1	IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES
2	x
3	JOSE ANTONIO LOPEZ, :
4	Petitioner, :
5	v. : No. 05-547
6	ALBERTO R. GONZALES, :
7	ATTORNEY GENERAL; :
8	and :
9	REYMUNDO TOLEDO-FLORES, :
10	Petitioner, :
11	v. : No. 05-7664
12	UNITED STATES. :
13	x
14	Washington, D.C.
15	Tuesday, October 3, 2006
16	
17	The above-entitled matter came on for oral
18	argument before the Supreme Court of the United States
19	at 10:03 a.m.
20	APPEARANCES:
21	ROBERT A. LONG, JR., ESQ., Washington, D.C.; on behalf of
22	Petitioner Lopez.
23	TIMOTHY CROOKS, ESQ., Supervisory Assistant Federal Public
24	Defender, Houston, Texas; on behalf of Petitioner
25	Toledo-Flores.

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1	PROCEEDINGS
2	[10:03 a.m.]
3	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear argument
4	first this morning in Lopez versus Gonzales and
5	Toledo-Flores versus United States.
6	Mr. Long.
7	ORAL ARGUMENT OF ROBERT A. LONG, JR.
8	ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER LOPEZ
9	MR. LONG: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it please
10	the Court:
11	A drug-trafficking crime is defined in 18 U.S.
12	Code Section 924(c) as any felony punishable under the
13	Controlled Substances Act or two other Federal statutes.
14	"Punishable" is a key term. If that word is omitted, the
15	remaining phrase, "any felony under the Controlled
16	Substances Act," clearly refers to felony violations of
17	the Controlled Substances Act. The parties agree that
18	"punishable" means "subject to criminal sanctions." So, a
19	"drug-trafficking crime," under 924(c), is conduct that is
20	subject to being punished under the Controlled Substances
21	Act.
22	State felonies are not, themselves, punishable
23	under the Controlled Substances Act. It is not a Federal
24	crime to violate State law. The defendant's conduct may
25	be punishable under both Federal and State law, but a

- 1 State felony is not a felony punishable under the
- 2 Controlled Substances Act.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, do you agree that if
- 4 there were a State conviction for an offense that would
- 5 have been punishable under the Federal law, their both
- 6 being felonies, that enhancement can apply, in that
- 7 instance, and that that does meet the definition?
- 8 MR. LONG: Yes, Justice Kennedy. Our position
- 9 is, if the conduct would violate a felony provision of the
- 10 Controlled Substances Act or one of the other two Federal
- 11 statutes, it then is a drug-trafficking crime under 18
- 12 U.S. Code Section 924(c), and, therefore, it is an
- 13 aggravated felony.
- 14 But there are three additional textual
- 15 indications, in addition to simply the "felony punishable"
- 16 language, that misdemeanor offenses under the Controlled
- 17 Substances Act are not drug-trafficking crimes under
- 18 Section 924(c). The first one is, there are other
- 19 provisions of Section 924 -- (e), (g), and (k) -- where
- 20 Congress actually used very similar language. It referred
- 21 to conduct punishable under the Controlled Substances Act
- 22 or the two other statutes, or offenses under the
- 23 Controlled Substances Act or the two other Federal
- 24 statutes. But then, it added an express reference to
- 25 State offenses, so --

1	JUSTICE SCALIA: Where
2	MR. LONG: the implication is that when
3	Congress meant to include State offenses, it said so.
4	JUSTICE SCALIA: Where are those sections?
5	MR. LONG: The you can find them; they're in
6	the appendix to Lopez's blue brief, Justice Scalia
7	JUSTICE SCALIA: Okay.
8	MR. LONG: and the provisions on (e), (g),
9	and (k) 924 begins on page 3A of the appendix, and (e)
10	begins on 5A, and you can pick up (g) is on 6A, (k) is
11	on 7A.
12	JUSTICE SCALIA: What are the sections (b)?
13	MR. LONG: They're subsections (e), (g), and
14	(k).
15	JUSTICE SCALIA: All right.
16	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, that doesn't carry
17	too much weight, though, because the provision that I'm
18	looking at (g)(3), "violates any State law relating to any
19	controlled substance," can be broader than what's
20	punishable under the Federal Controlled Substances
21	MR. LONG: It
22	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Act.
23	MR. LONG: It is a bit broader, Mr. Chief
24	Justice, but if you look at all of these provisions, the
25	implication is clearly that Congress was referring to

- 1 State law when it meant to include State law. I mean, the
- 2 -- if you looked at (e), for example, there it's a
- 3 parallel construction; it's not broader. I think perhaps
- 4 the government would say, "Well, we're talking about
- 5 offenses." That's a little different from a felony, but
- 6 "offenses" is actually a broader term.
- 7 I'll mention an additional statute, which was
- 8 not in the appendix -- 18 U.S. Code Section 3559(c)(2)(H).
- 9 This provision -- it's a similar provision; it defines a
- 10 "serious drug offense" as an offense that is punishable
- 11 under the specific sections of the Controlled Substances
- 12 Act, or an offense under State law that, had the offense
- 13 been prosecuted in a court of the United States, would
- 14 have been punishable under the CSA.
- 15 An additional textual indication is, it's agreed
- 16 -- and this Court has already said, in Gonzales against
- 17 the United States, that a drug-trafficking crime under
- 18 924(c), under the criminal statute, must be a Federal
- 19 crime. 924(c)(1)(A) refers to a crime that may be
- 20 prosecuted in a court of the United States, and that
- 21 clearly refers to a Federal crime. The definition of
- 22 drug-trafficking crime, by its term, says it is for
- 23 purposes of 924(c), so there is no reason why Congress
- 24 would have wanted to include State felonies in a
- 25 definition that applies to a Federal criminal provision

- 1 that all concede applies only to Federal predicate
- 2 offenses. And --
- JUSTICE ALITO: In --
- 4 MR. LONG: -- the Government's interpretation
- 5 would significantly broaden Section 924(c) to include
- 6 Federal misdemeanors.
- 7 JUSTICE ALITO: In 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(43)(B),
- 8 what, in your view, does the first phrase, "illicit
- 9 trafficking in a controlled substance," add to the
- 10 reference to a drug-trafficking crime --
- 11 MR. LONG: Justice --
- 12 JUSTICE ALITO: -- as defined by 924(c)?
- MR. LONG: Justice Alito, in our view, "illicit
- 14 trafficking" means any offense that has a trafficking
- 15 element -- that is, distribution, possession with intent
- 16 to distribute, manufacture --
- JUSTICE ALITO: But are there any trafficking
- 18 offenses that would not fall within 924(c) if you define a
- 19 "trafficking offense" that way?
- MR. LONG: Yes. They're -- most offenses under
- 21 the Controlled Substances Act are trafficking offenses.
- 22 There are a few that are simple possession. There is a
- 23 date-rape drug that I will not try to pronounce, but it's
- 24 listed in 21 U.S.C. Section --
- 25 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, no, there --

1 MR. LONG: -- 844. 2 JUSTICE ALITO: -- are possessory -- there are 3 "mere possession" offenses that are outlawed by 924(c), but is it not the case that any -- if you interpret 4 5 "trafficking" to mean trafficking in the way the word 6 would be used in ordinary speech -- that any State 7 trafficking offense you can think of would have a 8 corresponding felony violation under the Controlled Substances Act, so that if you read the statute that way, 9 the initial phrase is superfluous? 10 11 MR. LONG: I believe the Government has a 12 footnote in their brief where they suggest there are some 13 State trafficking offenses that actually do not have a 14 parallel in Federal law. Soliciting, I think, may be one 15 of them. So, I think there are, in fact, some. And our 16 position, of course, is that by adding illicit trafficking 17 -- any trafficking offense, State or Federal, whether or 18 not it is punishable under the Controlled Substances Act, 19 is an aggravated felony. 20 JUSTICE ALITO: Let me ask the same question a different way. If -- since 924(c) includes some "mere 21 possession" offenses, and illicit trafficking in a 22 23 controlled substance includes all violations of 924(c), 24 doesn't that show that the way Congress used "illicit

trafficking in a controlled substance" is not in the sense

25

- 1 in which the term is used in ordinary speech, but's much
- 2 broader, so that it can include "mere possession"
- 3 offenses?
- 4 MR. LONG: The -- Justice Alito, there is an
- 5 argument -- it's developed in the brief of the American
- 6 Bar Association -- that, because illicit trafficking is
- 7 the general category, that all the aggravated felonies in
- 8 this category should have a trafficking component; and,
- 9 therefore, the felonies punishable under the Controlled
- 10 Substances Act that are "simple possession" offenses
- 11 should not, in fact, be included. That is not an argument
- 12 that we have pressed in our brief. We read the phrase to
- 13 say "illicit trafficking, including any felony punishable
- 14 under the Controlled Substances Act." So, I would agree
- 15 with you, to the extent that if it is a felony punishable
- 16 under the Controlled Substances Act, Congress has said, by
- 17 definition, that it is included in the category of illicit
- 18 trafficking.
- 19 JUSTICE BREYER: But that's ambiguous. That's
- 20 perfectly ambiguous. Because, the case of your client, it
- 21 is a felony, and it is punishable under the Controlled
- 22 Substances Act.
- MR. LONG: Well, Justice Breyer, it is a
- 24 misdemeanor under --
- JUSTICE BREYER: No, that's --

