:1,1,6 7:25
continue 31:18	41:5,8,13,14	27:15 42:23	34:15 37:21	8:2,6,9,10,11
continues 10:16	41:17 42:14,24	45:12,14,17	38:1,2,9,9,10	8:16 9:9 11:19
contrary 40:13	42:25 43:2,25	defeated 40:18	38:16 41:22	12:9,9,10,12
contrast 42:4	44:8 46:8 47:9	defense 25:13	42:8 43:11,15	12:15,18,22,23
contrasts 24:11	47:9,11 48:12	<b>defer</b> 37:2	43:20,23 45:13	13:1,5,6,7,8,9
control 29:6	48:13 49:9,20	deficiency 48:7	45:15,17,18,19	13:14,17,19,21
conventional	50:5,25 51:7	delay 24:10 45:6	49:21 50:12	13:22 14:18,19
20:8 22:13	51:15,22,24,25	46:24	52:3,9,11	15:18,19 16:5
<b>copy</b> 12:11	52:8	delays 10:19	discretionary	18:5,9,9,10,13
corporations	courthouse	21:3 48:7	12:14 16:9	18:19,20,22
4:20 39:11	35:16,19 36:7	denied 8:8 12:14	17:3 24:25	19:19,21 24:24
<b>correct</b> 5:6 7:9	44:4,15,16,18	<b>deny</b> 9:21	25:3 36:11,12	24:25 25:9

	<u> </u>	 I	I	I
48:18	19:25 22:19	extracted 26:24	Flora 4:5	generally 4:22
earn 45:8	47:20	F	<b>fly</b> 51:13	10:17,25
easily 27:17	et 1:3 44:12		focused 26:11	Ginsburg 4:23
42:22	evaluating 6:19	<b>F</b> 1:3 51:1	<b>follow</b> 6:4 13:7	9:17,24 10:7
easy 12:8	event 45:5	faced 4:15	47:4	11:1,11 16:23
<b>effect</b> 13:21	everybody 44:3	fact 4:16	follows 47:7	17:15,18 39:19
effectively 41:4	exactly 31:7	facts 20:25	footnote 40:5	40:20,25 47:21
either 6:20	37:6 45:7	fail 25:16	<b>force</b> 44:12	48:2 49:22
elements 47:23	examination	<b>failed</b> 7:12	forgive 32:5	give 11:11 31:5
employee 24:10	21:4	<b>failing</b> 34:15	<b>forgot</b> 33:23	31:12 36:5
enable 20:3	example 8:6	<b>failure</b> 15:14,17	48:8	43:1 44:20,22
enabling 3:20	examples 35:22	18:18 19:8,15	<b>form</b> 7:2 15:10	45:2
enact 35:9	exceedingly	48:4	formal 36:7	given 3:23 4:24
<b>enacted</b> 4:13,18	39:10	fair 11:20	formation 5:8	gives 24:16
11:14,23 27:4	exclusive 8:4	fall 28:18	forth 52:3	26:20 40:10
27:12	9:21 20:8 23:7	<b>far</b> 4:5 13:23	fortiori 13:7	<b>go</b> 9:17 10:1,2,4
enactment 3:11	40:15,22 41:5	43:16	<b>forum</b> 4:12 5:9	10:4,10 30:23
3:15 24:1	41:8 47:17	fashion 44:17	5:13 6:15 9:20	33:5 41:10
encompassed	exclusivity	Federal 3:10,12	9:21 10:19	44:3 47:8,9
49:18	32:13	6:11 15:8	17:25 22:14	goes 16:16 29:15
encompassing	Excuse 30:13	16:10 17:21	23:15 27:8	going 5:24 16:6
19:9	exercise 25:6,23	27:19 40:5,12	40:18	20:5 21:6,17
enforceable	26:13 27:20	51:25 52:9	forums 4:7	29:20 31:4
38:19	42:8	feel 33:8	<b>found</b> 3:14	good 12:18
enter 36:7	exist 16:23 36:1	<b>fees</b> 36:1,4 39:20	<b>four</b> 48:16	18:25
<b>entire</b> 6:16 9:3	existed 11:18	39:22	framework 4:1	gotten 12:11
entitled 34:6	13:16	<b>Fifth</b> 17:11,15	4:4	<b>govern</b> 18:13
entitlement 13:5	existence 10:16	17:16,18,23	free 21:10	Government
42:17,19,21	10:16	22:7 26:23,24 43:6 46:4 49:9	friend 28:22	5:16 9:25
enunciated 4:5	existing 17:13		front 8:12,14	10:20,21 21:9
Equal 35:25	18:1 22:17	<b>figure</b> 29:15	9:14 28:20	21:16 25:11
39:17	exists 15:12	31:5,10 <b>file</b> 23:22 48:5	45:4	28:11 32:22
