SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE	UNITED STATES
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RELENTLESS, INC., ET AL.,)
Petitioners,)
v.) No. 22-1219
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, ET AL.,)
Respondents.)
	_

Pages: 1 through 155

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9		
10	Washington, D.C	
11	Wednesday, January	17, 2024
12		
13	The above-entitled matter	came on for oral
14	argument before the Supreme Court	of the United
15	States at 10:05 a.m.	
16		
17	APPEARANCES:	
18	ROMAN MARTINEZ, ESQUIRE, Washingt	on, D.C.; on behalf
19	of the Petitioners.	
20	GEN. ELIZABETH B. PRELOGAR, Solic	itor General,
21	Department of Justice, Washin	gton, D.C.; on behalf
22	of the Respondents.	
23		
24		
25		

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1	PROCEEDINGS
2	(10:05 a.m.)
3	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear
4	argument first this morning in Case 22-1219,
5	Relentless versus the Department of Commerce.
6	Mr. Martinez.
7	ORAL ARGUMENT OF ROMAN MARTINEZ
8	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONERS
9	MR. MARTINEZ: Mr. Chief Justice, and
10	may it please the Court:
11	For too long, Chevron has distorted
12	the judicial process and undermined statutory
13	interpretation. It should be overruled for
14	three reasons.
15	First, Chevron violates the
16	Constitution. Article III empowers judges to
17	say what the law is. It requires them to
18	interpret federal statutes using their best and
19	independent judgment.
20	Chevron undermines that duty. It
21	reallocates interpretive authority from courts
22	to agencies, and it forces courts to adopt
23	inferior agency constructions that are issued
24	for political or policy reasons. In doing so,
25	Chevron blocks judges from serving as faithful

- 1 agents of Congress. It mandates judicial bias 2 and encourages agency overreach. And by 3 removing key checks on executive power, it threatens individual liberty. 4 Chevron also violates the APA. 5 6 most straightforward reading of Section 706 7 requires de novo review of legal questions. Congress put constitutional and statutory 8 9 interpretation on equal footing, and it required 10 independent legal judgment as to both. 11 Justice Scalia wrote, the APA's text 12 contemplates that courts, not agencies, will 13 authoritatively resolve ambiguities in statutes. 14 And, third, this Court's only 15 justification for Chevron is the implied 16 delegation theory, but that theory is a fiction. 17 There's no reason to think that Congress intends 18 every ambiguity in every agency statute to give 19 agencies an ongoing power to interpret and reinterpret federal law in ways that override 20 21 its best meaning. In this case, the agency 2.2 misinterpreted the MSA to force struggling 23 fishermen to pay up to 20 percent of their
- The government says that even if all

annual profits to federal agents.

- 1 nine of you agree with us that the agency's
- 2 construction is worse than ours, you should
- 3 nonetheless defer to that construction and
- 4 uphold their program under Chevron. That's not
- 5 consistent with the rule of law. If we have the
- 6 best view of the statute, we should win this
- 7 case.
- I welcome the Court's questions.
- 9 JUSTICE THOMAS: Mr. Martinez, how
- 10 much deference is in tension with the judicial
- 11 role?
- 12 MR. MARTINEZ: I think it's very much
- in tension, Your Honor.
- 14 JUSTICE THOMAS: No. How much would
- 15 it require? I mean, your argument is that
- 16 Chevron deference is problematic. But how do we
- 17 determine how much deference is too much
- 18 deference?
- 19 MR. MARTINEZ: I think you've
- 20 certainly crossed the line when you have a rule
- 21 that says that we're going to allocate
- 22 interpretive authority from -- from Article III
- 23 courts to an agency. And so, when -- when
- 24 you've got deference that amounts to that, which
- is what Chevron deference is, then I think

- 1 you've -- you've crossed the line because what
- 2 you've really done is --
- JUSTICE THOMAS: I think what I'm
- 4 trying -- what I'm asking is, how do we know
- 5 where the line is? We show deference. You --
- 6 there's Skidmore deference.
- 7 MR. MARTINEZ: Sure.
- 8 JUSTICE THOMAS: We are deferential in
- 9 fact finding, et cetera. So I'm just trying to
- 10 determine whether you're saying that we -- if
- 11 it's not de novo review --
- MR. MARTINEZ: Right.
- JUSTICE THOMAS: -- without any
- 14 presumptions or deference, then it's
- 15 problematic.
- 16 MR. MARTINEZ: I -- I think deference
- 17 becomes problematic when it requires a judge to
- say that the law means X when really the judge
- 19 thinks the law means Y. I think Skidmore
- 20 deference is not problematic because it doesn't
- 21 require that. Skidmore deference essentially
- 22 says -- and we would be very comfortable with
- 23 Skidmore -- that because the agency has a -- has
- an important role to play in the process, often
- 25 the agency has helped draft the statute, the

1 agency has knowledge of the policy context 2 surrounding the statute and its implementation. 3 Of course, courts should pay special 4 attention to what agencies say, but the agency ultimately has to bring its expertise to bear in 5 6 a way that's persuasive. And if the -- the 7 court isn't persuasive, if the court thinks that 8 the law means X even though the agency thinks 9 the law means Y, then the court needs to go with the best interpretation of the statute, just 10 11 like it does in every other --12 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well --13 MR. MARTINEZ: -- area of statutory or constitutional --14 15 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: -- let's --16 MR. MARTINEZ: -- interpretation. 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: -- let's 18 suppose the statute says the Department of 19 Transportation will set length limits for trucks that are reasonable. 20 21 MR. MARTINEZ: Right. 2.2 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Is that a 23 legal question for the court, or is that a 24 policy question for the agency?

MR. MARTINEZ: I think that --

Τ	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: It's a the
2	the legal authority says they've got to be
3	reasonable. That's a term that courts apply in
4	many situations.
5	MR. MARTINEZ: I I think that a
6	court looking at that statute would try to
7	determine the best meaning of the statute, and
8	the best meaning of the statute there would be
9	that that the use of the term real
LO	"reasonable" confers upon the agency discretion
L1	to choose among certain policy options.
L2	Now that doesn't mean that the agency
L3	can just do whatever it wants because there are
L4	limits, and the court has to police that limits.
L5	Michigan versus EPA is a good example. Congress
L6	used a broad term like "appropriate" and the
L7	question was which is similar to
L8	"reasonable," in giving the agency a a range
L9	of discretion. But, at the same time, when the
20	agency said, well, we don't have to consider
21	costs in figuring out whether something is
22	appropriate, the court said no, that, as a legal
23	matter, the best interpretation of the word
24	"appropriate" in the context of this statute
25	requires the agency to consider costs.

1	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, what if
2	the statute says that the agency can regulate
3	truck truck length for vehicles that travel
4	in interstate commerce and there's a question
5	whether or not interstate commerce the the
6	delegation for interstate commerce is satisfied
7	when particular
8	MR. MARTINEZ: Right.
9	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS:
10	circumstances are present.
11	MR. MARTINEZ: I I think that that
12	would be a case if you're if the Court were
13	called upon to interpret what if the dispute
14	was about whether what interstate commerce
15	means, I think that would be a classic legal
16	question that would be a legal question for the
17	Court. And I think it actually highlights
18	because interstate commerce is probably there
19	because of the constitutional limitations, it
20	highlights the fact that, really, the same rules
21	should apply to interpreting constitutional
22	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, I mean
23	
24	MR. MARTINEZ: provisions as
25	statutes.

Τ	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: you could
2	imagine you could imagine situations where
3	the interstate commerce determination is
4	peculiarly fact-bound, you know, trucks
5	transferring loads and at transfer points on
6	the border. Is that in interstate commerce for
7	each one or not? And isn't the policy judgment
8	of the agency pertinent in that situation?
9	MR. MARTINEZ: I think, certainly, the
LO	policy judgment of the agency is is pertinent
L1	in determining sort of the facts because the
L2	agency might be on the ground and understand the
L3	factual scenario.
L4	But I think there's a an important
L5	legal component to that question, that in any
L6	other context, like, for example, if you were
L7	interpreting the Constitution, I think the court
L8	would would quite reasonably think it's its
L9	own job to interpret the constitutional
20	requirement of interstate commerce and would
21	would say would give it its best meaning.
22	And I think
23	JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, let me give you
24	
25	MP MARTINET: the same approach

1 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- a few more examples 2 along the same lines, Mr. Martinez. 3 Is a new product designed to promote healthy cholesterol levels a dietary supplement 4 or a drug? 5 6 MR. MARTINEZ: Sorry. Can you give 7 that one more time? JUSTICE KAGAN: A new product designed 8 9 to promote healthy cholesterol levels, is it a 10 dietary supplement -- that's a statutory term --11 MR. MARTINEZ: Okay. 12 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- or a drug? MR. MARTINEZ: I -- I think it would 13 14 depend on -- on the -- the original 15 understanding of the text of that statute in --16 read in context. 17 JUSTICE KAGAN: You -- you want the --18 MR. MARTINEZ: And I think that's a --19 a legal question for a court. 20 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- you think that the court should determine whether this new product 21 22 is a dietary supplement or a drug without giving 23 deference to the agency, where it is not clear 24 from the text of the statute or from using any

traditional methods of statutory interpretation

```
1
      whether, in fact, the new product is a dietary
 2
      supplement or a drug?
 3
               MR. MARTINEZ: I --
                JUSTICE KAGAN: You want the courts to
 4
     decide that?
 5
 6
               MR. MARTINEZ: Justice Kagan, I think
 7
     with respect to that question or any other of
      the -- a legal question, I think what the court
 8
 9
     would do, there -- there are going to be hard
     questions, but I think the court would bring all
10
11
      the traditional tools of construction to bear --
12
                JUSTICE KAGAN: They do that --
               MR. MARTINEZ: -- and would --
13
14
                JUSTICE KAGAN: -- under Chevron.
15
      They -- you know, we have made clear all the
16
      traditional tools, if you can find an answer,
17
      that is the answer. So the court is very rarely
18
      in the situation in which you're talking where
19
      it thinks the law means X and instead it says Y.
20
                If it thinks it means X, under
      Chevron, as we've understood it and made clear
21
2.2
      and reigned it in a little bit over these last
23
      few years, it's supposed to say X. But
      sometimes law runs out. Sometimes there's a
24
```

gap. Sometimes there's a genuine ambiguity.

- 1 And I -- I don't know. In that case,
- 2 I would rather have people at HHS telling me
- 3 whether this new product was a dietary
- 4 supplement or a drug.
- 5 MR. MARTINEZ: So, Your Honor, I think
- 6 a couple things.
- 7 First of all, I don't think Chevron is
- 8 a doctrine that only applies to tie-breaker
- 9 50/50 scenarios. It's never been understood
- 10 that way. You know, Justice Scalia in his
- 11 famous article in 1989 --
- 12 JUSTICE KAGAN: It's not a
- 13 tie-breaker. There are just some times where
- 14 you look at a statute and the most honest
- reading is that there's -- there's a
- 16 gap there --
- 17 MR. MARTINEZ: But --
- 18 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- because of the
- 19 limits of language, because of the limits of our
- ability to predict the future.
- 21 And so who fills that gap?
- 22 MR. MARTINEZ: But I -- I guess what I
- would sort of push back on is I don't think
- there's a gap if the court looks at the statute
- and thinks, hey, this is a really hard case,

- 1 it's a really close statute. Fifty-two percent
- 2 likely, I think -- you know, I have 52 percent
- 3 confidence that X is right --
- 4 JUSTICE KAGAN: I'll give you --
- 5 MR. MARTINEZ: -- 48 percent likely --
- 6 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- I'll give you
- 7 another one, Mr. Martinez. Does the term "power
- 8 production" -- I'm just -- these are real cases.
- 9 MR. MARTINEZ: Right.
- 10 JUSTICE KAGAN: These are -- these are
- 11 prototypical Chevron cases.
- MR. MARTINEZ: But --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Does the term "power
- 14 production capacity" refer to AC power that is
- sent out to the electric grid or DC power that's
- 16 produced by a solar panel?
- 17 MR. MARTINEZ: I think same answer as
- 18 the first hypothetical. But let me try to --
- 19 let me try to sort of give you a different
- 20 framework for thinking about this problem.
- 21 Let's imagine that that statute came
- to a court before an agency had even acted in
- 23 the first place. What would a court do? Would
- 24 a court look at the statute -- a statutory term
- 25 like that that's a hard -- presents a hard

- 1 interpretive question and say: Well, this is
- 2 hard, it's sort of 52/48, it's kind of close. I
- 3 think the law has run out and I'm just not going
- 4 to be able to decide this. I think the court
- 5 would go with the best interpretation.
- 6 JUSTICE KAGAN: The -- the --
- 7 the court might -- the court in that case would
- 8 have to make a choice. But, you see, here, the
- 9 court can say, you know, the best option is to
- 10 listen carefully and to defer if it's reasonable
- and if it's consistent with everything that we
- 12 know that Congress has said, to defer to people
- 13 who actually know things about these things --
- MR. MARTINEZ: But --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: -- to -- you know, to
- 16 people who understand the way particular
- 17 questions fit within a broader statutory and
- 18 regulatory scheme, to people who have
- 19 understanding of the policies and of the facts
- 20 that led to this.
- I'll give you a third example.
- MR. MARTINEZ: Can I respond?
- JUSTICE KAGAN: And this will be my
- last one, Mr. Martinez, and it's going to be
- 25 fairest one because it's going to be one you

- 1 know about, which is Chevron. As a stationary
- 2 source in the Clean Air Act, does it refer to
- 3 whole plants or to each pollution-emitting
- 4 device within the plant?
- 5 MR. MARTINEZ: We think that the
- 6 decision in Chevron was -- reflected the best
- 7 interpretation with much respect to Justice
- 8 Gorsuch's mother's EPA. We think that that was
- 9 the best interpretation.
- 10 But -- but can I just go back and I
- 11 think what you described earlier about listening
- to the agency and taking into account all those
- 13 things, our -- our rule would allow that.
- 14 That's Skidmore.
- I think the only difference between
- 16 our rule and -- and the Skid- -- what -- the
- 17 Skidmore sort of approach and the Chevron
- approach is that after listening to the agency's
- 19 explanation of all the things that you said, if
- 20 the court isn't persuaded by the agency that the
- 21 agency's interpretation is correct, Chevron
- 22 would say you still have to go with the agency.
- 23 And that's just like a dramatic thing.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But why not?
- 25 Meaning I -- I think all of the play in

- disagreement is around the word "ambiguity." I
- 2 know that there have been some earlier cases
- 3 that suggested if there were two plausible
- 4 meanings, you went with the agency meaning. I
- 5 think we've gone far beyond that.
- It has to be two reasonable meanings.
- 7 Assuming -- you -- you make an assumption that
- 8 there is a best answer. I don't know how you
- 9 can say there's a best answer when Justices of
- 10 this Court routinely disagree and we routinely
- 11 disagree at 5/4.
- 12 Is the best answer simply a majority
- 13 answer? I don't think so.
- MR. MARTINEZ: But, Your Honor, if --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I happen, when I
- 16 dissent, think the others got it wrong.
- 17 (Laughter.)
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: And they often do.
- 19 (Laughter.)
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But putting that
- 21 aside -- but putting that aside, in those
- 22 situations, there are two plausible -- not
- 23 nearly plausible. There are two best answers.
- 24 And the question is who makes the choice or
- 25 helps you make the choice.

1 And if the Court can -- can disagree 2 reasonably and comes to that tie-breaker point, 3 and it could be 51/49, it could be 52/53, if it's that close, why shouldn't the person with 4 all of the qualities you spoke about, the entity 5 6 with all of the qualities, expertise, 7 experience, on-the-ground execution, knowledge of consequences, why shouldn't deference be 8 9 given to that entity? 10 MR. MARTINEZ: Justice Sotomayor, I 11 think your explanation of ambiguity just now 12 just proves the problem with Chevron because I 13 think what you said is that whenever there's a 14 case, a statutory case in which the members of 15 the Court disagree with one another, that --16 that's essentially saying the statute is 17 ambiguous because reasonable people can 18 disagree. 19 JUSTICE KAGAN: That's what nobody 20 believes --21 MR. MARTINEZ: Well --2.2 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- about Chevron, Mr. 23 Martinez. As we've described it, if you -- you 24 work hard to figure out a statutory problem.

You don't say, oh, it's difficult. Oh, there

- 1 are two interpretations. Oh, you know, not
- 2 everybody agrees with this in three seconds
- 3 flat.
- 4 You don't say that. You do everything
- 5 you do, look at the text, look at legislative
- 6 history if you believe in legislative history.
- 7 Look at context. Look at every tool you can,
- 8 and still there are places where we don't know
- 9 whether this drug is a -- is a -- is a --
- 10 whether this product is a drug or a dietary
- 11 supplement, and it's best to defer to people who
- do know, who have had long experience on the
- ground, who have seen a thousand of these kinds
- 14 of situations.
- 15 And, you know, judges should know what
- 16 they don't know.
- 17 MR. MARTINEZ: I -- I agree with that,
- 18 Justice Kagan. But, with -- with all due
- 19 respect, I -- I think I understood Justice
- 20 Sotomayor to be saying that whenever judge --
- 21 Justices of this Court disagree about the best
- 22 meaning of the statute, because, obviously,
- everyone on the Court is reasonable, that shows
- that there's an ambiguity.
- If that's the test, which I think was

- the implication of the question, then that can't be wrong. That's much broader than --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: That wasn't --
- 4 MR. MARTINEZ: -- step one.
- 5 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- my implication.
- 6 My implication was that using all the statutory
- 7 tools, you can still come up, using them in good
- 8 faith, using them, you can still come up with no
- 9 answer --
- 10 MR. MARTINEZ: Well, I think --
- 11 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- with no clear
- 12 answer.
- MR. MARTINEZ: -- I -- I think you can
- can come up with no clear answer because some --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Or no best answer.
- 16 MR. MARTINEZ: -- because some
- 17 statutes are hard. But I think you can come up
- 18 with a best answer, and -- and the reason I
- 19 think that is because --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Best only because
- 21 a majority agrees?
- JUSTICE JACKSON: But --
- MR. MARTINEZ: No, no, because --
- 24 because, if you had the same statute with the
- 25 same interpretive question posed to you without

1 the agency having acted, I don't think you would 2 say there's no answer here. I think you would 3 choose the best answer. JUSTICE GORSUCH: I mean, Mr. Martinez 4 5 JUSTICE JACKSON: But, Mr. Martinez --6 7 JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- I guess I'm 8 struggling to understand what -- what -- what's 9 at stake here given the questions because, as I 10 understand Justice Kagan's hypotheticals, which 11 are -- are hard ones, that one option would be 12 to say it's ambiguous and, therefore, the agency always wins. That -- that's what I understood 13 14 Chevron to mean at least coming in here today. 15 Another would be to listen carefully 16 to both sides and provide special weight under 17 Skidmore to a coequal branch of government's 18 views about the law, which one would think we 19 would do anyway, and that they would have --20 have -- be considered great weight in arriving at the best answer and that that's what a court 21 2.2 would do if -- if there were no interpretive 23 principles advanced by the executive branch, if there hadn't been some sort of rule or 24 25 adjudication.