1 MR. LONG: -- the Controlled --2 JUSTICE BREYER: -- right. But it is a felony 3 under South Dakota law. And what the statute says -- and 4 that's the Government's argument -- they say "any felony 5 punishable under the Controlled Substances Act." They don't mean, necessarily, any felony punishable as a felony 6 7 under the Controlled Substances Act. MR. LONG: Well --8 JUSTICE BREYER: It might mean anything that is 9 10 a --MR. LONG: But --11 12 JUSTICE BREYER: -- felony, and --13 MR. LONG: But --14 JUSTICE BREYER: -- it is also punishable; in which case, you lose. But, in the first case, you win. 15 MR. LONG: But, you know --16 17 JUSTICE BREYER: So, what am I supposed to look 18 to, to decide which is --MR. LONG: Well, you could look to the case of 19 20 Jerome against United States, which is -- which was a 21 unanimous decision of this Court -- in which the Court held that the -- just the phrase "any felony" --22 23 JUSTICE BREYER: Uh-huh. 24 MR. LONG: -- in the Federal bankruptcy statute 25 should be interpreted to mean any Federal felony, so --

1 JUSTICE BREYER: Oh, but you don't mean that, 2 because you're prepared to concede -- at least I thought 3 you were, until your last argument -- you're prepared to 4 concede that if a person engages in a crime that is 5 punishable as a felony under South Dakota law, and it is also punishable as a felony under Federal law, under 801, 6 7 et seq, well, that counts. MR. LONG: Well, but, I mean, the Government --8 9 JUSTICE BREYER: Do you --10 MR. LONG: -- accuses us --11 JUSTICE BREYER: Do you concede that --12 MR. LONG: The --13 JUSTICE BREYER: -- or not? 14 MR. LONG: The Government accuses us of making 15 that concession --16 Justice Breyer: No, no. 17 MR. LONG: -- but we --18 JUSTICE BREYER: You --19 MR. LONG: -- really don't. 20 JUSTICE BREYER: -- you say your answer is, you 21 don't make the concession? 22 MR. LONG: We really don't. I mean, we concede 23 that if the -- I mean, 8- -- 924(c), the criminal statute, 24 says nothing about State law. It says nothing about any 25 conviction under Federal or State law. It's simply a

- 1 question of whether the conduct is punishable, capable of 2 being punished, under the Controlled Substances Act --3 JUSTICE KENNEDY: But I thought that --4 MR. LONG: -- the Federal statute. 5 JUSTICE KENNEDY: -- was the concession you made 6 in response to my --7 MR. LONG: Well --8 JUSTICE KENNEDY: -- question. 9 MR. LONG: -- yes. I -- but I just want to be 10 careful about the language in which we make --11 JUSTICE STEVENS: But you --12 MR. LONG: -- this concession --13 JUSTICE STEVENS: -- make the concession, as I 14 understand it, because it's a Federal felony, not because 15 it's a State felony --16 MR. LONG: Right. 17 JUSTICE STEVENS: -- isn't that right? Yes. 18 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Is it --
- 19 MR. LONG: Precisely.
- 20 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Is it -- if this is an
- 21 ambiguous statute, do you -- what mileage do you get from
- 22 Barrett? There is certainly an argument that what was --
- 23 Congress was trying to do was to codify that practice of
- 24 saying, "If there is analogous felony -- if there is
- 25 analogous crime under State law, that should be included."

- 1 And that made good sense.
- 2 MR. LONG: Yes. If it's ambiguous, and you look
- 3 to the legislative history, I think we get considerable
- 4 mileage from Barrett. The Congress was pretty clear that
- 5 what it was doing was codifying Barrett. The Barrett
- 6 approach, which was then followed by the BIA for more than
- 7 a decade, was that they would count State drug crimes, but
- 8 only if they were felonies under the Federal statutes,
- 9 under the Controlled Substances Act. So, I think we get
- 10 considerable mileage out of that.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: What --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: You've --
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: -- about the --
- 14 JUSTICE KENNEDY: -- answered Justice Breyer by
- 15 citing the Jerome case. After Jerome, we decided United
- 16 States vs. Gonzales, having to do with the consecutive or
- 17 concurrent sentencing terms. And it -- are those two
- 18 cases in some tension? Gonzales didn't mention Jerome.
- 19 And I noticed that none of the briefs mentioned it either.
- 20 Is there some tension in the cases? And, if so, is this a
- 21 case where, when we write an opinion, whatever the
- 22 outcome, we should talk about that? And, if that's so,
- 23 what should we say?
- MR. LONG: I don't see any tension. Gonzales
- 25 was just about consecutive versus concurrent sentences

- 1 under State versus Federal law. I mean, the Court has
- 2 applied that principle --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: But it does --
- 4 MR. LONG: For example, in Taylor --
- 5 JUSTICE KENNEDY: -- it does seem to limit the
- 6 broad statement in Jerome, without mentioning Jerome.
- 7 MR. LONG: Well, but -- I mean, with respect,
- 8 Justice Kennedy, I don't see how it limits it. And there
- 9 have been other cases -- Taylor is an example -- where the
- 10 Court adopted a single definition of "burglary" for
- 11 purposes of 924(e). That applies the Jerome principle. I
- 12 mean, it's a principle that has been applied in a number
- 13 of this Court's cases.
- 14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But has it ever been
- 15 applied in a -- to a statute that specifically says that
- 16 the term "aggravated felony" applies to an offense
- 17 described in this paragraph, whether in violation of
- 18 Federal or State law?
- 19 MR. LONG: Well --
- 20 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: That would seem to me to
- 21 be a very express legislative repudiation of the Jerome --
- MR. LONG: Well --
- 23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: -- principle.
- MR. LONG: -- when we get to that language, Mr.
- 25 Chief Justice -- and I do think it helps the analysis to

- 1 first decide, What is the definition of a "drug-
- 2 trafficking crime" under 924(c), the criminal statute?
- 3 Once you've decided that -- now, when you move back to the
- 4 INA, there is this language. The term "aggravated felony"
- 5 applies to an offense described in 101(a)(43), whether in
- 6 violation of Federal or State law, or the law of a foreign
- 7 country. Now, we think that's pretty straightforward. It
- 8 has to be an offense described. So, the simple example is
- 9 money laundering. It -- the offense described in 18 U.S.
- 10 Code Section 1956, "money laundering," is an aggravated
- 11 felony. So, a violation of State law or of foreign law
- 12 can be an aggravated felony, but only if it is the offense
- 13 described in 1956. If States or a foreign government has
- 14 a broader definition of "money laundering," that can't
- 15 count, because it's not the offense described. And when
- 16 you turn to a drug-trafficking crime, the way that offense
- is described in 101(A)(43) is -- Congress picked up, in
- 18 its entirety and without any modification, the definition
- 19 of "drug-trafficking crime" in 924(c), a felony punishable
- 20 under the Controlled Substances Act.
- So, if you agree that, in the criminal statute,
- 22 that means a felony violation of the Controlled Substances
- 23 Act, the offense described is the felonies in the
- 24 Controlled Substances Act, not the felonies in the
- 25 misdemeanors. And State -- if State law wants to call a

- 1 -- something that's a misdemeanor under Federal law a
- 2 felony, they can do that, but they can't expand the
- 3 offense described. The offense described, the way
- 4 Congress did that, is --
- 5 JUSTICE STEVENS: But are you saying it would
- 6 also include State trafficking offense, because it's
- 7 described in the word "trafficking"?
- 8 MR. LONG: Yes. I'm focusing on the definition
- 9 of "drug-trafficking crime." It -- also, there's the
- 10 illicit trafficking piece of this. And, I should add, any
- 11 State offense that is illicit trafficking is going to be
- 12 an aggravated felony. We recognize that.
- If there are no further questions, I'd like to
- 14 reserve the balance of my time.
- 15 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Long.
- Mr. Crooks, we'll hear now from you.
- 17 ORAL ARGUMENT OF TIMOTHY CROOKS
- 18 ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER TOLEDO-FLORES
- 19 MR. CROOKS: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it
- 20 please the Court:
- 21 I would first like to address the Government's
- 22 contention that Mr. Toledo-Flores's appeal is moot. His
- 23 appeal of his sentence is not moot, primarily because he
- 24 is still subject to the sentence that is the subject of
- 25 that appeal. Even though Mr. Toledo-Flores was released