erroneous 9:5	expanded 22:12	filed 25:11	full 4:15 10:18	34:5,5 37:5
12:16 25:12	expanding	filing 23:14	28:20 29:6,8	42:10 51:1
50:10	17:13	fills 41:23	29:25 45:4	Government's
erroneously	expected 51:9	final 23:23	fully 40:16	14:22 51:4,9
50:8	expedient 23:14	46:15	fundamental	grace 17:3 32:4
error 24:9 26:6	expedited 6:1	finally 18:5	20:11	32:8 38:13
46:24	explained 28:22	find 19:18 29:2	further 14:1	42:3
errors 21:3	expressly 3:16	41:21	21:10 30:18,21	grant 17:24 20:2
especially 5:9	3:19	fine 45:25	48:12	41:19
29:11 49:6	extend 22:10	first 6:2 24:7	G	granted 7:3 12:7
<b>ESQ</b> 1:15,17 2:3	32:5	29:18,25 30:6	$\frac{3}{g \cdot 3:1 \cdot 31:15}$	grasp 17:4
2:6,9	extended 20:7	35:21 37:20	general 1:18	greater 5:13
establish 40:11	extension 7:1	50:6,15 51:1	4:11 16:10	<b>grounds</b> 6:8
<b>established</b> 4:1	extent 18:12	five 15:3	24:19	46:23
4:6 8:2 15:9	extract 43:5	1110 13.3	<u>∠</u> ¬.1 <i>)</i>	<b>guess</b> 33:17
		<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

	İ	İ	I	i
H	14:15 16:2,19	41:1	29:1,3,5,7,8,9	J
<b>h</b> 11:6,7 12:20	17:11,20 18:7	incentive 37:2	29:17 30:1,3,4	<b>JOHN</b> 1:3
13:1,20 15:20	18:24 19:3,17	includes 4:19	30:8,15,25	JONATHAN
18:8,16 24:15	19:20,22,24	21:19	31:18 32:6	1:17 2:6 23:2
24:24 31:25	20:18,24 21:20	including 51:5	34:3,14 36:19	Jones 51:15
32:14 45:11	22:5 29:5 49:4	<b>income</b> 35:9,13	37:4,11,18	judicial 15:24
50:7	50:4 51:14	inconvenienced	43:16 45:5,8	26:11 38:22
half 26:24	52:15	6:3	46:9,11,17,21	jurisdiction
hand 12:15	horrendous	inconvenient	46:23 47:10,23	3:13,15,17,19
handle 45:4	49:5	47:15,16	48:10 49:10,11	3:23 4:2,3,7,16
happened 11:17	<b>Horton</b> 7:21,22	independent	49:12,14,20,24	6:10 7:1,2,5,6
44:17	11:17 52:12	52:6	50:8,17,19,24	8:5 10:14 12:3
happening	<b>House</b> 11:5 12:1	indicates 16:8	51:5,12	13:13,16 14:13
33:24	49:3	individual 10:5	interestingly	15:6,7,12 16:3
happens 25:8	Houston 1:15	22:1	11:6	17:1,5,14,24
34:14	hundred 49:7	individuals	interim 39:14	18:17 20:1,3,4
<b>hard</b> 44:10	hypothetical	39:11 44:21	Internal 3:13	20:6 22:10,13
<b>hardship</b> 5:9 6:3	24:19	inference 40:11	22:15 49:25	22:18,18 23:7
34:24 35:2	т	48:23	50:2	23:19 24:4,16
hardships 4:15	<u>I</u>	initial 21:19	interpret 43:8	24:19,20 26:16
harmonized	idea 28:17 32:1	28:23 31:13	interpretation	27:6,7,9,20
6:24	39:25	instance 18:2	6:22	40:22,23 41:6
hear 3:3 11:2	identical 32:21	32:18	intricacies 50:2	41:8,14,17,18
16:4	identically	instances 3:17	<b>invest</b> 34:11	41:19 42:13,14
<b>heard</b> 33:7	32:23	integrated 26:25	35:4,7 39:14	48:6,24 50:6
<b>hearing</b> 40:2,6	identified 46:4	43:5	investments	51:17
held 23:6 26:25	illegal 50:19	<b>intend</b> 3:18 16:8	29:21 37:4	<b>Justice</b> 1:18 3:3
42:19	illegally 50:9	intended 10:13	involve 26:13	3:8 4:8,23 5:18
<b>help</b> 8:19	Imagine 32:20	22:9 40:11	involved 22:2	7:7,15 8:9,17
<b>high</b> 34:10,23	immediate 8:15	intends 40:15	25:23 44:11	8:23 9:4,8,10
