SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

IN THE	SUPREME	COURT	OF.	THE	ONTLED	STATES
					-	
APPLE INC.,)	
	Petition	ner,)	
V) No.	17-204
ROBERT PEPPER, ET AL.,)		
	Responde	ents.)	
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Pages: 1 through 65

Place: Washington, D.C.

Date: November 26, 2018

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1	IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES			
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3	APPLE INC.,			
4	Petitioner,)			
5	v.) No. 17-204			
6	ROBERT PEPPER, ET AL.,			
7	Respondents.)			
8				
9	Washington, D.C.			
10	Monday, November 26, 2018			
11				
12	The above-entitled matter came on for			
13	oral argument before the Supreme Court of the			
14	United States at 10:05 a.m.			
15				
16	APPEARANCES:			
17				
18	DANIEL M. WALL, ESQ., San Francisco, California; on			
19	behalf of the Petitioner.			
20	GEN. NOEL J. FRANCISCO, Solicitor General,			
21	Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.;			
22	for the United States, as amicus curiae,			
23	supporting the Petitioner.			
24	DAVID C. FREDERICK, ESQ., Washington, D.C.; on			
25	behalf of the Respondents.			

1	CONTENTS	
2	ORAL ARGUMENT OF:	PAGE:
3	DANIEL M. WALL, ESQ.	
4	On behalf of the Petitioner	3
5	ORAL ARGUMENT OF:	
6	GEN. NOEL J. FRANCISCO, ESQ.	
7	For the United States, as amicus	
8	curiae, supporting the Petitioner	20
9	ORAL ARGUMENT OF:	
10	DAVID C. FREDERICK, ESQ.	
11	On behalf of the Respondents	32
12	REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF:	
13	DANIEL M. WALL, ESQ.	
14	On behalf of the Petitioner	61
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		

1	PROCEEDINGS
2	(10:05 a.m.)
3	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear
4	argument first this morning in Case 17-204,
5	Apple versus Pepper.
6	Mr. Wall.
7	ORAL ARGUMENT OF DANIEL M. WALL
8	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER
9	MR. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Chief
10	Justice, and may it please the Court:
11	The only damages theory in this
12	monopolization action is rooted in a 30 percent
13	commission that Apple charges app developers
14	and which allegedly causes those developers to
15	increase app prices to consumers.
16	The case is barred by the Court's
17	Illinois Brick doctrine because the developers'
18	pricing decisions are necessarily in the causal
19	chain that links the commission to any consumer
20	damages.
21	If the commission increases beyond the
22	competitive level, but apps developers do not
23	change their apps prices, consumers suffer no
24	damages. And if app developers do change their
25	prices to pass on some or all of the

- 1 over-charge, well, that is precisely the kind
- of damages theory that the Illinois Brick
- 3 doctrine prohibits.
- 4 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Is there any -- in
- 5 -- in your view, is there any first buyer in
- 6 this picture?
- 7 MR. WALL: Excuse me?
- 8 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Is there any first
- 9 buyer in this picture?
- MR. WALL: Well, there's -- there's
- 11 two different buyers in this picture. There
- are the app developers who, by contract with
- 13 Apple, are buying a package of services which
- include distribution and software and
- 15 intellectual property and testing and -- and so
- 16 forth.
- 17 And then the plaintiffs in this case
- 18 are the -- the buyer of the apps themselves
- 19 that are made with that package of goods and
- 20 services and --
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: My -- my question
- 22 was within Illinois Brick, is there in this
- 23 case anyone who would qualify as a first buyer
- with standing to sue Apple?
- MR. WALL: The developers, yes.

- 1 Without a doubt, the developers are the ones
- who, in the first instance, pay the 30 percent
- 3 commission.
- 4 I think it's -- it is -- it is
- 5 important to root the analysis in the common
- 6 ground, which has been conceded, that the only
- 7 damages theory is based upon that 30 percent
- 8 commission. That is charged by contract
- 9 between Apple and the developers. And it is
- 10 deducted from whatever price that the developer
- 11 chooses to -- to set, subject to only the
- 12 minimal restriction --
- 13 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I'm sorry, the --
- 14 the first sale is from Apple to the customer.
- 15 It's the customer who pays the 30 percent.
- MR. WALL: But there has always been a
- 17 -- a transaction between Apple and the
- developer before that, which has the pricing
- decision of what the developer is going to do
- 20 on account of the 30 percent commission. There
- 21 is never --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Could I ask you
- 23 something --
- MR. WALL: Sure.
- 25 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- more generally

- 1 about Illinois Brick? That was a case of a
- vertical monopoly: A concrete block person,
- 3 manufacturer, monopolizes the next intermediate
- 4 market who then sells to a customer.
- 5 MR. WALL: Yes.
- 6 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: All right. This
- 7 is not quite like that. This is dramatically
- 8 different. This is a closed loop.
- 9 MR. WALL: It is a closed loop, but in
- 10 terms of the injury theory, which is what is at
- 11 issue in --
- 12 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: They're not
- 13 claiming the 30 percent is their injury.
- MR. WALL: No. They're --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: They're -- they're
- 16 claiming their injury is the suppression of --
- of a cheaper price, doesn't have to be
- 18 30 percent. They're not seeking 30 percent of
- 19 their sales.
- 20 They have to go out and prove at the
- 21 next step how, without this monopoly, they
- 22 would have paid less. It could be as little as
- 23 a -- a penny or nothing or it could be
- 24 something more. But the point is that this
- 25 closed loop with Apple as its spoke, they are

- 1 the first purchaser of that 30 percent markup.
- MR. WALL: No, they are not. The --
- 3 the first purchaser is clearly the app
- developer, who, by contract, agrees that every
- 5 time it puts a positive price on an app, it
- 6 will allow Apple to -- to take 30 percent of
- 7 it. And the damages theory --
- 8 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Apple took
- 9 30 percent from the customer, not from the
- 10 developer.
- 11 MR. WALL: Apple collects the -- the
- 12 funds, but even the Ninth Circuit here agreed
- 13 that -- that the process -- the payment flow is
- immaterial to the Illinois Brick issue.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Certainly, I wouldn't
- think that's true, even if they concluded it.
- 17 And in a simple theory, I would have thought it
- 18 would have been in antitrust for at least 100
- 19 years. What you do is you look to see who you
- 20 claim is the monopolist. Who do they claim is
- 21 the monopolist?
- MR. WALL: Apple.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Apple. And if you
- 24 pay -- if that's true, they can raise prices to
- 25 some people, lower them to others, their

- 1 suppliers. And if you were injured because you
- 2 paid them more, the monopolist, you can collect
- 3 damages.
- 4 And if you're injured because they
- forced your price down, you're a supplier, you
- 6 can collect damages. End of theory. I don't
- 7 see anything in Illinois Brick that conflicts
- 8 with that.
- 9 MR. WALL: Everything in Illinois
- 10 Brick --
- 11 JUSTICE BREYER: All right. What is
- 12 that?
- MR. WALL: -- conflicts with that.
- 14 JUSTICE BREYER: Yeah.
- MR. WALL: The -- the emphasis in all
- three of this Court's decision on both pass-on
- 17 defenses and damages theories, that's what the
- 18 doctrine disallows. It -- it says that --
- 19 JUSTICE BREYER: Yeah, it says that if
- 20 -- I don't mean to interrupt you, but I don't
- 21 want to -- you to miss the point I'm making.
- 22 If Joe Smith buys from Bill, who
- 23 bought from the monopolist, then we have
- 24 something indirect. But, if Joe Smith bought
- from the monopolist, it is direct. That's a

- 1 simple theory.
- Now I can't find in reason or in case
- 3 law or in anything I've ever learned in
- 4 antitrust anything that would conflict with
- 5 that. And what I want you is to tell me what?
- 6 MR. WALL: What conflicts with that in
- 7 this case is that the alleged monopolization,
- 8 which is over the distribution function,
- 9 allegedly first manifests in a 30 percent
- 10 commission. Consumers do not pay the
- 11 30 percent commission.
- 12 There was an effort in the -- in the
- 13 district court to try to argue that -- that
- 14 Apple added that, but that was abandoned. So
- what we have here instead is a damage theory
- 16 that runs through the independent pricing
- decisions of the app developers.
- 18 JUSTICE KAGAN: Does your answer to
- 19 Justice Breyer depend on what you said, that
- 20 the alleged monopolization is in the
- 21 distribution function? Because I understood
- 22 the -- the Respondents now to be saying, no,
- that's wrong; the alleged monopolization is in
- the apps themselves.
- 25 In other words, the consumer says you

- 1 have a monopoly on apps. You might also have a
- 2 monopoly on the distribution function, which
- 3 the app developers have to live with, but you
- 4 have a monopoly on apps, which the consumers
- 5 have to live with.
- 6 MR. WALL: In --
- 7 JUSTICE KAGAN: So, in responding to
- 8 Justice Breyer, you said: Well, it's because
- 9 the alleged monopoly is the distribution
- 10 function. But I don't think that that's
- 11 correct.
- MR. WALL: Well, two points, Justice
- 13 Kagan.
- 14 First of all, it is correct. The --
- the complaint repeatedly alleges at paragraphs
- 16 3, 8, and 53 that this is a case about -- about
- 17 a distribution market. It has always been a
- 18 case about a distribution market. And it
- 19 necessarily is because there is no good-faith
- 20 allegation that -- that Apple actually
- 21 monopolizes the apps as software.
- 22 It is -- it is simply the pipeline,
- 23 the sale of the apps, which is -- which is
- 24 alternately described in this case as either
- 25 distribution or as the so-called aftermarket,

- 1 which is simply limiting that to iOS apps
- 2 instead of the 80 percent of the apps --
- JUSTICE BREYER: You know, there are
- 4 an awful lot of words in this case that I tend
- 5 to have trouble understanding. One is
- 6 two-sided market. Another is a lot that you
- 7 used.
- MR. WALL: Uh-huh.
- 9 JUSTICE BREYER: So I go by simple
- 10 analogy. If Bill buys from the monopolist, he
- is a direct purchaser. If Bill buys from Sam,
- who buys from the monopolist, he is an indirect
- 13 purchaser. Anyone can understand that.
- 14 And when I get into what I think of as
- jargon, I begin to think: Suppose I were
- 16 advising United Fruit Company. I have a great
- 17 idea. You won't have to torpedo the boats of
- 18 your competitors anymore.
- 19 Here's what you do: What you do is
- 20 you buy from the farmers and you tell the
- 21 farmers what you will pay the banana farmers is
- 22 a very low price plus 30 percent commission.
- 23 And then what you do is, when you sell to
- 24 banana consumers throughout the world, you
- 25 charge them that 30 percent commission, which

- 1 they say is a higher price. And if -- you,
- 2 United Fruit, did not become a monopolist.
- Now I think I'm advising Jay
- 4 Rockefeller, John Rockefeller, and I give him
- 5 the same advice. And I give the same advice to
- 6 United Shoe, which happened to be a
- 7 distribution company. And we thereby have --
- 8 well, you see the point.
- 9 MR. WALL: But the difference here is
- 10 -- is that there -- there is -- there is no
- 11 third-party intermediary that is setting the
- 12 price and exercising its independent
- determination as to whether any or all of the
- initial over-charge, which is some part or all
- of the commission, is going to manifest itself
- in the app's price. And that's why I started
- 17 with -- with -- with the simple I would --
- 18 would -- would say, you know, the hypothetical
- of imagine the price today is the competitive
- 20 price, the 30 percent is the competitive price,
- 21 and it goes up by 10 points tomorrow.
- No consumer is injured unless the
- 23 apps' prices change. The apps' prices have to
- 24 change. And if they don't -- and they only
- 25 change by virtue of a decision which implicates

- 1 everything this Court talked about in Hanover
- 2 Shoe, in Illinois Brick, and in UtiliCorp.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, Mr. Wall, I
- 4 think you're avoiding the question a bit
- 5 because, I mean, the questions that are being
- 6 put to you by my colleagues are really, what
- 7 was Illinois Brick about? Was it about a
- 8 vertical supply chain or, instead, was it about
- 9 a pass-through theory?
- Now, in the facts of Illinois Brick
- and, indeed, in the facts of all the Illinois
- 12 Brick cases that we've discussed, you had both.
- 13 So you didn't have to separate the two.
- 14 And now, here, you don't have both,
- 15 because this is not a vertical supply chain,
- but there still is a pass-through mechanism.
- 17 So then the question is, does Illinois Brick
- 18 apply to that or not?
- 19 And I think what Justice Breyer was
- 20 suggesting to you, that as long as it's not
- 21 that vertical supply chain where the person is
- 22 not buying from the monopolist itself, here,
- the person is transacting with the monopolist
- itself, that that's what separates this case
- 25 from Illinois Brick and makes it entirely

- 1 different, notwithstanding that there's some
- 2 kind of pass-through mechanism involved.
- 3 MR. WALL: I completely agree with you
- 4 that the key to this is deciding what Illinois
- 5 Brick was about. Was it simply a formalistic
- 6 case about vertical chains, or was it about
- 7 pass-through?
- 8 And in answering that question, I
- 9 would begin with, first of all, with Hanover
- 10 Shoe, which is about a pass-on defense and
- 11 about the -- the difficulties in -- in the --
- 12 the -- the potential complication of antitrust
- litigation through pass-on defense, and then
- the framing of the question in Illinois Brick
- by this Court which said, having already found
- that we will not allow a pass-on defense, we
- 17 are now confronted with the question to whether
- allow pass-on to be used offensively.
- 19 It was 100 percent about pass-on. The
- 20 vertical chain was the factual setting of the
- 21 case, and, indeed, Respondents' argument would
- 22 -- would have this Court believe that the
- factual setting is the sum and substance of the
- 24 Court's reasoning.
- 25 JUSTICE ALITO: Mr. Wall, could I ask

- 1 you about what troubles me about your position,
- 2 and -- and it is this: Illinois Brick was not
- 3 about economic theory. It was about the
- 4 court's -- the court's -- the basis for the
- 5 decision was not economic theory, as I read the
- 6 case. It's the court's calculation of what
- 7 makes for an effective and efficient litigation
- 8 scheme.
- 9 And maybe your answer to this question
- 10 is that the validity of Illinois Brick is not
- 11 before us. But I really wonder whether, in
- 12 light of what has happened since then, the
- 13 court's evaluation stands up.
- 14 Take the third point that it makes
- 15 about that the direct -- the so-called direct
- 16 purchasers are the most efficient and most --
- in the best position to -- to sue.
- 18 If we look at this case, how many app
- 19 developers are there whose apps are sold at the
- 20 Apple store?
- 21 MR. WALL: Tens of thousands.
- JUSTICE ALITO: Yeah. Has any one of
- 23 them ever sued?
- 24 MR. WALL: None have ever sued. There
- 25 have been -- there have been plenty of

- disputes, but none has ever gone to litigation.
- 2 For that matter, no state or federal antitrust
- 3 agency has ever sued either.
- We do not take that -- we do not take
- 5 the -- the absence of litigation as evidence of
- 6 an oppressed developer community that cannot
- 7 speak for itself. These -- you know, the fact
- 8 of the matter is that nowadays major companies
- 9 suing their suppliers happens all of the time.
- 10 The idea that it -- that it -- that it
- doesn't, which was decried by Judge Posner as
- 12 fanciful, has proven to be fanciful because it
- 13 literally happens all of the time.
- 14 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Well, Mr. Wall,
- 15 along those lines, I -- I take your point that
- 16 Illinois Brick and Hanover Shoe might be read
- 17 about the economic realities of the
- 18 pass-through mechanism being important, rather
- 19 than the contractual formalities, whether it's
- 20 a sales agent or a formal purchase between the
- 21 manufacturer and the distributor.
- 22 And antitrust normally accounts for
- economics, rather than forms of contract.
- MR. WALL: Indeed.
- 25 JUSTICE GORSUCH: I take your point.