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1
                Is that -- is that correct?
 2
               MR. MARTINEZ: I -- I think that's
 3
      correct. And I think the difference between the
      Skidmore approach that you just laid out and the
 4
 5
     Chevron approach is just, at the end of the day,
 6
      once you've considered all the expertise and all
7
      the information the agency has to bear --
                JUSTICE GORSUCH: Who decides?
8
 9
               MR. MARTINEZ: Who decides? Who -- is
      the judge persuaded or not persuaded?
10
11
                JUSTICE GORSUCH: Is the judge
12
     persuaded at the end of the day, with proper
13
     deference given to a coequal branch of
14
      government, or does the judge abdicate that
15
      responsibility and say automatically whatever
16
      the agency says wins?
17
               MR. MARTINEZ: Right, even -- even if
18
      the judge is not persuaded.
19
                JUSTICE JACKSON: But, Mr. Martinez --
20
               JUSTICE GORSUCH: And then -- and then
21
                JUSTICE JACKSON: -- doesn't that --
2.2
23
                JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- and then if I
     might just -- just finish up, what -- what's the
24
25
      effective difference of that? It seems to me
```

- 1 that in the first case, when -- when a judge
- 2 says here's the law, it's settled, we're done,
- 3 right? It can be appealed, but at the end of
- 4 the day, if the Supreme Court of the United
- 5 States upholds that interpretation, we're
- 6 finished.
- Whereas, under the Chevron approach,
- 8 are we finished?
- 9 MR. MARTINEZ: No.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: What happens?
- MR. MARTINEZ: I think the agency can
- overrule what the court said. The agency can
- overrule what itself said. I think that's a
- 14 very strange thing, that in every other area of
- 15 statutory interpretation, we understand the law
- to have one fixed meaning and the goal is to try
- 17 to figure out that fixed meaning, but Chevron by
- design creates this world in which the agency is
- 19 -- is -- because there's this zone of
- 20 discretion, the -- the agency and ambiguity, the
- 21 agency can kind of flip-flop and then force
- 22 courts to flip-flop with them.
- 23 JUSTICE GORSUCH: And I'm struck on
- 24 that score by the Brand X case, which involved
- 25 broadband, in which this Court said, okay,

- 1 agency, you automatically win with respect to
- one interpretation of the Bush administration, I
- 3 believe it was, and then, of course, the next
- 4 administration came back and proposed an
- 5 opposite rule.
- 6 MR. MARTINEZ: Right.
- 7 JUSTICE GORSUCH: And then the next
- 8 administration came back and flipped it back
- 9 closer to the first. And as I understand it,
- 10 the present Administration is thinking about
- 11 going back to where --
- MR. MARTINEZ: That's -- that --
- 13 that's exactly right.
- 14 JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- where we started.
- MR. MARTINEZ: That's exactly right,
- 16 Justice Gorsuch, and I think it -- it plays up
- 17 the real problem. Chevron really is a
- 18 reliance-destroying doctrine. Imagine if you're
- 19 a person or a regulated entity and you're trying
- 20 to figure out what the law is. You should be
- 21 able to rely on the best interpretation of the
- law and not have to, you know, check the -- the
- 23 C.F.R. every couple years to see if the law has
- somehow changed, even though Congress hasn't
- 25 acted.

Τ	JUSTICE GORSUCH: And that's the delt
2	between Skidmore and Chevron?
3	MR. MARTINEZ: I think I think
4	that's right. I mean, Skidmore, I think, would
5	allow for for courts to give meaningful
6	weight and consideration to to persuasive
7	opinions by agencies. The only thing Skidmore
8	doesn't do is require a court to give up its
9	its interpretive ultimate interpretive say
LO	and defer to an interpretation that is not
L1	persuasive.
L2	JUSTICE GORSUCH: Thank you.
L3	JUSTICE JACKSON: Mr. Martinez, what
L 4	what I'm stuck on is what seems to be an
L5	assumption in your argument that every question
L6	posed with respect to interpreting
L7	interpreting a statute is a legal one.
L8	I see Chevron as doing the very
L9	important work of helping courts stay away from
20	policymaking, and so I I'd like for you to
21	sort of think of it through that lens and help
22	me understand why, if we do away with Chevron's
23	framework, we won't have a problem of courts
24	actually making a policy decision.
25	So Justice Kagan gave you a number of

- 1 examples, and I think the reason why those
- 2 examples are hard or why they're ambiguous or
- 3 whatever is because, at bottom, they're not
- 4 asking legal questions; they're asking policy
- 5 questions. How is it that, you know, stationary
- 6 source is to be defined? That's not really a
- 7 legal question. I mean, there could be several
- 8 reasonable ways of interpreting that. And at
- 9 the end of the day, I think the way I've been
- 10 thinking about Chevron is Congress has given
- 11 that policy choice to the agency.
- 12 And my concern is that if we take away
- 13 something like Chevron, the court will then
- suddenly become a policymaker by majority rule
- or not, making policy determinations. So how
- 16 can we avoid that?
- 17 MR. MARTINEZ: So we agree, obviously,
- 18 that -- that courts should not be in the
- 19 business of policymaking. And I think the whole
- 20 enterprise of statutory interpretation, when
- 21 properly understood, is -- is designed to take
- 22 courts out of policymaking because what the
- 23 court is trying to do is -- is act as a faithful
- 24 agent of what Congress has done and find the
- 25 best --

Т	JUSTICE JACKSON: But isn't that
2	MR. MARTINEZ: interpretation.
3	JUSTICE JACKSON: isn't that what
4	Chevron does? I mean, isn't Chevron, step one,
5	even in this very case, asking the question,
6	one, has Congress made that policy
7	determination? So, for example, here, the
8	question is whether or not monitors on the boats
9	have to be paid for by the owner of the boat.
LO	I see that as a policy question.
L1	Congress could have said yes or no. There's
L2	nothing about law really inherently in the
L3	question of should the monitors on the boats be
L4	paid for by the owners or the government. So
L5	step one is has Congress in the statute answered
L6	that question.
L7	When we say no, everybody agrees
L8	that's not in the statute, then we say the
L9	agency can make that determination so long as
20	they do so in a reasonable way. And the and
21	courts sort of police the boundaries of
22	reasonableness, but whether or not the monitors
23	are paid for is not really a legal question.
24	MR. MARTINEZ: I think the question of
25	whether or not the law allows the agency to

- 1 to force the monitors to be paid for by private
- 2 industry is absolutely a legal question. I
- 3 agree with you that when Congress --
- 4 JUSTICE JACKSON: But isn't that the
- 5 same question as to whether or not -- isn't that
- 6 just another way of saying, can this policy
- 7 determination be made by the agency?
- 8 MR. MARTINEZ: No, I don't think so.
- 9 I think the difference is when the -- when the
- 10 -- when the policymaker, whether it's Congress
- or the agency, is sitting there and trying to
- 12 figure out, like, what the best policy is, would
- the world be a better place if industry has to
- pay for these monitors or not, that's absolutely
- 15 a policy question.
- 16 JUSTICE JACKSON: Okay. So that's the
- 17 question --
- 18 MR. MARTINEZ: But -- but --
- 19 JUSTICE JACKSON: -- right?
- MR. MARTINEZ: No, because, when it
- 21 comes to a court, the court is not figuring out
- 22 what the best thing for the world is. The court
- is figuring out, well, what did Congress
- 24 actually want here. It's --
- JUSTICE JACKSON: But I guess I'm

1 afraid that the court really is figuring out 2 what the best thing in the world is if we --3 MR. MARTINEZ: But -- but --JUSTICE JACKSON: -- look at it 4 through your lens, right, because, if the answer 5 6 to the question is, you know, should -- should 7 they pay for it or not, the agency has a view, and unless we're deferring to that view, I don't 8 9 see why we aren't overriding the -- the agency's 10 policy prerogative. 11 MR. MARTINEZ: The -- the question 12 that the court should be answering is not should agency -- should industry pay for the monitors. 13 14 The question that the court should be answering 15 is, did Congress require or allow agent --16 industry to be forced to pay for the monitors? 17 And that's a very different question. 18 the different between law and policymaking. 19 And I think the whole assumption and 20 the whole understanding of statutory interpretation under this Court's cases is 21 2.2 there's a difference between law and 23 policymaking. Judges are there not to exercise 24 force or will. They're there to exercise 25 judgment. They're -- they're serving as neutral

1 umpires. They're not players on the field. 2 JUSTICE JACKSON: All right. So how 3 does that --JUSTICE BARRETT: Mr. Martinez --4 JUSTICE JACKSON: -- play out under 5 6 your interpretation -- so, here, what -- what is 7 the question we're supposed to be answering? 8 MR. MARTINEZ: The question you're 9 supposed to be answering is, did -- does this 10 statute require -- has Congress required --11 either required the -- the monitors to be paid 12 for by industry, or has it given the agency the authority to make that decision? And I don't 13 14 think -- I think that is a legal -- both of 15 those versions of that question are legal 16 questions, and the answer is no. 17 JUSTICE BARRETT: Mr. Martinez, can I 18 ask you a question about the line between law 19 and policy? And I want to ask you in the 20 context of one of Justice Kagan's examples, the 21 dietary supplement or drug. 2.2 Where is the line between something 23 that would be then subject to arbitrary and 24 capricious review and something that's a 25 question of law? Because I'm just wondering

- 1 whether we could say that the definition of
- 2 dietary supplement or drug might be something
- 3 that's a question of statutory interpretation in
- 4 the context of the statute, but which category
- 5 any one thing fell in might be a question of
- 6 policy for the agency.
- 7 MR. MARTINEZ: Right. I --
- 8 JUSTICE BARRETT: Is that possible?
- 9 MR. MARTINEZ: -- I -- I think that's
- 10 right. I think that would be more of a -- of a,
- 11 you know, application of law to fact or a
- 12 factual question. But I think the core question
- of, like, you know, what is the meaning of
- 14 dietary supplement, and I forget what the other
- 15 alternative was, those are legal questions.
- JUSTICE BARRETT: But whether the
- 17 particular cholesterol-reducing drug fell --
- 18 MR. MARTINEZ: Right.
- 19 JUSTICE BARRETT: -- in one category
- 20 or the other, I mean, you know --
- 21 MR. MARTINEZ: That -- that would be a
- 22 --
- JUSTICE BARRETT: -- presumably, that
- 24 depends on how does this function? What is the
- 25 mechanism by which it decreases cholesterol?

- 1 MR. MARTINEZ: I -- I think that's
- 2 right. But I think it's -- I do think it is
- 3 important to make -- retain the sort of legal
- 4 component of that question and -- and make sure
- 5 that the courts have authority over that legal
- 6 component.
- 7 JUSTICE BARRETT: I want to ask you
- 8 something about your Article III argument too.
- 9 You know, Justice Thomas asked you what the line
- 10 is. And, you know, courts all of the time make
- judgments about whether things are reasonable.
- 12 But I -- I don't understand you to be
- disagreeing that things like whether
- something -- that an agency could be tasked with
- deciding what was the most feasible, most
- 16 useful, most reasonable.
- 17 Well, courts could do that too. So is
- that a delegation of judicial power that would
- offend Article III in your view, to give those
- 20 kinds of --
- 21 MR. MARTINEZ: No, I think --
- 22 JUSTICE BARRETT: -- decisions to an
- agency?
- 24 MR. MARTINEZ: -- I think the way to
- 25 think about those kinds of -- of statutory

- 1 provisions would be that the best interpretation
- of the statute, given the nature of the word
- 3 "reasonable" in context, is to confer a range of
- 4 discretion on the agency.
- 5 And so I think a court in that case --
- 6 if -- if the agency is operating within the
- 7 range of discretion, that's arbitrary and
- 8 capricious review. If the agency is sort of
- 9 operating at the edges, you have to figure out
- 10 where the guardrails are. That's the legal
- 11 question.
- So, if the -- if the statute says, you
- 13 know, the agency can pick red, blue, or green,
- then the choice among those three options is for
- 15 the agency. But, if you have a legal question
- like, oh, does pink count as red, that's a legal
- 17 question.
- 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr.
- 19 Martinez.
- 20 How much of an actual question on the
- 21 ground is this? I saw some study that said we
- 22 haven't relied on Chevron for 14 years. And
- Judge Kethledge has written -- he's been a judge
- for 10 years. He's never invoked Chevron step
- 25 two.

Т	rou know, judges are used to deciding
2	things, and when they get around to doing it,
3	they tend to think what they've come up with is
4	not only the best answer, but it's the only
5	answer.
6	(Laughter.)
7	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: And and I
8	just wonder how often this comes up?
9	MR. MARTINEZ: I think it comes up a
LO	lot, Your Honor. And this Court hasn't relied
L1	on Chevron since 2016, but the lower courts
L2	still have to apply it. And I think these two
L3	cases, the the two that you're going to hear
L4	this morning, sort of show what happens when
L5	when courts are applying this doctrine because
L6	they're they're essentially getting to a
L7	point where they don't really have to figure out
L8	the best answer and they can just you know,
L9	instead of asking what does the statute mean,
20	they can ask a different threshold question,
21	which is, is this statute ambiguous enough that
22	that we should just, you know, let the agency
23	do the work for us?
24	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you.
25	Justice Thomas?

1	Justice Alito?
2	JUSTICE ALITO: Mr. Martinez, would
3	you agree that one of the reasons why Chevron
4	was originally so popular was concern that
5	judges were allowing their policy views,
6	consciously or unconsciously, to to to
7	influence their interpretation of the statutes
8	in question?
9	MR. MARTINEZ: Yes.
10	JUSTICE ALITO: Why was that fear
11	unfounded? Why do you think now that the fear
12	was unfounded?
13	MR. MARTINEZ: Well, I think three
14	things. First of all, I think the fear has
15	it's reasonable to think the fear has diminished
16	over time, regardless of what it was then, in
17	large part due to the very salutary developments
18	in the way that this Court and the lower courts
19	generally now think about statutory
20	construction.
21	In the old days, there was a lot of
22	reliance on legislative history and on sort of
23	more free-form analysis that I think made it
24	easier for policy considerations to infect the
25	iudicial decision-making process. But this

- 1 Court has now made clear that, you know, really,
- 2 we should be text-focused, we should be focused
- 3 on faithful agency to Congress. So I think that
- 4 is one difference.
- 5 I think another difference is courts
- 6 now have become more appreciative of the fact
- 7 that we're not just talking about, you know,
- 8 judicial -- rules of, like, judicially made
- 9 common law about how to interpret statutes. We
- 10 have the APA here.
- 11 Justice Scalia was a big defender of
- 12 Chevron in its original incarnation but, over
- 13 time, came to realize that the APA had text that
- 14 actually bore on this question.
- 15 And I think, when you're enforcing
- 16 that text, you come to the same place as our
- 17 Article III argument, which is that courts have
- 18 to exercise independent judgment.
- 19 JUSTICE ALITO: Do you think that the
- 20 canons of interpretation that we have now and
- 21 all of the other tools that we have in our
- 22 statutory interpretation toolkit are like the
- 23 enigma machine and so we have these statutes and
- they're sort of written in code and we run them
- 25 through the enigma machine and, abra cadabra, we

- 1 have the best interpretation? Do you really
- 2 think that's how it works?
- 3 MR. MARTINEZ: I -- I think that what
- 4 this Court does with respect to the normal
- 5 canons of construction is it's used the -- it's
- 6 -- it's generated those canons as rough rules of
- 7 thumb to help guide the interpretive process
- 8 because, if the Court believes that the canons
- 9 best approximate the best original meaning of
- 10 the statute, especially -- and then there's some
- 11 canons that -- that sort of are not purely
- textual canons but that sort of are informed by
- 13 constitutional -- foundational constitutional
- 14 values.
- I think Chevron's very different from
- 16 that because, with Chevron, you're doing
- 17 something -- you're not trying to find the best
- interpretation anymore. You're, in fact,
- 19 agreeing that you have to impose the not-best
- interpretation because you have to defer.
- 21 And so, unlike all the other canons,
- 22 Chevron is the only one that says to courts, you
- 23 can stop doing your normal interpretive function
- and we're going to allocate that interpretive
- 25 function outside of Article III.

1 JUSTICE ALITO: Thank you. 2 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice 3 Sotomayor? 4 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I counted over, I 5 think -- not I -- the Solicitor General or someone has given us a list of 77 cases in which 6 7 the Court has used the Chevron approach and 8 interpreted what the law was. 9 Your overruling Chevron puts a 10 question to all those 77 cases. 11 MR. MARTINEZ: No, Your Honor, I 12 think --13 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: No, your out is it's stare decisis now? 14 15 MR. MARTINEZ: Right. So --16 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Until the agency 17 does something else? And then people can come 18 back because it's not stare decisis anymore? 19 MR. MARTINEZ: So I think, with 20 respect to the effects of -- of applying normal 21 rules of construction here instead of Chevron, 22 I'd say two things. First of all, the 70 holdings or 23 whatever, the bottom-line holdings in those 24 cases would get stare decisis, so they would not 25

- 1 be undermined. So there's no convulsive change
- 2 of the law with respect to that.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I don't understand
- 4 how that happens. Once you have a new approach,
- 5 I'm not sure.
- 6 MR. MARTINEZ: I --
- 7 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But let me move on
- 8 to the second part of my question, which is the
- 9 cases that come to the Court are usually the
- 10 hard cases. So you say in the last 14 years
- 11 we've barely referenced Chevron.
- 12 And do you know what the breakup is?
- 13 How often have we consistently upheld the agency
- in those cases?
- MR. MARTINEZ: In -- in the cases
- 16 since 2016?
- 17 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Yes.
- 18 MR. MARTINEZ: I -- I don't know the
- 19 track record on it, Your Honor.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I know, it's
- 21 interesting.
- 22 MR. MARTINEZ: But I will say, I mean,
- 23 there -- there's some prominent --
- 24 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But -- but putting
- 25 that aside where we disagree, do you suggest

- 1 that our disagreement was based on ignoring of
- 2 Chevron or us doing exactly what you say we
- 3 should be doing, which is to say this is outside
- 4 the bounds of reasonableness or around the
- 5 quardrails because you're going outside of
- 6 plausible --
- 7 MR. MARTINEZ: I --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- of reasonable
- 9 interpretation?
- 10 MR. MARTINEZ: -- I think the Court in
- 11 cases like the American Hospital case or the
- 12 Digital Realty case, which I think are two
- 13 really good recent examples, the Court
- 14 unanimously overturns the lower court decision
- 15 because it does exactly the right thing. It
- 16 does all the canons at step one and it -- and it
- 17 essentially says, like, the statute is clear.
- 18 But I think what those 9-0 decisions
- show is how confusing and unworkable Chevron is
- 20 because the lower courts, you know, purported to
- do or didn't really do what they were supposed
- to do and they came to the opposite conclusion,
- 23 not necessarily because they thought that --
- that your interpretation wasn't the best but
- 25 rather because it thought that the statute was

- 1 ambiguous enough that it required deference.
- 2 And so it's like a threshold --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Counsel, that
- 4 judgment is inherent in every question. I mean,
- 5 that -- that kind of problem is just a part not
- 6 just of judging but of decision-making, period,
- 7 of life. And so it's not clear to me that the
- 8 fact that there may be some ambiguity about
- 9 what -- how much ambiguity, the question that
- 10 Justice Thomas asked, it doesn't take away from
- 11 the basic premise of Chevron, which is a
- 12 reasonable interpretation within the bounds
- of -- of common statutory interpretation should
- 14 be given deference.
- MR. MARTINEZ: Right. But I do think
- the ambiguity trigger introduces a whole kind of