- 1 from prison on April 21st of this year, and deported to
- 2 Mexico, he's still subject to the supervised-release
- 3 portion of his sentence, because supervised release is not
- 4 automatically extinguished by deportation.
- 5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But there's no
- 6 supervised release of people outside the United States.
- 7 MR. CROOKS: There's no supervision of people
- 8 outside the United States, Mr. Chief Justice, but he is
- 9 still subject to the jurisdiction of the District Court,
- 10 and still subject to the conditions of supervised release
- 11 that are not dependent upon supervision.
- 12 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, like what?
- MR. CROOKS: Well, for example, he shall not
- 14 excessively use alcohol, he shall not associate with
- 15 persons who --
- 16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: What's going to happen
- 17 to him if he does that?
- 18 MR. CROOKS: If the District Court learns about
- 19 it he could be violated -- he could be extradited back
- 20 from Mexico, and he could face up to a year more in
- 21 prison.
- 22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Has anything like that
- 23 ever happened before with people subject to supervised
- 24 release who are then deported? It would be the first
- 25 time, if the District Court did that, right?

- 1 MR. CROOKS: There have been instances in the
- 2 case law where people on supervised release have been
- 3 extradited back from foreign countries based on violations
- 4 of their supervised release. But the point is, under the
- 5 statutory scheme, Mr. Toledo-Flores is still subject to
- 6 the District Court's jurisdiction. The District Court
- 7 retains jurisdiction to modify his supervised release, to
- 8 change the conditions, or to cut the supervised release.
- 9 If the District Court learns of a violation and a
- 10 violation warrant is filed within the supervised-release
- 11 period then the supervised-release period is effectively
- 12 tolled and the District Court --
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: And that --
- MR. CROOKS: -- retains --
- 15 JUSTICE GINSBURG: -- that period has how many
- 16 months to run?
- MR. CROOKS: Until April 20th of next year, Your
- 18 Honor.
- 19 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Do you -- you said you rely
- 20 primarily on that argument -- do you have another
- 21 argument?
- MR. CROOKS: Yes, we do, Your Honor. After
- 23 April 20th, of course, in accordance with this Court's
- 24 decisions in Spencer v. Kemna and Lane v. Williams, the
- 25 Court needs to look for a collateral consequence of the

- 1 then-expired sentence. And, in this case, we point to the
- 2 possibility that a retrospective reduction in the term of
- 3 imprisonment -- which, of course, will not give excess
- 4 prison time back to Mr. Toledo-Flores -- but even to
- 5 reduce the number of the sentence, on paper, could be a
- 6 favorable factor for him to get a waiver of
- 7 inadmissibility, should he ever want to get a nonimmigrant
- 8 visa in the future to come visit his U.S.-citizen
- 9 children.
- 10 JUSTICE SCALIA: We have a case involving
- 11 standing which says that -- you know, the doctrine of
- 12 standing is more than a -- an exercise in the -- in the
- 13 conceivable. And this seems to me an exercise in the
- 14 conceivable. Nobody thinks your client is really, you
- 15 know, abstaining from tequila down in Mexico because he's
- 16 on supervised release in the United States, or is going --
- 17 is going to apply -- having been deported from the country
- 18 for criminal offenses, is going to apply to come back in
- 19 the -- these are ingenious exercises in the conceivable.
- 20 This is just not the real world.
- MR. CROOKS: Well, my answer to that, Justice
- 22 Scalia, is that this Court has never said that an appeal
- 23 of a sentence may become moot before that sentence is
- 24 expired. And in cases like Lane v. Williams and Spencer
- 25 v. Kemna, the sentences were completely expired, and,

- 1 therefore, the Court had to look for collateral
- 2 consequences of the now-expired sentence. Here, in
- 3 consequence -- in contrast, Mr. Toledo-Flores is still
- 4 under the sentence, which is a direct consequence --
- 5 JUSTICE SCALIA: That depends on whether you
- 6 consider the sentence to be effectively expired once he
- 7 leaves the country, if the sentence is one of supervised
- 8 release, which is impossible once he leaves the country.
- 9 Supervision being impossible, supervised release is not a
- 10 realistic consequence of the prior conviction.
- 11 MR. CROOKS: But that argument could be made
- 12 with respect to a person who is in the United States, who
- is subject to a term of probation where the only condition
- 14 is that he not further violate the law. In that --
- 15 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, no, because --
- MR. CROOKS: -- instance --
- 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: -- in that -- in that
- instance, action can be taken against him if he does
- 19 further violate the law under the terms of probation. The
- 20 point is that the jurisdiction of the probation office or
- 21 the District Court doesn't extend to Mexico.
- MR. CROOKS: Well, that's true. But if we're
- 23 talking about future violations of the law, it is very
- 24 often the case that persons who are deported to Mexico do
- 25 come back, and do have their supervised release --

1	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well
2	MR. CROOKS: revoked.
3	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: you don't want to say
4	that your case is not moot because your client is going to
5	violate the law again in the future.
6	MR. CROOKS: No, not at all, Your Honor, but I'm
7	saying that, in the respect that you just talked about for
8	the U.S. citizen, it's not any different, that the court
9	retains jurisdiction to violate the supervised release,
10	and to revoke it, and then to send him back to prison.
11	JUSTICE SOUTER: No, but it is different, in the
12	respect that he would first have to violate the law by
13	entering the United States.
14	MR. CROOKS: That is true. But in most cases,
15	that is the only violation of supervised release for which
16	they are later revoked. And, in that respect, it would be
17	no different from a person who violates his probation by
18	driving while intoxicated or committing some other legal
19	violation.
20	JUSTICE BREYER: Do you work in
21	JUSTICE GINSBURG: On
22	JUSTICE BREYER: this area?
23	JUSTICE GINSBURG: On collateral consequences,
24	do you have what is your best authority to say that in
25	it would keep this case from being moot?

1	MR. CROOKS: We cited, in our reply brief at
2	page 4, Your Honor, the Hamdi case, United States v.
3	Hamdi, from the Second Circuit, where the Second Circuit
4	found that the possibility of reducing the term of
5	imprisonment, even retrospectively, could have an impact
6	on the ability to get a waiver of inadmissibility in
7	JUSTICE GINSBURG: Because
8	MR. CROOKS: the future.
9	JUSTICE GINSBURG: Because the length of the
10	sentence counts heavily in the attorney general's
11	assessment, is that
12	MR. CROOKS: That's correct, Your Honor. In
13	Hamdi, they pointed out that the length of the sentence
14	goes to two of the three factors that are evaluated by
15	Immigration officials under a decision called Matter of
16	Heronka that are used in evaluating whether a person
17	should be granted a waiver of inadmissibility in the
18	discretion of the attorney general
19	JUSTICE SCALIA: Do you think there's a
20	realistic possibility that this person is going to be
21	readmitted? A realistic possibility?
22	MR. CROOKS: I do not know, Your Honor. He's
23	JUSTICE SCALIA: Oh.
24	MR. CROOKS: got U.S. citizen
25	JUSTICE SCALIA: Do you think there's a

- 1 realistic possibility he's going to try to get readmitted,
- 2 so that he can be subjected to really enforced supervised
- 3 release?
- 4 MR. CROOKS: Well, I think that there is a
- 5 possibility that he -- he could qualify for a nonimmigrant
- 6 visa at some point --
- 7 JUSTICE SCALIA: Has he applied for such a visa?
- 8 Has he expressed any intention to apply?
- 9 MR. CROOKS: He has not, Your Honor, but he does
- 10 have U.S.-citizen --
- 11 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well --
- MR. CROOKS: -- children --
- 13 JUSTICE SCALIA: -- then it's an exercise in the
- 14 conceivable, it seems to me.
- 15 MR. CROOKS: But this Court has never held that
- 16 a -- it would be unfair to hold that an appeal of a
- 17 sentence can be moot while that sentence is still in
- 18 effect, and when it can still have consequences for Mr.
- 19 Toledo-Flores. And that's what distinguishes this case
- 20 from all the other cases decided by this Court, is that
- 21 the sentence itself is the concrete and continuing injury
- 22 that defeats --
- JUSTICE STEVENS: May I --
- 24 MR. CROOKS: -- mootness in this case.
- 25 JUSTICE STEVENS: -- ask this question? It's --

- 1 presuming -- supposing we say it's not moot, and you
- 2 prevail. Could he be resentenced without being present in
- 3 court?
- 4 MR. CROOKS: Yes, he could, Your Honor. We do
- 5 resentencing in absentia all the time in the Southern
- 6 District of Texas --
- 7 JUSTICE BREYER: In the Southern --
- 8 MR. CROOKS: -- in circumstances that are
- 9 similar.
- 10 JUSTICE BREYER: In the -- have you ever heard
- of, or had, a client -- or heard of a person from Mexico
- 12 who had been deported because he has been involved in
- drugs, and the Government wants to bring him back because
- 14 he may be a witness -- maybe something develops, some
- 15 other members of the gang are there, they'd like his
- 16 information?
- 17 MR. CROOKS: That does happen occasionally.
- 18 People are paroled, then, to testify in court proceedings
- 19 or to cooperate with Federal --
- JUSTICE BREYER: So, if --
- MR. CROOKS: -- or State --
- 22 JUSTICE BREYER: -- they pick up some friends of
- 23 his who are engaged in drugs, the Government might decide
- 24 to try to get him back.
- MR. CROOKS: That's correct, Your Honor.