- 1 But building on what Justice Alito had 2 in mind, Illinois Brick has been questioned by 3 31 states before this Court in an amicus brief. 4 You're asking us to extend Illinois Brick, 5 admittedly, only because of a contractual 6 formality and the economic realities are the 7 same. I'll spot you all of that for purposes 8 of this question. 9 But why should we build on Illinois 10 Brick? Shouldn't we question Illinois Brick, perhaps, given the fact that so many states 11 12 have done so. They've repealed it. 13 There haven't been a huge number of 14 reported problems with indirect purchasers and 15 direct purchasers receiving double recovery, one of the problems Illinois Brick built on, 16 and the other one, which Justice Alito alluded 17 18 to, is direct purchasers don't always sue 19 because there's a threat that monopolists will 20 share the rents with the direct purchasers. 21 MR. WALL: Right. 22 JUSTICE GORSUCH: And indirect purchasers may be better suited to enforce the 23
- MR. WALL: Okay.

antitrust laws. So long wind-up.

```
1
               JUSTICE GORSUCH: Sorry, but there --
 2
      there's the pitch.
 3
               MR. WALL: Sure. So a few things.
 4
               First of all, it is -- it is an
 5
      enormously complicated and controversial issue,
 6
      what to do with the Illinois Brick doctrine.
 7
               You can see this in -- in the briefing
 8
      in this case where, yes, you did have states
9
      saying repeal it. You also had the plaintiffs'
10
      bar through the American Antitrust Institute
      say don't repeal it.
11
12
               There have been, I think, on the order
13
      of 17 efforts in Congress to have -- have it
14
      changed. Not once has it ever gotten to the
15
      floor. It is a quintessentially controversial
16
     political issue which belongs across the
      street, not here.
17
18
               I would disagree completely --
19
               JUSTICE GINSBURG: Why? Why is that
20
      so if the Court created the doctrine in the
21
      first place?
22
               MR. WALL: Because I don't think it's
23
      fair to say that the Court just created it.
24
      What the Court did was it applied the
```

foundational principle of all Section 4

- 1 jurisprudence, which is the proximate cause
- 2 principle of damages not going past the first
- 3 step, and then it -- it dealt with that in the
- 4 context of the potential for duplicative
- 5 pass-through over-charge claims, which are a
- 6 unique problem in antitrust.
- 7 It's not a general problem of all
- 8 damage theories. But, when you have
- 9 over-charge cases -- and this gets to Justice
- 10 Gorsuch's point about the potential for -- for
- 11 duplicative recovery -- it's not hypothetical.
- 12 It's automatic. It's mathematical.
- 13 If the first purchaser gets
- 14 100 percent of the over-charge because of
- 15 Hanover Shoe, anything else that is recovered
- that gets added on to that is necessarily
- duplicative, and that's what happens in the
- 18 district courts. You get the direct purchasers
- and the direct purchasers suing on whatever
- 20 theory optimizes their level of recovery.
- 21 I'd like to reserve the rest of my
- time and turn it over to the Solicitor General
- 23 at this point.
- 24 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
- 25 counsel.

1	General Francisco.
2	ORAL ARGUMENT OF GEN. NOEL J. FRANCISCO
3	FOR THE UNITED STATES, AS AMICUS CURIAE,
4	SUPPORTING THE PETITIONER
5	GENERAL FRANCISCO: Mr. Chief Justice,
6	and may it please the Court:
7	I'd like to begin where Mr. Wall left
8	out, and I think it addresses many of the
9	questions that have been asked here.
LO	At bottom, Illinois Brick and Hanover
11	Shoe, properly understood, prohibit
12	pass-through theories. And they reflect a
13	basic application of the background principles
L4	of proximate cause that this Court generally
15	reads into statutes of this sort, and, in
L6	particular, the rule that damages stop at the
L7	first step.
L8	Here, the first step is the app
L9	maker's pricing decision, because the
20	Respondents, the consumers, are injured if and
21	only if the app makers decide to increase their
22	prices in order to recoup Apple's
23	JUSTICE KAGAN: General, I have to say
24	I find that a not intuitive argument, I mean,
25	because it just seems to me that when you're

- 1 looking at the relationship between the
- 2 consumer and Apple, that there is only one
- 3 step.
- I mean, I pick up my iPhone. I go to
- 5 Apple's App Store. I pay Apple directly with
- 6 the credit card information that I've supplied
- 7 to Apple. From -- from my perspective, I've
- 8 just engaged in a one-step transaction with
- 9 Apple.
- 10 And when I come in and say Apple is a
- 11 monopolist and Apple is charging a
- 12 super-competitive price by -- by extracting a
- 13 commission that it can only extract because of
- its market power, I mean, there's my one step.
- 15 GENERAL FRANCISCO: Right. I
- 16 understand that, Your Honor. But, in proximate
- 17 cause, the issue is not transactional
- 18 proximity. The issue is proximity between the
- illegal conduct on the one hand, here, Apple's
- 20 monopolistic over-charge, and the injury to
- 21 consumers on the other hand, here, the higher
- 22 prices.
- 23 And Apple's monopolistic over-charge
- is not the direct cause of higher prices. The
- 25 direct cause of the higher prices is the app

2.2

- 1 maker's decision to increase their prices in
- 2 order to recoup the over-charge.
- 3 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: How do we know
- 4 that? How do we know that, given that Apple
- 5 really operates as a retailer in many respects
- 6 here, as Justice Kagan points out?
- 7 GENERAL FRANCISCO: Right.
- 8 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: And how do we know
- 9 that the 30 percent charge is not affecting the
- 10 price?
- 11 GENERAL FRANCISCO: Well, you don't
- 12 know --
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: In the same way
- that any retailer that adds 30 percent would
- 15 affect the ultimate price paid by the consumer?
- GENERAL FRANCISCO: You don't know for
- 17 sure, but that's the whole point. Here,
- 18 because app makers set the final price, they
- 19 have a choice to make: They either absorb the
- 20 over-charge and keep prices the same, in which
- 21 case the consumers aren't harmed at all, or
- 22 they increase their prices to recoup the
- over-charge, in which case the app makers are
- 24 also harmed because they face a drop in sales
- as a result of increased prices.

1 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: But the consumers 2 are harmed then too. 3 GENERAL FRANCISCO: Yes, Your Honor. 4 And that's the whole point of Illinois Brick 5 and Hanover Shoe. When you've got part of the 6 harm going to that initial party that's bearing 7 the full brunt of the over-charge in the first 8 instance because of its pricing decision, 9 that's the party that gets the whole claim. 10 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: But we have ambiguity about what Illinois Brick means here, 11 12 and shouldn't that ambiguity, if -- if there is such ambiguity, be resolved by looking at the 13 14 text of the statute? Any person injured? 15 GENERAL FRANCISCO: Yes, Your Honor. 16 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: That's broad. GENERAL FRANCISCO: And what I think 17 18 that Illinois Brick reflects is the type of 19 statutory interpretation that this Court has 20 engaged in in a variety of cases, including the 21 RICO cases, including the Lexmark cases, where 22 you interpret background principles of 23 proximate cause to be built into the statute, including the rule that damages stop at the 24 25 first step.

1 JUSTICE KAGAN: Does it make a 2 difference, General, that -- that Apple is 3 influencing the prices here? In other words, 4 this is -- you're suggesting that the app 5 developers are just sort of setting these 6 prices independently --7 GENERAL FRANCISCO: Uh-huh. 8 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- but I'll give you 9 sort of two ways in which that's not true. 10 The first way is this 99 cent 11 charge --12 GENERAL FRANCISCO: Uh-huh. 13 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- which you might 14 say, well, that doesn't matter because, you 15 know, it could be 99 cents or it could be \$100.99. 16 17 But, in fact, these are all low-cost 18 products for the most part. So saying a price 19 has to end with the -- you know, the -- the 20 number 99 is saying a lot about the fact that you can't charge 77 cents or 55 cents --21 22 GENERAL FRANCISCO: Sure. 23 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- or 32 cents. So 2.4 that's one.

And the other is the entire allegation

- 1 here is that Apple is truly a monopolist on
- 2 both sides of the market. It's able to dictate
- 3 to developers whatever price structure it
- 4 wants, and it's also able to dictate to
- 5 consumers what the nature of the sale is going
- 6 to be.
- 7 GENERAL FRANCISCO: Right.
- 8 JUSTICE KAGAN: And in that event, it
- 9 -- it sure seems as though, you know, Apple --
- 10 you know, it happened to set up this commission
- 11 that puts it in the ambit of Illinois Brick,
- but it could have done a thousand other things
- that are essentially the same that would have
- 14 taken it out of the Illinois Brick rule.
- 15 GENERAL FRANCISCO: Sure. And let me
- 16 take those points in turn. First, the 99 cent
- 17 pricing policy.
- The first thing I'll point out is it's
- 19 not in the complaint, but we'll put that to the
- side and assume that it's part of this case.
- 21 Here, I don't think it changes the fact that
- the app makers still control the overall price,
- 23 and to the extent that -- to the extent that
- 24 Respondents are harmed by that, it's based on a
- 25 pass-through.

1 Look, if I go to an auction house and 2 I have to bid in \$10 increments, nobody thinks 3 the auction house is setting the price. The 4 bidders are still setting the price. And, 5 here, the Respondents are --JUSTICE KAGAN: But if you have to bid 6 7 in \$10 increments and the -- and the true 8 alternative prices are \$3, \$5, and \$7 --9 GENERAL FRANCISCO: Right. 10 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- then, indeed, you are setting the price. 11 12 GENERAL FRANCISCO: And, well, that's my second point, Your Honor. Here, any injury 13 14 is based on a pass-through because app makers 15 are either going to round up or they're going 16 to round down. If they round down to the lower 99 cent price point, the consumers aren't 17 18 injured at all. If they round up to the next 19 99 cent price point, the consumers are injured 20 as a result of the pass-through theory. And 21 it's that intermediating pricing decision that 22 we think that under the principles of proximate 23 cause that --24 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: General, the 25 problem is that they're not measuring damages

- 1 by that.
- 2 GENERAL FRANCISCO: I --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: As I understand,
- 4 they're saying it's not the 30 percent; it is
- 5 what the price would be if we could buy apps
- 6 outside of this closed loop.
- 7 GENERAL FRANCISCO: I --
- 8 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: And it could be
- 9 theoretically a lot higher than the markup, it
- 10 could well be within it, but the point is that
- 11 that 30 percent -- that 30 percent or whatever
- 12 that 30 --
- GENERAL FRANCISCO: Uh-huh.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- percent figure
- is, is not the measure of our damages. That's
- 16 as I understand --
- 17 GENERAL FRANCISCO: Yeah --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- that they're
- 19 saying the developers may have their own claim,
- their damages likely have to stay within the
- 30 percent, but we don't measure our damages by
- 22 that.
- 23 GENERAL FRANCISCO: So, respectfully,
- I'll disagree with that, and in explaining it,
- Justice Kagan, I think I can also answer the

- 1 second part of your question.
- 2 The harm to the consumers here is that
- 3 they have to pay higher prices for apps, and
- 4 the reason they have to pay higher prices for
- 5 apps -- and, Justice Kagan, this goes to your
- 6 question -- is because Apple controls the
- 7 pipeline that connects app makers on the one
- 8 hand and iPhone users on the other.
- 9 And the way they exploit that pipeline
- 10 through their alleged monopoly is by charging
- 11 that 30 percent commission. So the only reason
- 12 consumers are harmed here in the form of paying
- 13 higher prices is because the app makers decide
- 14 to increase their prices in order to recoup
- 15 that commission.
- And, Justice Breyer, to your question,
- the reason why this makes it different than
- 18 your hypothetical of Bill buys from Sam and you
- 19 have transactional proximity is because the
- 20 question isn't proximity between the parties
- 21 who are transacting with one another but
- 22 proximity between the antitrust violation, the
- 23 30 percent commission, and the harm to
- 24 consumers in the form of higher prices.
- JUSTICE BREYER: I wouldn't have

- 1 thought that was the antitrust violation. I
- 2 would have thought the antitrust violation is
- 3 having enormous market power achieved by not
- 4 patents and not skill, foresight, and industry
- 5 but, rather, anticompetitive or more
- 6 restrictive than necessary practices.
- 7 Alcoa --
- 8 GENERAL FRANCISCO: For sure.
- 9 JUSTICE BREYER: -- Alcoa did not
- 10 charge higher than competitive prices, and
- 11 that's why Learned Hand said the easy life, not
- 12 necessarily higher prices, is the reward,
- often, of monopoly. Now --
- 14 GENERAL FRANCISCO: For sure --
- 15 JUSTICE BREYER: -- I would have
- 16 thought it's a matter for proof at the damages
- stage whether, in fact, Apple, assuming they
- 18 prove it is a monopoly, has extracted higher
- 19 than competitive prices from those particular
- 20 people, the plaintiffs, or whether they've just
- 21 had the easy life.
- 22 GENERAL FRANCISCO: Right.
- 23 JUSTICE BREYER: Now I don't think
- that's the stage we're at in this case. So, if
- 25 you say right, right, right --

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1
               GENERAL FRANCISCO:
                                   Well --
 2
               JUSTICE BREYER: -- then they must
 3
      win.
 4
               GENERAL FRANCISCO: -- no -- so what I
 5
      wanted to say is that, for sure, the Illinois
 6
      Brick theory doesn't apply across the board,
 7
     but it does apply when somebody is bringing an
 8
      over-charge theory, as in Illinois Brick, as in
 9
     Hanover Shoe, and as here. The --
10
               JUSTICE BREYER: Have we had trial on
11
      that?
12
               GENERAL FRANCISCO: Your Honor, where
      you have that kind of over-charge theory, what
13
14
      Illinois Brick says -- asks is, under basic
     principles of proximate cause, is there some
15
16
      party other than the monopolist that's standing
      in between the plaintiffs' injury in the form
17
18
      of higher prices and the monopolist's violation
19
      in the form of the commission.
20
               And whenever the price setter, the
21
      ultimate price setter, is somebody other than
22
      the monopolist, it's never the monopolist's
23
      over-charge that is the direct cause of the
24
      injury.
25
               JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: But -- but if the
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- 1 app developer -- if Apple bought the apps from
- 2 the app developer and then added 30 percent to
- 3 it and sold it to the consumer, you would agree
- 4 that a claim could lie there, correct?
- 5 GENERAL FRANCISCO: Your Honor, I want
- 6 to make sure I understand the hypothetical. If
- 7 Apple said --
- 8 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Apple's buying the
- 9 app from the app developer for a price --
- 10 GENERAL FRANCISCO: Right.
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: -- Apple's then
- 12 adding 30 percent to that price and selling it
- 13 to the consumer. The consumer alleges that
- 14 Apple's doing that as a result of monopolistic
- 15 behavior.
- The claim lie?
- 17 GENERAL FRANCISCO: Yes, you can sue
- 18 Apple directly, but you can't sue Apple if the
- 19 -- if -- if Apple isn't the price-setting
- 20 party, but the app maker is the price-setting
- 21 party. And that's why -- may I finish the
- 22 answer, Your Honor?
- 23 And that's why the key is who sets the
- 24 price, and it's very hard to manipulate our
- 25 rule because, under our rule, you actually have

- 1 to change the party that has the authority to
- 2 set the final price, and that's a fundamental
- 3 change in the nature of the transaction itself.
- 4 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
- 5 counsel.
- 6 Mr. Frederick.
- 7 ORAL ARGUMENT OF DAVID C. FREDERICK
- 8 ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENTS
- 9 MR. FREDERICK: Thank you, Mr. Chief
- 10 Justice, and may it please the Court:
- 11 Apple directed anticompetitive
- 12 restraints at iPhone owners to prevent them
- from buying apps anywhere other than Apple's
- 14 monopoly App Store. As a result, iPhone owners
- paid Apple more for apps than they would have
- 16 paid in a competitive retail market.
- 17 Under this Court's precedents, iPhone
- 18 owners have a cause of action under Section 4
- of the Clayton Act directly against Apple for
- 20 those over-charges. The court of appeals
- 21 should be affirmed for three reasons.
- 22 First, Illinois Brick is a bright-line
- 23 rule that Respondents easily satisfy.
- 24 Second, Apple directed its monopoly
- abuses at Respondents. So it's appropriate