39:10 45:3	immediately	<b>intent</b> 5:7 13:12	involves 25:6	9:12,17,24
Hinck 1:3 3:4	8:16	42:2	48:2 49:24	10:7 11:1,11
history 6:16	immunity 23:12	intentional	IRS 7:12 20:20	11:20 12:8
11:5,9,10,25	impediment 7:25	32:17	21:2 24:10,22	13:3,18,23
19:23 23:9,25	implemented	interest 3:13 4:9	29:15 30:5,8	14:4,7,12,17
26:10 40:2	22:12	4:11 5:16 7:10	30:18,21 31:16	15:13,22 16:14
48:22	implicit 13:21	7:13,17 9:5	33:23 34:14	16:23 17:15,18
<b>hold</b> 14:24 42:7	implied 15:11	10:21 11:13	41:15 42:15	18:4,8,25
holding 52:13	18:3	12:15 14:11	43:13 46:23	19:12,19,21
<b>Homes</b> 7:22	impliedly 18:9	15:4,15,18	50:8	20:10,14,20
11:18 52:13	impose 32:11	18:18 19:8	issue 24:1 49:1	21:18,22 22:21
Honor 4:11 5:6	imposed 25:5,21	20:17,23 21:19	49:23 51:17	22:24 23:4,25
5:22 7:12,18	39:22 40:17	22:3 23:8,10	issues 6:1 27:21 48:10	24:15,18,21,24
8:19 9:1,13,16	43:2	23:15,18,20,24 24:9 26:15		25:8,14,19,24
9:23 10:3,12	imposes 32:16	27:16,20,23	issuing 48:7 It'd 32:12	26:10,14 27:3
11:4,24 12:21	imposes 52.10	28:4,7,8,11,23	11 U 32.12	27:22 28:2,14
13:11 14:6,9	koo	20.4,7,0,11,23		28:21 29:10,14
			l	

29:18,23 30:13	27:4 42:4	49:16 50:10	31:14 32:1,9	mixed 33:25
31:1,9,12,22	47:19	limited 5:5	32:15 33:10,15	Monday 1:9
32:7,12,18	large 34:10 37:3	42:24,25 44:16	34:2,9,22 35:3	money 20:22
33:12,16 34:8	largely 11:4	line 38:25 39:4	35:6,21,24	28:13 32:6
34:13 35:1,5,8	larger 5:11,19	39:16	36:14,22 37:6	34:3,4,5,9,11
35:11,12,23,25	6:2,13 10:24	linkage 47:21	37:12,17,22	35:3,4 36:12
36:4,8,15,16	14:2	litigation 4:4	38:4,12,19,22	36:13 39:14
36:24 37:1,7,8	Laughter 8:20	logic 5:24	39:1,6,10,15	42:15
37:14,15,19,24	8:25 19:2	logical 10:23	39:21 40:24	months 31:15,15
38:6,7,15,20	35:10 39:5	long 33:8 51:19	41:24 42:9,17	31:16,17
38:25 39:2,3,7	46:2	52:1	43:17 44:1,14	moves 48:5
39:13,17,19	law 14:24 16:11	long-established	45:1,9,25 46:3	
40:20,25 41:12	16:20 17:2	15:5,11	46:18 47:3,15	N
41:24 42:5,12	18:14 26:5,6	long-standing	48:1,15 49:23	<b>N</b> 2:1,1 3:1
43:9,17,19	26:19 27:12	7:4	material 46:24	name 31:10
44:2,19 45:1,7	32:19,24 37:25	look 6:23 16:10	materials 8:10	natural 25:20
45:10 46:1,14	43:21 45:13,18	16:11,14 24:7	8:22 12:10	26:8
47:1,6,21 48:1	52:10	24:14 26:9	matter 1:11 17:3	nature 3:22
48:14 49:2,22	laws 45:22	27:11 40:1	20:7 25:18	24:14
52:16	lawsuit 34:17,18	45:19,23	32:4 38:12	necessarily 31:6
justiciable 16:4	legal 42:17,18	looking 9:9	41:25 42:1,3	necessary 47:16
17:7	42:21 43:14,24	30:18,21 31:3	45:20,21 52:19	necessity 20:1
	legally 34:6	41:16 45:25	matters 3:24	need 5:13 27:11
K	legislation 11:14	lot 28:24	maximum 21:15	46:20
keep 33:17,18	48:24	lower 16:24 26:6	51:10	net 4:19 5:2,5
34:2 35:19	legislative 11:5	40:8	may-abate 19:5	10:5 12:6,24
keeping 33:20	11:9,10,25	ludicrous 51:8	mean 8:18 15:20	12:25 23:21
Kennedy 9:4	26:10 40:2		16:24 31:2	28:2,18 32:11
11:20 23:25	48:22	M	32:6,19 47:7	34:10,10,23