- threshold question that's very hard to apply
- 18 neutrally. I mean, you have great judges, Judge
- 19 Kethledge, I think, was referenced. He
- 20 doesn't -- he never found a case that required
- 21 him to go past step one.
- Just Silberman, another great judge,
- 23 said that in most cases he thought the statute
- 24 was ambiguous. And if there's that much
- disagreement, then I think that's a sign that

- 1 Chevron really isn't workable.
- 2 And this Court has tried to rein in
- 3 Chevron in numerous ways, but I think that what
- 4 all of those efforts show is that you kind of
- 5 need a secret decoder ring to figure out what
- 6 the law means under this Court's approach.
- 7 You have to do step zero. You have to
- 8 apply need. Then you have to do a robust step
- 9 one inquiry, taking into account Footnote 9 and
- 10 taking into account, you know, how much
- 11 ambiguity is needed.
- 12 In this -- in the D.C. Circuit, you
- have to do step one and a half, where you have
- 14 to figure out whether the agency recognized that
- 15 the statute was ambiguous.
- Under Kisor, there's maybe a step
- three that says you turn off deference when the
- 18 agency's operating outside of its area of
- 19 expertise. And then overlying all that you've
- 20 got the Major Questions Doctrine.
- 21 And so I think, if -- if -- if that's
- 22 kind of what --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Well, that's the
- 24 Court's creation.
- MR. MARTINEZ: Right. But it's the

- 1 Court's creation because it's trying to solve
- 2 the fundamental problem, which is that Chevron
- 3 is doing something very weird. It's taking
- 4 interpretive authority that belongs to courts
- 5 and it's giving it to agencies.
- 6 So all of these bells and whistles are
- 7 efforts to kind of claw it back to address the
- 8 symptoms, but I think it's time for the Court to
- 9 address the disease, the underlying problem,
- 10 which is Chevron itself.
- 11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice Kagan?
- 12 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Martinez, I want
- 13 you to think of this from Congress's
- 14 perspective. So I was thinking what is the next
- big piece of legislation on the horizon and who
- 16 knows, don't have a crystal ball, but I'm going
- 17 to say -- I'm going to guess that it's
- 18 artificial intelligence.
- 19 So let's imagine Congress enacts an
- 20 artificial intelligence bill and it has all
- 21 kinds of delegations, maybe it creates an agency
- 22 for the purpose or maybe it uses existing
- agencies and it has all kinds of delegations to
- that agency or agencies about how to regulate
- 25 artificial intelligence so that this nation can

- 1 capture the -- the -- the opportunities but also
- 2 meet the challenges of that.
- And then, just by the nature of things
- 4 and especially the nature of the subject, there
- 5 are going to be all kinds of places where,
- 6 although there's not an explicit delegation,
- 7 Congress has in effect left a gap. It has
- 8 created an ambiguity. And what Congress is
- 9 thinking is, do we want courts to fill that gap,
- or do we want an agency to fill that gap?
- 11 When the normal techniques of legal
- interpretation have run out, on the matter of
- 13 artificial intelligence, what does Congress
- 14 want, Mr. Martinez?
- MR. MARTINEZ: I think Congress wants
- 16 courts to interpret the best interpretation of
- 17 their --
- 18 JUSTICE KAGAN: Congress doesn't know
- 19 --
- 20 MR. KAGAN: -- apply the best
- 21 interpretation --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: -- what that answer
- 23 means. Congress knows that there are going to
- 24 be gaps because Congress can hardly see a week
- in the future with respect to this subject, let

- 1 alone a year or a decade in the future.
- 2 And Congress knows that there are
- 3 going to be things that it writes that it's just
- 4 not going to be clear how this will apply or
- 5 what it will mean with respect to countless
- 6 factual situations that this country will have
- 7 to address.
- 8 Does the Congress want this Court to
- 9 decide those questions, policy-laden questions,
- 10 of artificial intelligence?
- 11 MR. MARTINEZ: I -- I don't think
- 12 Congress wants the Court to do policy. I think
- 13 Congress wants the Court to do its ordinary
- 14 function, which is interpret the law and figure
- 15 -- and apply the best understanding of the law.
- 16 And I think that the implication of
- 17 your question is that this is some sort of
- intentional delegation by Congress that Chevron
- 19 deference is -- is this implicit delegation.
- 20 But I -- I don't think that's right. I think
- 21 many people, including a very insightful article
- 22 that -- that you wrote 20 years ago, make clear
- 23 that this is fictional. This is delegation of a
- 24 fiction.
- 25 JUSTICE KAGAN: Fictional just

- 1 means -- is like academic speak for presumed.
- We are indeed presuming congressional intent.
- 3 The congressional intent, you know, the -- the
- 4 delegation that's not explicit on the face of
- 5 this statute, but what we're thinking is
- 6 Congress knows things about different
- 7 institutions, about what they know, about what
- 8 they're competent with respect to, and Congress
- 9 knows that this Court and lower courts are not
- 10 competent with respect to deciding all the
- 11 questions about AI that are going to come up in
- 12 the future.
- 13 And what Congress wants, we presume,
- is for people who actually know about AI to
- decide those questions. And also, those same
- 16 people who know about AI are people who, to some
- degree in some way, are accountable to the
- 18 political process. They have constituencies.
- 19 They have fact-finding abilities. They are
- 20 obligated to go consult with people. They
- 21 report to a president, who needs to be elected.
- In all kinds of ways, both with --
- 23 with respect to expertise and with respect to
- their connections to the public and to other
- 25 policymaking entities, those are the people

- 1 Congress wants to decide questions about AI. We
- don't even know what the questions are about AI,
- 3 let alone the answers to them, we being the
- 4 Court.
- 5 MR. MARTINEZ: Justice Kagan, I think,
- 6 if we're trying to figure out what the -- what
- 7 the reasonable thing to infer that Congress has
- 8 presumed, I think the far more reasonable
- 9 presumption and the one that's most consistent
- 10 with our constitutional structure is that
- 11 Congress is going to presume that courts are
- going to do law and not policy, they're going to
- 13 pick the best interpretation and enforce the
- 14 best interpretation as to this statute in the
- 15 exact same way that they would do it with
- 16 respect to any other -- any other statute.
- 17 And I this think case actually -- you
- 18 know, AI is a trickier example --
- 19 JUSTICE KAGAN: I mean, but it's --
- 20 MR. MARTINEZ: -- but talk about this
- 21 case. Does anyone --
- 22 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- it's a real
- 23 example. I mean, this case, you know, whether
- 24 it's -- it -- it was a correct interpretation or
- 25 not a correct interpretation of Chevron is

- 1 really not the issue that we're deciding here.
- The issue we're deciding here is more
- 3 like that, is more like the countless policy
- 4 issues that are going to confront this country
- 5 in the years and decades ahead. Will courts be
- 6 able to decide these issues as to things they
- 7 know nothing about, courts that are completely
- 8 disconnected from the policy process, from the
- 9 political process, and, you know, that just
- don't have any expertise and -- and experience
- in an area, or are people in agencies going to
- 12 do that?
- MR. MARTINEZ: I --
- 14 JUSTICE KAGAN: That's what this case
- 15 is about.
- 16 MR. MARTINEZ: -- I think the
- 17 constitutional answer is that Congress needs to
- 18 set the rules with respect to AI. It can
- 19 delegate some policymaking discretion to
- 20 agencies, but once the law is written and the
- 21 interpretive function has begun, then that job
- is -- is for the courts.
- 23 And I think this case actually really
- is a good example because I think the problem
- 25 with Chevron is that, like, no one really -- I

- 1 mean, I'm curious to see what the Solicitor
- 2 General will say about this, but does anyone
- 3 really think that Congress was presuming that
- 4 the agency would get to decide the question of
- 5 who pays for the monitors?
- 6 JUSTICE KAGAN: Okay. I have one last
- 7 question. Do you think that Congress could
- 8 codify -- codify Chevron?
- 9 MR. MARTINEZ: I -- I don't think so
- 10 because I think that -- that a statute that
- 11 codifies Chevron would say, essentially, that
- the interpretive authority has been reallocated
- 13 from the court to the agency. I think that --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Congress --
- MR. MARTINEZ: -- interpretive
- 16 authority --
- 17 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- cannot decide that
- in cases -- after all the statutory tools have
- been used and there remains a gap or an
- 20 ambiguity, Congress could not decide that it
- 21 wants people who know something about something
- 22 to decide the questions that will be left over?
- MR. MARTINEZ: I -- I think that gives
- 24 away and -- and would -- would take away from
- 25 courts and give to agencies core judicial

- 1 interpretive authority. I don't think Congress
- 2 could do that. In the same way that Congress
- 3 couldn't tell the president how to exercise the
- 4 veto power or the pardon power, it can't tell
- 5 courts how to do interpretation and to defer to
- 6 someone else.
- 7 JUSTICE KAGAN: Thank you.
- 8 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 9 Gorsuch?
- 10 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Do we have to decide
- 11 that constitutional question?
- 12 MR. MARTINEZ: I think it makes sense
- 13 to decide the constitutional question. I think
- 14 you could --
- 15 JUSTICE GORSUCH: That wasn't -- do we
- 16 have to?
- 17 MR. MARTINEZ: I think you could
- 18 resolve this case under the APA, and we would
- 19 certainly welcome an -- an interpretation of the
- 20 APA that comes out our way, especially if it's
- 21 informed by constitutional avoidance principles
- 22 that I think have a lot of salience here.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Are -- does anything
- 24 in your argument suggest or depend upon the idea
- 25 that judges should make or decide policy

- 1 questions about AI or anything else?
- 2 MR. MARTINEZ: No. We -- we a hundred
- 3 percent agree that judges should not do policy.
- 4 We just think that they should do law. And
- 5 that's in -- Chevron is about legal questions.
- 6 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Then there was some
- 7 question about past decisions, and as you
- 8 pointed out, this Court's moved away from using
- 9 legislative history to some degree in favor of
- 10 text, and we've made other changes in our
- interpretive approaches too without Congress's
- intervention, for example, in sovereign immunity
- 13 contexts, returning to the clear statement rule
- that had preexisted this Court's jurisprudence
- for 200 years, and then we wandered off into
- 16 legislative history and circled back around and
- 17 corrected our own mistake.
- 18 We had to deal with the question of
- 19 what to do with those precedents, and our answer
- 20 was to leave them alone from -- from those
- 21 ancient regimes, as we --
- MR. MARTINEZ: Right.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- called them. Are
- 24 you asking us to -- to do anything different
- 25 when it comes to Chevron?

MR. MARTINEZ: No, and if I could just 1 2 explain what -- how I think the world would look 3 with respect to the old cases. I think stare decisis would apply to the holdings of those old 4 I don't think that -- that anything 5 6 would change. You know, stationary source would 7 still mean what it meant when -- when the Court issued that bottom-line interpretation. And so 8 I don't think that this would -- a ruling in 9 favor of our side would -- would require or 10 11 entail overturning any of those old cases. 12 I think what we really care about is 13 prospectively, both with respect to the fishing regulation here but also with respect to other 14 15 cases that come forward to the courts, making 16 sure that courts are the ones doing the 17 interpreting and not agencies. 18 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Thank you. 19 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice 20 Kavanaugh? JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Several questions. 21 2.2 First of all, on Skidmore, there was reference 23 to Skidmore deference, and I guess I don't think that's the right term, that it's respect or pay 24 25 attention to, but I think, if we throw the term

- "deference" into Skidmore deference, we're going
- 2 to walk into another problem --
- 3 MR. MARTINEZ: Some --
- 4 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: -- like the one we
- 5 have with Chevron deference.
- 6 MR. MARTINEZ: Some might say
- 7 "deference" is ambiguous. I think that --
- 8 (Laughter.)
- 9 MR. MARTINEZ: -- that it's imprecise.
- 10 I think the better way -- I think oftentimes,
- when people say "deference," what they mean is
- that if you think the answer is X, you should
- defer to someone else's answer, which is
- 14 different. I don't think -- I think absolutely
- that that would be inappropriate. So I would
- 16 not use "Skidmore deference" because I think it
- 17 -- it runs the risk of -- of giving that
- 18 implication.
- I think that, really, we're talking
- about very serious consideration of the points
- 21 that the agency makes, but, ultimately, you have
- to be persuaded. And if you're persuaded, then
- that means that you've concluded that the agency
- 24 has the best interpretation and then you just
- apply the normal rules.

- 1 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Right. I thought 2 Skidmore was about the power to persuade, not 3 the power to control. 4 MR. MARTINEZ: Exactly. JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Yeah. 5 6 MR. MARTINEZ: We -- I agree with 7 that. JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Okay. On the 8 constitutional issue that Justice Gorsuch and 9 10 Justice Kagan were raising, you have lots of 11 arguments here, and Mr. Clement does too, for 12 overruling Chevron without reaching the 13 constitutional issue. 14 So I guess why -- why would we reach 15 it? If -- if we agreed with you on overruling 16 Chevron on other grounds, I don't see the need 17 to address the hypothetical that Justice Kagan 18 raised about Congress passing a Chevron-type 19 regime. 20 MR. MARTINEZ: I think three things on that. Like I said earlier, we would certainly
- 21
- 22 welcome overruling Chevron, especially under the
- 23 APA and especially if informed by constitutional
- 24 avoidance principles.
- 25 But I think there are three reasons

- 1 why you should consider going beyond that to the
- 2 constitutional holding. There are going to be
- 3 some cases that, as a technical matter,
- 4 Section 706 of the APA wouldn't -- doesn't
- 5 apply. And so, if it's an APA holding, it may
- 6 be that in those cases there might be lingering
- 7 uncertainty about whether deference should --
- 8 should apply to cases that aren't technically
- 9 under Section 706.
- I think the second thing is that a lot
- of the analysis in figuring out what the duty
- 12 under the APA to interpret the law, I think a
- 13 lot of that analysis really overlaps with the
- 14 constitutional points. And I think, if you --
- if you get to a place where you agree with us on
- the APA, it's not that far, not that different
- to ultimately agree with us on the Constitution
- 18 as well.
- 19 And then, finally, I would just say
- 20 that although, of course, this Court often
- 21 prefers to rule on non-constitutional grounds, I
- think it's also recognized in cases like Pearson
- versus Callahan that there's going to be a value
- and a benefit to the judicial system to
- 25 providing clarity about what the Constitution

- 1 means. I think -- I would respectfully submit
- 2 this is one of those situations.
- 3 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: On the question of
- 4 how much does Chevron matter on the ground, I
- 5 think you addressed this a little bit by citing
- 6 Judge Silberman, but do you want to elaborate on
- 7 that? I mean, are -- there are cases, I assume,
- 8 that get to Chevron step two pretty regularly.
- 9 MR. MARTINEZ: Very regularly, Your
- 10 Honor. It happens all the time. And I think,
- if a case like this one or two cases like these
- 12 two can get to Chevron step two, I think that
- 13 suggests that it's really hard to figure out how
- 14 Chevron step one is supposed to work.
- I mean, the Digital Realty case is
- 16 another great example. That's a case where
- 17 there was a statutory definition of the term
- 18 "whistleblower" that required the person to have
- 19 gone to the SEC and -- and, you know, submitted
- 20 a -- a complaint, and the government and the
- lower court concluded that that was ambiguous
- 22 and that it might actually apply, it was
- 23 reasonable to read the statute to not require a
- 24 report to the SEC.
- 25 So I think there are cases, there are

- 1 examples like these that come up all the time,
- and, you know, thankfully, this Court doesn't
- 3 have to intervene every single time, but the
- 4 reason that the problem is there is because
- 5 you've told lower courts how to do their
- 6 interpretation. And as long as that instruction
- 7 is out there, there are going to be a lot of
- 8 cases that get it wrong, and you're not going to
- 9 want to be in the business of sort of error
- 10 correction on each one.
- 11 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: On the question of
- 12 how Congress can operate without Chevron, I just
- 13 want to elaborate on -- have you elaborate on
- 14 that a little more.
- 15 My understanding is Congress
- oftentimes will use terms like "the agency can
- 17 regulate reasonable limits or "appropriate
- 18 limits," and that gives, under State Farm, a lot
- of discretion to the agency to make choices to
- 20 do what Justice Kagan was talking about, to
- 21 think about the world as it exists five years
- from now or 10 years from now and not have to
- worry about going back to Congress.
- 24 So the question really is for Congress
- 25 and its drafting choices, I think, what kinds of

- 1 broad, capacious terms it uses, as opposed to
- 2 using more defined terms or statutory terms --
- 3 usual kinds of statutory language. Yes, it
- 4 can't rewrite that. At least that's how I
- 5 thought Congress could operate in a world where
- 6 Chevron does not exist.
- 7 MR. MARTINEZ: I -- I think that's
- 8 exactly right, Justice Kavanaugh. And I think
- 9 that, like I said earlier, in -- in those
- 10 situations, the Court's job is basically
- 11 figuring out what the best interpretation of
- 12 that word is. And in many cases, maybe most
- 13 cases, those types of capacious words are
- 14 basically -- the best understanding of those
- words is that Congress is, in fact, conferring
- 16 the discretion on the agency.
- 17 That's very different from Chevron,
- where, instead of having any sort of language
- 19 like that or express language conferring a
- 20 delegation, you're -- you're basically applying
- 21 this fictional implied delegation that -- that
- 22 is triggered by ambiguity, which is like -- you
- know, frankly, it's -- it's -- it's not -- it's
- fictional, it's made up.
- 25 And so I think a world in which

- 1 Congress, when it wants to delegate to agencies,
- 2 needs to be express and use language like that
- 3 or other language, I think is a better world
- 4 from the perspective of -- of Article I and from
- 5 Article III.
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Thank you.
- 7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 8 Barrett?
- 9 JUSTICE BARRETT: Mr. Martinez, I want
- 10 to return to the question that Justice Sotomayor
- 11 raised about stare decisis.
- 12 So you said that overruling Chevron
- wouldn't have an effect on the many cases that
- 14 have gotten to Chevron step two and then
- 15 deferred to the agency. You said -- am I -- did
- 16 I understand you correctly?
- 17 MR. MARTINEZ: Those bottom-line
- 18 holdings would be right, yeah.
- 19 JUSTICE BARRETT: Okay. But the
- 20 bottom-line holdings in those cases, if the
- 21 Court did defer at step two, are simply that the
- 22 agency's interpretation was reasonable. And
- 23 maybe sometimes, like in Brand X, they might
- even be like, well, we would reach a different
- interpretation if it were our call -- our call,

- 1 but it's ambiguous, so the agency can decide.
- 2 So maybe nothing happens immediately
- 3 to those cases, but isn't the door then open for
- 4 litigants to come back and say: Well,
- 5 "stationary source" really means X or, you know,
- 6 "broadband" or whatever the specific term was in
- 7 -- in Brand X.
- 8 So isn't it inviting a flood of
- 9 litigation even if for the moment those holdings
- 10 stay intact?
- MR. MARTINEZ: So I would say the
- 12 bottom-line holdings in those cases, I would
- just quibble slightly, I would -- I would
- 14 describe the bottom-line holding as being that
- the agency's action was lawful. And so that's
- 16 the bottom line.
- I think it's true that people could
- 18 come and say, look, the interpretive methods
- 19 have changed since this bottom-line holding was