- 1 that Respondents can sue Apple for their
- 2 damages as a result of those violations.
- And, third, Apple seeks to expand and
- 4 modify the bright-line rule of Illinois Brick
- 5 to deny indisputably direct purchasers an
- 6 antitrust remedy and to change the rule into a
- 7 standardless inquiry that will be hard to apply
- 8 at the pleadings stage.
- 9 Now, if I could return to the first
- 10 point, the direct purchaser rule is a
- 11 bright-line rule. This Court said so in
- 12 Illinois Brick and, importantly, a case that
- has not yet been discussed today, in UtiliCorp,
- in which the Court said Illinois Brick is a
- 15 bright-line rule for direct purchasers,
- 16 notwithstanding the economics that go into
- 17 that.
- 18 UtiliCorp was a case that protected
- 19 the defendants, who were asserting that -- who
- 20 -- who were asserting that the -- there was a
- 21 break in the link of the chain.
- This case is really the flip side of
- 23 that to protect plaintiffs who directly
- 24 purchased from the alleged antitrust violator
- and are claiming damages as a result of that

- 1 antitrust violation.
- 2 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: There's --
- 3 there's one antitrust violation under your
- 4 theory, which is the increase, the 30 percent
- 5 increase that Apple imposes when it -- when
- 6 it's -- when, as you put it, it sells the apps?
- 7 MR. FREDERICK: Wrong. And this is
- 8 very important for the Court to understand.
- 9 The antitrust violation here is the monopoly
- 10 App Store. Consumers cannot buy an app
- anywhere other than Apple's 100 percent-owned
- 12 monopoly App Store.
- 13 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But, when it
- 14 comes to the -- the 30 percent increase, you're
- 15 -- you're obviously saying the purchasers,
- 16 again, under your theory of the apps, are
- 17 harmed by that and recover -- can recover
- 18 damages for that, and also that the developers
- 19 are harmed by that and they can recover damages
- 20 for it as well.
- In other words, to the extent it might
- 22 be said that Apple is a two-sided market,
- 23 they're -- they're subject to suit on both
- 24 sides of the market for a single antitrust
- 25 price increase that they're alleged to have

- 1 imposed.
- 2 MR. FREDERICK: So, Mr. Chief Justice,
- 3 I think that your question kind of gets to the
- 4 core of a lot of the confusion here because, by
- 5 having a wholly-owned monopoly App Store, Apple
- 6 is able to distort the market at the supply
- 7 chain and at the retail chain for consumers.
- 8 We, representing consumer iPhone
- 9 owners, are suing only for the damages that we
- 10 incur. That is the higher than what a
- 11 competitive market price would be for apps.
- 12 Our measure of damages is not
- 13 necessarily the 30 percent. The 30 percent is
- 14 simply proof that Apple is acting as a
- 15 monopolist because it extracts --
- 16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: No, no, I
- 17 understand -- I understand your claim on your
- 18 side of the market. But you do think that the
- developers have a claim as well, don't you?
- 20 MR. FREDERICK: Well, I have no grief
- 21 --
- 22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: It's the same?
- 23 MR. FREDERICK: I have -- it's not the
- 24 same. It is a different claim.
- 25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: For -- for the

- 1 same price increase -2 MR. FREDERICK: No --
- 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: -- for the
- 4 same --
- 5 MR. FREDERICK: -- I disagree with
- 6 that, Mr. Chief Justice. Apple's supplier of
- 7 the apps, if they have a claim, it is that
- 8 Apple has distorted the market for the supply
- 9 of apps in a way that hurts app developers'
- 10 profits.
- 11 Their argument would be, if we weren't
- 12 suffering under the one monopoly store
- 13 constraint, we might be able to charge a
- 14 different price lower than 99 cents and be able
- to get a direct purchase from an iPhone Apple
- owner.
- 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, I think
- 18 you're just saying that the measure of damages
- 19 would be different between the two sides of the
- 20 market?
- MR. FREDERICK: And -- but they would
- 22 be different damages.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: In other words, you
- 24 are saying the consumer says, I'm paying a
- 25 higher price for the product. It might be the

- 1 entire 30 percent commission, it might be some
- 2 portion of the 30 percent commission, that's
- 3 super-competitive, but I'm paying a higher
- 4 price for the product.
- 5 And the app developer says: Well, I
- 6 don't -- you know, that's irrelevant to me. I
- 7 don't have to buy the product. What's relevant
- 8 to me is fewer people are buying my apps.
- 9 And that represents some amount of
- 10 lost profits. But those two things are not --
- I mean, it is true that two people are being
- able to sue because Apple is -- is transacting
- with each of these people and each of them has
- 14 a gripe against what -- the way Apple has
- 15 structured the market.
- But the damages are entirely
- 17 different. One is a measure of lost profits,
- 18 which may or may not exist. The other is I'm
- 19 paying too much.
- MR. FREDERICK: That's correct.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Well, but, Mister --
- 22 JUSTICE ALITO: That's an interesting
- 23 theory, but is that the theory -- is that your
- 24 claim?
- MR. FREDERICK: Yes.

1 JUSTICE ALITO: I thought this case 2 was all about the 30 percent. 3 MR. FREDERICK: Well, the other side 4 has been trying, Justice Alito, to make the 5 case all about the 30 percent. But if you read 6 the --7 JUSTICE ALITO: So the 30 percent has 8 nothing to do with this? 9 MR. FREDERICK: The -- what the 10 30 percent is, is an allegation that Apple is monopolizing the sale of apps. And we know 11 12 that because they can extract 30 percent on every single sale, which only a monopolist 13 14 could do. 15 The 30 percent is not a measure of 16 damages. I'm not aware of any case from this 17 Court that says you have to plead antitrust damages with particularity. But the -- because 18

JUSTICE GORSUCH: Mr. Frederick, I

competitive market existed.

19

20

21

22

- think you'd agree that there can only be one
- 25 monopoly rent. And then the question becomes,

of the ability to extract a monopoly rent, we

can say in good faith that they -- we are

paying more than we would pay than if a

- 1 who's paying it?
- 2 And it might be spread partially
- 3 between direct purchasers and indirect
- 4 purchasers. It might be partially spread
- 5 between the app makers and the purchasers of
- 6 apps. And disaggregating that is the question
- 7 that we've been wrestling with here.
- 8 I guess here is where I'm stuck and
- 9 need your help. You say that Illinois Brick is
- 10 a bright-line rule premised on the existence of
- 11 a contractual relationship between the buyer --
- 12 the ultimate purchaser and the intermediate
- 13 seller, and that there has to be that kind of
- 14 relationship, rather than a sales agency
- 15 relationship like we have here.
- 16 But antitrust doesn't usually depend
- 17 upon such contractual formalities. It usually
- depends upon the underlying economics. And I
- 19 have a hard time distinguishing this case from
- 20 Illinois Brick in the sense of -- in the
- 21 question of economic pass-through and the
- 22 problems that it presents, the possibility that
- 23 the intermediate purchaser may absorb the
- 24 monopoly rent and not pass it along.
- Now that raises for me the question,

- further question, and I -- I -- I'll wind it up
- 2 quickly, I promise, whether Illinois Brick is
- 3 correct. All right. And you have an amicus
- 4 that says it's not, but you don't make that
- 5 argument.
- I'm really curious why --
- 7 MR. FREDERICK: Because --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- the plaintiffs'
- 9 bar is not making that argument before this
- 10 Court.
- MR. FREDERICK: Because --
- 12 JUSTICE GORSUCH: So there -- there's
- a whole -- a whole bunch of things for you to
- 14 chew on.
- MR. FREDERICK: Okay. I'll try to
- 16 chew on them succinctly, Your Honor.
- 17 We haven't asked for Illinois Brick to
- 18 be overruled because we plainly meet the
- 19 bright-line rule. We paid Apple and Apple was
- 20 --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Say I don't -- say I
- 22 don't buy the formalistic contractual -- it
- 23 seems to me an argument in -- in -- in the law
- of contracts rather than the law of antitrust.
- 25 So help me out with economics.

1 MR. FREDERICK: Economics, we paid 2 money. Apple never shared that money with any 3 middleman. Illinois Brick is a case about a 4 middleman. There's no middleman here. 5 We paid the money. Apple kept 6 30 percent of it --7 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Again -- again, that 8 9 MR. FREDERICK: -- before sending 10 70 percent on. JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- that's based on 11 the form of the relationship. 12 13 MR. FREDERICK: But that --14 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Talk to me about the 15 possibility, the problem that the app producer 16 might absorb the monopoly rent. That's the 17 economic problem that I'm stuck with. 18 MR. FREDERICK: Okay. If I could try 19 to answer your question with a hypothetical, 20 and if the Court would indulge me, suppose in a 21 competitive market the price for an app was 90 22 cents, not 99 cents, as Apple is charging. 23 It's 90 cents. We would all agree, I 24 think, that the consumer can sue for the nine

cent differential between the monopoly price --

1 JUSTICE GORSUCH: I understand the 99 2 cent argument. MR. FREDERICK: Okay. 3 4 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Let's put that 5 aside. 6 MR. FREDERICK: All right. Now that 7 we've got that aside, let's look at it from the 8 developer's perspective. 9 If they had a claim -- if they had a 10 claim -- and I'm not saying that they do -- but if they had a claim, they would need to show 11 12 the difference between the profits that they would have achieved in the monopoly App Store 13 14 versus the profits they would have achieved at 15 a competitive market price. 16 And that depends on three factors, okay? One is the difference in sales that they 17 would achieve between 99 cents and 99 -- 90 18 19 cents. The second is how their sales 20 differences would affect their revenue. And the third is whether the commission was 21 22 30 percent in a competitive market. Okay? 23 So, if you take my hypothetical, the 24 damages for the developer, there are three

possibilities. One is that it's zero. If the

- 1 commission went to 22 percent in a competitive
- 2 market, the developer takes home 70 cents just
- 3 as it does with Apple's 30 percent in a 99 cent
- 4 monopoly market. At 22 percent commission, the
- 5 developer has zero damages.
- 6 The developer would have positive
- 7 damages if the commission were zero because
- 8 then the app developer sustains damages of 20
- 9 cents. The developer would make the 90 cents
- in the competitive market instead of the 70
- 11 cents that Apple is now passing along by virtue
- of the monopoly market.
- The damages would be negative, though,
- if, in a competitive market, the commission
- 15 stayed at 30 percent because, there, the
- 16 benefits that would achieve by the monopoly
- 17 price of 99 cents give the developer an extra
- 18 eight cents per transaction.
- 19 So, in that way, Mr. Chief Justice,
- 20 the developer has a different claim that's
- 21 based on its lost profits. And that would be
- 22 irrespective of whether the buyer of the app,
- 23 the consumer, sustains damage for the nine
- 24 cents in my hypothetical.
- 25 You can run these out under different

- 1 -- you can get your law clerks to run all the
- 2 different scenarios. It always works the same
- 3 way.
- 4 JUSTICE BREYER: Unless we're --
- 5 unless we're prepared to overrule, which wasn't
- 6 our case, Alcoa, I think all you'd have to show
- is, one, they have monopoly power, and, two,
- 8 they achieved it through less restrictive --
- 9 for more restrictive than necessary practices,
- 10 end of your burden.
- In your case -- and -- and Justice
- 12 Gorsuch is quite right, there's only one
- monopoly profit to be earned. And so you'd
- 14 have a different question when you get to the
- 15 damages stage. The different question is:
- 16 Well, how did they divide that monopoly profit?
- 17 You'd like to show that they got some
- 18 of it from consumers. But that's for a later
- 19 proceeding.
- MR. FREDERICK: That's correct.
- JUSTICE BREYER: And you're adding one
- 22 thing. One of the things that we want to use
- in order to prove that they do have monopoly
- 24 power, i.e., the power to raise price
- 25 significantly above a competitive level, is

- 1 they charge us so bloody much money. That's
- 2 just a piece of evidence here, and we'll worry
- 3 later, agreeing that there's only one monopoly
- 4 profit in theory, as to who got what.
- Now have I stated that correctly?
- 6 MR. FREDERICK: Yes, you have, Justice
- 7 Breyer.
- I mean, the basic problem in this case
- 9 as it comes to this Court is who gets to
- 10 complain about the monopoly App Store. We say,
- as the buyers of the apps from the monopoly App
- 12 Store, there's no form or function, there are
- 13 no contract issues, Justice Gorsuch, that
- 14 create a different form versus function
- 15 problem. We're paying the money. They're
- 16 keeping it. And we think we're paying more
- 17 than we're -- we would have to if the market
- 18 was a competitive market.
- 19 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: They say it would
- 20 be different if Apple purchased the apps from
- 21 the app developer and then added 30 percent on
- the sale.
- 23 And why is that not different?
- MR. FREDERICK: Because it's
- 25 irrelevant. And here's where we part company

- 1 from the Solicitor General. It's irrelevant
- who sets the price so long as what the
- 3 violation is -- here, the monopoly App Store --
- 4 leads to higher prices that the consumers have
- 5 to pay. That's what the violation is. That's
- 6 how we are proximately harmed.
- 7 So, in the very hypothetical, Justice
- 8 Kavanaugh, that you posed to the Solicitor
- 9 General, the Solicitor General concedes we are
- direct purchasers in a situation where the app
- developer sets the price and they simply tack
- on 30 percent by virtue of their monopoly
- power.
- 14 It's no different here. If you think
- about it in -- in terms of what is actually
- going on, suppose Apple dropped its commission
- from 30 percent to 20 percent, but it
- maintained the price restriction of a 99 cent
- 19 app. From the consumer's perspective, we're
- 20 still overpaying for the app. Under that
- 21 hypothetical, Apple simply gives the app
- developer more money, but that doesn't affect
- 23 the consumer welfare at all.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Now --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Are we going to

- 1 create a -- I'm sorry. Go ahead, please.
- 2 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: The General said
- 3 that if, in fact, Apple bought these products
- 4 from suppliers and paid them and then added
- 5 30 percent to you, that that would be a classic
- 6 antitrust violation.
- 7 You're saying -- that's basically what
- 8 they're doing here anyway. But let's take the
- 9 reverse. Let's say they collected money from
- 10 you and paid all of it over to the developer
- 11 and then told the developer: Give us
- 12 30 percent of that back.
- Would you then still be a direct
- 14 purchaser and --
- 15 MR. FREDERICK: So we would still be
- direct purchasers if, under your hypothetical,
- we're buying it from Apple and then Apple is
- 18 engaging in the Justice Gorsuch form over
- 19 function situations in terms of how the money
- 20 gets moved around.
- I think that the -- in that situation,
- we are still directly purchasing and we're
- 23 still able to complain about Apple's violation.
- 24 And I think, under your hypothetical, Justice
- 25 Sotomayor, we have to keep the idea that Apple

- is still operating a monopoly App Store.
- 2 It's no different than if there was a
- 3 grocery store chain that monopolized the sale
- 4 of all vegetables. If they -- if that is the
- only place you could buy vegetables, we would
- 6 say that that monopoly store outlet was able to
- 7 control prices and affect output. That's
- 8 basically what's happening here.
- 9 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Well, I think
- 10 Justice Sotomayor's question is a -- requires
- 11 further exploration. I mean, are -- are we in
- danger of just incentivizing a restructuring of
- 13 contracts here so that all that Apple does or
- 14 people like it is make you purchase directly
- from the app provider and then it then returns
- 16 the -- the profit to Apple later?
- 17 And if that's all we're doing, then
- 18 what is the point of Illinois Brick? And you
- 19 still haven't explained to me why the
- 20 plaintiffs' bar isn't asking to overturn
- 21 Illinois Brick when 31 states are. So help --
- 22 help me on both those.
- MR. FREDERICK: Well -- well --
- 24 JUSTICE GORSUCH: They're two separate
- 25 questions.