24:15,18,22	level 21:4,8,9,14	mailing 23:23	meaning 6:17	36:2 37:23
25:14,19 26:10	51:2	<b>major</b> 22:17	45:14	39:3,11,13
37:1 45:7	liability 10:18	majority 46:7	means 6:1 43:24	40:8 44:22
kept 44:8	21:7,11,15,16	<b>making</b> 36:18	meet 23:20	45:3
kind 27:23	22:14 28:8,20	47:7	37:23	never 42:13
kinds 48:9	29:8,11,20	mandated 3:22	merely 7:2	new 6:14 14:7
knew 30:1 33:23	31:21 41:11	mandatory	17:13	15:9 19:11
know 10:20 29:2	45:4 46:8,10	18:10,12 24:12	met 12:24,25	normal 7:14
29:10,16,19,24	46:13 47:5,25	37:16	million 4:20,20	43:12
31:1,20 35:8	50:9,13,14	<b>March</b> 40:3,6	10:6 12:6,6	normally 15:12
36:4 38:11	51:3,4,11	<b>Marcus</b> 1:17 2:6	16:18 28:3,4	note 6:6 12:4
44:5,13,23,25	<b>limit</b> 3:19 10:9	23:1,2,4 24:6	39:3,14	19:4 49:6,10
45:1	10:11,13 14:1	24:17,21 25:2	mind 34:2 51:13	50:4,23 51:24
	limitation 4:19	25:10,18 26:4	ministerial	<b>notice</b> 21:6,10
<u>L</u>	5:14 32:11	26:22 27:11	24:11 48:4	30:5,20 31:2,3
L 1:17 2:6 23:2	limitations	28:1,5,16 29:4	minutes 48:16	31:13 33:23
language 23:9	23:21 28:19	29:13,18 30:2	mishandling	48:6,8
23:17 24:7,11	36:2 37:23	30:17 31:6,11	49:24	notified 30:15
24:12 25:4				
	ı ————————————————————————————————————		ı ————————————————————————————————————	I

	<u> </u>		İ	<u> </u>
30:17	page 2:2 9:9,10	performing	positions 28:19	Procedure
<b>notifies</b> 30:8,18	11:10 40:3	46:24	possibly 38:9	18:13
number 9:9	paid 20:21 28:10	period 5:15	post 51:11	procedures 6:5
	29:24,25 42:15	20:25 22:1	postpayment	<b>proceed</b> 5:17,19
<u> </u>	50:17	30:7,11,11	15:7	5:20 10:22
O 2:1 3:1	<b>Pardon</b> 17:17	31:19	potential 5:10	proceeding
objection 26:21	part 12:13 23:21	permissive 19:6	poverty 38:25	21:25 47:2,2,4
occurred 21:3	47:1	37:15	39:4	47:4,13
occurs 21:1	particular 4:9	permits 23:16	<b>power</b> 37:10	proceedings
odd 4:24	20:11 27:24	permitting	43:14	21:5,13
<b>Oh</b> 10:7 37:14	28:24	36:19	precedent 23:16	<b>process</b> 51:18,21
okay 33:16 34:1	partnership	<b>person</b> 33:1,13	precedents	processing 45:6
<b>old</b> 6:4	21:4,7,8,9,14	33:14,17,18,20	16:11	48:3 49:25
once 7:12 16:5	29:11,14 51:2	33:21 35:5	precise 33:4	profit 37:4
43:19	partnership-r	37:11,20,25	precisely 30:20	progressive 35:9
<b>open</b> 35:19	49:6	38:1	preexisting 3:15	35:13
45:12	<b>passed</b> 37:25	<b>petition</b> 9:3 40:4	13:13	proper 43:8
<b>opened</b> 44:16,18	<b>passes</b> 32:24	Petitioner 1:16	preferred 27:8	proposed 51:10
44:21	pattern 4:6 5:11	Petitioners 1:4	<b>prepay</b> 20:13,14	proposing 51:2
opening 45:21	6:14 7:4 15:6	2:4,10 3:7	prepayment 4:2	protect 4:14
operating 11:2	18:1 19:25	48:19	4:12,21,22 5:9	prove 13:9
opinion 3:10	pay 4:13,15 5:12	Petitioner's	5:13,25 6:15	<b>provide</b> 5:8 15:4
opinions 4:6	6:2,5 7:4 10:15	23:12	7:1,2,5,11	provided 17:7
49:9	10:17,24 15:12	phantom 18:5	10:14,19 11:7	provides 23:19
opportunity	19:25 20:9,12	<b>piece</b> 26:24 43:6	12:3 15:6,9	24:8 50:7