- 20 issued and we think that -- that, you know, a
- 21 different result now should apply. And -- and
- that's why courts consider requests to overturn
- 23 precedent. But I just think that they would
- 24 apply the same standards that they would apply
- 25 to other stare decisis inquiries, and I think it

- 1 would be the rare case that would require --
- 2 that -- where a court would say this -- this
- decision not only isn't the best interpretation,
- 4 but it's like so bad and so practically
- 5 important that we're going to overturn our own
- 6 precedent.
- 7 So I think that would be the
- 8 safeguard.
- 9 JUSTICE BARRETT: So, when you say
- 10 that the bottom-line holdings, you -- you've
- 11 kind of changed the level of generality, right?
- 12 If you say the bottom-line holding is that the
- agency's interpretation is lawful, you think
- it's not open to people to come back then and
- say, well, it's actually not lawful, this is
- 16 wrong. The Court got it wrong because the best
- interpretation isn't the agency's.
- 18 MR. MARTINEZ: I -- I think litigants
- 19 could make that argument, but I think they would
- 20 have to overcome the normal stare decisis test,
- 21 which is very hard to overcome, and so they
- 22 would probably have to show that it's really
- wrong and really practically important.
- 24 And I think most courts, and I imagine
- 25 this Court, is -- is going to find that that

- 1 threshold is -- is met, like, almost -- very
- 2 rarely, maybe almost never. And so, as a
- 3 practical matter, you're not going to be
- 4 upending, you know, those -- those bottom-line
- 5 decisions --
- 6 JUSTICE BARRETT: Okay.
- 7 MR. MARTINEZ: -- even if you let
- 8 people in theory come and challenge them, which
- 9 they can do now.
- JUSTICE BARRETT: So let me ask you --
- 11 you -- you just referred to the, you know,
- 12 serious stare decisis threshold, you know, that
- would have to be overcome.
- MR. MARTINEZ: Yeah.
- 15 JUSTICE BARRETT: So let's talk about
- 16 the stare decisis threshold here. Why is it
- different here than it was in Kisor? You know,
- in Kisor, the Court declined to overrule Auer
- 19 and the part -- the opinion that was for a
- 20 majority of the Court was largely it was on
- 21 stare decisis grounds.
- 22 So why would a different result obtain
- 23 here?
- MR. MARTINEZ: I think my first answer
- 25 is that the Chief Justice's opinion suggested it

- 1 might be different and I think the reasons why
- 2 it's -- it's reason -- it's -- it really
- 3 is different is because there are important
- 4 differences between Chevron and Auer.
- 5 The most important that I think plays
- 6 on the reliance question is this idea that
- 7 Chevron allows and -- and almost like a feature
- 8 of Chevron, not a bug, is that it encourages and
- 9 allows agencies to flip-flop.
- 10 And so the reliance consideration with
- 11 respect to Chevron is -- is much, you know,
- 12 weaker for -- for -- for the government's side
- because the agency is allowed to flip-flop all
- 14 at once, whereas, with our deference, the idea
- is that the agency -- it's going to be very hard
- 16 for the agency to flip-flop. So I think it's
- more important to correct Chevron because
- it's -- it has that mistake that Auer doesn't.
- 19 There are other differences. You
- 20 know, Chevron is problematic because it lets
- 21 agencies say what Congress intended or what
- 22 Congress's meaning was, as opposed to just
- 23 saying what they themselves meant with the
- 24 regulation that they themselves enacted.
- 25 So I think the -- the kind of -- you

- 1 know, the deference makes more sense when you're
- 2 deferring to the entity that actually created
- 3 the provision in question as opposed to
- 4 deferring to their interpretation of -- of a
- 5 provision that was created by Congress.
- I think, in addition, you know,
- 7 Chevron is not limited to agency expertise.
- 8 Auer is limited to agency expertise. So Auer
- 9 is -- is narrower.
- 10 And then, finally, I do think there's
- 11 a difference even with respect to the APA where
- 12 I think the APA more clearly puts constitutional
- interpretation and statutory interpretation on
- 14 equal footing, and that might play into the
- 15 analysis.
- You know, this Court, the plurality
- in -- in Kisor sort of emphasized that -- that
- 18 the APA was enacted after Seminole -- a year
- 19 after Seminole Rock, and so maybe that was a
- 20 basis to think that -- that Congress was okay
- 21 with something that looked like Auer deference.
- 22 But that's not true here. Chevron came many
- 23 years after the APA.
- 24 So I think there are a lot of
- 25 differences that really flesh out, I think, the

- 1 important point that the Chief Justice was
- 2 making, which was that the analysis there
- doesn't automatically transfer over to Chevron.
- 4 JUSTICE BARRETT: Thanks.
- 5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 6 Jackson?
- 7 JUSTICE JACKSON: So I've heard you
- 8 say several times that you agree that judges
- 9 should not be doing policy, they should be doing
- 10 law. And I guess I too agree with that, and my
- 11 concern is that it's actually not as easy as it
- seems to distinguish between the two and -- and
- that it appears in a lot of your answers that
- 14 you sort of say, well, you come up with the best
- answer, it's a legal question. But I'm not so
- sure it's a legal question as opposed to is it
- 17 the best under the sort of policy regime.
- 18 And I think that there's a real
- 19 separation-of-powers danger here to the extent
- that you're saying that the judges are deciding
- 21 whether or not this is something the agency
- 22 should do or not, whether this is a legal
- 23 question or not.
- You know, there's the old saying that
- when you're a hammer, everything looks like a

- 1 nail. And I'm concerned that judges are going
- 2 to look at all of the questions related to a
- 3 statute and call them legal if we don't have
- 4 something like Chevron that requires judges to
- 5 be actually thinking about their proper role
- 6 relative to this issue.
- 7 So how can you assuage my concern in
- 8 that regard?
- 9 MR. MARTINEZ: So I think two points.
- 10 I think the first point I would make on the
- 11 distinction between law and policy and how they
- 12 kind of maybe seem like they blur together, I
- 13 think that -- that there are just so many
- instances in which a court can get a question
- that comes before it that maybe it involves an
- agency regime, but the agency hasn't acted yet.
- 17 And I think the court in that
- 18 circumstance just does its best. It doesn't
- 19 have guidance, it doesn't have instructions from
- 20 the agency. It does its best. And I think,
- 21 when it does its best --
- JUSTICE JACKSON: But does it have to,
- 23 Mr. Martinez? I mean, there are -- there are
- other regimes in which a court is presented with
- 25 a question and it identifies it as a policy

- 1 question that it cannot answer.
- 2 So what I'm saying is that it's not
- 3 necessarily true that just because the court
- 4 gets an issue, it automatically says, oh, this
- 5 must be legal, I have to act.
- 6 MR. MARTINEZ: But, if -- if the court
- 7 got -- just to go back to Justice Kagan's
- 8 hypothetical, the question of what -- what is a
- 9 dietary supplement and the agency hadn't acted,
- 10 I think the court would absolutely give meaning
- 11 to that. And I don't think the court would
- think that what it's doing is making policy.
- JUSTICE JACKSON: Well, let me give
- 14 you a -- a particular example, all right? In
- 15 the Food and Drug and Cosmetic Act situation,
- 16 new drugs can be approved only if an adequate --
- 17 "adequate and well-controlled investigation"
- 18 shows that the drug will have its attend --
- 19 intended effect.
- This term, what is an "adequate and
- 21 well-controlled investigation," is it your view
- 22 that Congress wanted the courts to decide what
- 23 it means for a study to be adequate or
- 24 well-controlled?
- I mean, how would a court go about

- 1 determining whether that's something it's
- 2 supposed to be doing or the agency is supposed
- 3 to be doing?
- 4 MR. MARTINEZ: I think that the -- the
- 5 court would -- would do exactly the kind of
- 6 analysis there that it would do if it had that
- 7 exact same statute without the agency acting.
- 8 And I think what that means is the court would
- 9 go in and it would do everything that -- that we
- 10 all agree happen -- should happen under step
- 11 one.
- 12 I think the only difference is that
- if, after doing that step one analysis, the
- 14 court concludes that there's a better view and a
- less better view, then the court should just go
- 16 with the better view.
- 17 JUSTICE JACKSON: But when -- when
- does the court decide that this is not my call?
- MR. MARTINEZ: Well, I think at the --
- 20 JUSTICE JACKSON: I quess that's the
- 21 part that's dropping out for me in your
- 22 analysis. You just say, you know, we do a step
- one analysis and then the court makes the
- interpretive decision about what this means.
- 25 And I guess --

1 MR. MARTINEZ: I -- I -- I don't think 2 the court ever says that it's not my call if the 3 question in front of it is a question of statutory interpretation, because I think that's 4 a core job --5 6 JUSTICE JACKSON: So every statutory 7 interpretation question is one of law that a 8 court can decide, you're saying? MR. MARTINEZ: Yes, and that --9 JUSTICE JACKSON: There's never a 10 11 statutory interpretation question that is one of 12 policy that you see Congress may have been 13 intending the agency to answer? 14 MR. MARTINEZ: I think, by definition, 15 if we're talking about interpreting a statute, 16 then you're talking about a legal guestion in 17 the same way that if you're talking about 18 interpreting the Constitution, then you have a 19 constitutional question. No one would say that 20 you would apply deference there. 21 JUSTICE JACKSON: So there's never a 2.2 world you -- maybe we just differ on this. 23 worried about the courts becoming 24 uber-legislators, that when we have a policy --25 so one way that some of the experts have looked

- 1 at this, some of the legal -- legal scholars
- 2 have looked at this, is that they say, when
- 3 there's an ambiguity, there are actually
- 4 different kinds of ambiguities.
- 5 So you might have a situation in which
- 6 there's a statutory term and it's ambiguous in
- 7 the sense that there are several reasonable
- 8 meanings of what "stationary source" might mean,
- 9 for example, several different ways that you
- 10 could define that. When you get down to that
- 11 level of analysis, the question is, who's going
- 12 to make the choice as between what those
- meanings are?
- 14 And I hear you saying there might be a
- best choice, but I guess, if we're talking about
- 16 a policy question, there are several reasonable
- meanings, why should the court be the one to
- 18 make that determination?
- 19 MR. MARTINEZ: I --
- 20 JUSTICE JACKSON: And -- and couldn't
- 21 we be in a world where Congress intended for the
- agency to actually decide which choice is best?
- MR. MARTINEZ: I think where I --
- 24 where I would just sort of disagree is what you
- 25 said at the end when you sort of assumed that it

- 1 was a policy question. I would just say that if
- 2 it's -- if the question is the meaning of a
- 3 statutory term, that's an interpretive question
- 4 that's a legal question and would be treated as
- 5 a legal question if you got that exact same
- 6 question before the agency had acted.
- 7 JUSTICE JACKSON: All right. Let me
- 8 ask you one more thing about practical
- 9 implications. So let's say it is, you know, a
- 10 legal question, as you have analyzed, adequate
- and controlled investigations. If I'm an agency
- 12 and I'm trying to be responsible, how is this
- going to work as a practical matter? Is the
- 14 agency going to go to court every time it gets
- 15 one of these undefined terms in a statute and
- 16 seek, you know, a declaratory judgment as to the
- 17 meaning of "adequate and controlled" -- and
- 18 "well-controlled investigations" before it goes
- 19 forward with its policy?
- MR. MARTINEZ: No.
- 21 JUSTICE JACKSON: All right. So the
- 22 agency can come up with its own definition and
- 23 implement it and then wait to be sued with
- 24 respect to that, and -- and every term undefined
- in a statute we're going to have litigation

- 1 about?
- 2 MR. MARTINEZ: No. No, Your Honor. I
- 3 think what the agency has to do is what everyone
- 4 else has to do, which is try to figure out what
- 5 the -- what the law means and then act
- 6 accordingly, and if someone challenges that,
- 7 then that'll get sorted out. If there's a -- a
- 8 stat -- a legal question, a statutory
- 9 interpretation question, then that'll get sorted
- out by the courts. But the agency isn't, like,
- 11 paralyzed --
- 12 JUSTICE JACKSON: What do we do about
- 13 the -- the chaos that we talked about in -- in
- 14 the City of Arlington case that comes from
- perhaps having different courts, right? We have
- 16 11 different, you know, jurisdictions that have
- 17 legal authority. So something like the
- definition of "adequate and well-controlled
- investigations," you say the courts will sort it
- 20 out.
- 21 Well, first of all, it will take years
- 22 perhaps for the courts to sort it out. What is
- the agency supposed to be doing in the meantime?
- 24 And different courts from all of these different
- 25 jurisdictions could actually have a different

- 1 view, as Justice Sotomayor pointed out, of what
- 2 "adequate and well-controlled investigations"
- 3 are supposed to do, so -- means.
- 4 So isn't it sort of impractical and
- 5 chaotic to have a world in which every undefined
- 6 term in a statute is subject to litigation if
- 7 you're trying to govern?
- 8 MR. MARTINEZ: Well, I -- I don't
- 9 think it's impractical. I think that to the
- 10 extent that Justice Kagan's questions sort of
- indicate that there's actually a relatively
- small set of cases in which Chevron's going to
- make a difference, you're going to have that
- same problem with respect to the cases that
- maybe 20 years ago under a looser approach to
- 16 Chevron wouldn't have gotten deference.
- 17 JUSTICE JACKSON: Wouldn't you have
- more of a problem in a world in which we've
- 19 gotten rid of Chevron because it's going to give
- 20 incentives to parties to raise legal issues that
- 21 they wouldn't have raised before?
- MR. MARTINEZ: I -- I don't think it's
- 23 a problem to -- to have parties, if they think
- an agency is overstepping the boundaries and if
- 25 they're right that --

1	JUSTICE JACKSON: No, I understand,
2	but, under a Chevron regime, right, if that's
3	the background rule, then you're going to have
4	parties thinking twice before going down a
5	litigation road with respect to a term because
6	they're going to say, at the end of the day
7	MR. MARTINEZ: Right.
8	JUSTICE JACKSON: the agency has a
9	reasonable interpretation, that's what the
LO	court's going to find, so it's not any
L1	MR. MARTINEZ: Right. You're
L2	you're going to have parties being less likely
L3	to challenge agency action that is unlawful
L4	under the best interpretation of the statute
L5	because they know that when they go into court,
L6	the judge is not going to apply its independent
L7	neutral judgment and instead is going to tilt
L8	the scales and defer to the agency.
L9	JUSTICE JACKSON: Thank you.
20	MR. MARTINEZ: And
21	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
22	counsel.
23	General Prelogar.
24	

1	ORAL ARGUMENT OF GEN. ELIZABETH B. PRELOGAR
2	ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENTS
3	GENERAL PRELOGAR: Mr. Chief Justice,
4	and may it please the Court:
5	The Chevron framework is a bedrock
6	principle of administrative law with deep roots
7	in this Court's jurisprudence. Overruling a
8	precedent is never a small matter, but
9	overruling a precedent as foundational as
LO	Chevron should require a truly extraordinary
L1	justification, and Petitioners don't have one.
L2	They say that Article III requires de
L3	novo review of all statutory interpretation
L4	questions. But that's flatly inconsistent with
L5	precedent going back to the Marshall Court and
L6	with the traditional limits on mandamus
L7	jurisdiction, which governed most judicial
L8	review of executive action in the early
L9	republic.
20	They've said that Chevron violates due
21	process. But the application of deferential
22	standards of review doesn't constitute
23	impermissible bias. And they contend that the
24	APA requires de novo review. But that theory is
25	inconsistent with the statute's history and the

- 1 way it's been understood ever since its
- 2 enactment, including in the more than 70 cases
- 3 in which this Court has relied on Chevron to
- 4 sustain an agency's interpretation.
- 5 On top of all that, reliance interests
- 6 in this context are at their apex. Congress,
- 7 agencies, states, regulated parties, and the
- 8 American public have all relied on Chevron and
- 9 the regulations upheld under it to make
- 10 important decisions that could be upended by
- 11 overruling that framework.
- 12 Thousands of judicial decisions
- 13 sustaining an agency's rulemaking or
- 14 adjudication as reasonable would be open to
- 15 challenge, and that profound disruption is
- 16 especially unwarranted because Congress could
- modify or overrule the Chevron framework at any
- 18 time. Congress has many times considered
- 19 proposals to do so, but it's never taken that
- 20 step.
- 21 Instead, Congress has legislated for
- 22 decades with Chevron as the background rule
- informing the degree of discretion that Congress
- has chosen to confer on federal agencies.
- Just five years ago in Kisor, this

- 1 Court declined similar calls to overrule the
- 2 Auer deference doctrine based on many of the
- 3 same flawed arguments that Petitioners are
- 4 making here. The Court observed that it would
- 5 be the rare overruling that would introduce so
- 6 much instability into so many areas of the law,
- 7 all in one blow. Overruling Chevron would be an
- 8 even greater and unwarranted shock to the legal
- 9 system.
- I welcome the Court's questions.
- 11 JUSTICE THOMAS: General, Section 706
- of the APA was not mentioned in Chevron. How
- 13 would you reconcile the requirements of -- on
- 14 this -- on federal courts under 706 with your
- 15 view of Chevron?
- 16 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Section 706 says
- 17 that courts should decide all relevant questions
- of law and interpret statutes, but none of that
- is inconsistent with the Chevron framework
- 20 because 706 doesn't prescribe a universal
- 21 standard of review to govern those kinds of
- 22 statutory interpretation questions. And the
- courts are interpreting statutes when they walk
- 24 through the Chevron framework.
- 25 First, there's all the work that the

- 1 Court does at step one of Chevron. That is
- 2 using the tools of interpretation to identify
- 3 whether Congress has spoken to the issue in the
- 4 case and, if so, Chevron said that's the end of
- 5 the matter. So, in that sense, in a step one
- 6 case, the Court has, of course, interpreted the
- 7 statute.
- But, in a situation where, at the end
- 9 of that interpretive process, the Court is left
- 10 with no conclusion that it's actually able to
- 11 ascertain that Congress has spoken, then, in
- 12 that circumstance, I think the right
- interpretation of the statute is that Congress
- 14 left a gap or maybe created an ambiguity and
- simultaneously vested the agency with the
- 16 important responsibility, pursuant to an express
- 17 delegation, to administer that statute with the
- 18 regulations that have the force of law.
- 19 And that's within -- tells the Court
- what the relevant question of law that's left
- 21 over to resolve is. It's whether the agency
- 22 acted within the bounds that Congress itself
- 23 prescribed.
- So I don't think there's any
- 25 fundamental incompatibility with Section 706 and

- 1 what Chevron dictates about how to think about
- 2 Congress's delegations.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Can I say,
- 4 counsel -- General, I know plenty of statutes
- 5 where Congress uses the word "de novo." It
- 6 didn't here, correct, in 706?
- 7 GENERAL PRELOGAR: That's correct.
- 8 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I thought it, and
- 9 I do think it, would be revolutionary to say
- 10 that Congress can't limit judicial review.
- 11 AEDPA is the quintessential question where we
- 12 not only give deference to state court
- decisions, we say even if it got it wrong, if it
- 14 didn't get it unreasonably wrong, we are
- 15 superseding the Court's ability to declare a
- violation of the Constitution and give relief.
- 17 So I -- I -- I think it would be
- 18 radical to say that Congress couldn't implement
- 19 Chevron. In fact, there is legislation to
- 20 overrule Chevron, requiring de novo review, that
- 21 hasn't passed. There are statutes that
- 22 basically don't -- say apply de novo review,
- 23 correct?
- 24 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yes.
- 25 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: And there are