MR. FREDERICK: -- okay. So -- so let 1 2 me take the second one first, Justice Gorsuch. 3 I don't represent the plaintiffs' bar. I 4 represent the consumers in this case, and the 5 consumers in this case have no brief and no 6 beef with Illinois Brick. 7 We think we are direct purchasers. We 8 satisfy the rule. We come within the bright 9 line. That's okay with us. 10 What the Court decides doctrinally to do with Illinois Brick is obviously something 11 12 where I think you go to a different situation 13 if the case arises. 14 But, on your other point, I think it's the other side that is actually asking for the 15 opportunity to use contracts in order to 16 distort or recharacterize matters in a way that 17 18 evades the Illinois Brick bright-line rule. 19 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Well -- well, assume 20 for the moment that -- that I believe the 21 economics underlying the two arrangements are 22 very similar. Hard to distinguish. I haven't 23 yet heard you give me a good argument why. 24 So let's just posit that. Then it

really is just about form, isn't it?

1 MR. FREDERICK: No, I think in that 2 hypothetical, I would be prepared to say if we 3 were paying the developer directly for the app 4 and the app developer could set whatever price 5 it wanted to set, okay, keep with me on that 6 assumption, the app developer operating in a 7 free market can set whatever it wants to set, 8 and then Apple comes after the app developer 9 and says, hey, you bought it -- the consumer 10 bought it through our store, we want whatever we want, that becomes not a problem with the 11 12 consumer; that becomes a problem between the developer and the app -- and the seller of the 13 14 app. 15 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Ah, so pricing 16 control is really important to proximate cause 17 then? 18 MR. FREDERICK: I beg your pardon? 19 JUSTICE GORSUCH: So pricing control 20 is really important to proximate cause? 21 MR. FREDERICK: No, pricing control is 22 not important to pricing -- to proximate cause 23 in the sense that whether -- I think, under direct proximate cause, we're buying the app 24 25 directly from the app developer, and, remember,

- 1 a key part of my answer was the app developer
- 2 can set that price competitively in a
- 3 competitive market.
- 4 What arrangements happen between Apple
- 5 exercising its monopoly control through the App
- 6 Store and the supplier is not something we are
- 7 proximately --
- 8 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Your -- your --
- 9 MR. FREDERICK: -- affected by that.
- 10 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Sorry to
- 11 interrupt. Your point was that the other side
- is putting form over the reality?
- 13 MR. FREDERICK: That's correct. And
- 14 -- and they're doing it in a way that is
- 15 particularly standardless, because what the
- 16 court in UtiliCorp held was that even when it
- is absolutely clear 100 percent of the
- 18 over-charge is going from the natural gas
- 19 supplier through the utility directly to the
- 20 consumer, this Court held: No, we're going to
- 21 keep the bright-line rule. Only the utility
- 22 gets to complain about the natural gas
- 23 over-charge.
- 24 And it was that bright-line rule that
- 25 the Court said is going to apply. And the

- 1 reason is exactly, Justice Alito, for the point
- 2 that you made, which is that it's about
- 3 judicial administration at the pleadings stage.
- 4 We're just trying to figure out who has the
- 5 claim and who could complain about the
- 6 antitrust violation. Here, that's clearly the
- 7 consumers because we're the ones who are paying
- 8 Apple the money to receive the app.
- 9 And so, to -- to Justice Kavanaugh, to
- 10 finish off the point, what the other side is
- 11 essentially asking is that, instead of having a
- 12 bright-line rule, it's a very fuzzy rule,
- 13 because they don't have a test for what
- 14 constitutes a pass-through. They don't have a
- test that applies when there is no middleman.
- 16 There's no middleman in this particular
- 17 transaction. It's directly between the iPhone
- 18 owner and Apple.
- 19 And so you're going to have to figure
- 20 out, do they get a one ticket good for this
- 21 case only? They happen to be the largest
- 22 company in the world, or at least they were
- some weeks ago, and they are able to extract
- 24 monopoly pricing by virtue of a unique
- 25 e-commerce monopoly on their App Store.

1 JUSTICE ALITO: What concerns me about 2 your argument is that it doesn't seem to be 3 based on the way in which this claim was 4 understood by the lower courts. 5 Maybe they misunderstood it. But, I 6 mean, the opening line of the -- the order 7 granting Apple's motion to dismiss the second 8 amended complaint by the district court: "The 9 thrust of Plaintiff's second amended complaint 10 is that Apple has engaged in antitrust conduct by collecting 30 percent of the price of iPhone 11 12 applications." MR. FREDERICK: The district court 13 14 just missed it, Justice Alito, respectfully. 15 JUSTICE ALITO: And where -- okay. 16 Where -- can you point to me where in the Ninth Circuit's opinion they understood your claim in 17 18 the way that you've characterized it this 19 morning? 20 MR. FREDERICK: Yeah, they said on 21 page 21a of the petition app -- I think that's 22 the page -- that this is simply about a 23 monopoly distribution and that it is a simple 24 case as a result of that.

If you look at the bottom of 21a, the

- very last paragraph: "Instead, we rest our
- 2 analysis, as compelled by Hanover Shoe,
- 3 Illinois Brick, UtiliCorp, and Delaware Valley,
- 4 on the fundamental distinction between a
- 5 manufacturer or producer on the one hand and a
- 6 distributor on the other." Apple is a
- 7 distributor of the iPhone apps, selling them
- 8 directly to purchasers through its App Store.
- 9 And because of that, we have standing
- 10 to complain that they are the seller of the
- 11 apps. That's -- it's a very simple case in
- 12 that -- as viewed through that lens.
- Now I accept, Justice Alito, that
- 14 there have been a lot of arguments and this
- idea about the 30 percent has led to a certain
- lack of clarity, but I think that the position
- 17 we have written in our brief is the best
- 18 articulation of what the underlying theory is
- 19 here, and that is that the Apple monopoly App
- 20 Store over-charges iPhone owners for apps.
- 21 JUSTICE KAGAN: And -- and -- and the
- 22 rule of the end in 99-cent requirement in that
- 23 theory is what? In other words, would your
- theory be the same if no such requirement
- 25 existed, or would it not?

1 MR. FREDERICK: It would be still an 2 over-charge case, Justice Kagan, because the 3 theory economically is that, if you are having 4 to buy only from a monopoly, you are paying 5 more than you would if there was a, you know, 6 discount apps warehouse or you could buy 7 directly from the app's developer. 8 Our assertion is that, with multiple 9 sellers, multiple suppliers of the apps, we 10 would be able to buy them at a lower price. It's that competition. 11 12 JUSTICE KAGAN: So what's the significance of that end in 99-cent rule? 13 14 MR. FREDERICK: The significance of it 15 is that it informs the price elevation and the 16 price over-charge. And it also informs that, contrary to Apple's assertion, they are not the 17 18 agent of the apps developers. I mean, they put 19 that in their contract. That's -- that's where 20 you get to Justice Gorsuch's form over 21 substance problem, because, at 99 cents, 22 they're telling the app developer, we're foreclosing from you 99 percent of all pricing 23 24 options.

- 1 that significant, why didn't you include it in
- 2 the complaint?
- 3 MR. FREDERICK: Because it's not
- 4 significant from this perspective, Mr. Chief
- 5 Justice, and that is that, with a monopoly
- 6 store, the prices are over-charged, our theory
- 7 is relatively simple. They brought up the 99
- 8 cents in the blue brief.
- 9 I think it's at page 9 of their brief
- 10 where they raise the 99 cent issue. And as we
- 11 were thinking about what the implications of
- 12 that were, it became clear to us that that
- meant the app developer couldn't possibly be --
- 14 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Sounds kind of late
- 15 in the day --
- 16 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: It's another --
- 17 JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- to come up with a
- 18 new litigation theory.
- MR. FREDERICK: Well, no, we're at a
- 20 pleadings stage, Justice Gorsuch.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: In the Supreme
- 22 Court, a blue brief, really?
- MR. FREDERICK: Well, it's their --
- 24 JUSTICE GORSUCH: I mean, should we be
- 25 taking that up now? I mean, maybe you can

- 1 amend your complaint or something like that on
- 2 remand, but should we be addressing that?
- 3 MR. FREDERICK: Well, Justice Gorsuch,
- 4 they were the ones, is what I'm saying, that
- 5 brought up the 99 cents. It wasn't us.
- 6 JUSTICE GORSUCH: But we're usually --
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: It's not --
- 8 JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- a court of
- 9 review, not first view, right.
- MR. FREDERICK: Well, no, our point
- 11 was that when they raised the 99 cents is
- somehow proof that the developer actually gets
- to set the price, we say, no, it's actually
- irrelevant for the reasons which I've already
- 15 stated.
- But, secondly, it's just wrong
- 17 because, if you're constraining what 99 percent
- of the pricing options are, you know, that --
- 19 that's -- it is what it is.
- 20 But it also has the effect
- 21 economically of raising the prices --
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: It's going to --
- 23 MR. FREDERICK: -- that the consumers
- have -- have to pay.
- 25 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: It's going to add

to your damages, correct? 1 2 MR. FREDERICK: Well, it --3 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Potentially. 4 MR. FREDERICK: -- it could 5 potentially add to the damages or it could 6 subtract from the damages. 7 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Correct. 8 MR. FREDERICK: We don't know. What 9 we know is what the price is in a 10 noncompetitive market, and we will have to have experts that will assess what the damages would 11 12 be in a competitive market. 13 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Your theory 14 doesn't depend on the 99 cent? 15 MR. FREDERICK: Our theory of damages 16 or our theory of the violation? 17 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Well, the --18 MR. FREDERICK: The theory of the 19 violation is the wholly-owned monopoly App 20 Store as the place to sell apps. That is what 21 the violation is here. And how you calculate 22 the damages is you look at what is the 23 over-charge based on what the monopoly is 24 selling the app for versus what it would be 25 sold for in a competitive market.

1 The antitrust scholars, and I would 2 direct you to page 23 of their brief, they go 3 through a lot of the pricing scenarios that you 4 have explored through hypotheticals here and they make very clear that, as a matter of 5 6 function, what is happening here is that the 7 monopoly seller of the apps here is extracting 8 an over-charge from the purchasers who are 9 direct purchasers of those apps. 10 JUSTICE ALITO: If this case were to go to trial as a class action, would every app 11 12 purchaser potentially be entitled to three 13 times the 30 percent over-charge, or would it 14 depend on the particular app? 15 MR. FREDERICK: Your Honor, I -- I 16 think that -- I don't know the answer to your question fully. I'll be candid. 17 I have not 18 thought about how the experts are actually 19 going to try to prove it up. 20 What I would say, though, is that 21 they're probably -- what will likely happen is 22 that because there are apps that are sold at 99 23 cent, a huge number of them are free, but a 24 huge number are sold at 99 cents, some other 25 strata is sold for \$1.99, some other strata is

- 1 sold for \$2.99 or \$6.99, and I haven't put my
- 2 head around, to be perfectly honest, exactly
- 3 how you would carve up the damages on some sort
- 4 of a pro rata basis. But the idea, of course,
- of the Clayton Act is that treble damages is
- 6 designed to deter antitrust violations.
- 7 And so this Court has made very clear
- 8 in its cases that the point of having that
- 9 deterrence is to avoid having the monopolist in
- 10 this case act in a way that it's not penalized
- 11 for its monopoly behavior.
- 12 And if you were to suppose that it was
- just a single damages problem, it would be easy
- 14 for monopolists to simply act, and, if they get
- 15 caught, they just simply pay over what they
- 16 caused in damage, but the idea behind the
- 17 Clayton Act's treble damages remedy is designed
- 18 to deter actions just like this.
- 19 And that is why Apple cannot point to
- 20 another e-commerce distributor that does what
- 21 it does. In every other instance, as we point
- out in the red brief, there is an alternative
- 23 to buying the product.
- 24 And, in fact, Apple doesn't even do
- 25 this with its own computer software. And we

- 1 have pleaded that in the complaint, Mr. Chief
- 2 Justice, where we say that, if you buy
- 3 software, you can buy it open source and you do
- 4 not have to buy it through Apple's monopoly
- 5 chain.
- 6 So the iPhone app monopoly App Store
- 7 is a unique feature of the e-commerce setting.
- 8 Apple has found ways using technology and
- 9 contractual constraints to limit the
- 10 opportunity of a competitive market to
- 11 flourish.
- 12 If a competitive market did flourish,
- 13 the prices that iPhone owners pay would be
- 14 lower. Thank you.
- 15 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
- 16 counsel.
- 17 Three minutes, Mr. Wall.
- 18 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF DANIEL M. WALL
- 19 ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONERS
- 20 MR. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Chief
- 21 Justice.
- I think I need to begin with the
- 23 experience I had in this case for its first
- 24 nine years, and that is it was about a
- 25 30 percent commission.

- 1 Paragraph 48 of the complaint is -- is
- 2 -- is the key allegation, which is the root of
- 3 the damages theory, which maintains that the
- 4 30 percent commission is a monopoly price.
- 5 It's called a monopoly price.
- 6 It's elsewhere called a
- 7 super-competitive price. It is the root of the
- 8 damages theory not just in part, not just on
- 9 the periphery, but entirely.
- 10 The brief in opposition at -- at pages
- 11 5 and 12 make this unmistakably clear. At --
- 12 at page 5, the brief in opposition states:
- 13 "Respondents seek damages based solely on the
- 14 30 percent markup."
- 15 So whatever other attributes of this
- 16 case one may want to talk about that might
- 17 contribute to the liability theory, the injury
- 18 theory, the damages theory, is, in their words,
- 19 solely about the -- the 30 percent.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Mr. Wall, I have a
- 21 question about this Court's case law, and I'd
- 22 -- I'd like your answer to it.
- 23 If Apple had in every agreement with
- 24 an iPhone owner a provision that you can sue --
- 25 you can't sue, you have to go to an arbitrable

- 1 forum in a one-by-one, then Apple would be home
- 2 free in this case?
- 3 MR. WALL: We -- we do not have such a
- 4 provision. In fact, the -- all of the relevant
- 5 agreements with both developers and consumers
- 6 state that -- that there shall be litigation in
- 7 the Northern District of California.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Yeah, I -- I know
- 9 -- I know you don't, but suppose you did.
- 10 MR. WALL: If -- if that were the
- 11 case, then this would be a matter for
- 12 arbitration, and I don't think it changes the
- 13 legal question.
- 14 JUSTICE GINSBURG: And -- and it would
- 15 take this case out of this Court, put it in an
- arbitrable forum, with a single complainant?
- 17 MR. WALL: Indeed, it -- it would, but
- 18 that's not this case. There is -- there is no
- 19 concern about that in this case.
- The second point that I want to make
- 21 is -- relates to this duplicative recovery
- 22 possibility. It -- there is -- we never heard
- any suggestion prior to the Respondents' merits
- 24 brief about potential lost profits claims based
- upon monopsony.

1 To the contrary, the theory throughout 2 the life of this case is that -- that 3 developers, if they sued, would sue over the 4 same 30 percent markup. The brief in 5 opposition at 12 says any claim by the app's 6 developers -- excuse me -- a claim by the app's 7 developers, even if they had one, would not 8 overlap the 30 percent markup paid by app's 9 purchasers. Rather, it is a piece of the same 10 30 percent pie. So going back to what is Illinois 11 12 Brick about, it is about not having that apportionment fight. They admitted to the --13 14 to the time that this case was on this Court's doorstep that this is all about an 15 16 apportionment fight between the developers. As -- as to the -- the -- the -- which 17 is the better rule, the formalistic rule or the 18 substantive rule, I suggest that -- that the 19 20 formalistic rule is always the one that is most 21 subject to manipulation. 22 The substantive rule that asks is your 23 damages theory a pass-on theory focuses on what is of economic substance. And, here, that's 24 25 what the district court judge did.