28:25	22:2,3,14,18	<b>place</b> 7:9 9:25	17:13,25 20:1	provision 8:2
oral 1:11 2:2,5	25:9 28:20,25	14:14 23:17	20:6 22:14,18	19:5,6 24:8
3:6 23:2	31:2 41:14,15	29:25 39:17	51:16,21	27:13 30:12
<b>order</b> 4:14 20:3	45:4 50:24	<b>plan</b> 22:19	presupposes	31:16 36:9
51:12	51:11,16,19,23	<b>please</b> 3:9 23:5	25:5	38:4 39:2,16
originally 4:12	<b>paying</b> 20:15	<b>point</b> 4:24 30:19	pretty 18:25	39:18,21,23,23
34:6	37:2,4	30:22 42:18	prevail 46:20	41:21
outcome 49:8	payment 7:13	43:10 49:22	prevails 21:16	provisions 6:11
outside 21:15	11:22 30:22	51:5	prevented 30:3	7:14 12:7 15:1
49:16	pays 29:7	<b>points</b> 48:21	previously 13:2	15:2 19:7
overcharged	pay-and-sue 4:1	<b>policy</b> 47:18	13:16 50:21	24:12 25:1,9
49:12	peculiarly 17:8	<b>poor</b> 33:1,6,13	principles 23:11	36:1 41:3,5
overlap 6:20	penalties 52:5	33:17,20 35:5	<b>prior</b> 3:15 7:16	purpose 6:18
overvaluation	penalty 28:12	36:5,21 37:1	14:2 15:22	purposes 39:19
52:6	49:12,13 52:6	37:25 38:16,17	22:2 26:15	<b>pursue</b> 46:22
owe 20:20,23	pendency 21:13	39:8	27:10 42:23	pursued 7:20
29:2 30:20	<b>people</b> 5:1 9:19	<b>portion</b> 49:13	privilege 44:11	<b>put</b> 6:3 26:9
31:7,17	10:10 33:5,6	<b>position</b> 6:3 24:5	probably 32:19	30:22
owes 32:23	36:5,5,11,13	24:6 25:2	problem 30:5	<b>p.m</b> 1:13 3:2
<b>owing</b> 31:4	37:3 42:6 44:7	29:19 51:4	33:2,9 41:19	52:18
	performance	positioned 35:7	49:5	
P	24:10	45:3	problems 48:3	Q
<b>P</b> 3:1			<b>_</b>	
	1	1	1	1

qualified 7:24	4:10,24 5:6,22	relief 10:14,22	respects 27:7	32:1,15 37:6
quality 51:1	7:11,18 8:13	15:10 17:1,8	responded	38:12,19,22
question 13:14	8:18,21 9:1,7	17:25 32:5	42:20	39:21 44:1,14
14:20 18:10,21	9:13,23 10:3	42:7 46:19	Respondent	rights 12:7
20:6,11 32:7	10:12 11:4,15	relieved 21:21	1:19 2:7 23:3	51:21
34:20 38:20	11:24 12:21	<b>rely</b> 15:15,19	response 7:16	<b>ripen</b> 46:10
46:12	13:11,22,25	remaining 22:22	responsibility	rise 40:10 43:1
questions 22:22	14:6,9,15,21	48:17	31:20	ROBERTS 3:3
48:2,12 50:1	15:17 16:2,19	remains 36:10	rest 12:3	4:8 5:18 7:7,15
quite 22:7 29:23	17:10,17,20	remedies 40:12	restricted 5:1	9:8 13:3 15:13
quote 22:9	18:4,7,23 19:3	remedy 4:22	12:1,2	15:22 16:14
	19:17,20,22	5:25 6:12,14	restricting	20:10,14,20
R	20:13,18,24	7:12 8:8 9:19	10:21	21:18,22 22:24
<b>R</b> 3:1	21:20,24 22:25	10:15,25 14:2	restriction 12:5	26:14 27:3,22
raise 20:6	48:16,18,20	20:9 23:13	restrictions 5:5	28:2,14,21
raised 25:13	49:3 50:3	26:11 30:10,10	23:13 27:2	41:12 42:5,12
rate 49:12	redeterminati	32:16 38:21,23	32:16 40:17	46:14 47:1,6
rational 33:11	46:7	38:23 40:15,15	41:1 43:2	48:14 52:16
33:12 34:22	reference 3:20	40:17 42:24,25	rests 22:6	routinely 16:25
rationale 33:19	3:21 9:15 20:2	43:1,3 51:20	<b>result</b> 23:16	<b>rule</b> 36:7 40:14
39:8 44:5,24	referenced	51:21,23	41:1	40:16
read 9:25 19:9	27:17	Remember 33:3	results 51:6	ruling 20:4
25:20 40:7	referred 12:1	removes 26:20	return 30:6,19	running 29:17