1 statutes that require differential review 2 explicitly to legal questions, correct? 3 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yes. JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Besides Chevron? 4 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yes. 5 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: All right. 6 So now 7 we have -- we're now at 706. And my -- your 8 adversary, your opposing counsel, said that he 9 didn't see that much disruption from overruling 10 Chevron, that nobody would really bring up those 11 old cases. 12 Do you have a view on that? 13 GENERAL PRELOGAR: I think that my 14 friend, it -- it might be easy for him to say 15 that because he is not going to be involved in 16 the endless litigation that I think would result 17 if this Court were to overrule Chevron. 18 I understand his point to be that all 19 of the holdings in those cases will be secure 20 because stare decisis will apply in those 21 contexts. But the important thing to realize is 2.2 that in those cases, as Justice Barrett's 23 questions emphasized, the Court has decided that 24 what the agency did was reasonable. The statute 25 has essentially been interpreted to vest the

- 1 agency with discretion such that the agency's
- 2 regulation is being held lawful or valid on the
- 3 basis of reasonableness, and I think that that
- 4 means that litigants will come out of the
- 5 woodwork seeking to open those decisions and
- 6 contending that they didn't actually address
- 7 what they now say is the relevant question, not
- 8 whether the agency's interpretation is
- 9 reasonable or whether the regulation can be
- 10 upheld on that basis, but how the statute should
- 11 be interpreted without granting any deference to
- 12 the agency's interpretation.
- 13 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Counsel, I'll
- 14 ask you the same question I asked your friend.
- 15 You began by saying Chevron is foundational.
- We get a lot of statutory
- 17 interpretations from agencies, and I don't know
- whether it was 14 or 16 years, we haven't relied
- 19 on Chevron over that time. I -- I mean, have we
- 20 overruled it in practice even if we've let the
- 21 -- had to leave the lower courts to continue to
- 22 grapple with it?
- 23 GENERAL PRELOGAR: No, I don't think
- so, Mr. Chief Justice. It's been eight years
- 25 since this Court relied on Chevron at step two,

- 1 but there's no case that my friends have been
- 2 able to point to where the Court has said that a
- 3 statute was ambiguous or left a gap and Chevron
- 4 would otherwise apply, but the Court is not
- 5 going to defer in that circumstance. I think
- 6 that that --
- 7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: No. But, I
- 8 mean, that's simply a function of the fact,
- 9 when -- when we go through the work of trying to
- interpret what a statute means, when we get to
- 11 the end, that seems to be the right
- 12 interpretation, and --
- 13 GENERAL PRELOGAR: I agree. Those are
- 14 step one holdings. So I -- so I think that they
- 15 are consistent with the Chevron framework. And
- the fact that this Court hasn't had a step two
- 17 case in recent years in no way indicates that in
- those cases where Congress is, in fact, leaving
- 19 ambiguities or gaps, Chevron no longer sets the
- 20 right ground rule for understanding the scope of
- 21 the delegation.
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Can I ask you
- about what I see is an internal inconsistency in
- 24 Chevron itself? It relates to Footnote 9, which
- 25 is -- instructs that a court should use all the

- 1 traditional tools of statutory interpretation
- 2 before getting to step two.
- 3 My concern about that or my confusion
- 4 about that is, if you use all the traditional
- 5 tools of statutory interpretation, you'll get an
- 6 answer. And we know that because, in cases
- 7 where we don't have an agency involved and we
- 8 use those same traditional tools, we get an
- 9 answer.
- So how do we deal with Footnote 9,
- which seems to suggest that you'll never get to
- 12 step two if you follow Footnote 9 by what it
- 13 says?
- 14 GENERAL PRELOGAR: So what the Court
- 15 said in Footnote 9 is that the Court should use
- 16 all of the traditional tools to ascertain
- 17 whether Congress had an intent on the issue.
- 18 And that, of course, is an important
- 19 part of this framework because, if Congress
- 20 actually spoke to the issue, then the agency
- 21 doesn't have any discretion to act in a way
- that's contrary to Congress's express direction.
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Do you think
- that's different from ascertaining what the
- 25 statute means?

1	GENERAL PRELOGAR: I think that there
2	can be a relevant difference and it touches on
3	exactly what you were asking about in the
4	context where a court has to do it without an
5	agency.
6	In that circumstance, I think it's
7	absolutely right that the Court is ultimately
8	going to keep working and decide how it thinks
9	the statute should best be administered, even in
10	the circumstance where there might be an
11	ambiguity or a gap to fill.
12	But what Chevron recognizes is that
13	there is a third option available. It's not
14	just Congress spoke to the issue and it
15	necessarily authorized what the agency did or
16	Congress spoke to the issue and it prohibited
17	what the agency did.
18	There is a category of cases and
19	statutes out there where, really, using all of
20	the tools, the best interpretation of the
21	statute is that Congress didn't resolve it. It
22	left that gap or ambiguity and coupled it with
23	this express authorization to the agency to
24	carry that statute into effect. This is
25	Congress and the agencies working together hand

1 in hand to put into effect this --2 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: How would you 3 define ambiguity or how would you, if you were a judge, say, yes, this is ambiguous or no, that's 4 5 not ambiguous? 6 GENERAL PRELOGAR: So I would draw on 7 what the Court said recently in Kisor where it said a statute is ambiguous when the Court has 8 exhausted the tools of interpretation and hasn't 9 found a single right answer. 10 11 And I recognize, Justice Kavanaugh, 12 and you have expressed these concerns that there 13 are some limits of language here and it's not 14 subject to precise mathematical quantification, 15 but that's because I think it's a standard that inherently requires the application of judgment. 16 17 And at the end of the day, what the 18 Court should be looking for and asking itself 19 is, did Congress resolve this one? Do I have 20 confidence that actually I've got it, I -- I 21 understand what Congress meant to say in this 2.2 statute and it meant to proscribe a -- a uniform 23 approach to stationary source, that it has to be 24 plant-wide or it has to be a particular piece of 25 equipment?

1 But, in a circumstance like Chevron 2 itself with stationary source or some of the 3 examples that the Justices have been talking about with reasonable or feasible, I think you 4 can get to the end of that process and a judge 5 could say: I think, actually, the way -- the 6 7 right way to understand this statute is that it's conferring discretion on the agency to take 8 a range of permissible approaches. 9 10 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Do you -- do you 11 think it's possible for a judge to say, the best 12 reading of the statute is X, but I think it is ambiguous and, therefore, I'm going to defer to 13 14 the agency, which has offered Y? 15 GENERAL PRELOGAR: No, I think that 16 that would probably --17 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: That can't happen? 18 I think that happens all the time. 19 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Well, I think that 20 there are two different ways in which courts use 21 the term "best interpretation of the statute." 2.2 So, if what you're asking me is, is there a 23 world in which a judge could go through the 24 rigorous step one inquiry, apply all of the 25 tools, and say, I think there's a best

1 interpretation insofar as I think Congress spoke 2 to the issue, but the agency's interpretation is it could be permissible, I recognize there's 3 some doubt here, the answer is no. 4 Chevron does not require a court to 5 6 ignore what is ascertained doing the step one 7 inquiry. At that point, that is the -- the judge's conclusion that Congress actually spoke 8 9 to the issue and Chevron is totally clear about this, give effect to it. 10 11 But, if what you're asking me is, is 12 there a world in which the Court could get to 13 the end of the step one inquiry, decide that 14 Congress hasn't spoken to the issue, and then 15 say, if, in fact, the courts had been given the 16 role of filling the gap, I would have done it 17 differently, I would have exercised whatever 18 discretion that Congress left open in this 19 statute in a different way, even looking to 20 things like the overall objectives in the 21 statutory program as a whole, then yes, of 2.2 course, in that circumstance, it's -- it's 23 implementing Congress's directives --

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JUSTICE GORSUCH: I mean, General --

GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- for the court to

24

Т	not
2	JUSTICE GORSUCH: I'm sorry to
3	interrupt, but those are two different very
4	different views about what qualifies as an
5	ambiguity you've just given us. One is there is
6	a better interpretation. I provide it as a
7	court. The other is: Well, yeah, but I'm going
8	to defer anyway given whatever considerations
9	you want to throw into the ambiguity bucket.
10	And that's exactly the problem that
11	your friends on the other side suggest have
12	persisted in the lower courts for 40 years and
13	why some judges claim never to have found an
14	ambiguity and other equally excellent circuit
15	judges have said they find them all the time.
16	And it's also why, I don't know, maybe
17	a dozen or more circuit judges have written
18	asking us to overrule Chevron. And and
19	and and and it also may be why one of your
20	colleagues last year said I don't know what
21	ambiguity means at this lectern.
22	And should that be a clue that
23	something needs to be fixed here, that even the
24	federal government at the podium can't answer
25	the question what triggers ambiguity?

1	You've given us two different
2	alternatives today, and so many lower court
3	judges who just want to follow whatever we tell
4	them to do faithfully can't figure it out.
5	GENERAL PRELOGAR: So there's a lot
6	packed in there, Justice Gorsuch, and I want to
7	respond to each of your concerns.
8	First, I would draw from Chevron and
9	Kisor in defining what is an ambiguity. It is
LO	when a court has applied the tools of
L1	construction and can't ascertain that Congress
L2	had an intent on the matter. So I think that
L3	that is the core question for a court at step
L4	one of Chevron, and if that's the circumstance,
L5	that would only ever move a court to applying
L6	deference at step two.
L7	Now I understand the concern you
L8	expressed that maybe lower courts are too
L9	reflexively finding that there's ambiguity at -
20	JUSTICE GORSUCH: Well, you gave us a
21	second definition just a moment ago, and
22	GENERAL PRELOGAR: I was trying to
23	to explain how I thought that sometimes
24	JUSTICE GORSUCH: Some yeah.
25	CENERAL DRELOGAR: in the case law

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1
      "best interpretation" --
               JUSTICE GORSUCH: Yes.
 2
 3
               GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- is used in two
 4
     different --
 5
               JUSTICE GORSUCH: Right.
 6
               GENERAL PRELOGAR: I don't think
7
      that's a different understanding of Chevron.
               JUSTICE GORSUCH: Well --
8
9
               GENERAL PRELOGAR: I think that's
     really a difference --
10
11
               JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- your -- your
12
     friend --
13
               GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- between step one
14
     and step two.
15
               JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- your friend a
16
     year ago thought so and -- and -- and lower
17
     court judges think so.
18
               GENERAL PRELOGAR: So let me respond
19
     to the concern --
20
               JUSTICE GORSUCH: So you agree --
21
               GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- about lower
22
     court judges. If you think that they are too
23
     readily finding ambiguity, I think the Court
24
     could do in this case exactly what it did in
25
     Kisor --
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1
                JUSTICE GORSUCH: Haven't -- haven't
 2
 3
                GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- issue a course
      correction --
 4
 5
                JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- we done that,
 6
      like -- like, 15 times over the last eight or 10
7
      years, say, really, really, really, go look at
 8
      all the statutory tools, and yet here we have a
 9
      case, two cases, one in which one court found
10
      ambiguity and went to step two and another one
11
      which -- well, I can't tell what it did, but
12
      there's a pretty good argument it -- it tried to
13
      resolve it at step one.
14
                So, even in a case involving herring
15
      fishermen and the question whether they have to
16
      pay for government officials to be onboard their
17
      boats, which may call for some expertise, but it
18
      doesn't have much to do with fishing or
19
      fisheries, it has to do with payments of --
20
      of -- of government costs, we -- we -- lower
21
      court judges even here in this rather prosaic
2.2
      case can't figure out what Chevron means.
                GENERAL PRELOGAR: Well, I do think
23
24
      that issuing a reminder to courts about the
25
      thoroughness --
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1	JUSTICE GORSUCH: Another one?
2	GENERAL PRELOGAR: that's necessary
3	at step one could make a difference in this
4	context. And I can just share anecdotally on
5	behalf of the government that we have canvassed
6	the litigating components and looked at the
7	lower court case law.
8	And after Kisor, lower courts granted
9	Auer deference far less frequently, so I think
LO	it can matter and that lower courts can get that
L1	kind of message if you're worried about it.
L2	But, Justice Gorsuch, the other point
L3	to add here is that if you are concerned that
L4	lower courts have different reactions in trying
L5	to implement Chevron at step one, I think it's
L6	important to think about the alternative as
L7	well. It's not as though, if this Court
L8	overruled Chevron, that's going to get rid of
L9	statutory gaps or ambiguities.
20	JUSTICE GORSUCH: No, it takes
21	GENERAL PRELOGAR: They will persist
22	
23	JUSTICE GORSUCH: us back to
24	Skidmore, which Justice Jackson, the most ardent
25	of New Dealers, wrote and that persisted in this

- 1 Court for 40 years, more or less, after the APA.
- 2 And the world seemed to continue on its axis
- 3 just fine.
- 4 GENERAL PRELOGAR: But it's not going
- 5 to create greater predictability or stability or
- 6 consistency across judges.
- 7 JUSTICE GORSUCH: That's -- that's --
- 8 GENERAL PRELOGAR: If anything, I
- 9 think that --
- 10 JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- an interesting
- 11 thing to suggest, that Chevron predicts
- 12 stability, when the whole point -- I didn't see
- 13 you mention Brand X much in your brief. But I
- 14 -- I'm sorry to go back there, but -- my good
- friend, but Brand X is a recipe for instability,
- isn't it, because each new administration can
- 17 come in and undo the work of a prior one.
- 18 They're all reasonable. I mean, my goodness,
- 19 the American people elect them. Of course,
- they're reasonable people.
- 21 (Laughter.)
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: And -- and --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: That may be the
- 24 first --
- 25 (Laughter.)

1 JUSTICE GORSUCH: And -- and there we 2 And so you never have stability in the 3 I mean, if reliance and stability count, I would have thought that Chevron, at least as 4 this Court's understood it, is a recipe for 5 6 anti-reliance. 7 GENERAL PRELOGAR: So I disagree with that characterization about Brand X, and I think 8 9 my friends have created, kicked up some dust about exactly what Brand X does --10 11 JUSTICE GORSUCH: So you do --12 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- and doesn't do. JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- you do endorse 13 14 Brand X, the government does? 15 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yes. I think it is 16 a logical follow-on of Chevron, and here is why. 17 As Brand X itself recognizes, if the court has found at step one that Congress spoke to the 18 19 issue, there's no room under Brand X for the 20 agency to reverse the court or somehow change 21 the underlying meaning of the statute. Instead, 2.2 the statute has been interpreted at step one and 23 what Congress says goes. 24 It's only in the category of step two 25 cases where Brand X comes into play, and in that

- 1 circumstance, it's because the court in the
- 2 prior case has understood the statute to leave a
- 3 gap or an ambiguity for the agency to fill,
- 4 considering a range of regulatory approaches.
- 5 So, in that circumstance too, the meaning of the
- 6 statute doesn't change. It remains a gap for
- 7 the agency to fill at time two, and if the
- 8 agency is running through all of the procedural
- 9 hoops, which can be quite burdensome in this
- 10 context, to change its regulatory approach, it
- is still acting consistently with the --
- 12 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Or not.
- 13 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- with the
- 14 discretion.
- 15 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Or not if it -- if
- it issues an interpretive rule without notice
- and comment or issues an adjudication. It may
- or may not be that burdensome, right?
- 19 So Brand X also says that an agency
- 20 can overturn a prior judicial interpretation.
- 21 And I saw that as a circuit judge with respect
- 22 to an alien who was allowed into the country
- 23 under the Tenth Circuit's understanding of the
- law. And the government come back and says, no,
- 25 you have to overturn your precedent, Tenth

- 1 Circuit, and he's not allowed in the country.
- 2 And we had to overrule our judicial precedent.
- 3 Do you think that's an appropriate
- 4 understanding of the law too, that judicial
- 5 precedents, maybe even precedents of this Court,
- 6 can be overturned by agencies?
- 7 GENERAL PRELOGAR: It depends on what
- 8 the judicial precedent held. If it held at step
- 9 one that that statute was clear, then of course
- 10 not. But Brand X doesn't require that result.
- 11 If the prior precedent held that
- 12 Congress didn't resolve the issue and had
- delegated to the agency the responsibility and
- 14 role in administering it and filling the gap,
- including with the possibility of changing
- 16 regulatory approaches based on things like
- 17 change --
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: But the reality --
- 19 just to pick up on that, the reality is -- you
- 20 -- you say don't overrule Chevron because it
- 21 would be a shock to the system, but the reality
- of how this works is Chevron itself ushers in
- 23 shocks to the system every four or eight years
- 24 when a new administration comes in, whether it's
- 25 communications law or securities law or

- 1 competition law or environmental law, and goes
- 2 from pillar to post, like Professor Pierce
- 3 wrote, and he had been a fan of Chevron. Now
- 4 he's not because he says it's a source of
- 5 extreme instability in the law. That's his --
- 6 his phrase.
- 7 And it just seems like you just pay
- 8 attention to what happens when a new
- 9 administration comes in at EPA, at SEC, at FTC,
- 10 you name it. It's just massive change. That is
- 11 at war with reliance. That is not stability.
- 12 And so I think to hold up stability and reliance
- is a little tough given just watching how it
- 14 operates every four years.
- 15 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Well, let me give
- 16 you a couple of different reactions to that. I
- 17 think that that is a small sliver of cases or
- 18 circumstances. And in the mine run case
- 19 involving agency regulations, agencies
- 20 themselves build on those regulations as a
- 21 foundation. There's no evidence that agencies
- are out there flip-flopping left and right or
- doing so on a whim.
- 24 And it brings me to the important
- 25 point that to do --

1	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: I don't think
2	they're I'm sorry to interrupt
3	GENERAL PRELOGAR: No.
4	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: and I'll let
5	you finish. But I don't think they're doing it
6	on a whim. I think they're doing it because
7	they have disagreement with the policy of the
8	prior administration and they're using what
9	Chevron gives them and what they can't get
10	through Congress to do it themselves, self-help
11	and to do it themselves unilaterally, which is
12	completely inconsistent with bicameralism and
13	presentment to get your policy objectives
14	enacted into law.
15	GENERAL PRELOGAR: But, Justice
16	Kavanaugh, the premise I think that's embedded
17	in that question is the idea that Congress had
18	spoken to that issue. And in a circumstance
19	where Congress didn't resolve it and, in fact,
20	wanted the agency to have flexibility and a
21	range of options, there's nothing inherently
22	problematic or incompatible with our system of