1	JUSTICE	SCALIA:	Is th	ere anv	/ indication	that

- 2 that's in the works, or is this just another conceivable
- 3 thing?
- 4 MR. CROOKS: There is no indication in the
- 5 record --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Yes.
- 7 MR. CROOKS: -- that that is in the work. I do
- 8 want to point out that --
- 9 JUSTICE BREYER: Well, it's conceivable, I
- 10 guess, that people will break their parole. Often it
- 11 doesn't happen; sometimes it does. Sometimes they want to
- 12 get him back; sometimes they don't.
- MR. CROOKS: That's all very true, Justice
- 14 Breyer.
- I wanted to point out that, in Campo Serrano,
- 16 which we've cited in our brief, this Court held that a
- deported alien's probation term was a continuing criminal
- 18 sentence that saved the case from mootness. And the Court
- 19 pointed to the fact that he -- that the deported alien in
- 20 Campo Serrano could, just like Mr. Toledo-Flores, have his
- 21 conditional release revoked, and he could be reimprisoned,
- 22 upon a finding that he had violated his conditions. And
- 23 we believe that Campo Serrano points very strongly in the
- 24 direction that this case is not moot.
- On the merits, I would just like to point out

- 1 that the interpretation that is advanced by the
- 2 petitioners here promotes the very sort of uniformity that
- 3 this Court has found desirable in cases like Jerome v.
- 4 United States and its progeny, including Taylor v. United
- 5 States, in that the same conduct of conviction will have
- 6 the same immigration and same Federal sentencing
- 7 consequences, irrespective of the labels or maximum prison
- 8 terms affixed by the particular States that set out that
- 9 conduct. And --
- 10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, Counsel.
- MR. CROOKS: Thank you.
- 12 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Mr. Kneedler.
- 13 ORAL ARGUMENT OF EDWIN S. KNEEDLER
- ON BEHALF OF RESPONDENTS
- 15 MR. KNEEDLER: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it
- 16 please the Court:
- In order for a State drug offense to be an
- aggravated felony under Section 1101(a)(43)(B) of the INA,
- 19 two -- there are two requirements. The underlying conduct
- 20 must be punishable under the Controlled Substances Act or
- 21 one of the other specified Federal statutes, and it must
- 22 be a felony.
- Because Petitioner's underlying conduct here was
- 24 punishable under the Controlled Substances Act, and was a
- 25 felony under State law, they are -- they were properly

- 1 found to have committed aggravated felonies. That
- 2 conclusion follows, not just from Section 924(c), but,
- 3 more importantly, by the fact that what is relevant here
- 4 is, What is the meaning of 1101(a)(43), which is the
- 5 operative provision, which just happens to incorporate the
- 6 definition of "drug-trafficking crime" from 924(c)? And
- 7 there are three features of 1101(a)(43) with --
- 8 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Why don't you say "it just
- 9 happens"? I mean --
- 10 MR. KNEEDLER: No. No. But -- no, but -- yes.
- 11 No, it's --
- 12 JUSTICE KENNEDY: -- it's there in the statute.
- MR. KNEEDLER: It's -- I'm sorry.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: That's why you're here.
- 15 MR. KNEEDLER: It expressly incorporates it,
- 16 yes. Yes. But the -- but the operative provision is
- section 1101(a)(43) of the INA, and there are three
- 18 features of that that we think reinforce this conclusion.
- 19 The first is that the consequences of aggravated felony
- 20 status under the INA turn on whether one is convicted, not
- 21 whether they have committed the crime, and that's true
- 22 both with respect to the enhancement of sentences under
- 23 1326 and the -- and the immigration consequences. And we
- 24 think it makes particular sense when you're talking about
- 25 a conviction to look about how the -- to look at how the

- 1 crime is treated under the jurisdiction of conviction.
- 2 JUSTICE SCALIA: I thought the Government has
- 3 taken the position -- and as far as I know, all the Courts
- 4 of Appeals have bought the Government's argument -- that
- 5 there -- you do not need a conviction --
- 6 MR. KNEEDLER: You do --
- 7 JUSTICE SCALIA: -- that so --
- 8 MR. KNEEDLER: -- not need a conviction under
- 9 Section 924 if you're bringing a prosecution under Section
- 10 924(c).
- 11 JUSTICE SCALIA: Yes. You don't --
- 12 MR. KNEEDLER: You do not -- you do not need a
- 13 conviction. But, in order -- the immigration consequences
- 14 --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Yes, but --
- MR. KNEEDLER: -- have been --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: -- but 924(c) is incorporated
- 18 in 1101(a)(43). It's --
- 19 MR. KNEEDLER: Right.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: -- incorporated. So, you want
- 21 us to interpret 924(c) one way for criminal convictions --
- 22 a criminal sentence -- that is, you don't need a
- 23 conviction in order to get the enhancement -- but another
- 24 way for --
- MR. KNEEDLER: No.

1	JUSTICE SCALIA: for the INA?
2	MR. KNEEDLER: Our point is not that 924(c)
3	requires a conviction when it's in the Immigration Act,
4	it's that the immigration consequences of that
5	incorporation turn on whether someone was convicted of an
6	aggravated felony.
7	JUSTICE SCALIA: Why is
8	MR. KNEEDLER: So
9	JUSTICE SCALIA: that?
LO	MR. KNEEDLER: Well, the ground of deportation
L1	that refers to "aggravated felony" refers to someone who
L2	has been convicted of an aggravated felony. The
L3	ineligibility for cancellation of removal turns on whether
L 4	someone has been convicted of an aggravated felony, and
L5	the enhanced penalties under Section 1326 for someone
L6	whose illegal reentry, following aggravated felony, is for
L7	a conviction for an aggravated felony. So, my point is
L8	that, under the INA, the consequences turn on conviction,
L9	and it makes sense to look at the jurisdiction of
20	conviction here, State law to see whether it to
21	look at the to determine the status of the crime. And
22	since State law determines it to be a felony, that's the
23	
24	JUSTICE GINSBURG: Mr. Kneedler
25	MR. KNEEDLER: proper place to look.

1	JUSTICE GINSBURG: if there is room for more
2	than one construction of this statute, it seems to me
3	unseemly, in the immigration context, to say that two
4	people who have committed the identical acts, one of them
5	is barred from ever coming back, doesn't have any of the
6	dispensations, and the other does, because of the
7	happenstance of the State in which they were convicted.
8	That kind of disuniformity in an area where the
9	Constitution expressly charges Congress with authority to
10	make uniform laws, it's doesn't that uniform-law
11	specification in the Constitution tug in the direction of
12	the interpretation that Mr. Long was
13	MR. KNEEDLER: No, we
14	JUSTICE GINSBURG: presenting to us?
15	MR. KNEEDLER: we think it does, for several
16	reasons. First, with respect to the constitutional
17	requirement, the uniformity provision applies to uniform
18	rules of naturalization; that is, citizenship. This
19	we're not talking about citizenship here, we're talking
20	we're talking about the eligibility of aliens to remain in
21	the country. Beyond that, even where the Uniformity
22	Clause applies and there's, for example, a parallel
23	Uniformity Clause for bankruptcy that's never been
24	interpreted to mean that consequences of certain conduct
25	under State law can have no impact on bankruptcy law, and