42:25 43:5,13	39:18	repeal 3:11 6:9	30:21 45:6	34:4
reading 9:6	refers 40:6	13:12,21 15:11	Revenue 3:13	runs 29:7 50:10
14:14 26:8	reflect 20:24	18:3,9	22:15 49:25	
reads 32:17,17	reflected 11:17	repeals 3:17	50:2	S
really 8:11	<b>refund</b> 3:12 4:16	report 11:5 12:1	reverse 27:14	S 2:1 3:1
12:17 20:16	7:14,14,24 8:1	49:4	review 14:11,22	sat 48:8
22:3,6,11 38:7	9:5 12:16 13:1	reproduced	15:24 16:7	saying 5:24 13:4
50:12	14:19 15:7,11	8:10	19:8,10,10	13:5,18 16:15
reason 22:16	15:12 25:12	requested 21:1	23:10,15,18	21:18 27:8
33:18,19,24	27:1,15,17,18	requirements	25:23 41:20,22	29:24 35:16
35:19 44:10,13	41:15 42:16,21	12:24,25	42:1,7 43:23	36:7 37:25
44:20,23,24	43:7 46:5,19	requires 24:13	47:17	38:7,8,10
47:18	46:20 47:9	requiring 36:20	reviewed 25:6	40:22 42:20
reasoning 5:23	49:13,15,17	reserve 22:22	52:1,7	44:25
26:23	50:22 52:8	resolve 22:15	reviewing 6:20	says 9:4 12:12
reasons 42:10	refusing 43:15	resolving 6:1	52:10	12:16 14:12,19
rebuttal 2:8	43:15	respect 4:8,10	rich 33:5,14,18	16:6 18:16,19
22:23 48:18	<b>regard</b> 16:5 20:5	9:5 11:19	33:20 36:5,20	18:20 19:8
receives 30:5	<b>regime</b> 47:20	12:16,19 21:1	37:11,20 38:1	22:7 27:6 31:3
recognized	reject 42:23	26:12,22 32:21	38:16,18 39:8	32:24 38:3
27:10	relate 12:9	36:11,13,20,21	<b>right</b> 9:12 11:21	41:16
recover 25:12	relative 12:6	37:11,22 44:22	14:17 15:19	<b>Scalia</b> 8:9,17,23
Redding 1:15	relatively 50:3	respectfully	17:23 20:17	9:12 12:8
2:3,9 3:5,6,8	relevant 12:3	12:22	28:14,16 30:2	13:18,23 18:4
	•	•		•

		I	I	ı
18:8,25 19:12	45:15	23:12 27:2	structure 17:13	<b>system</b> 4:25 15:9
19:19,21 24:24	sent 21:2 51:1	40:14,16 41:1	22:17 23:9	systems 16:13
25:8,24 29:10	separate 37:9	44:24,24	<b>stuff</b> 16:16	
29:14,18,23	46:16 47:2	specifically 3:24	subject 20:16	T
30:13 35:8,11	separately 47:12	11:8	25:23 27:1	<b>T</b> 2:1,1
36:8,16 37:15	seriously 48:25	specified 27:18	30:9	take 18:19 27:9
38:7 45:10	Service 3:14	specify 41:7,7	<b>submit</b> 19:24	33:8 47:18
46:1 49:2	22:15	<b>split</b> 46:5,9	submitted 52:17	51:9
scheme 47:17	set 3:24 9:3	47:22 49:19	52:19	taken 48:25
se 14:24	23:21 47:18	splitting 49:4	subsection 6:7	talk 45:24
seconds 44:9	52:3	stake 33:6,13	9:11 11:6,7	talking 8:11
Secretary 12:12	shifting 39:23	standard 8:2,3	12:2 31:15,25	34:3 49:5
12:17 18:20,21	<b>short</b> 5:14 32:9	14:10,16,17,21	subsections	tax 3:20,21,23
19:13 24:9,13	<b>shut</b> 35:15	16:4,7,7,12,15	14:25 15:1,2,3	3:23,25 4:3,4
25:4,15 26:12	significant 46:6	16:20,21 19:10	15:20	4:21,25 5:2,8
32:3,4 36:11	<b>simple</b> 23:14	19:11 25:5,21	substantive 38:3	5:12,15,17,20
36:19 37:10,17	40:21	26:8,18,20	41:11 45:22	6:17 7:1,3,6
Secretary's	simpler 40:25	38:15 41:20,22	47:24,25 50:13	9:19 10:1,20
18:17 23:23	<b>simply</b> 3:10 9:15	42:1,7 43:12	substantively	12:2 13:24
42:8	22:8,9,9 45:11	43:20 44:2	43:14	14:10 15:6,10
<b>section</b> 3:11,16	50:10	52:3,4,9,10	subtle 17:4	16:6,17 17:8