1	In in a patient but persistent
2	manner, she required them to say what is your
3	theory. And it and at JA 137 to 143, you
4	see the transcript of the district court
5	argument when when, finally, at JA 141, they
6	said or 143, rather they said their
7	theory is that, because of the commission, the
8	developer would mark up the app.
9	That is a classic over-charge case.
10	Now, to be sure, in a new setting, it's a new
11	world setting. It's not the brick-and-mortar
12	setting of the three cases that this case
13	that this Court has decided before. But it is
14	the same economics that should have the same
15	outcome prohibiting pass-through damages
16	claims.
17	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
18	counsel. The case is submitted.
19	(Whereupon, at 11:05 a.m., the case
20	was submitted.)
21	
22	
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	Official - Subjec
\$	90 [4] 41 :21,23 42 :18 43 :9
	99 [24] 24 :10,15,20 25 :16 26 :17,19
\$1.99 [1] 59:25 \$10 [2] 26:2,7	36 :14 41 :22 42 :1,18,18 43 :3,17
\$100.99 [1] 24: 16	46 :18 55 :21,23 56 :7,10 57 :5,11,
\$2.99 [1] 60:1	17 58:14 59:22,24
\$3 [1] 26 :8	99-cent [2] 54:22 55:13
\$5 [1] 26:8	Α
\$6.99 [1] 60:1	a.m [3] 1:14 3:2 65:19
\$7 [1] 26 :8	abandoned [1] 9:14
1	ability [1] 38:19
	able [10] 25 :2,4 35 :6 36 :13,14 37 :
10 [1] 12:21 10:05 [2] 1:14 3:2	12 47 :23 48 :6 52 :23 55 :10
10.05 [2] 1:14 3:2 100 [5] 7:18 14:19 19:14 34:11 51:	above [1] 44:25
17	above-entitled [1] 1:12
11:05 [1] 65: 19	absence [1] 16:5
12 [2] 62 :11 64 :5	absolutely [1] 51:17 absorb [3] 22:19 39:23 41:16
137 [1] 65: 3	abuses [1] 32:25
141 [1] 65 :5	accept [1] 54:13
143 [2] 65 :3,6	account [1] 5:20
17 [1] 18: 13	accounts [1] 16:22
17-204 [1] 3:4	achieve [2] 42:18 43:16
2	achieved [4] 29:3 42:13,14 44:8
20 [3] 2 :8 43 :8 46 :17	across [2] 18:16 30:6
2018 [1] 1:10	Act [4] 32:19 60:5,10,14
21a [2] 53 :21,25	Act's [1] 60:17
22 [2] 43 :1,4	acting [1] 35:14
23 [1] 59: 2	action [3] 3:12 32:18 59:11
26 [1] 1 :10	actions [1] 60:18 actually [7] 10:20 31:25 46:15 49:
3	15 57 :12,13 59 :18
3 [2] 2 :4 10 :16	add [2] 57:25 58:5
30 [58] 3: 12 5: 2,7,15,20 6: 13,18,18	added 5 9:14 19:16 31:2 45:21
7 :1,6,9 9 :9,11 11 :22,25 12 :20 22 :	47 :4
9,14 27 :4,11,11,12,21 28 :11,23 31 :	adding [2] 31:12 44:21
2,12 34 :4,14 35 :13,13 37 :1,2 38 :2,	addresses [1] 20:8
5,7,10,12,15 41 :6 42 :22 43 :3,15	addressing [1] 57:2
45 :21 46 :12,17 47 :5,12 53 :11 54 :	adds [1] 22:14 administration [1] 52:3
15 59 :13 61 :25 62 :4,14,19 64 :4,8, 10	admitted [1] 64:13
31 [2] 17: 3 48: 21	admitted [1] 17:5
32 [2] 2 :11 24 :23	advice [2] 12:5,5
	advising [2] 11:16 12:3
4	affect [4] 22:15 42:20 46:22 48:7
4 [2] 18 :25 32 :18	affected [1] 51:9
48 [1] 62:1	affecting [1] 22:9
5	affirmed [1] 32:21
5 [2] 62: 11,12	aftermarket [1] 10:25 agency [2] 16:3 39:14
53 [1] 10: 16	agent [2] 16:20 55:18
55 [1] 24 :21	ago [1] 52:23
6	agree [4] 14:3 31:3 38:24 41:23
61 [1] 2 :14	agreed [1] 7:12
7	agreeing [1] 45:3
	agreement [1] 62:23
70 [3] 41 :10 43 :2,10	agreements [1] 63:5
77 [1] 24:21	agrees [1] 7:4
8	Ah [1] 50:15 ahead [1] 47:1
8 [1] 10: 16	AL [1] 1:6
80 [1] 11 :2	Alcoa [3] 29:7,9 44:6
9	ALITO [14] 14:25 15:22 17:1,17 37:
9 [1] 56:9	22 38 :1,4,7 52: 1 53 :1,14,15 54: 13

allegation [4] 10:20 24:25 38:10 alleged [7] 9:7,20,23 10:9 28:10 33:24 34:25 allegedly [2] 3:14 9:9 alleges [2] 10:15 31:13 allow [3] 7:6 14:16.18 alluded [1] 17:17 already [2] 14:15 57:14 alternately [1] 10:24 alternative [2] 26:8 60:22 ambiguity [3] 23:11,12,13 ambit [1] 25:11 amend [1] 57:1 amended [2] 53:8.9 American [1] 18:10 amicus [5] 1:22 2:7 17:3 20:3 40:3 amount [1] 37:9 analogy [1] 11:10 analysis [2] 5:5 54:2 Another [4] 11:6 28:21 56:16 60: answer [8] 9:18 15:9 27:25 31:22 **41**:19 **51**:1 **59**:16 **62**:22 answering [1] 14:8 anticompetitive [2] 29:5 32:11 antitrust [25] 7:18 9:4 14:12 16:2, 22 17:24 18:10 19:6 28:22 29:1,2 **33**:6,24 **34**:1,3,9,24 **38**:17 **39**:16 **40**:24 **47**:6 **52**:6 **53**:10 **59**:1 **60**:6 anyway [1] 47:8 app [72] 3:13,15,24 4:12 7:3,5 9:17 10:3 15:18 20:18.21 21:5.25 22: 18.23 **24**:4 **25**:22 **26**:14 **28**:7.13 **31:**1.2.9.9.20 **32:**14 **34:**10.10.12 35:5 36:9 37:5 39:5 41:15.21 42: 13 43:8,22 45:10,11,21 46:3,10,19, 20,21 48:1,15 50:3,4,6,8,13,14,24, 25 **51**:1,5 **52**:8,25 **53**:21 **54**:8,19 **55**:22 **56**:13 **58**:19,24 **59**:11,14 **61**: 6,6 65:8 app's [5] 12:16 55:7 64:5,6,8 appeals [1] 32:20 APPEARANCES [1] 1:16 APPLE [76] 1:3 3:5.13 4:13.24 5:9. 14,17 **6**:25 **7**:6,8,11,22,23 **9**:14 **10**: 20 15:20 21:2.5.7.9.10.11 22:4 24: 2 25:1.9 28:6 29:17 31:1.7.18.18. 19 **32**:11,15,19,24 **33**:1,3 **34**:5,22 **35**:5,14 **36**:8,15 **37**:12,14 **38**:10 **40**:19,19 **41**:2,5,22 **43**:11 **45**:20 **46**:16,21 **47**:3,17,17,25 **48**:13,16 **50**:8 **51**:4 **52**:8,18 **53**:10 **54**:6,19 60:19,24 61:8 62:23 63:1 Apple's [15] 20:22 21:5,19,23 31:8, 11,14 **32**:13 **34**:11 **36**:6 **43**:3 **47**: 23 53:7 55:17 61:4 application [1] 20:13 applications [1] 53:12 applied [1] 18:24 applies [1] 52:15 apply [5] 13:18 30:6,7 33:7 51:25

appropriate [1] 32:25 apps [37] 3:22,23 4:18 9:24 10:1,4, 21,23 11:1,2 15:19 27:5 28:3,5 31: 1 **32**:13,15 **34**:6,16 **35**:11 **36**:7,9 **37**:8 **38**:11 **39**:6 **45**:11,20 **54**:7,11, 20 55:6,9,18 58:20 59:7,9,22 apps' [2] 12:23,23 arbitrable [2] 62:25 63:16 arbitration [1] 63:12 aren't [2] 22:21 26:17 arque [1] 9:13 argument [20] 1:13 2:2,5,9,12 3:4, 7 14:21 20:2,24 32:7 36:11 40:5,9, 23 42:2 49:23 53:2 61:18 65:5 arguments [1] 54:14 arises [1] 49:13 around [2] 47:20 60:2 arrangements [2] 49:21 51:4 articulation [1] 54:18 aside [2] 42:5.7 asks [2] 30:14 64:22 asserting [2] 33:19,20 assertion [2] 55:8.17 assess [1] 58:11 assume [2] 25:20 49:19 assuming [1] 29:17 assumption [1] 50:6 attributes [1] 62:15 auction [2] 26:1,3 authority [1] 32:1 automatic [1] 19:12 avoid [1] 60:9 avoiding [1] 13:4 aware [1] 38:16 awful [1] 11:4 В

back [2] 47:12 64:11 background [2] 20:13 23:22 banana [2] 11:21.24 bar [4] 18:10 40:9 48:20 49:3 barred [1] 3:16 based [9] 5:7 25:24 26:14 41:11 43:21 53:3 58:23 62:13 63:24 basic [3] 20:13 30:14 45:8 basically [2] 47:7 48:8 basis [2] 15:4 60:4 bearing [1] 23:6 became [1] 56:12 become [1] 12:2 becomes [3] 38:25 50:11.12 beef [1] 49:6 bea [1] 50:18 begin [4] 11:15 14:9 20:7 61:22 behalf [8] 1:19,25 2:4,11,14 3:8 32: 8 61:19 behavior [2] 31:15 60:11 behind [1] 60:16 believe [2] 14:22 49:20 belongs [1] 18:16 benefits [1] 43:16 best [2] 15:17 54:17 better [2] 17:23 64:18 between [20] 5:9,17 16:20 21:1,18

apportionment [2] 64:13.16

28:20.22 30:17 36:19 39:3.5.11 41:25 42:12,18 50:12 51:4 52:17 **54**:4 **64**:16 beyond [1] 3:21 bid [2] 26:2.6 bidders [1] 26:4 Bill [4] 8:22 11:10.11 28:18 bit [1] 13:4 block [1] 6:2 bloody [1] 45:1 blue [2] 56:8.22 board [1] 30:6 boats [1] 11:17 both [7] 8:16 13:12,14 25:2 34:23 48:22 63:5 bottom [2] 20:10 53:25 bought [6] 8:23,24 31:1 47:3 50:9, 10 break [1] 33:21 BREYER [20] 7:15,23 8:11,14,19 9: 19 **10**:8 **11**:3.9 **13**:19 **28**:16.25 **29**: 9.15.23 30:2.10 44:4.21 45:7 Brick [49] 3:17 4:2.22 6:1 7:14 8:7. 10 **13**:2.7.10.12.17.25 **14**:5.14 **15**: 2,10 **16**:16 **17**:2,4,10,10,16 **18**:6 **20**:10 **23**:4,11,18 **25**:11,14 **30**:6,8, 14 32:22 33:4,12,14 39:9,20 40:2, 17 **41:**3 **48:**18,21 **49:**6,11,18 **54:**3 **64**:12 brick-and-mortar [1] 65:11 brief [12] 17:3 49:5 54:17 56:8.9. 22 59:2 60:22 62:10,12 63:24 64: briefing [1] 18:7 bright [1] 49:8 bright-line [10] 32:22 33:4,11,15 **39**:10 **40**:19 **49**:18 **51**:21.24 **52**:12 bringing [1] 30:7 broad [1] 23:16 brought [2] 56:7 57:5 brunt [1] 23:7 build [1] 17:9 building [1] 17:1 built [2] 17:16 23:23 bunch [1] 40:13 burden [1] 44:10 buy [12] 11:20 27:5 34:10 37:7 40: 22 48:5 55:4,6,10 61:2,3,4 buyer [6] 4:5,9,18,23 39:11 43:22 buyers [2] 4:11 45:11 buying [8] 4:13 13:22 31:8 32:13 **37**:8 **47**:17 **50**:24 **60**:23 buys [5] 8:22 11:10,11,12 28:18 C

calculate [1] 58:21 calculation [1] 15:6 California [2] 1:18 63:7 called [2] 62:5,6 came [1] 1:12 candid [1] 59:17 cannot [3] 16:6 34:10 60:19 card [1] 21:6 carve [1] 60:3

Case [55] 3:4.16 4:17.23 6:1 9:2.7 **10**:16,18,24 **11**:4 **13**:24 **14**:6,21 **15**:6,18 **18**:8 **22**:21,23 **25**:20 **29**: 24 33:12,18,22 38:1,5,16 39:19 **41:**3 **44:**6,11 **45:**8 **49:**4,5,13 **52:**21 **53**:24 **54**:11 **55**:2 **59**:10 **60**:10 **61**: 23 62:16,21 63:2,11,15,18,19 64:2, 14 65:9.12.18.19 cases [7] 13:12 19:9 23:20.21.21 60:8 65:12 caught [1] 60:15 causal [1] 3:18 cause [14] 19:1 20:14 21:17.24.25 23:23 26:23 30:15,23 32:18 50:16, 20 22 24 caused [1] 60:16 causes [1] 3:14 cent [11] 24:10 25:16 26:17,19 41: 25 42:2 43:3 46:18 56:10 58:14 **59**:23 cents [22] 24:15,21,21,23 36:14 41: 22.22.23 42:18.19 43:2.9.9.11.17. 18.24 **55**:21 **56**:8 **57**:5.11 **59**:24 certain [1] 54:15 Certainly [1] 7:15 chain [10] 3:19 13:8,15,21 14:20 33:21 35:7,7 48:3 61:5 chains [1] 14:6 change [8] 3:23,24 12:23,24,25 32: 1,3 33:6 changed [1] 18:14 changes [2] 25:21 63:12 characterized [1] 53:18 charge [7] 11:25 22:9 24:11,21 29: 10 36:13 45:1 charged [1] 5:8 charges [1] 3:13 charging 3 21:11 28:10 41:22 cheaper [1] 6:17 chew [2] 40:14,16 CHIEF [22] 3:3,9 19:24 20:5 32:4,9 **34:**2,13 **35:**2,16,22,25 **36:**3,6,17 **43**:19 **55**:25 **56**:4 **61**:1,15,20 **65**: 17 choice [1] 22:19 chooses [1] 5:11 Circuit [1] 7:12 Circuit's [1] 53:17 claim [20] 7:20.20 23:9 27:19 31:4. 16 **35**:17,19,24 **36**:7 **37**:24 **42**:9, 10,11 43:20 52:5 53:3,17 64:5,6 claiming [3] 6:13,16 33:25 claims [3] 19:5 63:24 65:16 clarity [1] 54:16 class [1] 59:11 classic [2] 47:5 65:9 Clayton [3] 32:19 60:5,17 clear [5] 51:17 56:12 59:5 60:7 62:

clearly [2] 7:3 52:6

colleagues [1] 13:6

closed [4] 6:8,9,25 27:6

clerks [1] 44:1

collect [2] 8:2,6

collected [1] 47:9 collecting [1] 53:11 collects [1] 7:11 come [3] 21:10 49:8 56:17 comes [3] 34:14 45:9 50:8 commission [28] 3:13,19,21 5:3,8, 20 9:10,11 11:22,25 12:15 21:13 **25**:10 **28**:11.15.23 **30**:19 **37**:1.2 **42**:21 **43**:1,4,7,14 **46**:16 **61**:25 **62**: 4 65:7 common [1] 5:5 community [1] 16:6 companies [1] 16:8 Company [4] 11:16 12:7 45:25 52: compelled [1] 54:2 competition [1] 55:11 competitive [21] 3:22 12:19,20 29: 10,19 32:16 35:11 38:22 41:21 42: 15.22 **43**:1.10.14 **44**:25 **45**:18 **51**: 3 **58**:12.25 **61**:10.12 competitively [1] 51:2 competitors [1] 11:18 complain [5] 45:10 47:23 51:22 **52:**5 **54:**10 complainant [1] 63:16 complaint [8] 10:15 25:19 53:8,9 **56**:2 **57**:1 **61**:1 **62**:1 completely [2] 14:3 18:18 complicated [1] 18:5 complication [1] 14:12 computer [1] 60:25 conceded [1] 5:6 concedes [1] 46:9 concern [1] 63:19 concerns [1] 53:1 concluded [1] 7:16 concrete [1] 6:2 conduct [2] 21:19 53:10 conflict [1] 9:4 conflicts [3] 8:7.13 9:6 confronted [1] 14:17 confusion [1] 35:4 Congress [1] 18:13 connects [1] 28:7 constitutes [1] 52:14 constraining [1] 57:17 constraint [1] 36:13 constraints [1] 61:9 consumer [16] 3:19 9:25 12:22 21: 2 22:15 31:3.13.13 35:8 36:24 41: 24 43:23 46:23 50:9,12 51:20 consumer's [1] 46:19 consumers [24] 3:15.23 9:10 10:4 **11**:24 **20**:20 **21**:21 **22**:21 **23**:1 **25**: 5 **26**:17,19 **28**:2,12,24 **34**:10 **35**:7 44:18 46:4 49:4,5 52:7 57:23 63:5 context [1] 19:4 contract [6] 4:12 5:8 7:4 16:23 45:

contribute [1] 62:17 control [6] 25:22 48:7 50:16,19,21 **51**:5 controls [1] 28:6 controversial [2] 18:5,15 core [1] 35:4 correct [9] 10:11,14 31:4 37:20 40: 3 44:20 51:13 58:1,7 correctly [1] 45:5 couldn't [1] 56:13 counsel [4] 19:25 32:5 61:16 65: 18 course [1] 60:4 COURT [36] 1:1,13 3:10 9:13 13:1 **14:**15,22 **17:**3 **18:**20,23,24 **20:**6, 14 **23**:19 **32**:10,20 **33**:11,14 **34**:8 **38**:17 **40**:10 **41**:20 **45**:9 **49**:10 **51**: 16.20.25 **53**:8.13 **56**:22 **57**:8 **60**:7 63:15 64:25 65:4.13 Court's [10] 3:16 8:16 14:24 15:4. 4 6 13 **32**:17 **62**:21 **64**:14 courts [2] 19:18 53:4 create [2] 45:14 47:1 created [2] 18:20.23 credit [1] 21:6 curiae [3] 1:22 2:8 20:3 curious [1] 40:6 customer [4] 5:14,15 6:4 7:9 D

D.C [3] 1:9,21,24 damage [4] 9:15 19:8 43:23 60:16 damages [50] 3:11,20,24 4:2 5:7 7: 7 8:3,6,17 19:2 20:16 23:24 26:25 **27**:15,20,21 **29**:16 **33**:2,25 **34**:18, 19 35:9,12 36:18,22 37:16 38:16, 18 **42**:24 **43**:5,7,8,13 **44**:15 **58**:1,5, 6,11,15,22 60:3,5,13,17 62:3,8,13, 18 **64**:23 **65**:15 danger [1] 48:12 DANIEL [5] 1:18 2:3.13 3:7 61:18 DAVID [3] 1:24 2:10 32:7 day [1] 56:15 dealt [1] 19:3 decide [2] 20:21 28:13 decided [1] 65:13 decides [1] 49:10 deciding [1] 14:4 decision [8] 5:19 8:16 12:25 15:5 20:19 22:1 23:8 26:21 decisions [2] 3:18 9:17 decried [1] 16:11 deducted [1] 5:10 defendants [1] 33:19 defense [3] 14:10,13,16 defenses [1] 8:17 **Delaware** [1] 54:3 deny [1] 33:5 Department [1] 1:21 depend [4] 9:19 39:16 58:14 59:

depends [2] 39:18 42:16

described [1] 10:24

designed [2] 60:6,17

13 55:19

17 40:22 61:9

contrary [2] 55:17 64:1

contracts [3] 40:24 48:13 49:16

contractual [6] 16:19 17:5 39:11.

deter [2] 60:6.18 determination [1] 12:13 deterrence [1] 60:9 developer [35] 5:10,18,19 7:4,10 **16**:6 **31**:1,2,9 **37**:5 **42**:24 **43**:2,5,6, 8,9,17,20 **45**:21 **46**:11,22 **47**:10,11 **50**:3,4,6,8,13,25 **51**:1 **55**:7,22 **56**: 13 **57:**12 **65:**8 developer's [1] 42:8 developers [22] 3:13,14,22,24 4: 12.25 5:1.9 9:17 10:3 15:19 24:5 **25**:3 **27**:19 **34**:18 **35**:19 **55**:18 **63**: 5 64:3.6.7.16 developers' [2] 3:17 36:9 dictate [2] 25:2.4 difference [4] 12:9 24:2 42:12,17 differences [1] 42:20 different [20] 4:11 6:8 14:1 28:17 35:24 36:14,19,22 37:17 43:20,25 **44:**2,14,15 **45:**14,20,23 **46:**14 **48:** 2 49:12 differential [1] 41:25 difficulties [1] 14:11 direct [24] 8:25 11:11 15:15.15 17: 15,18,20 19:18,19 21:24,25 30:23 **33**:5,10,15 **36**:15 **39**:3 **46**:10 **47**: 13,16 49:7 50:24 59:2,9 directed [2] 32:11,24 directly [12] 21:5 31:18 32:19 33: 23 47:22 48:14 50:3,25 51:19 52: 17 **54:**8 **55:**7 disaggregating [1] 39:6 disagree [3] 18:18 27:24 36:5 disallows [1] 8:18 discount [1] 55:6 discussed [2] 13:12 33:13 dismiss [1] 53:7 disputes [1] 16:1 distinction [1] 54:4 distinguish [1] 49:22 distinguishing [1] 39:19 distort [2] 35:6 49:17 distorted [1] 36:8 distribution [10] 4:14 9:8,21 10:2, 9.17.18.25 12:7 53:23 distributor [4] 16:21 54:6.7 60:20 district [7] 9:13 19:18 53:8.13 63: 7 64:25 65:4 divide [1] 44:16 doctrinally [1] 49:10 doctrine [5] 3:17 4:3 8:18 18:6,20 doing [4] 31:14 47:8 48:17 51:14 done [2] 17:12 25:12 doorstep [1] 64:15 double [1] 17:15 doubt [1] 5:1 down [3] 8:5 26:16,16 dramatically [1] 6:7 drop [1] 22:24 dropped [1] 46:16 duplicative [4] 19:4,11,17 63:21 Е e-commerce [3] 52:25 60:20 61:7

each [2] 37:13.13 earned [1] 44:13 easily [1] 32:23 easy [3] 29:11,21 60:13 economic [7] 15:3,5 16:17 17:6 39:21 41:17 64:24 economically [2] 55:3 57:21 economics [7] 16:23 33:16 39:18 40:25 41:1 49:21 65:14 effect [1] 57:20 effective [1] 15:7 efficient [2] 15:7.16 effort [1] 9:12 efforts [1] 18:13 eiaht [1] 43:18 either [4] 10:24 16:3 22:19 26:15 elevation [1] 55:15 elsewhere [1] 62:6 emphasis [1] 8:15 End [5] 8:6 24:19 44:10 54:22 55: enforce [1] 17:23 engaged [3] 21:8 23:20 53:10 engaging [1] 47:18 enormous [1] 29:3 **enormously** [1] **18:**5 entire [2] 24:25 37:1 entirely [3] 13:25 37:16 62:9 entitled [1] 59:12 **ESQ** [6] **1**:18,24 **2**:3,6,10,13 essentially [2] 25:13 52:11 ET [1] 1:6 evades [1] 49:18 evaluation [1] 15:13 even [5] 7:12.16 51:16 60:24 64:7 event [1] 25:8 Everything [2] 8:9 13:1 evidence [2] 16:5 45:2 exactly [2] 52:1 60:2 Excuse [2] 4:7 64:6 exercising [2] 12:12 51:5 exist [1] 37:18 existed [2] 38:22 54:25 existence [1] 39:10 expand [1] 33:3 **experience** [1] **61:**23 experts [2] 58:11 59:18 explained [1] 48:19 explaining [1] 27:24 exploit [1] 28:9 exploration [1] 48:11 explored [1] 59:4 extend [1] 17:4 extent [3] 25:23,23 34:21 extra [1] 43:17 extract [4] 21:13 38:12,19 52:23 extracted [1] 29:18 extracting [2] 21:12 59:7 extracts [1] 35:15

face [1] 22:24

fact [9] 16:7 17:11 24:17.20 25:21

29:17 47:3 60:24 63:4

facts [2] 13:10.11 factual [2] 14:20.23 fair [1] 18:23 faith [1] 38:20 fanciful [2] 16:12,12 farmers [3] 11:20.21.21 feature [1] 61:7 federal [1] 16:2 few [1] 18:3 fewer [1] 37:8 fiaht [2] 64:13.16 figure [3] 27:14 52:4,19 final [2] 22:18 32:2 finally [1] 65:5 find [2] 9:2 20:24 finish [2] 31:21 52:10 first [27] 3:4 4:5,8,23 5:2,14 7:1,3 9:9 10:14 14:9 18:4,21 19:2,13 20: 17,18 **23**:7,25 **24**:10 **25**:16,18 **32**: 22 33:9 49:2 57:9 61:23 flip [1] 33:22 floor [1] 18:15 flourish [2] 61:11.12 flow [1] 7:13 focuses [1] 64:23 forced [1] 8:5 foreclosing [1] 55:23 foresight [1] 29:4 form [11] 28:12,24 30:17,19 41:12 45:12,14 47:18 49:25 51:12 55:20 formal [1] 16:20 formalistic [4] 14:5 40:22 64:18. formalities [2] 16:19 39:17 formality [1] 17:6 forms [1] 16:23 forth [1] 4:16 forum [2] 63:1.16 found [2] 14:15 61:8 foundational [1] 18:25 framing [1] 14:14 Francisco [34] 1:18,20 2:6 20:1,2, 5 21:15 22:7,11,16 23:3,15,17 24: 7,12,22 **25**:7,15 **26**:9,12 **27**:2,7,13, 17,23 29:8,14,22 30:1,4,12 31:5, 10 17 FREDERICK [53] 1:24 2:10 32:6 7 9 34:7 35:2.20.23 36:2.5.21 37:20. 25 38:3,9,23 40:7,11,15 41:1,9,13, 18 **42**:3,6 **44**:20 **45**:6,24 **47**:15 **48**: 23 49:1 50:1,18,21 51:9,13 53:13, 20 55:1,14 56:3,19,23 57:3,10,23 **58:**2,4,8,15,18 **59:**15 free [3] 50:7 59:23 63:2 Fruit [2] 11:16 12:2 full [1] 23:7 fully [1] 59:17 function [8] 9:8,21 10:2,10 45:12, 14 47:19 59:6 fundamental [2] 32:2 54:4 funds [1] 7:12 further [2] 40:1 48:11

factors [1] 42:16 G gas [2] 51:18,22 GEN [3] 1:20 2:6 20:2 General [40] 1:20 19:7.22 20:1.5. 23 21:15 22:7,11,16 23:3,15,17 **24**:2,7,12,22 **25**:7,15 **26**:9,12,24 27:2,7,13,17,23 29:8,14,22 30:1,4, 12 **31:**5,10,17 **46:**1,9,9 **47:**2 generally [2] 5:25 20:14 gets [9] 19:9,13,16 23:9 35:3 45:9 **47**:20 **51**:22 **57**:12 GINSBURG [7] 4:4.8.21 18:19 62: 20 63:8.14 give [6] 12:4.5 24:8 43:17 47:11 49:23 given [2] 17:11 22:4 gives [1] 46:21 good-faith [1] 10:19 goods [1] 4:19 GORSUCH [32] 16:14,25 17:22 18: 1 **37:**21 **38:**23 **40:**8,12,21 **41:**7,11, 14 **42**:1,4 **44**:12 **45**:13 **46**:25 **47**: 18 **48**:9,24 **49**:2,19 **50**:15,19 **56**: 14.17.20.21.24 57:3.6.8 Gorsuch's [2] 19:10 55:20 got [4] 23:5 42:7 44:17 45:4 gotten [1] 18:14 granting [1] 53:7 great [1] 11:16 grief [1] 35:20 gripe [1] 37:14 grocery [1] 48:3 ground [1] 5:6 guess [1] 39:8 Н 20:10 23:5 30:9 54:2 happen [3] 51:4 52:21 59:21

hand [5] 21:19,21 28:8 29:11 54:5 Hanover [8] 13:1 14:9 16:16 19:15 happened [3] 12:6 15:12 25:10 happening [2] 48:8 59:6 happens [3] 16:9,13 19:17 hard [4] 31:24 33:7 39:19 49:22 harm [3] 23:6 28:2.23 harmed [8] 22:21.24 23:2 25:24 28:12 34:17,19 46:6 head [1] 60:2 hear [1] 3:3 heard [2] 49:23 63:22 held [2] 51:16,20 help [4] 39:9 40:25 48:21,22 higher [17] 12:1 21:21,24,25 27:9 **28**:3,4,13,24 **29**:10,12,18 **30**:18 35:10 36:25 37:3 46:4 home [2] 43:2 63:1 honest [1] 60:2

Honor [9] 21:16 23:3.15 26:13 30:

hypothetical [12] 12:18 19:11 28:

12 31:5,22 40:16 59:15

huge [3] 17:13 59:23,24

house [2] 26:1,3

hurts [1] 36:9

fuzzy [1] 52:12

mathematical [1] 19:12

Official - Subject to Final Review

18 31:6 41:19 42:23 43:24 46:7, 21 47:16,24 50:2 hypotheticals [1] 59:4 i.e [1] 44:24 idea [6] 11:17 16:10 47:25 54:15 60:4,16 illegal [1] 21:19 Illinois [49] 3:17 4:2,22 6:1 7:14 8: 7,9 13:2,7,10,11,17,25 14:4,14 15: 2,10 16:16 17:2,4,9,10,16 18:6 20: 10 23:4,11,18 25:11,14 30:5,8,14 32:22 33:4.12.14 39:9.20 40:2.17 **41:**3 **48:**18.21 **49:**6.11.18 **54:**3 **64:** imagine [1] 12:19 immaterial [1] 7:14 implicates [1] 12:25 implications [1] 56:11 important [6] 5:5 16:18 34:8 50: 16,20,22 importantly [1] 33:12 imposed [1] 35:1 imposes [1] 34:5 INC [1] 1:3 incentivizina [1] 48:12 include [2] 4:14 56:1 includina [3] 23:20.21.24 increase [10] 3:15 20:21 22:1,22 28:14 34:4,5,14,25 36:1 increased [1] 22:25 increases [1] 3:21 increments [2] 26:2,7 incur [1] 35:10 indeed [5] 13:11 14:21 16:24 26: 10 63:17 independent [2] 9:16 12:12 independently [1] 24:6 indirect [5] 8:24 11:12 17:14.22 indisputably [1] 33:5 indulge [1] 41:20 industry [1] 29:4 influencing [1] 24:3 information [1] 21:6 informs [2] 55:15,16 initial [2] 12:14 23:6 injured [7] 8:1,4 12:22 20:20 23: 14 26:18.19 injury [8] 6:10,13,16 21:20 26:13 30:17,24 62:17 inquiry [1] 33:7 instance [3] 5:2 23:8 60:21 instead [6] 9:15 11:2 13:8 43:10 52:11 54:1 Institute [1] 18:10 intellectual [1] 4:15 interesting [1] 37:22 intermediary [1] 12:11 intermediate [3] 6:3 39:12,23 intermediating [1] 26:21 interpret [1] 23:22

interrupt [2] 8:20 51:11 intuitive [1] 20:24 involved [1] 14:2 iOS [1] 11:1 iPhone [14] 21:4 28:8 32:12,14,17 35:8 36:15 52:17 53:11 54:7.20 **61**:6.13 **62**:24 irrelevant [4] 37:6 45:25 46:1 57: irrespective [1] 43:22 isn't [4] 28:20 31:19 48:20 49:25 issue [7] 6:11 7:14 18:5.16 21:17. 18 56:10 issues [1] 45:13 itself [5] 12:15 13:22,24 16:7 32:3 **JA** [2] **65**:3,5 iargon [1] 11:15 Jay [1] 12:3 Joe [2] 8:22,24 John [1] 12:4 Judge [2] 16:11 64:25 judicial [1] 52:3 iurisprudence [1] 19:1 Justice [155] 1:21 3:3.10 4:4.8.21 **5**:13.22.25 **6**:6.12.15 **7**:8.15.23 **8**: 11.14.19 **9**:18.19 **10**:7.8.12 **11**:3.9 **13**:3.19 **14**:25 **15**:22 **16**:14.25 **17**: 1,17,22 **18**:1,19 **19**:9,24 **20**:5,23 22:3,6,8,13 23:1,10,16 24:1,8,13, 23 25:8 26:6,10,24 27:3,8,14,18, 25 28:5,16,25 29:9,15,23 30:2,10, 25 **31**:8,11 **32**:4,10 **34**:2,13 **35**:2, 16,22,25 36:3,6,17,23 37:21,22 38: 1,4,7,23 40:8,12,21 41:7,11,14 42: 1,4 43:19 44:4,11,21 45:6,13,19 46:7,24,25 47:2,18,24 48:9,10,24

21 62:20 63:8,14 65:17

49:2.19 **50**:15.19 **51**:8.10 **52**:1.9

53:1.14.15 **54**:13.21 **55**:2.12.20.25

56:5.14.16.17.20.21.24 **57:**3.6.7.8.