- 1 that there can't be a variation. The State-law homestead
- 2 exemption under the -- under the bankruptcy laws is a good
- 3 example of that.
- But, going beyond that, with respect to the
- 5 issue of uniformity generally, Congress has established
- 6 uniform standards in Section 1101, either in terms of
- 7 identifying the conduct in certain instances; in other
- 8 instances, by identifying the minimum sentence that was
- 9 actually imposed. In this case, we think, with respect to
- 10 drug-trafficking crimes, it -- it's imposed a uniform
- 11 standard, in terms of the length of the sentence; it has
- 12 to be a felony. That's -- that is uniformity.
- But the -- to answer your point more directly,
- 14 it is a principle throughout 1101(a)(43) that one looks to
- 15 State law, not to -- not to a -- some supposed uniform
- 16 standard of Federal law. And, for example, if you --
- 17 several subparagraphs -- and if you'll -- 1101(a)(43) is
- 18 set out at page 12(a) of the appendix to our brief --
- 19 three subparagraphs -- (j), (q), and (t) -- refer to the
- 20 sentence that may be imposed for a violation. Well, when
- 21 you're talking about a State conviction, that's clearly
- 22 referring to the sentence that may be imposed under State
- 23 law for a conviction. Four other subparagraphs -- (f),
- (g), (r), and (s) -- turn on the sentence that was
- 25 actually imposed. That means that -- in the case of a

- 1 State crime, as we have here, that State law has to
- 2 authorize the sentence, and that the State Court, applying
- 3 State sentencing principles, has actually imposed a crime
- 4 of -- for -- of at least 1 year. So, it is -- it is
- 5 infused in Section 1101(a)(43) that, in fact, you do look
- 6 to the consequences of an offense under State law.
- 7 JUSTICE BREYER: I'm prepared to accept perfect
- 8 ambiguity here, linguistically. And I thought of an
- 9 empirical question, that you may know the answer to, that
- 10 might shed some light.
- 11 Now, going along the way -- maybe I'm making a
- 12 mistake to point it out, if I am -- but I go to the key
- 13 thing here, which is the words in 924(c), What is a
- 14 "drug-trafficking crime"? A "drug-trafficking crime" is a
- 15 crime -- "any felony punishable under the Controlled
- 16 Substances Act." That could mean an act, physically, that
- 17 is a felony under some law, and is also punishable under
- 18 the Controlled Substances Act as a misdemeanor. Okay?
- 19 Felony under -- it could pick that up. And it also could
- 20 mean any conduct which is punishable as a felony under the
- 21 Controlled Substances Act. And I could look at those
- 22 words a thousand times and not have a clue which it means.
- So, I thought of an empirical test. This
- 24 statute, 924(c), happens to be a statute that, if you
- 25 engage in a drug-trafficking crime, as defined, and you

- 1 have a gun with you, you get mandatory 5 years. That's
- 2 the point of it. And the Government does all the
- 3 prosecuting. So, in how many cases where a person
- 4 committed a misdemeanor offense, simple possession, and
- 5 had a gun, did the Government insist that they get the 5-
- 6 years minimum? Now, if you're prepared to tell me "a lot
- of 'em," I'm prepared to tell you, the Government has
- 8 consistently interpreted the statute the way you are now.
- 9 But if you're prepared to tell me "zero," I would say I
- 10 would be suspicious of an interpretation that comes along
- 11 now for the first time. And my mind is open on it. I'm
- 12 quite interested in the answer.
- MR. KNEEDLER: To my knowledge, we have not
- 14 brought crime -- prosecutions under 924(c)(1), based on
- 15 the circumstances you posit, but that's --
- 16 JUSTICE BREYER: But if --
- 17 MR. KNEEDLER: -- but I don't think that that
- 18 goes very far with respect to answering this question.
- 19 For one thing, as this Court pointed out in the Gonzales
- 20 decision, the requirement that there be a Federal crime,
- 21 and, therefore, a Federal felony under 924(c)(2), comes
- 22 from the language in 924(c)(1) that says that the crime
- 23 must be subject to prosecution in a court of the United
- 24 States. And this Court, in Gonzales, said it's that
- 25 language that renders the -- renders it a requirement that

- 1 it be a Federal crime. The definition of --
- 2 JUSTICE BREYER: No, no. We both agree. All --
- 3 everybody agrees here. It doesn't have to be a Federal
- 4 crime.
- 5 MR. KNEEDLER: It doesn't have to be --
- JUSTICE BREYER: And --
- 7 MR. KNEEDLER: -- under 1101 --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Correct, it doesn't have --
- 9 MR. KNEEDLER: Right.
- 10 JUSTICE BREYER: -- to be. It could be conduct
- 11 that violates the State law, but -- and punish it under
- 12 the State law -- but the conduct involved would have to
- 13 constitute what is a felony under the Controlled
- 14 Substances --
- MR. KNEEDLER: Would have to --
- JUSTICE BREYER: -- Act.
- 17 MR. KNEEDLER: -- in our view, it would have to
- 18 constitute --
- 19 JUSTICE BREYER: A felony or a misdemeanor.
- 20 MR. KNEEDLER: -- it would have to be punishable
- 21 under the Controlled Substances --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Yes.
- MR. KNEEDLER: -- Act.
- JUSTICE BREYER: All right.
- MR. KNEEDLER: But the important point here is

- 1 2 JUSTICE BREYER: All right. So, I say it's 3 suspicious. 4 MR. KNEEDLER: But the question is not what 5 924(c)(2) means, standing alone or in the abstract; it's what it means, as incorporated into 1101(a)(43). And --6 7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: And, of --8 MR. KNEEDLER: -- there --CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: -- course, that's --9 10 when you get to that, it must give you pause that your 11 analysis is of a term, "drug-trafficking crime" or "illicit trafficking," and your theory leads to the 12 13 conclusion that simple possession equates with drug 14 trafficking. 15 MR. KNEEDLER: Well, the Petitioner has 16 conceded, as I understand it -- I heard Mr. Long, I think, 17 concede -- that possession offenses can constitute 18 aggravated felonies under this provision, that there is 19 the recidivist possession, there is the possession of the 20 date-rape drug, there is possession of 5 grams or more of cocaine. All of those are specified as being -- of being 21
- 24 State statutes dealing with drugs do not -- are not

22

23

25 patterned directly after the Federal statute, and there's

felonies under the -- under 940 -- or 844. But, beyond

that, it's important to take into account that a lot of

- 1 no reason why Congress would have insisted that they do so
- 2 in order for this statute to operate sensibly. And one
- 3 notable example, for instance, is, when it comes to
- 4 possession of a substantial amount of drugs, that that
- 5 certainly would create a strong implication that the
- 6 defendant was engaged in trafficking activities, or
- 7 intended to.
- 8 The Federal statute deals with that by making it
- 9 a felony to possess with intent to distribute the drug. A
- 10 number of States don't do that. They, instead, have
- 11 graduated possession offenses, based on the quantity of
- 12 drugs that the defendant is possessing; that above a
- 13 certain quantity of drugs, it would be a felony. They're
- 14 getting at the same problem, but they've come at it in a
- 15 different way.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Then, in those cases, you can
- 17 say the conduct would constitute a felony under the
- 18 Federal statute; but here, if I recall correctly, the
- 19 amount involved would not have qualified for possession
- 20 with intent to distribute, under Federal law.
- 21 MR. KNEEDLER: Well, it would always be up to
- 22 the jury to decide that. Now, in Mr. Lopez's case, he was
- 23 -- he was initially charged with a series of offenses that
- 24 went beyond the aiding and abetting of possession that he
- 25 ultimately pleaded guilty to, but, as he testified in his

- 1 -- in his immigration hearing, his aiding and abetting of
- 2 possession was assisting someone in purchasing drugs,
- 3 which was, itself, a trafficking element. And so, this
- 4 shows that the way the State crimes are defined or applied
- 5 are often getting at what Federal law --
- 6 JUSTICE STEVENS: Yes. We have a case in which
- 7 we're assuming, for our purposes, we just have possession.
- 8 I mean, I understand the facts of this case. And I wanted
- 9 to ask -- I have two questions, Mr. Kneedler. One of them
- 10 -- the second one, I'd ask that -- you were going to
- 11 mention three different points, one about conviction; you
- 12 had two other points you didn't get to. I want to learn
- 13 what those were. But, before that, it seems to me that,
- 14 when you put the whole statute -- all the -- all the
- 15 different statutory provisions together, you really boil
- 16 down and focus on 924(c)(2) and the words "for purpose of
- 17 this subsection, the term 'drug-trafficking crime' means
- 18 any felony punishable under the Controlled Substances
- 19 Act." And if the word "Federal" had been inserted before
- 20 the word "felony" in the statute, would that not make the
- 21 statute perfectly clear?
- MR. KNEEDLER: It probably would, but I think
- 23 it's interesting that the version of 924(c) that was in
- 24 effect prior to 1988 said exactly that. It said "felony
- 25 violation of Federal law."