3:16,20,22	<b>Sir</b> 9:7	standards 43:10	<b>sudden</b> 26:19	17:14,24 18:16
4:18,18 6:9	situation 21:23	44:6	41:21	20:2,3,3,7 21:7
7:22,23 8:12	29:12	standing 38:21	sue 4:14 5:12	21:23,25 22:10
8:15 9:3,14	<b>small</b> 6:15 8:7	<b>start</b> 23:17	6:2,5 7:4,10	22:13 23:7,19
12:4 14:11	14:1	46:16	10:15,18,24	27:5,5,6 28:7,8
23:9,18 24:2,8	smaller 4:14	<b>state</b> 3:19 27:12	15:12 19:15,25	28:8,9,9,20
26:25 30:12	5:12,25 10:14	statement 48:23	20:9,12,12	29:8,11,16,20
39:24 40:10	40:1	<b>States</b> 1:1,6,12	22:18 25:9	29:21,25 30:24
41:6	<b>society</b> 33:6,14	3:4 17:24	41:14,15 51:16	31:20 35:9,13
sections 19:13	<b>solely</b> 14:1 16:9	statute 3:20	51:20,23	36:2 37:2 39:2
see 6:23 12:8	Solicitor 1:17	11:23 14:7	sufficient 10:25	39:23 40:21
13:18 22:16	sorry 8:18 14:6	16:22,24 23:10	suing 20:16	41:3,4,5,8,11
26:10 40:7	17:21 39:2	23:16,18 25:16	suit 13:1	41:17 42:24,25
42:24	43:17	25:20 27:17	suits 13:23	43:2 45:4 46:8 46:8 47:9,11
seeing 6:24	sought 52:5	34:15 38:3	summarized	49:15,20 50:5
seek 42:6 46:7	<b>SOUTER</b> 9:10	43:8 49:16	22:7	50:9,13,17
seeking 46:5	31:1,9,12,22	50:9	supersedes 6:25	51:4,7,24 52:2
seen 35:14	32:7,12 38:15	statutes 6:19,24	supplemental	52:8
Selman 7:22	38:20	<b>statutory</b> 24:7 47:19	40:4	taxpayer 5:11
11:18 52:12 seminal 7:21	sovereign 23:11		supports 23:10	5:12,19,25 6:2
seminal 7:21 send 20:21	speak 5:22 speaking 10:25	stop 29:1 30:24 strange 10:9	<b>suppose</b> 21:22 32:25 33:7	6:15 8:5,7 10:5
21:11 31:2,3	special 5:24	27:23	<b>Supreme</b> 1:1,12	10:5,24 12:23
33:23	10:14,21	strength 33:4	sure 8:24 13:3	14:2,2 21:2,5
sense 10:23 11:9	specific 3:21	strictly 50:21	18:8 47:6	21:10 27:25
22:4,8 36:6	11:16 20:2	strong 32:23	surprised 32:20	28:11 29:6,7
<u> </u>	11.10 20.2	stiving 32.23	bui priscu 32.20	
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

29:13,19,20	44:10,11,12,14	16:25 17:10	wants 39:24	22:3 33:2
30:4,8,23 34:4	45:12 48:24	18:23 29:21	Washington 1:8	40:20 44:9
34:10,11 35:7	50:15	30:14 36:10,15	1:18	write 34:16
40:1 46:4,5	<b>THOMAS</b> 1:15	37:9	way 4:18 15:10	wrong 3:11 9:6
48:5 51:8,20	2:3,9 3:6 48:18	<b>unique</b> 52:13	17:16,19 21:14	14:14 26:21
52:5	thought 9:18	<b>United</b> 1:1,6,12	25:13,20 27:4	
taxpayers 4:14	11:1 15:22	3:4 17:24	28:7 29:5	X
4:19 6:13	17:16,18 19:1	University	33:22 35:12	<b>x</b> 1:2,7
10:11,15,17	24:20 28:22	51:15	43:8 44:9,11	
23:20 28:18,18	42:5	unnecessary	45:20,23,25	<u>Y</u>
32:8 34:23	three 44:9 51:6	3:22	ways 45:8	<b>Yeah</b> 34:8 37:17
37:22 38:13	time 20:6,25	unpaid 28:8	wealth 35:14	years 21:2 22:20
40:1,8,9 45:3	21:5 22:1,22	unsuccessful	44:8	52:7
46:7,8 49:18	28:9,9,13 29:8	46:22	wealthier 10:11	you-can-walk
taxpayer's	30:7 50:6 51:5	use 19:15 25:9	10:17	17:6
21:11 31:8,20	<b>times</b> 51:6	25:10 35:3,14	wealthy 35:7	\$
46:10,12 48:4	<b>total</b> 38:10	41:17,23	37:18	<b>\$1.5</b> 39:14
technical 25:18	totally 17:2	usually 25:12	<b>wedge</b> 41:18	<b>\$1.5</b> 39:14 <b>\$2</b> 4:20 10:6