22.25 58:3.7.13.17 59:10 61:2.15.

KAGAN [19] 9:18 10:7.13 13:3 20: 23 22:6 24:1.8.13.23 25:8 26:6.10 **27:**25 **28:**5 **36:**23 **54:**21 **55:**2,12 KAVANAUGH [22] 22:3,8,13 23:1, 10,16 **30**:25 **31**:8,11 **45**:19 **46**:8 **51**:8,10 **52**:9 **56**:16 **57**:7,22,25 **58**: 3,7,13,17 keep [4] 22:20 47:25 50:5 51:21 keeping [1] 45:16 kept [1] 41:5 key [4] 14:4 31:23 51:1 62:2 kind [6] 4:1 14:2 30:13 35:3 39:13 **56:**14

lack [1] 54:16 largest [1] 52:21 last [1] 54:1 late [1] 56:14 later [3] 44:18 45:3 48:16 law [5] 9:3 40:23.24 44:1 62:21 laws [1] 17:24 leads [1] 46:4 learned [2] 9:3 29:11 least [2] 7:18 52:22 led [1] 54:15 left [1] 20:7 legal [1] 63:13 lens [1] 54:12 less [2] 6:22 44:8 level [3] 3:22 19:20 44:25 Lexmark [1] 23:21 liability [1] 62:17 lie [2] 31:4.16 life [3] 29:11,21 64:2 light [1] 15:12 likely [2] 27:20 59:21 limit [1] 61:9 limiting [1] 11:1 line [2] 49:9 53:6 lines [1] 16:15 link [1] 33:21 links [1] 3:19 literally [1] 16:13 litigation [6] 14:13 15:7 16:1,5 56: 18 63:6 little [1] 6:22 live [2] 10:3.5 long [3] 13:20 17:24 46:2 look [6] 7:19 15:18 26:1 42:7 53: 25 58:22 looking [2] 21:1 23:13 loop [4] 6:8.9.25 27:6 lost [4] 37:10,17 43:21 63:24 lot [7] 11:4.6 24:20 27:9 35:4 54:14 **59:**3 low [1] 11:22

low-cost [1] 24:17 lower [6] 7:25 26:16 36:14 53:4 55: 10 **61**:14

M

made [3] **4**:19 **52**:2 **60**:7

maintained [1] 46:18

maintains [1] 62:3 major [1] 16:8 maker [1] 31:20 maker's [2] 20:19 22:1 makers [8] 20:21 22:18,23 25:22 26:14 28:7.13 39:5 manifest [1] 12:15 manifests [1] 9:9 manipulate [1] 31:24 manipulation [1] 64:21 manner [1] 65:2 manufacturer [3] 6:3 16:21 54:5 many [4] 15:18 17:11 20:8 22:5 mark [1] 65:8 market [34] 6:4 10:17,18 11:6 21: 14 25:2 29:3 32:16 34:22,24 35:6, 11,18 36:8,20 37:15 38:22 41:21 42:15.22 43:2.4.10.12.14 45:17.18 **50**:7 **51**:3 **58**:10.12.25 **61**:10.12 markup [5] 7:1 27:9 62:14 64:4,8

matter [7] 1:12 16:2,8 24:14 29:16 **59**:5 **63**:11 matters [1] 49:17 mean [12] 8:20 13:5 20:24 21:4.14 **37**:11 **45**:8 **48**:11 **53**:6 **55**:18 **56**: 24.25 means [1] 23:11 meant [1] 56:13 measure [6] 27:15,21 35:12 36:18 37:17 38:15 measuring [1] 26:25 mechanism [3] 13:16 14:2 16:18 meet [1] 40:18 merits [1] 63:23 middleman [5] 41:3,4,4 52:15,16 might [11] 10:1 16:16 24:13 34:21 **36**:13,25 **37**:1 **39**:2,4 **41**:16 **62**:16 mind [1] 17:2 minimal [1] 5:12 minutes [1] 61:17 miss [1] 8:21 missed [1] 53:14 Mister [1] 37:21 misunderstood [1] 53:5 modify [1] 33:4 moment [1] 49:20 Monday [1] 1:10 money [9] 41:2,2,5 45:1,15 46:22 **47:**9,19 **52:**8 monopolist [17] 7:20,21 8:2,23,25 **11**:10,12 **12**:2 **13**:22,23 **21**:11 **25**: 1 30:16.22 35:15 38:13 60:9 monopolist's [2] 30:18,22 monopolistic [3] 21:20,23 31:14 monopolists [2] 17:19 60:14 monopolization [4] 3:12 9:7.20. monopolized [1] 48:3 monopolizes [2] 6:3 10:21 monopolizing [1] 38:11 monopoly [50] 6:2,21 10:1,2,4,9 **28**:10 **29**:13,18 **32**:14,24 **34**:9,12 35:5 36:12 38:19,25 39:24 41:16, 25 42:13 43:4,12,16 44:7,13,16,23 45:3.10.11 46:3.12 48:1.6 51:5 52: 24.25 53:23 54:19 55:4 56:5 58: 19,23 59:7 60:11 61:4,6 62:4,5 monopsony [1] 63:25 morning [2] 3:4 53:19 most [4] 15:16.16 24:18 64:20 motion [1] 53:7 moved [1] 47:20 much [2] 37:19 45:1 multiple [2] 55:8,9 must [1] 30:2

Ν

natural [2] 51:18,22 nature [2] 25:5 32:3 necessarily [5] 3:18 10:19 19:16 29:12 35:13 necessary [2] 29:6 44:9 need [3] 39:9 42:11 61:22

interpretation [1] 23:19

negative [1] 43:13 never [4] 5:21 30:22 41:2 63:22 new [3] 56:18 65:10.10 next [3] 6:3.21 26:18 nine [3] 41:24 43:23 61:24 Ninth [2] 7:12 53:16 nobody [1] 26:2 NOEL [3] 1:20 2:6 20:2 noncompetitive [1] 58:10 None [2] 15:24 16:1 normally [1] 16:22 Northern [1] 63:7 nothing [2] 6:23 38:8 notwithstanding [2] 14:1 33:16 November [1] 1:10 nowadays [1] 16:8 number [4] 17:13 24:20 59:23,24 О obviously [2] 34:15 49:11

offensively [1] 14:18 often [1] 29:13 Okay [10] 17:25 40:15 41:18 42:3, 17,22 49:1,9 50:5 53:15 once [1] 18:14 One [27] 11:5 15:22 17:16,17 21:2, 14,19 24:24 28:7,21 34:3 36:12 37:17 38:24 42:17,25 44:7,12,21, 22 45:3 49:2 52:20 54:5 62:16 64: 7,20

one-by-one [1] 63:1 one-step [1] 21:8 ones [3] 5:1 52:7 57:4 only [18] 3:11 5:6,11 12:24 17:5 20: 21 21:2,13 28:11 35:9 38:13,24 44:12 45:3 48:5 51:21 52:21 55:4 open [1] 61:3 opening [1] 53:6 operates [1] 22:5 operating [2] 48:1 50:6 opinion [1] 53:17 opportunity [2] 49:16 61:10 opposition [3] 62:10,12 64:5 oppressed [1] 16:6 optimizes [1] 19:20 options [2] 55:24 57:18 oral [7] 1:13 2:2,5,9 3:7 20:2 32:7 order [7] 18:12 20:22 22:2 28:14 **44:**23 **49:**16 **53:**6 other [25] 9:25 17:17 21:21 24:3. 25 **25**:12 **28**:8 **30**:16.21 **32**:13 **34**: 11.21 36:23 37:18 38:3 49:14.15 **51**:11 **52**:10 **54**:6.23 **59**:24.25 **60**: 21 62:15 others [1] 7:25 out [11] 6:20 20:8 22:6 25:14,18 40

25 43:25 52:4,20 60:22 63:15

over [8] 9:8 19:22 47:10.18 51:12

over-charge [22] 4:1 12:14 19:5,9,

outcome [1] 65:15

outlet [1] 48:6

output [1] 48:7

outside [1] 27:6

55:20 **60:**15 **64:**3

14 21:20,23 22:2,20,23 23:7 30:8, 13,23 51:18,23 55:2,16 58:23 59: 8,13 65:9 over-charged [1] 56:6 over-charges [2] 32:20 54:20 overall [1] 25:22 overlap [1] 64:8 overpaying [1] 46:20 overrule [1] 44:5 overrule [1] 49:18 overturn [1] 48:20 own [2] 27:19 60:25 owner [3] 36:16 52:18 62:24 owners [6] 32:12,14,18 35:9 54:20 61:13

Ρ package [2] 4:13,19 PAGE [6] 2:2 53:21,22 56:9 59:2 **62**:12 pages [1] 62:10 paid [11] 6:22 8:2 22:15 32:15,16 **40:**19 **41:**1,5 **47:**4,10 **64:**8 paragraph [2] 54:1 62:1 paragraphs [1] 10:15 pardon [1] 50:18 part [8] 12:14 23:5 24:18 25:20 28: 1 **45**:25 **51**:1 **62**:8 partially [2] 39:2.4 particular [4] 20:16 29:19 52:16 particularity [1] 38:18 particularly [1] 51:15 parties [1] 28:20 party [6] 23:6,9 30:16 31:20,21 32: pass [2] 3:25 39:24 pass-on [7] 8:16 14:10.13.16.18. 19 64:23 pass-through [13] 13:9,16 14:2,7 16:18 19:5 20:12 25:25 26:14.20 39:21 52:14 65:15 passing [1] 43:11 past [1] 19:2 patents [1] 29:4 patient [1] 65:1 pay [12] 5:2 7:24 9:10 11:21 21:5 28:3,4 38:21 46:5 57:24 60:15 61: paying [11] 28:12 36:24 37:3,19 38:21 39:1 45:15.16 50:3 52:7 55: payment [1] 7:13 pavs [1] 5:15 penalized [1] 60:10 penny [1] 6:23 people [6] 7:25 29:20 37:8,11,13 48.14 PEPPER [2] 1:6 3:5 per [1] 43:18

percent [68] 3:12 5:2,7,15,20 6:13,

18.18 **7**:1.6.9 **9**:9.11 **11**:2.22.25

12:20 14:19 19:14 22:9.14 27:4.

11,11,14,21 28:11,23 31:2,12 34:4

14 35:13,13 37:1,2 38:2,5,7,10,12, 15 **41**:6,10 **42**:22 **43**:1,3,4,15 **45**: 21 46:12,17,17 47:5,12 51:17 53: 11 **54**:15 **55**:23 **57**:17 **59**:13 **61**:25 62:4,14,19 64:4,8,10 percent-owned [1] 34:11 perfectly [1] 60:2 perhaps [1] 17:11 periphery [1] 62:9 persistent [1] 65:1 person [4] 6:2 13:21,23 23:14 perspective [4] 21:7 42:8 46:19 56:4 petition [1] 53:21 Petitioner [8] 1:4,19,23 2:4,8,14 3: 8 20:4 **PETITIONERS** [1] **61**:19 pick [1] 21:4 picture [3] 4:6,9,11 pie [1] 64:10 piece [2] 45:2 64:9 pipeline [3] 10:22 28:7,9 pitch [1] 18:2 place [3] 18:21 48:5 58:20 plainly [1] 40:18 Plaintiff's [1] 53:9 plaintiffs [3] 4:17 29:20 33:23 plaintiffs' [5] 18:9 30:17 40:8 48: 20 49:3 plead [1] 38:17 pleaded [1] 61:1 pleadings [3] 33:8 52:3 56:20 please [4] 3:10 20:6 32:10 47:1 plenty [1] 15:25 plus [1] 11:22 point [27] 6:24 8:21 12:8 15:14 16: 15.25 **19**:10.23 **22**:17 **23**:4 **25**:18 26:13.17.19 27:10 33:10 48:18 49: 14 **51**:11 **52**:1,10 **53**:16 **57**:10 **60**: 8,19,21 63:20 points [4] 10:12 12:21 22:6 25:16 policy [1] 25:17 political [1] 18:16 portion [1] 37:2 posed [1] 46:8 posit [1] 49:24 position [3] 15:1.17 54:16 positive [2] 7:5 43:6 Posner [1] 16:11 possibilities [1] 42:25 possibility [3] 39:22 41:15 63:22 possibly [1] 56:13 potential [4] 14:12 19:4,10 63:24 Potentially [3] 58:3,5 59:12 power [6] 21:14 29:3 44:7,24,24 **46**:13 practices [2] 29:6 44:9 precedents [1] 32:17 precisely [1] 4:1 premised [1] 39:10 prepared [2] 44:5 50:2 presents [1] 39:22