1 JUSTICE STEVENS: It was a question of --2 MR. KNEEDLER: It was -- it was explicit. 3 JUSTICE STEVENS: -- whether the change was 4 intended to be --5 MR. KNEEDLER: Well, but --6 JUSTICE STEVENS: -- substantive --7 MR. KNEEDLER: -- Congress --8 JUSTICE STEVENS: -- or merely --MR. KNEEDLER: But --9 10 JUSTICE STEVENS: -- stylistic. 11 MR. KNEEDLER: -- Congress did change it, in the 12 1988 Act, but it did it -- and this is significant -- it 13 did it in connection with two changes in the immigration 14 law. One is the enactment of the definition of 15 "aggravated felony," which, as I have explained, the 16 definition of "aggravated felony" looks to State law, in a 17 number of respects, in terms of the severity of the 18 offense or the punishment actually imposed. That was one 19 change. 20 The other change that was made in the 1988 Act was to amend Section 1326 with respect to illegal 21 22 reentries, and it did that by enhancing the penalty for 23 conviction of any felony other than an aggravated felony, 24 and an aggravated felony. And certainly the conviction of 25 any felony includes State law offenses in this --

JUSTICE STEVENS: Just again, Mr. Kneedler --

- focusing again on that specific language, you're saying,

 in effect, that that phrase means any State or Federal

 felony punishable under the Federal statutes.

 MR. KNEEDLER: It says -- yes, it says "any

 felony." And that is our -- doing it -- and what --
 - 7 JUSTICE STEVENS: And is it ever true that a
 - 8 State felony is punishable under a Federal statute?
 - 9 MR. KNEEDLER: The conduct is --
- 10 JUSTICE STEVENS: Yes, I know, but --
- 11 MR. KNEEDLER: -- punishable. The conduct is
- 12 punishable, not --

1

- JUSTICE STEVENS: -- but do you know of any
- 14 instance where we've said a State felony is punishable
- 15 under a Federal statute?
- 16 MR. KNEEDLER: I think not -- I think not used
- in that sense, but I think it's important -- it's
- important to look at the language, as a whole. It does
- 19 not say "punishable as a felony under" --
- JUSTICE STEVENS: But you do agree --
- 21 MR. KNEEDLER: -- "under the Controlled" --
- JUSTICE STEVENS: -- that the key to the case is
- 23 how we read that one sentence.
- MR. KNEEDLER: Well, no, I agree that the -- I --
- in my view, the key to the case is in 1101(a)(43),

- 1 because, if you look at the structure of 1101(a)(43) --
- 2 and this gets to the question you -- you said -- you
- 3 mentioned that I had three reasons. One is that under the
- 4 -- under the INA, the conviction consequences turn on the
- 5 conviction of an aggravated felony, and it only makes
- 6 sense to look at the jurisdiction of conviction to
- 7 determine the nature of the crime, whether it's a felony.
- 8 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, but you don't -- you
- 9 don't look to the jurisdiction of conviction. Are you
- 10 telling me you require a conviction? You -- I thought you
- 11 told me you don't require a conviction.
- MR. KNEEDLER: No. Under 924(c), you don't.
- 13 But under the -- under the -- if you're bringing a Federal
- 14 prosecution under 924(c), the term "aggravated felony" has
- 15 no role in that determination. It is a -- it is a
- 16 separate Federal crime. We're talking about, here, the
- 17 consequences of -- the consequences of being an aggravated
- 18 felon under 1101(a)(43) are, Where does the definition of
- 19 "aggravated felony" apply? It only applies under the INA
- 20 if someone has been convicted of an aggravated felony.
- 21 You're only -- you're only subject to deportation for
- aggravated felony if you've been convicted, you're
- 23 ineligible for cancellation or removal, you're subject to
- 24 sentence enhancement. All those things follow on
- 25 conviction. And we think it only makes sense to look to

- 1 the jurisdiction of conviction. That is --
- JUSTICE SOUTER: All right, Mr. Kneedler,
- 3 assuming that -- as I understand it, the answer you just
- 4 gave, your second point, as well as the point that you and
- 5 Justice Stevens were debating, turns, in your view, on a
- 6 definition, or a reading, of the statute that would work
- 7 this way: that if, under State law, the act were a felony,
- 8 but, under Federal law, the action was merely a
- 9 misdemeanor, it would still, for purposes of this
- 10 definition, be an aggravated felony.
- 11 MR. KNEEDLER: That's correct.
- 12 JUSTICE SOUTER: That -- isn't that very
- 13 strange, that Congress would have wanted a reading of the
- 14 statute that would turn its definition of a "misdemeanor
- 15 crime" into an aggravated felony for purposes of the
- 16 immigration law?
- MR. KNEEDLER: I don't think so at all. And for
- 18 one -- for one thing -- as I've mentioned, the structure
- 19 of the act, as a whole, of 1101(a)(43) -- and there are
- 20 numerous subsections -- look to how the crime -- what the
- 21 authorized punishment was, or look to how the person was
- 22 actually sentenced under State law, not under Federal law.
- JUSTICE SOUTER: No, but I'm --
- MR. KNEEDLER: And I --
- 25 JUSTICE SOUTER: -- saying, if --

1	MR. KNEEDLER: No I
2	JUSTICE SOUTER: No, go ahead.
3	MR. KNEEDLER: I also haven't mentioned the
4	explicit provision, that one of the other Justices
5	mentioned earlier I think, the Chief Justice that
6	the penultimate sentence of 1101(a)(43) says that
7	something a an offense constitutes an aggravated
8	felony, whether in violation of Federal or State laws.
9	JUSTICE SOUTER: Well
LO	MR. KNEEDLER: So
L1	JUSTICE SOUTER: I know it says that, but
L2	that doesn't necessarily take you any further than saying
L3	that if the words of the statute refer to something that
L 4	could be a State law felony, under the under the
L5	penultimate sentence, it will count. It does not
16	necessarily answer the question that we have, and that is
L7	whether a particular reference in the statute is a
18	reference to a Federal felony or a State felony. So, it
L9	has a the penultimate sentence has work to do. And, in
20	fact, we can see the work being done in the in the very
21	definition of "drug trafficking" but it doesn't
22	necessarily lead to the conclusion that you draw from it.
23	MR. KNEEDLER: Well, we think we think it is
24	quite a we think it's a strong confirmation of the
25	pattern in 1101(a)(43), that the statute looks to what

- 1 happened in State Court, and the State punishment that was
- 2 authorized there, and the express mention of that -- or --
- 3 JUSTICE SOUTER: Even when --
- 4 MR. KNEEDLER: -- requirement.
- 5 JUSTICE SOUTER: -- the consequence, in effect,
- 6 is to turn for -- turn the gravity of the Federal
- 7 misdemeanor into the gravity of --
- 8 MR. KNEEDLER: But the --
- 9 JUSTICE SOUTER: -- a felony that --
- 10 MR. KNEEDLER: -- the Federal Controlled --
- 11 JUSTICE SOUTER: -- just happens to be a State
- 12 felony.
- 13 MR. KNEEDLER: The Federal Controlled Substances
- 14 Act does not occupy the field of drug control in the
- 15 country, any more than any other Federal crime occupies
- 16 that field. And --
- 17 JUSTICE SOUTER: No, I realize that. But, if
- 18 we're asking, "What is important in the mind of Congress,
- 19 for purposes of the immigration law?" one would suppose
- 20 that the most obvious touchstone of importance is the way
- 21 Federal law deals with it -- i.e., in the case of a crime,
- 22 whether Federal law calls it a felony or Federal law calls
- 23 it a misdemeanor. You know, in your reading, when Federal
- 24 law calls it a misdemeanor, if State law calls it a
- 25 felony, it becomes a Federal felony for the immigration

- 1 law. And that's what seems to me odd.
- MR. KNEEDLER: Right. And this is not the only
- 3 place where that consequence can arise. There are --
- 4 there are cases involving "What's a crime of violence?"
- 5 which is -- which, under subparagraph (g), is another
- 6 aggravated felony. The crime of violence is defined in 18
- 7 U.S.C. Section 16, subsection (b) of that -- this Court
- 8 considered that statute in Leocal -- requires that the
- 9 offense be a felony which creates a serious risk of
- 10 physical harm. The courts have looked to the State law of
- 11 conviction to determine whether something is a felony --
- 12 JUSTICE SCALIA: Mr. Kneedler, could --
- JUSTICE SOUTER: Yes, but --
- MR. KNEEDLER: -- under that provision.
- 15 JUSTICE SOUTER: May I just ask one --
- 16 JUSTICE SCALIA: Sure.
- JUSTICE SOUTER: It's one thing to turn to State
- 18 law to get an answer where there is no other answer. The
- 19 problem here is that State law and Federal law are at odds
- 20 in determining the gravity of the offense. The Federal
- 21 law, on my hypothesis, would say, "It is minor; it's just
- 22 a misdemeanor." The State says, "No, it is a felony." It
- 23 seems to me very odd, given the tension between the State
- 24 and Federal classifications, to say that, for Federal
- 25 purposes, the State classification is going to trump the