technically	35:14 38:8	<b>UX</b> 1:3	Weiner 49:8	12:6 16:18
25:25	45:16 52:13		well-established	28:4 39:3
tell 21:15 30:19	traced 18:6	V	4:3 6:4	\$300 29:3
31:7,17 33:19	transfer 48:5	<b>v</b> 1:5	well-positioned	\$5,000 31:4
tells 25:16	<b>treating</b> 39:8,10	<b>value</b> 28:13	28:20	34:14,16
term 45:15	tripartite 4:25	35:15	went 15:13	\$50,000 32:23
terms 32:22	true 31:22,22	vast 46:7	17:16,19	<b>\$7</b> 4:20 12:6
50:23 51:17,23	50:3	versus 3:4 19:25	<b>We'll</b> 3:3	\$74.2012.0
test 5:2	<b>trump</b> 47:19	22:18 51:16	we're 5:24 6:7	0
<b>Tex</b> 1:15	<b>try</b> 42:6	vested 5:16	31:3 41:16	<b>06-376</b> 1:5 3:4
<b>Thank</b> 22:24	<b>trying</b> 13:12	view 10:13	we've 44:20	
23:4 48:13,14	41:17	17:11,12 26:7	whatsoever 8:8	1
52:15,16	<b>two</b> 4:7 6:19,23	32:13	wonder 35:18	<b>1</b> 8:10,16 9:9,11
<b>theory</b> 5:3 23:12	28:3 32:20	violation 14:24	Woodral 50:14	12:9,12,23
thing 8:23 35:8	36:18 37:8	18:14	<b>words</b> 30:6	13:7,9,14
42:12 45:16	41:3 45:22,23	virtually 21:14	37:10,24	15:18,19 16:5
47:22	47:22	<b>void</b> 41:23	works 28:7	18:19 19:21
<b>things</b> 37:9	<b>typically</b> 25:4,11	$\mathbf{w}$	world 24:19	24:25
think 6:16,20	32:15		worth 4:20 5:2,5	<b>1,000</b> 20:21,22
11:8 14:21		Wait 36:24 37:8	10:5 12:6,24	29:2
17:12,23 22:6	U	37:8	12:25 23:21	<b>1:00</b> 1:13 3:2
25:18,19,24,25	ultimate 51:4	waiting 49:7	28:3,18 32:11	<b>1:56</b> 52:18
26:4,22,23	ultimately 35:25	waive 36:19 want 4:25 5:19	34:10,14,23	<b>1346</b> 50:22
27:11,13,22	underlying 38:3		36:2 37:23	<b>16</b> 50:22
28:5,5,6,16,16	41:10 46:10,12	10:9 16:14,16	39:3,11,13	<b>18</b> 31:15,15,15
29:4 31:4 33:2	47:5,25	37:7,9 38:11	40:8 44:22	31:17 32:2
33:10,15 41:25	underpayment	42:15 44:4,13	45:3	<b>18-month</b> 31:19
42:1,9,10 43:4	28:10,12 30:7	44:23,25	Worthless 33:16	<b>180</b> 23:22
43:7,9,13 44:8	understand 5:23	wanted 27:14,14 42:22	<b>wouldn't</b> 9:21	<b>19</b> 40:6
		42.22		

				Page 0.
<b>1986</b> 24:22 32:2	40:10 43:4			1
32:4 44:18	48:22 49:18			
<b>1995</b> 40:3,6	50:19			
<b>1996</b> 44:17	6404(h)'s 26:25			
<b>1998</b> 31:16	6404(h)(1) 15:25			
1770 31.10	16:15,17			
2	<b>6406(h)</b> 3:16			
<b>2</b> 7:25 8:2,6,9,11	<b>6659</b> 52:7			
11:19 12:9,10	0037 32.7			
12:15,18,22	7			
13:1,5,6,8,17	<b>7442</b> 3:22			
13:19,21,22	<b>7491</b> 39:24			
14:18,19 18:5				
18:9,9,10,13	9			
18:20,22 24:24	<b>98</b> 40:3			
25:9				
<b>2007</b> 1:9				
<b>23</b> 1:9 2:7				
3				
<b>3</b> 2:4				
4				
<b>42</b> 9:10				
<b>48</b> 2:10				
5				
<b>5,000</b> 34:17,19				
6				
<b>6330(d)</b> 41:6				
<b>6404</b> 6:9 8:13				
12:4,7 14:14				
15:1,2,3,21				
19:9,9 49:11				
6404(a) 19:5				
50:5,16				
<b>6404(d)</b> 19:4				
6404(e)(1) 6:7				
7:21,22 23:9				
24:8 49:21				
50:4				
<b>6404(e)(2)</b> 7:23				
<b>6404(h)</b> 3:11,16				
3:21 4:18 6:6,8				
7:9 8:4 12:22				
13:6,13 20:5				
23:18 26:15,19				
		1	1	1