23	government to recognize that agencies can carry
24	out those directives.
25	And just look at

- 1 "stationary source." You know, that was a
- 2 circumstance where the Court said, applying all
- of the tools, Congress didn't have a view on it.
- 4 It didn't want to foreclose a plant-wide
- 5 definition. It didn't want to foreclose an
- 6 equipment-specific definition. And I think it
- 7 was entirely permissible for the expert agency
- 8 to come in, take stock of the entire situation,
- 9 and, yes, take account of the policy goals of an
- incoming administration to better account for
- 11 the interests of the regulated parties and give
- 12 them flexibility. That's just part of
- 13 Congress's design.
- JUSTICE JACKSON: After all, you know,
- taking into account the policy goals of the new
- 16 administration reflects a democratic structure
- where we have the new administration being
- 18 elected by the people on the basis of certain
- 19 policy determinations.
- I guess my concern is I suppose
- 21 judicial policymaking is very stable but
- 22 precisely because we are not accountable to the
- 23 people and have lifetime appointments. So, if
- 24 we have gaps and ambiguities in statutes and the
- judiciary is coming in to fill them, I suppose

Τ	we would have a something of a separation of
2	powers or policy excuse me separation of
3	powers concern related to judicial policymaking.
4	Am I wrong to be worried about that?
5	GENERAL PRELOGAR: No. I think that
6	that concern is valid, and I think it's valid
7	along two separate dimensions, and one is to
8	recognize that in these scenarios where we're at
9	Chevron step two, by definition, it's because
10	the statute itself doesn't supply an answer and
11	the court can't ascertain that Congress actually
12	meant to resolve it. And in that circumstance,
13	it's entirely sensible for Congress to give the
14	issue to an agency when it is charged with
15	administering the statute and, of necessity, is
16	going to have to fill the gap along the way.
17	And Congress could quite legitimately want the
18	agency to draw on its policymaking expertise in
19	figuring out the right way to fill the gap.
20	JUSTICE JACKSON: What do what do
21	you say to Mr. Martinez, who says we've already
22	characterized that as a question of law because
23	the court was involved at step one in making the
24	determination, and so it seems a little odd I
25	think I took this away from his presentation

1 to suddenly say, when we're in a step two 2 gap-filling world, now we're going to call it a 3 policy question as opposed to a legal one? GENERAL PRELOGAR: So I think you can 4 still characterize it as a legal question while 5 6 recognizing that in a circumstance, to borrow 7 Justice Kagan's words, where the law has run out and Congress hasn't actually spoken to the 8 issue, the court, if it resolves that issue, is 9 -- is going to have to draw on a set of 10 11 considerations to inform its judgment. 12 And I wouldn't call it policymaking, but I do think it means that the court can't 13 14 suggest that the answer it is giving is 15 absolutely dictated on that precise issue by 16 Congress because, by definition, we're in a 17 world where Congress didn't speak to it. So the 18 court will have to take account of a narrower 19 range of circumstances, things like the 20 overarching statutory objectives, to try to fill 21 in the gap. 2.2 But the point is that when Congress has left that gap and charged the expert agency 23 24 with the administration role, Congress could 25 have every expectation, and Chevron says

- 1 Congress has the expectation, that the agency
- 2 will fill the gap and that the courts will
- 3 respect it within the bounds of reasonableness
- 4 that always apply in this context.
- 5 JUSTICE BARRETT: General Prelogar,
- 6 most scholars of statutory interpretation
- 7 consider Chevron to be an interpretive canon,
- 8 much like clear statement rules, rule of lenity,
- 9 judicially created. Do you see Chevron that
- 10 way? And, if so, do you see it as different in
- 11 kind from any of the other canons of
- interpretation that we apply?
- 13 GENERAL PRELOGAR: I do think it is
- 14 different. I don't conceive of it as a canon.
- 15 Instead, I think that it is fundamentally rooted
- in -- in kind of setting the ground rules for
- 17 how all three branches of the government are
- 18 operating together.
- 19 And what I understand the Court to
- 20 have been doing in Chevron is recognizing that
- 21 there are legitimate reasons why Congress cannot
- 22 answer every question itself and why it will
- want to go hand-in-hand with an agency by
- 24 charging that agency with administering the
- 25 statute. And in that circumstance, it's the

- 1 role of the court to give effect to that.
- 2 So I think it's not just kind of an
- 3 interpretive canon, but, rather, it really is
- 4 grounded in the separation of powers.
- 5 JUSTICE BARRETT: So is it dependent
- 6 on a judgment about what Congress would want,
- 7 one that would have to be empirically tested?
- 8 GENERAL PRELOGAR: So I don't think
- 9 that it's getting into Congress's subjective
- intent, although, certainly, I think the primary
- 11 rationale that Chevron gave was its appraisal
- that this is, as an overarching matter, what
- 13 Congress would have intended when it comes to
- 14 gaps.
- And I don't mean to suggest that this
- 16 means that Congress thinks about each and every
- 17 gap it's creating in the moment. Sometimes I
- think it does and it's clear when it says set
- 19 reasonable rates. It knows that it's not itself
- 20 prescribing what those rates will be in concrete
- 21 circumstances. It's leaving gaps and the agency
- 22 has to fill it.
- But I think, even in the circumstance
- 24 where Congress doesn't know it's creating it at
- 25 the time, someone's going to have to come in

- 1 after the fact and fill it in, and it's either
- 2 going to be the agency or it's going to be the
- 3 Court without deference. And in that
- 4 circumstance, I think the Court appropriately
- 5 recognized Congress would want for the agency to
- 6 do it.
- 7 JUSTICE BARRETT: And how do we know
- 8 -- this is -- goes back to that question of what
- 9 is the trigger of ambiguity that Justice Gorsuch
- 10 was asking you.
- 11 So think about a concrete example like
- 12 Pulsifer, which the United States is on the
- other side, pending before the Court, turning on
- 14 what "and" joins together.
- 15 GENERAL PRELOGAR: We think that one's
- 16 clear. I'll just put it out there.
- 17 (Laughter.)
- JUSTICE BARRETT: So let's -- let's
- 19 put aside the question of whether, you know, the
- 20 Department of Justice and the Executive can get
- 21 to deference in interpreting criminal statutes.
- 22 Just erase that issue from the picture.
- 23 Is that the kind of question -- you
- know, judges below, very smart, very reasonable
- 25 judges reached different conclusions about what

- 1 that word in the statute meant. Is that the
- 2 kind of question then, you know, thinking about
- 3 Brand X saying, well, it doesn't have to be the
- 4 best, it just has to be, you know, a plausible
- 5 reasonable one, is that the kind of statutory
- 6 question that would trigger ambiguity and step
- 7 two deference?
- 8 GENERAL PRELOGAR: So I think it's
- 9 hard to speak in generalities about this. And I
- 10 am struggling because, of course, the Court has
- 11 recognized that the -- the Department of Justice
- does not get deference in the criminal context.
- 13 JUSTICE BARRETT: Right.
- GENERAL PRELOGAR: So, with respect to
- 15 that particular issue --
- 16 JUSTICE BARRETT: And it's that
- 17 statutory structure in a -- in a communication
- 18 --
- 19 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Right.
- 20 JUSTICE BARRETT: -- communication
- 21 sense.
- 22 GENERAL PRELOGAR: But I guess what I
- would say to just try to address the overarching
- question is that, you know, I think that it's
- 25 going to be kind of a specific exercise in every

- 1 case, and I can't say here is the formula I can
- 2 give you to know when the statutory
- 3 interpretation exercise at step one runs out and
- 4 the Court should feel like, I don't have an
- 5 answer, Congress didn't supply one and when not.
- 6 I think it's going to vary based on the
- 7 statutory scheme.
- 8 But, in each case, the Court should
- 9 conduct that inquiry, make it a thorough inquiry
- 10 and take account of all of the relevant aspects
- of interpretation that can bear on meaning and
- 12 show that Congress, in fact, did resolve it.
- 13 That is the role of the Court, and
- it's the role of the Court likewise to enforce
- 15 Congress's directions.
- 16 JUSTICE BARRETT: So that kind of
- 17 question, putting aside the government's
- 18 position in Pulsifer, so maybe --
- 19 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yeah.
- 20 JUSTICE BARRETT: -- that's an unfair
- 21 question to ask you, but that kind of question
- 22 you think would be the kind of question that
- 23 could -- you know, let -- let's take it outside
- of what does the word "and" mean.
- You know, a question of statutory

- 1 structure, the placement of a comma, you know,
- 2 that kind of a thing, that is the kind of
- 3 question that, depending on the circumstance,
- 4 could trigger step two deference?
- 5 GENERAL PRELOGAR: I think it
- 6 conceivably could. Now I want to hold open and
- 7 acknowledge that the Court has said there are
- 8 certain types of statutory questions that don't
- 9 fit within the Chevron framework because there
- 10 are kind of statute-specific reasons to think
- 11 Congress wasn't giving this question to the
- 12 agency.
- 13 JUSTICE BARRETT: Sure.
- 14 GENERAL PRELOGAR: I think the Major
- 15 Questions Doctrine is a species of that. I'd
- 16 point to the Adams Fruit case as well where it
- 17 was a judicial review provision and the Court
- said this wasn't something for the agency to do.
- But I think, in the mine run case,
- 20 yes, and -- and to the extent you're saying,
- 21 well, it feels odd for it to depend on a comma
- or to turn on the meaning of the word "and,"
- 23 still I think the inference holds because, in
- 24 that context, Congress, if it, in fact, has left
- 25 the ambiguity or the gap, recognizes that the

1 agency is going to have to come up with an 2 answer as part of implementing the --3 JUSTICE BARRETT: Except a lot of 4 times Congress doesn't intentionally leave the ambiguity or the gap, right? It's just limits 5 6 of language, limits of foresight. 7 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yes. And I think a -- so I think a court ultimately, if it's able 8 9 to ascertain that, although it's not perfectly 10 clear in the statute, you can figure out what 11 Congress intended, give effect to that, that's 12 step one. 13 At least Congress knows that if it's 14 going to unintentionally create ambiguities or 15 gaps, Chevron is the stable background rule. 16 It's been the rule for 40 years. This Court 17 acknowledged in City of Arlington that Congress, 18 in fact, legislates against the background of 19 that rule, and so it knows that with anything 20 it's doing that's unintentional, that will 21 trigger --2.2 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Can I --GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- deference --23 24 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: -- can I ask you

25

about your --

1	GENERAL PRELOGAR: if the
2	predicates are satisfied.
3	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: I'm sorry. Can I
4	ask you about the phrase "law runs out." One
5	way to think about that would be if you had the
6	same statutory interpretation
7	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Go ahead and
8	finish, sure.
9	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Same statutory
10	interpretation issue in a non-agency case, could
11	the Court decide it?
12	And if the answer is yes, the Court
13	could decide it, then the law hasn't run out,
14	so, therefore, you could ask yourself that
15	question in an agency case. If this were a
16	non-agency case, would we come to an answer on
17	this case? And if so, you don't go to step two.
18	What's wrong with that? And if that's
19	not correct, because I don't think you're going
20	to agree with that
21	(Laughter.)
22	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: how how
23	would you define when the law runs out short of
24	that, which I think is a problem, as you said,
25	hard to speak in generalities about this.

- 1 That's the problem.
- 2 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yes. So you
- 3 predicted my answer. I don't agree that it's
- 4 only in a circumstance where the statute would
- 5 be incapable of the Court issuing a decision at
- 6 the end of day. Of course, if a case comes to
- 7 the Court and it has to resolve it, it's going
- 8 to have to do its level best.
- 9 But what I meant by the law running
- 10 out is that if the Court has walked through all
- of the tools of construction and interpretation
- 12 and doesn't think that Congress actually
- directly spoke to this issue, Congress itself
- 14 didn't resolve it, then the kinds of tools the
- 15 Court is going to have to use will be ones that
- sound in things like the overarching statutory
- 17 objectives that Congress revealed as part of its
- 18 plan.
- 19 And I think that in a -- a Chevron
- 20 circumstance, the insight of the Court's opinion
- there was that the Court doesn't have to go on
- and itself supply the answer when, actually, the
- 23 best way to understand Congress having not
- 24 resolved it itself was to make the primary
- decisionmaker or the person with the primary

1 role in the first instance to be the agency. 2 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Thank you. CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: 3 Thank you, 4 counsel. Justice Thomas, anything further? 5 JUSTICE THOMAS: Just a -- a couple 6 7 questions. You said that in an exchange with Justice Sotomayor and me that Congress could 8 9 require some deference when it came to questions 10 of statutory interpretation. And in 706, it -- it -- the reviewing 11 12 court shall decide all relevant questions of 13 law, interpret constitutional and statutory 14 provisions, et cetera. Could Congress also 15 require deference on the part of the court with 16 respect to constitutional issues? 17 GENERAL PRELOGAR: So I think that 18 that would raise distinct issues in light of the different history that would be in play in that 19 20 kind of hypothetical. There has not been a 21 longstanding history of courts deferring to 2.2 agencies when it comes to interpreting the 23 Constitution, so I think there could be a unique Article III interest at stake there. 24

But the -- the history runs in

- 1 precisely the opposite direction when it comes 2 to statutory interpretation, where agencies themselves are charged with administering it 3 because, as we've tried to explain, Chevron was 4 not an innovation, it was not something new. 5 These principles of deference go all 6 7 the way back to the -- the very founding years 8 of the republic. They're reflected in things 9 like mandamus practice, where virtually all executive action for the first hundred years of 10 11 our nation's history was reviewed deferentially, 12 and then it was continued in a long line of 13 cases from this Court recognizing specifically 14 that in a circumstance when you have the 15 Executive administering the statute, Congress 16 could delegate and could expect for those 17 delegations to be respected. 18 JUSTICE THOMAS: I think mandamus is a 19 little bit different and the other extraordinary 20 writs in that they -- that you had quite a high 21 hurdle before they became applicable, but back 2.2 to -- we normally say that this Court reviews questions of law de novo, and that includes 23 24 statutory and constitutional.

How would you distinguish that normal

1 practice from what you're saying? 2 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Well, I think it is more nuanced than that. I certainly take the 3 point that the Court reviews many legal 4 questions de novo, but that's not invariably the 5 There can be issues that arise under 6 7 distinct statutes that set forth more deferential standards of review. AEDPA is a 8 9 good example of that. 10 It -- there can be circumstances like 11 mandamus where the nature of the action itself 12 dictates a more deferential standard of review. And I just don't think it would be accurate to 13 14 say as a uniform, across-the-board matter, de 15 novo is the standard that always and invariably 16 applies. That's inconsistent with cases from 17 this Court that were cited in Chevron, going 18 back to the early 1800s, things like Edwards' 19 Lessee versus Darby, where the Court itself was 20 recognizing that in a variety of contexts where 21 you have ambiguity in particular and you have an 2.2 expert agency charged with administering the 23 statute, deference can be warranted. Thank you. 24 JUSTICE THOMAS:

CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice Alito?

_	oublice Adilo: can you provide a
2	concise definition of what "ambiguity" means in
3	this context?
4	GENERAL PRELOGAR: Ambiguity exists
5	when the court has exhausted the tools of
6	interpretation and hasn't been able to arrive at
7	confidence that there is a right answer that
8	Congress spoke to the issue.
9	JUSTICE ALITO: Well, as Justice
LO	Kavanaugh's recent question presented, in cases
L1	that don't involve an agency, we never say we
L2	have exhausted all of our tools of
L3	interpretation and we just can't figure out what
L4	this means. So that would seem to suggest you
L5	never get to step two.
L6	GENERAL PRELOGAR: But the relevant
L7	question at step one is whether Congress is, in
L8	fact, resolving it or delegating it to the
L9	agency. So I agree that in a circumstance where
20	you don't have an agency, the Court can't give
21	effect to any delegation and, instead, the
22	backup option in a situation where an agency
23	would otherwise be available is the Court has to
24	do it, but I don't think that that undermines
25	the very real on-the-ground possibility that

- 1 Congress is legislating and meaning to give the
- 2 agency the gap.
- JUSTICE ALITO: Well, I come back to
- 4 --
- 5 GENERAL PRELOGAR: And think about a
- 6 term like "reasonable."
- 7 JUSTICE ALITO: I come back to the
- 8 question of your definition of ambiguity. And
- 9 what I heard you say the first time was it's
- when we've used up all our tools and we can't
- figure out what it means, then it's ambiguous.
- 12 So do you want to provide an alternative
- 13 definition?
- 14 GENERAL PRELOGAR: So I think maybe
- 15 the best way to try to clarify what the
- 16 definition I'm trying to give is to use an
- 17 example of something like a statutory term --
- JUSTICE ALITO: No, I --
- 19 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- like
- "reasonable."
- 21 JUSTICE ALITO: -- really would just
- 22 like a definition so that all the courts that
- have to apply the regime that you're advocating
- 24 will be able to apply it in the many different
- 25 cases that come before them.

1	GENERAL PRELOGAR: The Court gave this
2	definition in Kisor five years ago with respect
3	to Auer deference, and I think it's the right
4	definition to use
5	JUSTICE ALITO: And what is it?
6	GENERAL PRELOGAR: here as well.
7	JUSTICE ALITO: What is it?
8	GENERAL PRELOGAR: When a court has
9	used or exhausted the tools of interpretation
10	and doesn't believe that it reveals a right
11	answer. In that circumstance, Chevron said the
12	right way to think about that statute
13	JUSTICE ALITO: But I I think if
14	you
15	GENERAL PRELOGAR: the real right
16	answer there is a delegation.
17	JUSTICE ALITO: But again, I think you
18	you're running into the problem that we never
19	do that in cases that don't involve an agency.
20	GENERAL PRELOGAR: Because in those
21	cases
22	JUSTICE ALITO: So I think you've got
23	to provide a different a different
24	definition. Now, what I heard you say at a
25	couple of times a couple of times during your

1 argument was it's when we can't figure out --2 when we don't -- when we can't figure out what 3 Congress intended. Is -- is that what you mean 4 to say? That is the inquiry 5 GENERAL PRELOGAR: 6 that Chevron prescribes that you should be --7 and this is drawn from footnote 9, which is another formulation of this, use the tools of 8 9 interpretation to see if they reveal 10 Congress's --11 JUSTICE ALITO: What do you mean by 12 what Congress intended? Do you mean -- you mean 13 to say that you get to step two whenever we 14 don't think that a majority of the House and a 15 majority of the Senate had an intent on the 16 specific question that is before the court? 17 Then you'd always get to step two. 18 GENERAL PRELOGAR: No. So I don't 19 think it's about individual legislators' intent. I think the Court in Chevron used the word 20

JUSTICE ALITO: Thank you.

21

2.2

23

25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice

"Congress," but you're really looking at the

statute and what the statute reveals about

whether it's resolving an issue or not.

Т	Sotomayor?
2	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: There hasn't been
3	much discussion on why this is entitled to
4	statutory to stare decisis consideration.
5	There's been an argument by opposing
6	Petitioners that it's not because it's not
7	really a holding of a case; it's a method only,
8	and we have said in the past that a method that
9	lower courts have to use is subject to change
10	in change we can make without considering
11	stare decisis.