- 1 Federal classification; and that's a different situation
- 2 from the one you posit.
- 3 MR. KNEEDLER: Well, and -- if I could just
- 4 mention one other -- on other example, under the theft-
- 5 offense category in subsection -- I think it's (f) --
- 6 where a theft offense is deemed to be an aggravated felony
- 7 if a sentence of at least 1 year was imposed. There are
- 8 misdemeanor offenses there that -- as a matter of Federal
- 9 law, it can be a misdemeanor for certain types of theft
- 10 offenses; and yet, they are covered as aggravated
- 11 felonies. And, again, that would --
- 12 JUSTICE SCALIA: Mr. Kneedler, could I ask you
- 13 about your assertion that you "look to the State of
- 14 conviction"? What do you mean by that? For purposes of
- 15 1101. Does that mean, if you're convicted, in State
- 16 court, of a misdemeanor -- and even though that action
- would be a Federal felony, it's not an aggravated felony?
- 18 MR. KNEEDLER: That is our position, yes.
- 19 Because the requirement -- the --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: So, it's sort of a double
- 21 inconsistency. Not only do you treat State -- State
- 22 actions that are -- that are minimal -- I'm sorry, where
- 23 the State treats it more seriously than the Federal
- 24 Government, not only do you follow the State, but, where
- 25 the State treats it less leniently than the Federal

- 1 Government, you also follow the State.
- 2 MR. KNEEDLER: Well, and --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Is that right?
- 4 MR. KNEEDLER: Yes. And we -- yes. We think
- 5 that's --
- 6 JUSTICE SCALIA: So, you look to the State of
- 7 conviction. What --
- 8 MR. KNEEDLER: that's --
- 9 JUSTICE SCALIA: That's for purposes of the
- 10 immigration law.
- 11 MR. KNEEDLER: Of the immigration law. And,
- 12 again, we think that --
- 13 JUSTICE SCALIA: Okay. Now, do you do the same
- 14 for purposes of the felony enhancement provision?
- MR. KNEEDLER: 924(c)? No, you don't, because --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: You --
- 17 MR. KNEEDLER: -- the aggravated-felony question
- 18 has no -- has no -- the "aggravated felony" term has no
- 19 operative significance under 924 --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, that seems to me --
- 21 MR. KNEEDLER: -- itself.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: -- very strange. You would
- 23 look to the -- you would look to the State law for
- 24 purposes of the immigration section; but, for purposes of
- 924(c), what would you look to? Either one. Either one.

1 Whichever --2 MR. KNEEDLER: No, 924 --JUSTICE SCALIA: -- whichever -- for 924 --3 4 whichever one would make it a felony. 5 MR. KNEEDLER: No, under --6 JUSTICE SCALIA: You lose. 7 MR. KNEEDLER: -- under 924(c)(1), this Court --8 this Court, in the Gonzales case, said that it -- that it has to be a Federal crime, but not because of the --9 10 JUSTICE SCALIA: Yes. 11 MR. KNEEDLER: -- definition in --12 JUSTICE SCALIA: Right. 13 MR. KNEEDLER: -- 924(c)(2) --14 JUSTICE SCALIA: All right. 15 MR. KNEEDLER: -- but --16 JUSTICE SCALIA: If it's a felony under either 17 one, for purposes of 924(c), you lose, right? 18 MR. KNEEDLER: I don't think I --19 JUSTICE SCALIA: If the act is either a State 20 felony or a Federal felony, you lose. I mean, the 21 defendant gets the enhanced sentence, right, under 924(c)? 2.2 MR. KNEEDLER: No. 23 JUSTICE SCALIA: No? 24 MR. KNEEDLER: Under 924(c), the cases that have 25 been brought have all been situations where it is a

- 1 Federal offense. But, because -- not because of the
- 2 language in 924(c)(2) --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Well --
- 4 MR. KNEEDLER: -- but because of the -- of the
- 5 language --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Listen.
- 7 MR. KNEEDLER: -- in 924(c)(1).
- 8 JUSTICE SCALIA: Listen. My question is a
- 9 simple one. If it's -- it seems to me, if it's -- what
- 10 you're saying is, if it is either a felony under Federal
- 11 law or a felony under State law, you get the enhanced
- 12 sentence under 924(c), isn't that right?
- MR. KNEEDLER: I -- my understanding of the way
- 14 924(c)(1) has operated is that if it is a misdemeanor
- 15 under Federal law, but maybe it would be a Federal felony,
- 16 it would not be -- it would not give rise to the
- 17 enhancement, because it is not a --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: I thought that's --
- 19 MR. KNEEDLER: -- it --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: -- what the whole argument is
- 21 about, whether it has to be a felony under Federal law.
- 22 You're telling me, if it's a misdemeanor under Federal
- 23 law, that you don't get --
- MR. KNEEDLER: But not --
- 25 JUSTICE SCALIA: -- the enhanced sentence?

- 1 MR. KNEEDLER: -- but not under -- not under
- 2 924(c)(2) --
- JUSTICE BREYER: But why not?
- 4 MR. KNEEDLER: -- the definitional --
- 5 JUSTICE SCALIA: You've thoroughly confused me
- 6 now.
- 7 JUSTICE BREYER: But 924(c)(1) says that if you
- 8 have a gun, and you have a drug-trafficking crime, book, 5
- 9 years.
- Okay, now we go to two, what's a "drug-
- 11 trafficking crime"? It means any felony punishable under
- 12 the -- under the Controlled Substances Act. Now, in your
- definition, we first look to see whether simple possession
- 14 is punishable under the -- in Controlled Substances Act.
- 15 It sure is. It sure is. It's punishable as a
- 16 misdemeanor. So, it meets that. Under your definition,
- 17 is it a felony? Yup, it's a felony in South Dakota.
- 18 Okay. So, now we've got a prosecution, in Federal Court
- 19 in South Dakota. And, on your reading of the statute,
- 20 that guy should get a bump-up of 5 years.
- MR. KNEEDLER: No, that is not our reading of
- 22 the statute. The --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Because?
- MR. KNEEDLER: The only thing that is
- 25 incorporated into 1101(a)(43) is the definition in (c)(2)

- 1 -- not (c)(1), the definition of --2 JUSTICE BREYER: Yes. 3 MR. KNEEDLER: -- of "drug-trafficking crime" in 4 (c)(2), which says --5 JUSTICE BREYER: Yes. MR. KNEEDLER: -- "felony punishable under the 6 7 Controlled" --8 JUSTICE BREYER: Right. MR. KNEEDLER: -- "Substances Act." 9 10 JUSTICE BREYER: Right. 11 MR. KNEEDLER: That is what gets plugged into --12 JUSTICE BREYER: That's correct. 13 MR. KNEEDLER: -- 1101(a) - --14 JUSTICE BREYER: Right. 15 MR. KNEEDLER: -- -(43). 16 JUSTICE BREYER: Right. 17 MR. KNEEDLER: Along with all of the other 18 provisions in 1101(a)(43), you look to State law, in the 19 case of a State offense -- the State of conviction, the 20 jurisdiction --JUSTICE BREYER: Yes.
- 21
- 22 MR. KNEEDLER: -- of conviction -- to determine
- 23 the nature of the crime.
- 24 JUSTICE BREYER: But you still have to know
- whether that word, "felony," in (2) means "any felony 25

1 punishable as a felony under the Controlled" --2 MR. KNEEDLER: Right. And --3 JUSTICE BREYER: -- "Substances Act." MR. KNEEDLER: And --4 5 JUSTICE BREYER: And there --MR. KNEEDLER: -- a number --6 7 JUSTICE BREYER: Yeah. You have to know the 8 answer to that. 9 MR. KNEEDLER: -- a number of Courts of Appeals 10 that have looked at this in the sentencing context over 11 the years have concluded that it -- that the absence of 12 that language is very significant, and the presence of the 13 language that says "any felony" is also significant. 14 JUSTICE SCALIA: Never mind sentencing, let's 15 get back to the immigration. If I understand what you're 16 now saying, if you're convicted in State Court of action 17 that is a Federal felony, but it's just a State 18 misdemeanor -- right? -- you look to the State of 19 conviction, and it would be a misdemeanor, and the 20 immigration provisions would not -- would not take effect. 21 Is --22 MR. KNEEDLER: Yes. 23 JUSTICE SCALIA: -- that right? MR. KNEEDLER: And that -- and that -- that's 24 25 not true --