12:1,12,16,19,20,20 21:12 22:10, 15,18 24:18 25:3,22 26:3,4,11,17, 19 **27**:5 **30**:20,21 **31**:9,12,24 **32**:2 **34**:25 **35**:11 **36**:1,14,25 **37**:4 **41**: 21,25 42:15 43:17 44:24 46:2,11, 18 **50**:4 **51**:2 **53**:11 **55**:10,15,16 **57:**13 **58:**9 **62:**4,5,7 price-setting [2] 31:19,20 prices [31] 3:15.23.25 7:24 12:23. 23 20:22 21:22.24.25 22:1.20.22. 25 24:3.6 26:8 28:3.4.13.14.24 29: 10.12.19 **30**:18 **46**:4 **48**:7 **56**:6 **57**: 21 61:13 pricing [15] 3:18 5:18 9:16 20:19 23:8 25:17 26:21 50:15,19,21,22 **52**:24 **55**:23 **57**:18 **59**:3 principle [2] 18:25 19:2 principles [4] 20:13 23:22 26:22 30:15 prior [1] 63:23 pro [1] 60:4 probably [1] 59:21 problem [11] 19:6.7 26:25 41:15. 17 **45**:8.15 **50**:11.12 **55**:21 **60**:13 problems [3] 17:14,16 39:22 proceeding [1] 44:19 process [1] 7:13 producer [2] 41:15 54:5 product [4] 36:25 37:4,7 60:23 products [2] 24:18 47:3 profit [4] 44:13,16 45:4 48:16 profits [7] 36:10 37:10,17 42:12, 14 43:21 63:24 prohibit [1] 20:11 prohibiting [1] **65**:15 prohibits [1] 4:3 promise [1] 40:2 proof [3] 29:16 35:14 57:12 properly [1] 20:11 property [1] 4:15 protect [1] 33:23 protected [1] 33:18 prove [4] 6:20 29:18 44:23 59:19 proven [1] 16:12 provider [1] 48:15 provision [2] 62:24 63:4 proximate [10] 19:1 20:14 21:16 23:23 26:22 30:15 50:16.20.22.24 proximately [2] 46:6 51:7 proximity [5] 21:18,18 28:19,20, purchase [3] 16:20 36:15 48:14 purchased [2] 33:24 45:20 purchaser [10] 7:1,3 11:11,13 19: 13 33:10 39:12,23 47:14 59:12 purchasers [21] 15:16 17:14,15, 18,20,23 **19**:18,19 **33**:5,15 **34**:15 39:3.4.5 46:10 47:16 49:7 54:8 59: 8 9 64:9 purchasing [1] 47:22 purposes [1] 17:7 put [7] 13:6 25:19 34:6 42:4 55:18 60:1 63:15 puts [2] 7:5 25:11

prevent [1] 32:12

price [55] 5:10 6:17 7:5 8:5 11:22

putting [1] 51:12

quite [2] 6:7 44:12

Q

qualify [1] 4:23 question [26] 4:21 13:4.17 14:8.14 17 **15**:9 **17**:8,10 **28**:1,6,16,20 **35**:3 38:25 39:6,21,25 40:1 41:19 44: 14,15 48:10 59:17 62:21 63:13 questioned [1] 17:2 questions [3] 13:5 20:9 48:25 quickly [1] 40:2 quintessentially [1] 18:15

raise [3] 7:24 44:24 56:10 raised [1] 57:11 raises [1] 39:25 raising [1] 57:21 rata [1] 60:4 rather [7] 16:18,23 29:5 39:14 40: 24 **64**:9 **65**:6 read [3] 15:5 16:16 38:5 reads [1] 20:15 realities [2] 16:17 17:6 reality [1] 51:12 really [9] 13:6 15:11 22:5 33:22 40: 6 **49**:25 **50**:16,20 **56**:22 reason [5] 9:2 28:4,11,17 52:1 reasoning [1] 14:24 reasons [2] 32:21 57:14 **REBUTTAL** [2] 2:12 61:18 receive [1] 52:8 receiving [1] 17:15 recharacterize [1] 49:17 recoup [4] 20:22 22:2,22 28:14 recover [3] 34:17,17,19 recovered [1] 19:15 recovery [4] 17:15 19:11,20 63:21 red [1] 60:22 reflect [1] 20:12 reflects [1] 23:18 relates [1] 63:21 relationship 5 21:1 39:11,14,15 **41**:12 relatively [1] 56:7 relevant [2] 37:7 63:4 remand [1] 57:2 remedy [2] 33:6 60:17 remember [1] 50:25 rent [4] 38:19,25 39:24 41:16 rents [1] 17:20 repeal [2] 18:9,11 repealed [1] 17:12 repeatedly [1] 10:15 reported [1] 17:14 represent [2] 49:3,4 representing [1] 35:8 represents [1] 37:9 required [1] 65:2 requirement [2] 54:22,24 requires [1] 48:10 reserve [1] 19:21

respectfully [2] 27:23 53:14 respects [1] 22:5 Respondents [12] 1:7,25 2:11 9: 22 20:20 25:24 26:5 32:8,23,25 33:1 62:13 Respondents' [2] 14:21 63:23 responding [1] 10:7 rest [2] 19:21 54:1 restraints [1] 32:12 restriction [2] 5:12 46:18 restrictive [3] 29:6 44:8.9 restructuring [1] 48:12 result [7] 22:25 26:20 31:14 32:14 33:2.25 53:24 retail [2] 32:16 35:7 retailer [2] 22:5.14 return [1] 33:9 returns [1] 48:15 revenue [1] 42:20 reverse [1] 47:9 review [1] 57:9 reward [1] 29:12 RICO [1] 23:21 **ROBERT** [1] 1:6 ROBERTS [13] 3:3 19:24 32:4 34: 2,13 **35**:16,22,25 **36**:3,17 **55**:25 61:15 65:17 Rockefeller [2] 12:4.4 root [3] 5:5 62:2.7 rooted [1] 3:12 round [4] 26:15,16,16,18 rule [26] 20:16 23:24 25:14 31:25, 25 32:23 33:4.6.10.11.15 39:10

40:19 **49**:8.18 **51**:21.24 **52**:12.12 **54:**22 **55:**13 **64:**18.18.19.20.22

run [2] 43:25 44:1

runs [1] 9:16

S

sale [7] 5:14 10:23 25:5 38:11.13 45:22 48:3 sales [6] 6:19 16:20 22:24 39:14 42:17.19 Sam [2] 11:11 28:18 same [16] 12:5,5 17:7 22:13,20 25: 13 35:22,24 36:1,4 44:2 54:24 64: 4,9 65:14,14 San [1] 1:18 satisfy [2] 32:23 49:8 saying [12] 9:22 18:9 24:18,20 27: 4,19 **34**:15 **36**:18,24 **42**:10 **47**:7 savs [10] 8:18.19 9:25 30:14 36:24 **37**:5 **38**:17 **40**:4 **50**:9 **64**:5 scenarios [2] 44:2 59:3 scheme [1] 15:8 scholars [1] 59:1 second [8] 26:13 28:1 32:24 42:19 **49**:2 **53**:7,9 **63**:20 secondly [1] 57:16

Section [2] 18:25 32:18

seek [1] 62:13

seeking [1] 6:18

see [5] 7:19 8:7 12:8 18:7 65:4

seeks [1] 33:3 seem [1] 53:2 seems [3] 20:25 25:9 40:23 sell [2] 11:23 58:20 seller [4] 39:13 50:13 54:10 59:7 sellers [1] 55:9 selling [3] 31:12 54:7 58:24 sells [2] 6:4 34:6 sending [1] 41:9 sense [2] 39:20 50:23 separate [2] 13:13 48:24 separates [1] 13:24 services [2] 4:13.20 set [10] 5:11 22:18 25:10 32:2 50:4. 5,7,7 **51:**2 **57:**13 sets [3] 31:23 46:2,11 setter [2] 30:20,21 setting [11] 12:11 14:20,23 24:5 **26**:3,4,11 **61**:7 **65**:10,11,12 shall [1] 63:6 share [1] 17:20 shared [1] 41:2 Shoe [9] 12:6 13:2 14:10 16:16 19: 15 **20**:11 **23**:5 **30**:9 **54**:2 **Shouldn't** [2] **17**:10 **23**:12 show [3] 42:11 44:6.17 side [7] 25:20 33:22 35:18 38:3 49: 15 **51**:11 **52**:10 sides [3] 25:2 34:24 36:19

simply [9] 10:22 11:1 14:5 35:14 46:11.21 53:22 60:14.15 since [1] 15:12 single [4] 34:24 38:13 60:13 63:16 situation [3] 46:10 47:21 49:12 situations [1] 47:19 skill [1] 29:4 Smith [2] 8:22.24 so-called [2] 10:25 15:15 software [4] 4:14 10:21 60:25 61: sold [7] 15:19 31:3 58:25 59:22.24.

simple [7] 7:17 9:1 11:9 12:17 53:

significance [2] 55:13,14

significant [2] 56:1,4

significantly [1] 44:25

similar [1] 49:22

23 54:11 56:7

25 60:1

solely [2] 62:13.19

somebody [2] 30:7,21

somehow [1] 57:12

sorry [4] 5:13 18:1 47:1 51:10 sort [4] 20:15 24:5,9 60:3 SOTOMAYOR [15] 5:13,22,25 6:6. 12,15 7:8 26:24 27:3,8,14,18 46: 24 47:2,25 Sotomayor's [1] 48:10

Solicitor [5] 1:20 19:22 46:1,8,9

Sounds [1] 56:14 source [1] 61:3 spoke [1] 6:25 spot [1] 17:7 spread [2] 39:2,4 stage [6] 29:17,24 33:8 44:15 52:3

standardless [2] 33:7 51:15 standing [3] 4:24 30:16 54:9 stands [1] 15:13 started [1] 12:16 state [2] 16:2 63:6 stated [2] 45:5 57:15 STATES [10] 1:1.14.22 2:7 17:3.11 18:8 20:3 48:21 62:12 statute [2] 23:14 23 statutes [1] 20:15 statutory [1] 23:19 stay [1] 27:20 stayed [1] 43:15 step [7] 6:21 19:3 20:17,18 21:3, 14 23:25 still [11] 13:16 25:22 26:4 46:20 47: 13,15,22,23 **48:**1,19 **55:**1 stop [2] 20:16 23:24 store [22] 15:20 21:5 32:14 34:10,

12 **35**:5 **36**:12 **42**:13 **45**:10.12 **46**: 3 **48**:1.3.6 **50**:10 **51**:6 **52**:25 **54**:8.

20 56:6 58:20 61:6 strata [2] 59:25.25 street [1] 18:17 structure [1] 25:3 **structured** [1] **37:**15 stuck [2] 39:8 41:17

subject [3] 5:11 34:23 64:21 submitted [2] 65:18,20 substance [3] 14:23 55:21 64:24 substantive [2] 64:19.22 subtract [1] 58:6

succinctly [1] **40**:16 sue [11] 4:24 15:17 17:18 31:17.18

33:1 **37**:12 **41**:24 **62**:24.25 **64**:3 sued [4] 15:23.24 16:3 64:3 suffer [1] 3:23 suffering [1] 36:12 suggest [1] 64:19 suggesting [2] 13:20 24:4

suggestion [1] 63:23 suing [3] 16:9 19:19 35:9 suit [1] 34:23 suited [1] 17:23

sum [1] 14:23 super-competitive [3] 21:12 37: 3 62:7

supplied [1] 21:6 supplier [4] 8:5 36:6 51:6,19 suppliers [4] 8:1 16:9 47:4 55:9 supply [5] 13:8,15,21 35:6 36:8 supporting [3] 1:23 2:8 20:4 Suppose [5] 11:15 41:20 46:16 60:

suppression [1] 6:16 **SUPREME** [3] 1:1,13 56:21 sustains [2] 43:8.23

12 63:9

tack [1] 46:11 talked [1] 13:1 technology [1] 61:8 tend [1] 11:4

resolved [1] 23:13

terms [3] 6:10 46:15 47:19
test [2] 52:13,15
testing [1] 4:15
text [1] 23:14
themselves [2] 4:18 9:24
theoretically [1] 27:9
theories [3] 8:17 19:8 20:12
theory [42] 3:11 4:2 5:7 6:10 7:7,
17 8:6 9:1,15 13:9 15:3,5 19:20
26:20 30:6,8,13 34:4,16 37:23,23
45:4 54:18,23,24 55:3 56:6,18 58:
13,15,16,18 62:3,8,17,18,18 64:1,
23,23 65:3,7
there's [14] 4:10,10 14:1 17:19 18:

Tens [1] 15:21

there's [14] 4:10,10 14:1 17:19 18 2 21:14 34:2,3 40:12 41:4 44:12 45:3,12 52:16

thereby [1] 12:7 They've [2] 17:12 29:20 thinking [1] 56:11 thinks [1] 26:2 third [3] 15:14 33:3 42:21

third-party [1] 12:11

though [3] **25**:9 **43**:13 **59**:20 thousand [1] **25**:12

thousands [1] **15:**21

threat [1] 17:19 three [7] 8:16 32:21 42:16,24 59:

12 **61**:17 **65**:12

throughout [2] 11:24 64:1

thrust [1] 53:9 ticket [1] 52:20 today [2] 12:19 33:13 tomorrow [1] 12:21 took [1] 7:8

torpedo 11 11:17 transacting 13 13:23 28:21 37:12 transaction 15 5:17 21:8 32:3 43:

18 **52:**17

transactional [2] 21:17 28:19

transactional (2) 21.17 2 transcript [1] 65:4 treble [2] 60:5,17 trial [2] 30:10 59:11 trouble [1] 11:5 troubles [1] 15:1

true [5] 7:16,24 24:9 26:7 37:11

truly [1] 25:1

try [4] 9:13 40:15 41:18 59:19

trying [2] 38:4 52:4 turn [2] 19:22 25:16

two [10] **4**:11 **10**:12 **13**:13 **24**:9 **36**: 19 **37**:10,11 **44**:7 **48**:24 **49**:21

two-sided [2] 11:6 34:22

type [1] 23:18

U

ultimate [3] 22:15 30:21 39:12 under [13] 26:22 30:14 31:25 32: 17,18 34:3,16 36:12 43:25 46:20 47:16,24 50:23 underlying [3] 39:18 49:21 54:18 understand [9] 11:13 21:16 27:3, 16 31:6 34:8 35:17,17 42:1 understanding [1] 11:5 understood [4] 9:21 20:11 53:4, 17 unique [3] 19:6 52:24 61:7

UNITED ® 1:1,14,22 2:7 11:16 12: 2.6 20:3

unless [3] **12**:22 **44**:4,5 unmistakably [1] **62**:11

up [14] **12**:21 **15**:13 **21**:4 **25**:10 **26**: 15,18 **40**:1 **56**:7,17,25 **57**:5 **59**:19 **60**:3 **65**:8

users [1] 28:8 using [1] 61:8

UtiliCorp 5 13:2 33:13,18 51:16 54:3

utility [2] 51:19,21

V

validity [1] 15:10 Valley [1] 54:3 variety [1] 23:20 vegetables [2] 48:4,5 versus [4] 3:5 42:14 45:14 58:24 vertical [6] 6:2 13:8,15,21 14:6,20 view [2] 4:5 57:9 viewed [1] 54:12 violation [15] 28:22 29:1,2 30:18 34:1,3,9 46:3,5 47:6,23 52:6 58: 16,19,21

violations [2] 33:2 60:6 violator [1] 33:24

virtue [4] 12:25 43:11 46:12 52:24

W

WALL [44] 1:18 2:3.13 3:6.7.9 4:7. 10,25 **5**:16,24 **6**:5,9,14 **7**:2,11,22 8:9,13,15 9:6 10:6,12 11:8 12:9 **13**:3 **14**:3,25 **15**:21,24 **16**:14,24 17:21,25 18:3,22 20:7 61:17,18, 20 62:20 63:3,10,17 wanted [2] 30:5 50:5 wants [2] 25:4 50:7 warehouse [1] 55:6 Washington [3] 1:9,21,24 way [12] 22:13 24:10 28:9 36:9 37: 14 **43**:19 **44**:3 **49**:17 **51**:14 **53**:3, 18 60:10 wavs [2] 24:9 61:8 weeks [1] 52:23 welfare [1] 46:23 whatever [8] 5:10 19:19 25:3 27:

whatever [0] 5:10 19:19 25:3 27: 11 50:4,7,10 62:15 whenever [1] 30:20 Whereupon [1] 65:19 whether [10] 12:13 14:17 15:11 16:

whether 110 12:13 14:17 15:11 16: 19 **29:**17,20 **40:**2 **42:**21 **43:**22 **50:** 23

who's [1] 39:1

whole [5] 22:17 23:4,9 40:13,13 wholly-owned [2] 35:5 58:19 will [8] 7:6 11:21 14:16 17:19 33:7 58:10.11 59:21

wind [1] 40:1 wind [1] 40:1 within [4] 4:22 27:10,20 49:8 Without [2] 5:1 6:21 wonder [1] 15:11

words [7] 9:25 11:4 24:3 34:21 36: 23 54:23 62:18

works [1] 44:2

world [3] 11:24 52:22 65:11

worry [1] 45:2

wrestling [1] 39:7 written [1] 54:17

years [2] 7:19 61:24

Ζ

zero [3] 42:25 43:5,7