12	So could you address that argument?
13	GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yes. And I think
14	that Petitioners have pointed to two relevant
15	types of cases that they suggest just mean stare
16	decisis doesn't apply here or it applies in
17	particularly weakened form. First, they say the
18	Court has sometimes changed the interpretive
19	tools it consults. Things like legislative
20	history might have been in greater favor, at
21	least with some justices, before and maybe have
22	fallen out of favor later.
23	But I don't think that those provide a
24	parallel at all, because the Court has never
25	distilled those kinds of interpretive tools into

- a governing framework. It's never, for example,
 dictated to lower courts you should be applying
 legislative history in all cases. And so I
 don't think that it has the same kind of roots
- 5 in the type of binding governing framework that
- 6 Chevron has, which really has functioned in
- 7 quite a different way with respect to how you
- 8 understand and implement Congress's directives.
- 9 The second case they've pointed to is
- 10 Pearson, which held, in the context of the
- 11 Saucier rule, that that was entitled to weakened
- 12 stare decisis. But there the Court said that is
- entirely a rule of internal judicial management
- 14 about how courts decide issues and sequence
- their decision-making process. It doesn't have
- outward-looking consequences, and it would be
- foolish to require Congress to step in to fix
- 18 it.
- 19 There, too, I think that the
- 20 considerations in precisely the opposite
- 21 direction here because Chevron is not just a --
- 22 a -- a binding framework about how courts
- 23 conduct their business; it also gives notice to
- the legislature about how its statutes will be
- 25 construed. And if the Court got this wrong when

- 1 Chevron was decided and was wrong about
- 2 legislative intent, Congress is there at the
- 3 ready and is perhaps the best part or
- 4 institution in government to be able to correct
- 5 it and actually say, going forward, what it
- 6 wants the ground rules to be.
- 7 And the final thing I would say,
- 8 Justice Sotomayor, is that these were precisely
- 9 the kinds of considerations that the Court took
- into account in Kisor in applying the strongest
- 11 form of stare decisis to Auer deference. My
- 12 friends have largely ignored Kisor's analysis on
- this. This was the majority of the Court where
- 14 the Court said Congress can step in, these
- 15 deference decisions are balls that are lobbed
- into Congress's courts, and there are big
- 17 reliance interests at stake here because there
- 18 are dozens in that case, here thousands, of
- 19 decisions that could stand to be displaced and
- 20 create chaos if Chevron is overruled. So I
- 21 think that, from a stare decisis perspective,
- that precedent counts as precedent too.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: There -- and you
- answered the reliance question, because one of
- 25 the arguments on the other side is no one has --

- 1 well, the first argument, that the Court hasn't
- 2 applied Chevron in how many years, and so nobody
- 3 should have legitimate reliance interests. And
- 4 the second argument against reliance is that no
- 5 one should have reliance on a wrong
- 6 interpretation, basically.
- 7 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yes. And I think
- 8 that those kinds of arguments are inconsistent
- 9 with Kisor and also inconsistent with what we
- 10 know about what happens in the real world. You
- 11 know, there are agency regulations out there
- 12 that have been on the books for decades. People
- 13 have made investment decisions on the basis of
- 14 that. People have decided what contracts to
- 15 enter into on the basis of that. States in
- 16 cooperative federalism programs have designed
- 17 and invested the resources into their share of
- 18 that program.
- 19 And all of that could be thrown into
- 20 disarray if now it can be subject to renewed
- 21 challenge on the basis that that regulation was
- 22 upheld using the wrong -- answering the wrong
- 23 question, not looking at whether it conflicts
- 24 with some purportedly better interpretation of
- 25 the statute.

1	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Thank you.
2	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice Kagan?
3	JUSTICE KAGAN: There's been a fair
4	bit of talk, General, about how because you
5	don't have a formula for saying when there's a
6	gap or ambiguity so that you go to step two or
7	because judges may have different tendencies,
8	you know, which might be temperamental as much
9	as anything else, to find ambiguity, because of
10	that there's going to be some variability. And
11	it's hard to argue that it will be there will
12	be some variability, but could you talk about
13	the variability in the alternative scenario?
14	GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yes. And I I
15	think that this is a really important point to
16	focus on because, as I was trying to say
17	earlier, in a world without Chevron, it's not as
18	though Congress is always going to speak clearly
19	and it won't leave gaps or ambiguities in
20	statutes, genuine ambiguities where you apply
21	the tools and at the end you are left with no
22	certainty about what Congress was trying to do.
23	And in that circumstance in a world
24	without Chevron, what we'll see is what Justice
25	Alito was suggesting, the courts will have to go

- on and try to answer the question. But there
- 2 are 800 district court judges around the nation,
- 3 and I think it's fair to say they will likely
- 4 have different takes about what to do in that
- 5 circumstance and what to give greater weight to
- 6 and how to ultimately fill the gap in
- 7 administering the statute.
- And that's going to create problems
- 9 for a couple of different reasons.
- 10 JUSTICE KAGAN: And those differences,
- 11 to go back to Justice Alito's earlier question,
- 12 I mean, those differences were part of the
- impetus for Chevron because those differences
- were looking awfully idealogical in nature,
- awfully partisan in nature. And Chevron, all
- the empirical evidence suggests, dampens that
- 17 kind of idealogical division between courts.
- 18 GENERAL PRELOGAR: That's right.
- 19 There is good empirical evidence to support that
- judges have an easier time reaching common
- 21 ground under the Chevron framework and at least
- identifying when they can agree that Congress
- 23 did not itself resolve an issue, than they do
- 24 when they have to ultimately go on and try to
- 25 figure out what they are going to say is the

- 1 bottom line of the best way to put the statute
- 2 into operation.
- 3 So I think that that is rooted in
- 4 Chevron, and it just reflects as well this
- 5 uniformity concern, one of the basic
- 6 justifications for Chevron and one of the
- 7 reasons why this inference of legislative intent
- 8 is sound, because agencies can provide that kind
- 9 of uniform rule for the nation, subject to the
- 10 ground rules of course of judicial review under
- 11 Chevron. But I think that the alternative world
- where there's no Chevron is that there will open
- 13 up wide disputes among the lower courts, maybe
- on these mine-run statutory interpretation
- 15 questions in complex programs, things like
- 16 Medicare and Medicaid, and I think that it could
- 17 mean that regulated parties are subject to
- 18 different rules in different parts of the
- 19 country. You lose the uniformity value, and it
- 20 diminishes the force of the political
- 21 accountability value.
- 22 So I think Congress would have very
- good reason to think that agencies should do
- this and that courts should respect it within
- 25 the bounds of reasonableness.

1	JUSTICE KAGAN: Thank you.
2	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
3	Gorsuch?
4	JUSTICE GORSUCH: You agree that
5	courts, under the APA, have to review questions
6	of law involving the Constitution de novo?
7	GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yes. I think there
8	might be certain circumstances with respect to
9	certain provisions where more deferential
LO	standards apply, but I
L1	JUSTICE GORSUCH: But as a general
L2	rule
L3	GENERAL PRELOGAR: I certainly
L4	agree they don't defer to agencies.
L5	JUSTICE GORSUCH: Okay. And and
L6	you agree that, elsewhere in the law, when posed
L7	with questions of law, courts review those de
L8	novo, generally speaking?
L9	GENERAL PRELOGAR: I think that, in
20	many contexts, it's de novo. Certainly not in
21	all contexts.
22	JUSTICE GORSUCH: The examples you
23	gave, I think, were AEDPA and mandamus, right?
24	GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yes. I think those
25	are two good examples of situations where there

- 1 are specifications of a standard of review
- 2 that's more deferential.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: I wonder whether,
- 4 though, those have more to do with remedies,
- 5 right? In a mandamus case, a court should say,
- 6 or can say, what the law is. It just can't
- 7 provide relief unless its conviction about the
- 8 statute meaning is sufficiently clear. Same
- 9 thing in AEDPA, that we require a heightened
- 10 standard before relief is granted. Same thing
- in sovereign immunity contexts. We may think
- the statute says the government's liable, but we
- impose a higher standard before we grant access
- 14 to the fisc.
- 15 GENERAL PRELOGAR: So I acknowledge
- that I think that many of those doctrines do
- 17 turn on limitations built into the writ or
- 18 limitations on remedies. I don't think it would
- 19 be right, Justice Gorsuch, to say that in the
- 20 mandamus cases, what courts were traditionally
- 21 doing is saying let me put aside what the
- 22 executive officer did and just interpret the
- 23 statute de novo and say what I think the right
- answer is.
- 25 And the right answer is the executive

- 1 was violating the law, but not clearly outside
- 2 the scope of the executive's authority.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: But he could do so,
- 4 as -- just as we do in the qualified immunity
- 5 context. There are two steps to that analysis.
- 6 GENERAL PRELOGAR: But --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: You can just go to
- 8 the second one and resolve it and say, ah, it's
- 9 not clear, so I can't provide a remedy.
- 10 GENERAL PRELOGAR: But I think, for
- 11 Petitioners to succeed on their Article III
- 12 argument, they have to show not just that you
- 13 can --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: I'm not asking about
- 15 Article --
- 16 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- review de novo,
- 17 but you have to.
- 18 JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- I'm not asking
- 19 about Article III. I'm just asking about the
- 20 APA and what it means.
- 21 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yeah. Okay. So
- 22 sorry if I misunderstood. I -- I do think,
- though, that what the history shows at the very
- least is there has been no fundamental rule in
- 25 this country leading up to the APA's enactment

- 1 that you have to review all questions de novo.
- 2 And that's where the history of the APA really
- 3 matters.
- 4 This Court has several times
- 5 recognized the APA was a restatement of existing
- 6 judicial practice when it came to review of
- 7 agency statutory interpretations. And as we've
- 8 explained, there are really deep roots here, a
- 9 long line of precedent and history showing that
- 10 courts will sometimes defer.
- 11 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Yeah. On -- on
- 12 those --
- 13 GENERAL PRELOGAR: So I think to say
- 14 that --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- on those, it's --
- it's absolutely true, you -- you -- you do point
- out cases like Edwards' Lessee and others where
- 18 this Court gave respect to the federal
- 19 government's contemporaneous and uniform
- 20 interpretation of the statute.
- 21 And that's exactly what Skidmore does.
- 22 It gives respect to contemporaneous and uniform
- interpretations. But Chevron, it doesn't matter
- 24 whether it's contemporaneous and uniform. It
- 25 could be novel and out of the blue and

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1
      inconsistent with everything that came before
 2
      and it still gets deference, right?
 3
               GENERAL PRELOGAR: So I -- I disagree
 4
     with the idea that those cases stand for the
     more limited principle that's -- that --
 5
 6
               JUSTICE GORSUCH: Well, I'm -- I'm
7
      reading from them, but okay. All right. So
      let's let --
8
               GENERAL PRELOGAR: Well, there are --
9
      there are dozens of them.
10
11
               JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- let's let --
12
               GENERAL PRELOGAR: So I acknowledge
13
      that they use varying formulations, and maybe
14
     you can find some that look a little more like
15
     Skidmore. I think I have a lot that look a
16
     whole lot like Chevron --
17
               JUSTICE GORSUCH: Let's say you don't.
18
     Then what?
19
               GENERAL PRELOGAR: Well, I think I --
20
     I just have to dispute the premise because --
21
               JUSTICE GORSUCH: No. No, fair
22
      enough.
23
               GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- look at Gray
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versus Powell, look at NLRB versus --

JUSTICE GORSUCH: Yeah.

24

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1
               GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- First
 2
     Publications.
 3
               JUSTICE GORSUCH: Yeah.
               GENERAL PRELOGAR: You know, I think
 4
 5
      that these are -- these are cases in the 1940s
      that were leading cases in administrative law.
 6
7
               JUSTICE GORSUCH: Oh, I -- I wasn't --
8
      I was -- put aside what happened in the '40s
9
     because it went back and forth and wound up in
     Skidmore.
10
               GENERAL PRELOGAR: But, at the very
11
12
     least --
               JUSTICE GORSUCH: But -- but -- but --
13
14
               GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- Justice Gorsuch
15
16
               JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- but you wanted --
17
               GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- where there is
18
     no --
19
               JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- you wanted to say
      it's a very old thing, and the old cases don't
20
     look anything like Chevron. They look a lot
21
2.2
     like Skidmore.
23
               GENERAL PRELOGAR: I -- I disagree
     with that. Some of them --
24
25
               JUSTICE GORSUCH: Okay.
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GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- say you should 1 2 give it controlling weight, it should tip the 3 balance. They're not saying just pay attention to it if maybe it has the chance of persuading 4 5 you. JUSTICE GORSUCH: If it -- if it's 6 7 contemporaneous and if it's uniform, right? 8 GENERAL PRELOGAR: No, not all of the 9 cases --10 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Okay. 11 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- pay attention to 12 that fact. 13 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Okay. 14 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Some of them recite that, but others don't. 15 16 JUSTICE GORSUCH: All right. I'll --17 I'll go look again. That's fine. 18 GENERAL PRELOGAR: And I just want to 19 add as well --JUSTICE GORSUCH: I -- I have another 20 question, though. Chevron, you emphasize, is --21 22 is value-neutral and it'll sometimes favor 23 industries that are regulated and sometimes 24 favor the government.

And I can certainly see that in -- in

- 1 scenarios where we talk about the flip-flop of
- 2 administrations and new people leave -- come in
- 3 and replace others and -- and there's a lot of
- 4 movement from industry in and out of those
- 5 agencies. I think George Stigler talked about
- 6 regulatory capture.
- 7 And I -- I don't worry in a Chevron
- 8 regime about those people. They can take care
- 9 of themselves, okay? There is political
- 10 account, fine.
- 11 The cases I saw routinely on the
- 12 courts of appeals -- and I think this is what
- 13 niggles at so many of the lower court judges --
- 14 are the immigrant, the veteran seeking his
- 15 benefits, the Social Security Disability
- 16 applicant, who have no power to influence
- 17 agencies, who will never capture them, and whose
- interests are not the sorts of things on which
- 19 people vote, generally speaking.
- 20 And, there, Chevron is almost always
- 21 and, in fact, I -- I didn't see a case cited,
- and perhaps I missed one, where Chevron wound up
- 23 benefitting those kinds of peoples. And it
- 24 seems to me that it's arguable, and, certainly,
- 25 the other side makes this argument powerfully,

- 1 that Chevron has this disparate impact on
- 2 different classes of persons, and I wanted to
- 3 give you a chance to respond to that.
- 4 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Sure, and I have a
- 5 couple of different reactions to that. You
- 6 know, one is to say that I, of course,
- 7 acknowledge that the way that Chevron operates,
- 8 it gives effect to agency interpretations even
- 9 in circumstances where that might be
- 10 oppositional, some of the categories of
- individuals that you're identifying.
- 12 But, if it does that, it does that in
- accordance with Congress's intent and wishes
- 14 because even my friend agrees that there are
- 15 certain delegations that Congress can make to
- 16 agencies and -- and certain gap-filling that
- 17 agencies can do at least with the broad and
- 18 capacious terms. And at that point, it's just
- 19 putting into effect what Congress decided.
- 20 So I don't think that there is any
- 21 kind of fundamental flaw in giving effect to
- 22 Congress's statutes in that regard.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: But you've left open
- the possibility that a judge, if left to his own
- devices, would say the fairest ruling is in

- 1 favor of the immigrant, it's in favor of the
- veteran, and it's in favor of the Social
- 3 Security Disability applicant, but because of a
- 4 fictionalized statement about what Congress
- 5 wanted when it didn't think about the problem,
- 6 the government always wins.
- 7 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Well, I think there
- 8 are a couple of different ways to come at that
- 9 concern. One is to emphasize again that if it's
- 10 not just that in the exercise of discretion the
- 11 Court would think something is fairer and fill
- 12 the gap that way, but rather the Court thinks
- 13 actually the reason it's fairer is because I
- 14 have a -- a -- a sense that Congress spoke to
- this, I can determine it based on all of the
- 16 tools, you can --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Well, but we --
- 18 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- resolve that at
- 19 step one.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: But -- but that
- doesn't work, though, because you've said that
- 22 it doesn't matter whether Congress actually
- 23 thought about it and that --
- 24 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yes. So --
- 25 JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- and that there

- 1 are many instances where Congress didn't think
- 2 about it. And in every one of those, Chevron is
- 3 exploited against the individual and in favor of
- 4 the government.
- 5 GENERAL PRELOGAR: I don't think it's
- 6 fair to treat that as an exploitation. Congress
- 7 has been aware of the rules here. It could
- 8 change Chevron at any time. It could displace
- 9 it if it thinks that it's being used --
- 10 JUSTICE GORSUCH: All right.
- 11 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- in these
- 12 circumstances where it's not warranted.
- 13 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 14 Kavanaugh?
- 15 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: A few questions.
- 16 I think the other side's argument suggests that
- 17 the basic analytical concern at the heart of
- 18 Chevron is that it treats law as policy and that
- 19 that's antithetical to our constitutional
- 20 structure and the rule of law.
- 21 And that's why the Footnote 9 question
- is so important, I think, because, if you use
- the traditional tools in a non-agency case and
- got an answer, that suggests it's a statutory
- 25 interpretation question.

1	And you're saying no, you can stop
2	short of that in an agency case at some
3	difficult-to-define point and then treat the
4	rest of the case as a as a policy call for
5	the executive branch.
6	And that's treating what was a law
7	question in a non-agency case as a policy
8	question in an agency case, and it's the same
9	question. So it's transforming law into policy.
LO	And that's very difficult, I think, to accept if
L1	you accept the idea that a premise of the rule
L2	of law is that the executive and the judiciary
L3	can't just treat the laws passed by Congress as
L4	mere expressions of policy that they can change.
L5	Respond to that.
L6	GENERAL PRELOGAR: So I hear that
L7	concern, and I think the way to address that
L8	concern is to reinforce the principal in
L9	Footnote 9.
20	We agree that that's an important