1 JUSTICE SCALIA: That's extraordinary. 2 MR. KNEEDLER: No, but it's -- that's not --3 only true under this provision of 1101(a)(4). The other 4 -- the other provisions -- (f) and (q) and (j) and (q) and 5 (t) that I mentioned, that looked to the sentence that may be imposed under State law, or that was actually imposed 6 7 -- would, likewise, render someone in that situation who 8 was convicted of only a misdemeanor in State Court -- even though it might be a felony under Federal law, they would 9 10 not be -- they would not be convicted of an aggravated felony, because --11 12 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Mr. Kneedler --13 MR. KNEEDLER: -- of the way Congress chose to 14 write 1101(a)(43). 15 JUSTICE STEVENS: But is --16 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Do you --17 JUSTICE STEVENS: -- that a reasonable -- let's 18 say the statute's ambiguous, and you've convinced us 19 there's no constitutional requirement of uniformity. But 20 is it reasonable to assume that Congress would want the 21 different consequences to depend on the State of conviction? 2.2 23 MR. KNEEDLER: I think it is. I mean, they're 24 25 JUSTICE STEVENS: Is there anything in the

- 1 legislative history suggesting that?
- 2 MR. KNEEDLER: I think -- as I say, I think it's
- 3 on face of the statute.
- 4 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Barrett suggests otherwise.
- 5 If what Congress was trying to do was to codify that
- 6 practice of looking for an analogous crime under State
- 7 law, that's -- that seems to me the -- at least what
- 8 Congress was trying do.
- 9 MR. KNEEDLER: Well, that -- the legislative
- 10 history of the amendment in 1990 does not discuss the
- 11 aspect of Barrett that went to the comparison to decide
- 12 what -- in what circumstances there would be an analogous
- 13 Federal crime. It was clear that it wanted to ratify the
- 14 result that State crimes are covered.
- 15 But we think that that was evident from the 1988
- 16 amendments to -- that both enacted the definition of
- 17 "aggravated felony," revised the definition of "drug-
- 18 trafficking crime" to delete the requirement that it be a
- 19 Federal felony -- that was deleted in 1988 -- and enhanced
- 20 sentences --
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: You --
- MR. KNEEDLER: -- under 1326, clearly on the --
- 23 on -- by reference to whether someone was convicted of a
- 24 State felony, without any -- without any general Federal
- 25 minimum.

1	JUSTICE GINSBURG: May I
2	MR. KNEEDLER: What Congress
3	JUSTICE GINSBURG: May I just switch gears for a
4	moment, because your time is almost up, and we you
5	haven't addressed the mootness problem in Toledo-Flores.
6	MR. KNEEDLER: In Toledo-Flores.
7	JUSTICE GINSBURG: Is the Second Circuit wrong
8	in U.S. v. Hamdi? Because it seems to me that U.S. v.
9	Hamdi is on all fours with respect to mootness.
LO	MR. KNEEDLER: Yes. We think it is wrong, be
L1	under this Court's decision in Spencer versus Kemna and
L2	other cases, that, if the possible consequence turns on a
L3	discretionary judgment that may be made by someone else,
L 4	that is too speculative to constitute a real live case or
L5	controversy. And that's what I understand Toledo-Flores
L6	to be arguing, is that if he applied for discretionary
L7	relief in the future, that it might it might matter,
L8	because his sentence might be reduced slightly.
L9	I should point out that in the District Court
20	Toledo-Flores conceded that if he didn't get an eight-
21	level sentence enhancement, he would get a four-level
22	sentence enhancement, because this is at least a felony,
23	within the meaning of the adjacent provision of the
24	guidelines. That would result in a guideline range of 24
25	to 30 months. He would then have gotten 24 months under

- 1 that guideline range, the very same thing that he got
- 2 here. And, under the guidelines at the time, a term of
- 3 supervised release was mandatory. And a 1-year term of
- 4 supervised release was mandatory in those circumstances.
- 5 He would have gotten exactly the same term of supervised
- 6 release if he had been -- if he had gotten only the four-
- 7 level enhancement, rather than the eight-level
- 8 enhancement.
- 9 I also think that it is somewhat farfetched to
- 10 think that, given the fact that Toledo-Flores had more
- 11 than 12 illegal entries into the United States, and
- 12 various State offenses, that the determination of whether
- 13 the attorney general would actually grant discretionary
- 14 relief would turn on a marginal difference in the sentence
- 15 on that particular offense.
- 16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Kneedler.
- Mr. Long, you have 4 minutes remaining.
- 18 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF ROBERT A. LONG, JR.
- 19 ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER LOPEZ
- MR. LONG: Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice.
- In answer to Justice Breyer's question, Mr.
- 22 Kneedler said that a Federal misdemeanor is a drug-
- 23 trafficking crime under Section 924(c) if a State punishes
- 24 it as a felony. He said, "Well, the Federal Government
- 25 never prosecutes Federal misdemeanors under Section

- 1 924(c)." He said, "The reason is because of
- 924(c)(1)(A)," and the language there is, it has to be an
- 3 offense for which the person may be prosecuted in a court
- 4 of the United States. But that language -- a person may
- 5 be prosecuted in a court of the United States for a
- 6 misdemeanor. So, the Government is making an argument
- 7 that, to my knowledge, has never been accepted by any
- 8 court, has not ever been advanced by the Government in a
- 9 criminal context, and that would significantly expand
- 10 Section 924(c) and numerous other criminal statutes that
- 11 we cite in our brief that used the same definition of
- 12 "drug-trafficking crime."
- 13 The -- Mr. Kneedler also said that the
- 14 aggravated felony provisions in Section 101(a)(43) refer
- 15 to State law, but I read them just the opposite. There
- 16 are two kinds. There are 21 of them. Many of them say,
- 17 "an offense described in 18 U.S. Code Section X." I mean,
- 18 that's really what -- we're dealing with one of those
- 19 here. So, it clearly goes to Federal law to define the
- 20 offense. Now, if State law or foreign law also punishes
- 21 that offense, then it's an aggravated felony, but,
- 22 clearly, Federal law is defining the offense.
- There are other categories, such as murder and
- 24 theft, that are defined, in general terms; but the
- 25 Government's position, as I understand it, is, again, you

- 1 use a generic uniform definition. You don't pick any
- 2 definition that the States may have. The Court just
- 3 granted --
- 4 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, I thought -- I
- 5 thought you conceded that a State offense could constitute
- 6 illicit trafficking --
- 7 MR. LONG: Well, yes --
- 8 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: -- in a Controlled
- 9 Substance --
- 10 MR. LONG: Yes, Mr. Chief Justice. But, again,
- 11 to be clear -- and I think this is consistent with the
- 12 Government's position in other cases -- ultimately, there
- 13 will be some uniform Federal definition of what
- 14 constitutes illicit trafficking. It would be -- some
- 15 commercial element would probably be the definition the
- 16 Court hasn't decided. States can define it more broadly.
- 17 But the actual definition -- just as the definition of
- 18 "burglary" or "theft" --
- 19 JUSTICE ALITO: You think there's a uniform
- 20 Federal definition of a theft offense?
- 21 MR. LONG: Well, it's -- I mean, as -- this --
- 22 in the Taylor case, in burglary, the Court has a
- 23 methodology for this. You pick a sort of generic
- 24 definition. It may not -- it may not come from a Federal
- 25 statute; it could --

1 JUSTICE ALITO: There's -- they'll -- there's no 2 variation in State offenses that would fall within that, a 3 theft offense? 4 MR. LONG: Well, it's -- again, this is -- the 5 provision we're dealing with is -- looks to Federal law, the Controlled Substances Act and two other statutes. My 6 7 understanding of the Government's position -- and it's 8 consistent with this Court's cases, in Taylor -- is that, even when it's a generic offense, you would -- you would 9 10 still have a uniform definition. And that is certainly 11 consistent with the principle of uniformity that applies both in criminal law and in immigration law. I mean, if 12 13 there's any ambiguity, at the end of the day, ambiguities 14 are supposed to be resolved in favor of uniformity, 15 uniform Federal law -- uniform Federal criminal law, and 16 uniform immigration law. Effectively, what the Government 17 is arguing that -- is that States can banish noncitizens, 18 and can do so by enacting drug laws, deciding to make a 19 simple possession offense a felony. That's a decision 20 that a State would make, almost certainly, for reasons 21 that have little or nothing to do with immigration, and 22 it's highly unlikely that Congress would have left that determination to States. 23 24 On uniformity, aggravated felonies is a 25 condition for citizenship. If you're convicted of an

1	aggravated felony, you may not become a U.S. citizen. You
2	are foreclosed from establishing good moral character.
3	So, in fact, citizenship is at stake here, and the
4	Uniformity Clause is in play.
5	If there are no further questions, thank you.
6	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Long.
7	The case is submitted.
8	[Whereupon, at 11:03 a.m., the case in the
9	above-entitled matter was submitted.]
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