21	principle. And to the extent that there are
22	agencies out there or lower courts out there
23	that are effectively not giving the the
24	effect to Congress's own enactments, then a
25	court can police that and it can put into effect

- 1 the Footnote 9 principle in a robust way with a
- 2 rigorous analysis. That's the kind of
- 3 instruction the Court gave in Kisor.
- 4 And, Justice Kavanaugh, I think it's
- 5 not a -- a different question in the agency
- 6 context and in the non-agency context. What I
- 7 understand Chevron to be doing is telling the
- 8 court in the first instance figure out if
- 9 Congress spoke to this issue, and, if so,
- 10 implement it. But hold open the possibility
- 11 that Congress didn't speak to the issue.
- 12 And in that context, if Congress has
- given the agency this primary critically
- important role to administer the statute, that
- should merit deference if the agency still stays
- 16 within the bounds that Congress set.
- In a non-agency case, you don't have
- 18 the agency to rely on, but you might still end
- 19 up at the end of the interpretive process
- 20 thinking Congress didn't precisely speak to this
- 21 issue, but what is the best I can do to figure
- 22 out how Congress would have resolved it or what
- is the interpretation most consistent with the
- 24 overall statutory scheme here?
- The right way to resolve this case,

- 1 Congress, in fact, would know that courts are
- 2 going to have to do that in a context without an
- agency, and so it's still following the terms of
- 4 the statute, but I think it would be a fiction
- 5 to suggest that what the Court is doing there is
- 6 just following Congress's explicit directions on
- 7 the matter --
- 8 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Well, can I ask --
- 9 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- because that's
- 10 at war with the idea that there is genuine
- 11 ambiguity sometimes.
- 12 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Yeah. I think
- it's important to distinguish, and I think you
- 14 would distinguish, statutes that involve legal
- 15 questions of statutory interpretation and then
- 16 there are tons of statutes, to go back to the AI
- 17 example, that explicitly confer broad policy
- 18 discretion on agencies.
- 19 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yes.
- 20 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: And that's where
- 21 State Farm kicks in, and that's where we've
- 22 always been deferential.
- GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yes, correct.
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: And you
- acknowledge those are two different kinds of

- statutes, a statute that says -- for example, one statute might say no -- no one can catch
- 3 more than 50 fish today, the next statute may
- 4 say the agency can define what a reasonable
- 5 number of fish that can be caught in a
- 6 particular day. That second statute's
- 7 conferring broad policy discretion to define the
- 8 limit on the agency.
- 9 You agree those are distinct?
- 10 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Well, I -- I think
- 11 that one is obviously a clearer bestowal of
- 12 discretion on the agency, but I think it just
- shows that Congress can legislate in a variety
- of ways.
- 15 And if you think about some of these
- 16 examples, note --
- 17 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Can I stop you
- 18 right there? In -- so you agree Congress can
- 19 legislate broad policy discretion to an agency,
- 20 can -- can grant broad policy discretion,
- 21 explicitly through words like "reasonable,"
- 22 "appropriate" --
- 23 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yes --
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: -- "necessary."
- 25 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- absolutely.

Т	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Okay.
2	GENERAL PRELOGAR: And I think that
3	the same question of what does the court do
4	without the agency can sometimes come up in
5	those contexts. If Congress has said, to to
6	borrow from the Chief Justice's example,
7	reasonable truck lengths, and, you know, there
8	isn't an agency interpretation of that, the
9	court's going to have to do its best.
10	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Right.
11	GENERAL PRELOGAR: But I understood my
12	friend to concede that is actually meaning to
13	create a zone of discretion
14	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Yes. That's a
15	GENERAL PRELOGAR: for the agency
16	to operate in.
17	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: That's a State
18	Farm question, as I would see it. Okay.
19	Two more questions because I want to
20	make sure the concerns of the other side get
21	aired and you have a chance to respond.
22	So there's some discussion of this
23	would be taking power from the executive and
24	granting it to the judiciary. I guess a
25	different conception of this, of Chevron, is

- 1 that it's taken power from Congress and shifted
- 2 it to the executive and allowed the executive,
- 3 in essence, to unilaterally make policy without
- 4 Congress.
- 5 And one of the concerns historically,
- 6 from the beginning of this country, was
- 7 unchecked executive power. And you hear
- 8 presidents criticized all the time, whether
- 9 it's -- you know, Roosevelt or Reagan or Bush or
- 10 Obama are criticized for exercising unchecked
- 11 power. So the concern is, about Chevron, in
- 12 esse ushering in aggressive assertions of
- unilateral executive power. And that's the
- 14 concern that I think the other side has. Not.
- 15 about the judiciary taking power but the
- 16 judiciary having taken it from Congress and
- 17 shifted it to the executive, contrary to our
- 18 usual concerns.
- 19 GENERAL PRELOGAR: So I disagree with
- 20 their characterization that Chevron permits the
- 21 executive to claim power away from Congress and
- 22 Congress is powerless to do anything about that.
- You know, in the first instance, of course,
- 24 Congress has to make the delegation to the
- agency, and the Court can enforce that. And so

- 1 Congress knows, as this Court has said in City
- of Arlington, to speak capaciously when it wants
- 3 to bestow discretion, to speak plainly when it
- 4 wants to rein an agency in and resolve an issue
- 5 itself, and also Congress can change the rules
- of deference that apply in any context.
- 7 There have been particular statutory
- 8 schemes where Congress has said deference
- 9 doesn't exist in this context, don't apply it,
- 10 or defer to this agency and not this other
- 11 agency. So -- so Congress is really in the
- 12 driver seat here.
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Well, most -- this
- is a technical point. Most presidents would
- veto a bill getting rid of Chevron deference and
- 16 so -- but that's a technical point. But last --
- 17 (Laughter.)
- 18 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: -- last -- last
- 19 question, which is there was talk about
- 20 democratically elected political branches, but I
- just want to get your agreement on something
- that I think you'll agree on, which it's the
- 23 role of the judiciary historically under the
- 24 Constitution to police the line between the
- legislature and the executive to make sure that

- 1 the executive is not operating as a king, not
- 2 operating outside the bounds of the authority
- 3 granted to them by the legislature.
- 4 Do you agree that's a proper judicial
- 5 role, I would assume?
- 6 GENERAL PRELOGAR: I, of course, agree
- 7 with that, but I think Chevron is consistent
- 8 with that. The court polices the executive at
- 9 step one by ensuring that Congress's own choices
- 10 are put into operation, and it further polices
- 11 the executive at step two. As the Court said in
- 12 Kisor, reasonableness is a test that agencies
- 13 can fail. And so there's work to be done --
- done there too to make sure the agency doesn't
- 15 transgress some outer bound or line that
- 16 Congress set.
- 17 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Thank you very
- 18 much.
- 19 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 20 Barrett?
- 21 Justice Jackson?
- JUSTICE JACKSON: So just picking up
- where Justice Kavanaugh left off, doesn't the
- 24 Court have to not only police the other branches
- but itself as well? And by that I mean, to the

extent that the other side raises the concern

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2 that, you know, they're treating law as policy, isn't there a concern that policy questions 3 might be treated as law and that what Chevron is 4 doing is also helping the Court to police its 5 6 own determinations in that regard? 7 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yes. And I think a way to illustrate this is to think about a 8 9 delegation like the deceptive practices as 10 defined by the Secretary. If there were a 11 statute that said that, of course a court 12 couldn't come in and say, well, the Secretary 13 has said what's a deceptive practice, but I -- I 14 think that actually there's a better way to 15 think about the concept of what is deceptive 16 and, therefore, I'm going to override what the 17 agency has done or not give any weight to it. 18 Congress has directed there that what 19 you should do as a court is pay attention to 20 what the Secretary did because the Secretary was 21 given that role in administration. Obviously, 2.2 Chevron applies to circumstances where that 23 delegation is not quite as explicit. 24 meant to identify the same basic idea where I 25 think the courts' role then is to give effect to

- 1 what Congress has done.
- 2 JUSTICE JACKSON: But why isn't the
- 3 answer what -- what the other side says, which
- 4 is, really, make Congress say that? In other
- 5 words, you know, it seems to me their argument
- is when we're policing this line between what is
- 7 law and what is policy, we should require
- 8 Congress to say the Secretary gets to make this
- 9 decision, and when it doesn't, then I guess we
- 10 look at it as a legal question that the courts
- 11 can decide.
- 12 GENERAL PRELOGAR: So I think that
- that argument would have more merit if there
- weren't so much water under the bridge and the
- 15 fact that the Court explained when it would
- identify this kind of delegation 40 years ago.
- 17 And, you know, Petitioners talked about the
- 18 reliance interests here and tried to diminish
- 19 them. They didn't talk about Congress's own
- 20 reliance interests in enacting statutes against
- 21 the backdrop of Chevron.
- 22 So I think at this juncture, to say
- 23 we're going to switch the default and make
- 24 Congress say discretion is conferred would be
- 25 really to run to the detriment of Congress's own

- 1 reasonable expectations with respect to
- 2 drafting.
- 3 And I think it also doesn't account
- 4 for the category of cases where the language
- 5 that Congress is using is infused with
- 6 discretion. They agree to terms like
- 7 "reasonable," "appropriate," "necessary." Those
- 8 are terms that require greater application to
- 9 concrete factual settings to fill in the
- 10 details, and you can't just interpret those
- 11 terms in a vacuum. So I don't understand how
- this idea of just making Congress say it could
- 13 function in that kind of world.
- 14 And then the final thing is Congress
- has said something very important here, which is
- 16 the agency shall administer the statute with
- 17 regulations or adjudications that have the force
- of law. That is part of the statute as well.
- 19 And I think --
- 20 JUSTICE JACKSON: And you think that
- 21 that really carries a lot? I heard you use that
- 22 and focus on that many times when you're talking
- 23 about a situation in which deference is or
- 24 should be required.
- 25 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Exactly. Sc

- 1 Congress, in each and every statute where this
- is going to be applicable, where Chevron
- deference will even be available, is going to
- 4 have to have made that judgment in the statute
- 5 to give the agency that responsibility and role
- 6 in implementing the statute.
- 7 JUSTICE JACKSON: And let me just ask
- 8 you about whether or not -- going to the issue
- 9 of ambiguity, which has come up many times,
- 10 whether or not the Court could clarify when
- 11 there is a gap or ambiguity that allows for or
- 12 requires the court to -- to go to step two. And
- 13 what I'm thinking about is what I mentioned
- 14 previously with your friend on the other side,
- which is that some scholars have actually
- 16 identified different kinds of ambiguity.
- 17 So in one scenario, we have a statute
- 18 that uses a broad term, and that term
- 19 encompasses a range of reasonable meanings.
- 20 There are three or four different ways that
- 21 could be reasonably -- you know, the meaning of
- 22 stationary source, for example.
- 23 But then there's also the kind of
- ambiguity in which a statute can mean only one
- 25 thing, either A or B, perhaps because of the way

- 1 the -- the -- the language, you know, is put
- 2 forward in the statute. It's just unclear
- 3 whether it means A or B.
- I take these scholars to mean that,
- 5 really, in -- the former scenario is the one in
- 6 which we have a situation, you know, where
- 7 Chevron deference would be required. And -- and
- 8 could the Court say something like that? And
- 9 let me just clarify. I mean, Chevron, I look at
- it as that's reducing to a policy choice, that
- once we are in the world of finding the kind of
- 12 ambiguity where there are a number of reasonable
- 13 alternatives in terms of making this
- determination, then, you know, it's just going
- to be a policy choice as to which one, you know,
- 16 Congress -- Congress wanted in some sense or
- 17 which entity Congress wanted to make that
- 18 decision.
- 19 GENERAL PRELOGAR: So I -- I think
- 20 that there -- certainly this Court could provide
- 21 more guidance to lower courts and, in
- 22 particular, identify the types of statutory
- issues that might clearly connote discretion,
- there are going to be some easy calls on this,
- and the types of situations where there might be

1	multiple, possible ways to implement and play
2	that will signal that there really is a zone of
3	discretion and the agency should have some
4	flexibility.
5	My only concern with going down the
6	road of saying there's some fundamental
7	difference with respect to particular terms that
8	might be subject to only two possible ways to be
9	implemented is that, you know, there are kind of
10	an endless number of statutes out there and all
11	kinds of varieties. And I worry that it might
12	lose sight of certain contexts where Congress
13	actually was comfortable with either way of
14	implementing that particular term, even if there
15	are only two possibilities, and did, in fact,
16	delegate that issue to the agency.
17	So I wouldn't want some kind of, you
18	know, bright-line rule to diminish the courts'
19	ability to recognize and implement that kind of
20	delegation.
21	JUSTICE JACKSON: Thank you.
22	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
23	General.

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Mr. Martinez, rebuttal?

1	REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF ROMAN MARTINEZ
2	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONERS
3	MR. MARTINEZ: Thank you, Your Honor.
4	Just a few points in rebuttal.
5	First of all, I think it's really
6	important to be very clear about what Chevron
7	does. It takes the power to say that the law
8	what the law means, to say that the law means X,
9	and it takes that power away from courts and it
10	gives it to agencies. And it then forces
11	agencies forces courts to adjudicate the
12	rights of individual litigants that are in front
13	of them based on a version of the law that the
14	courts themselves do not believe is correct, do
15	not believe is the best interpretation.
16	Neither Congress nor this Court can
17	create a doctrine or legislate a statute that
18	that effectuates that reallocation of
19	interpretive authority. My friend on the other
20	side said that the purpose of Chevron is to set
21	the ground rules on how the the different
22	branches of government should operate.
23	With respect, I think the Constitution
24	sets those ground rules. And the Constitution
25	makes clear that the judicial power, the power

- 1 to say what the law is, the power to interpret
- the law, rests with courts, not with agencies,
- 3 and certainly not with Congress either. And I
- 4 think the APA reenforces that.
- 5 The Solicitor General tries to -- to
- 6 rescue or reconceptualize Chevron by I think
- 7 taking issue with our argument that under
- 8 Chevron, if the court thinks the best
- 9 interpretation is X, it sometimes is going to
- 10 have to apply Y because the agency told it too.
- 11 I think if you look at footnote 11 of Chevron,
- 12 that is exactly what Chevron itself says.
- 13 It tells the agency -- the court that
- it has to apply an interpretation that the court
- itself would not choose. In other words, an
- interpretation that the court itself does not
- 17 think is best.
- 18 The Solicitor General also describes
- 19 Chevron as applying, and the formulation that I
- 20 heard a lot today is it applies if the agency
- 21 didn't resolve the question, which is a kind of
- 22 innocuous phrasing, but what is really meant by
- 23 that is that Chevron applies in cases of
- 24 ambiguity. And ambiguity has always been
- 25 understood as a situation where reasonable

- people can disagree about what the law means.

 And that just broadens the scope of
- deference. Ambiguities are all over the place.
- 4 Courts resolve ambiguities all the time. That's
- 5 core to the interpretive function. And so
- 6 there's no reason to think that just because
- 7 Congress has accidentally left an ambiguity in a
- 8 statute, that what it's really trying to do is
- 9 have that ambiguity resolved by policy decisions
- 10 made by an agency.
- Justice Barrett asked about the -- the
- justification for Chevron and whether the intent
- justification is really valid. And I took my
- 14 friend to -- to essentially concede that the
- delegation is fictional, but nonetheless to say
- that we should apply it anyway as a presumption.
- I -- I -- I don't think that you can
- get the mileage that you need to get out of the
- intentional delegation theory after you've
- 20 conceded it's fictional because the only reason
- 21 that intentional delegation theory has weight is
- if it's actually what Congress wanted to do.
- 23 And if Congress didn't actually want to delegate
- it, then we shouldn't be, you know, basing our
- doctrine and reconceptualizing how we think

- 1 about statutory interpretation based on this
- 2 fictional premise.
- 3 Here there's no reason to think that
- 4 Congress actually wanted to delegate
- 5 policy-making authority to agencies to resolve
- 6 ambiguity -- any ambiguity that arises in any
- 7 statute administered by the agency.
- I think the government's sort of
- 9 solution to that problem is to propose a clear
- 10 statement requirement on Congress. Hey, you can
- just legislate more clearly, but ambiguities are
- 12 -- are -- are accidental; they're unintentional.
- 13 And so I don't think that works. I think that
- would impose a massive clarity tax on Congress
- 15 that's unjustified.
- With respect to the history, Your
- 17 Honor, I think the mandamus precedents make very
- 18 clear themselves that they're talking about
- 19 remedies and those cases like Decatur and Dunlap
- 20 expressly say that if we were interpreting these
- 21 -- these legal issues in a different context
- 22 where we weren't limited by the limits on
- 23 mandamus remedies, we would apply our -- our
- 24 best and independent judgment.
- 25 With respect to the APA, the Solicitor

- 1 General is looking at text that requires courts
- 2 to interpret statutory provisions and -- and is
- 3 saying that that rule, interpret statutory
- 4 provisions, is consistent with Chevron, which
- 5 she describes in her brief as allocating
- 6 interpretive authority to agencies.
- 7 So the statute says courts do the
- 8 interpretation. Chevron says agencies get
- 9 interpretive authority, not courts. These are
- 10 inconsistent. Chevron's not consistent with the
- 11 APA.
- 12 Finally, with respect to the course
- 13 correction idea or the amend it, don't end it
- 14 approach, I would just respectfully suggest that
- 15 you've tried to amend this. You've tried to
- 16 course correct over and over again over the
- 17 years. That's why we have a Chevron doctrine.
- 18 It's overladen with a lot of bells and whistles.
- 19 It's very hard to apply in practice.
- 20 I think in -- in -- in the real world,
- 21 if you try to amend it without ending it, what's
- 22 going to happen is you're going to put a lot of
- 23 pressure on the major questions doctrine.
- 24 People are going to be coming to this Court
- every three or four years asking you to adopt a

Т	new limitation, a new caveat, a new threshold
2	test.
3	We would respectfully suggest that the
4	solution here is to recognize that the
5	fundamental problem is Chevron itself.
6	Interpretive authority belongs to the courts.
7	If we have the best view of the
8	statute, we should win this case. Thank you,
9	Your Honors.
10	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
11	counsel. The case is submitted.
12	(Whereupon, at 12:17 p.m., the case
13	was submitted.)
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