SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE	UNITED STATES
	-
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY,)
Petitioner,)
v.) No. 23-1229
CALUMET SHREVEPORT REFINING,)
L.L.C., ET AL.,)
Respondents.)

Pages: 1 through 111

Place: Washington, D.C.

Date: March 25, 2025

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1	IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES	
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4	Petitioner,)	
5	v.) No. 23-1	.229
6	CALUMET SHREVEPORT REFINING,)	
7	L.L.C., ET AL.,	
8	Respondents.)	
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11	Washington, D.C.	
12	Tuesday, March 25, 2025	
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14	The above-entitled matter came on for	
15	oral argument before the Supreme Court of the	3
16	United States at 10:04 a.m.	
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1	APPEARANCES:
2	MALCOLM L. STEWART, Deputy Solicitor General,
3	Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.; on behalf
4	of the Petitioner.
5	SETH P. WAXMAN, Washington, D.C.; on behalf of
6	Respondents Growth Energy and Renewable Fuels
7	Association in support of the Petitioner.
8	MICHAEL R. HUSTON, Phoenix, Arizona; on behalf of
9	Respondents Calumet Shreveport Refining, L.L.C.,
10	et al.
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1	PROCEEDINGS
2	(10:04 a.m.)
3	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We will hear
4	argument first this morning in Case 23-1229,
5	Environmental Protection Agency versus Calumet
6	Shreveport Refining.
7	Mr. Stewart.
8	ORAL ARGUMENT OF MALCOLM L. STEWART
9	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER
10	MR. STEWART: Mr. Chief Justice, and
11	may it please the Court:
12	This case provides a paradigmatic
13	example of the result that the Clean Air Act
14	Act's venue provision was intended to avoid.
15	The April and June 2022 denial actions at issue
16	here resolved a total of 105 exemption petitions
17	filed by refineries in eight different 18
18	different states within eight judicial circuits.
19	The agency based those denials on a
20	new statutory interpretation and economic
21	analysis it had not previously applied. Under
22	the approach to venue adopted by the court of
23	appeals, however, several different regional
24	circuits would have been required to consider
25	substantially similar challenges to the agency's

- 1 approach, wasting judicial resources and
- 2 creating a heightened risk of inconsistent
- 3 outcomes. Congress amended the venue provision
- 4 in 1977 to prevent those results.
- 5 The judgment of the court of appeals
- 6 should be reversed.
- 7 I welcome the Court's questions.
- JUSTICE THOMAS: Mr. Stewart, are
- 9 there any limits to aggregating different claims
- and thereby determining venue in D.C.?
- 11 MR. STEWART: I don't know that there
- are limits to the agency's authority to publish
- 13 different decisions in the same Federal Register
- 14 notice. We do think that there is some room for
- judicial scrutiny of whether -- what the agency
- 16 describes as a single action should be regarded
- in that way.
- And so, for example, if the agency in
- one Federal Register notice disapproved a SIP
- 20 proposed by the State of Ohio and simultaneously
- 21 denied an exemption request for a smaller
- refinery in Louisiana, you couldn't cogently
- 23 regard that as a single action even if it was
- 24 published in the same Federal Register notice.
- 25 JUSTICE THOMAS: Well, in -- let's

- 1 just take this case with the refineries. What
- 2 would be a limiting principle if you could just
- 3 simply aggregate decisions about refineries?
- 4 MR. STEWART: I think you could. I
- 5 think in this case that the agency had good
- 6 reasons for publishing them together because it
- 7 had issued proposed denials based on a proposal
- 8 to change its methodology, and it didn't want to
- 9 issue the denials until it was ready to finalize
- 10 the methodology. And -- and that's why we wound
- 11 up with something of a -- of a backlog.
- 12 JUSTICE THOMAS: Does it have to be a
- 13 change? What about an application of an
- 14 existing rule or determination?
- MR. STEWART: I think the agency's
- 16 typical practice has been to do those one at a
- time or in small groups when the -- when the
- agency is simply applying a principle of federal
- 19 law or s rule of federal law that has previously
- 20 been established and isn't likely to be
- 21 contested on judicial review.
- JUSTICE THOMAS: But that's
- 23 discretionary, isn't it? That's not a real
- 24 limit?
- 25 MR. STEWART: I -- I think you're

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1 right that it is up to the -- the agency's
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- 2 discretion whether to aggregate in those
- 3 circumstances.
- 4 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Mr. Stewart,
- 5 historically, they -- they've taken these one by
- 6 one, and -- and SIPs and hardship determinations
- 7 have been dealt with at the -- at the regional
- 8 circuit level. This is kind of a new
- 9 development.
- 10 MR. STEWART: Well, I think with
- 11 respect to ozone transport rules in particular,
- that is, review of SIP provisions that purport
- to carry out states' good neighbor obligations
- 14 to prevent downwind pollution, I think the norm
- in that area has been aggregation --
- 16 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Well, I -- I dealt
- 17 with a bunch of SIP approvals on the -- on the
- 18 circuit court, and -- and now you've bundled
- 19 them and done it differently, but up until now,
- 20 these things with refineries and -- and with --
- 21 and with SIPs have been done -- done
- 22 historically --
- 23 MR. STEWART: Oh, I think you're
- 24 right.
- 25 JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- at a state level.

- 1 MR. STEWART: I think you're right 2 with respect to the refineries, that they have 3 they have been done seriatim in the past, but 4 the court --JUSTICE GORSUCH: Yeah. So this is 5 6 kind of new. I guess I'm asking what's changed 7 other than EPA's decision to bundle them 8 together? 9 MR. STEWART: I think what changed was 10 that the agency was changing its methodology. And the court of appeals, the Fifth Circuit, 11 12 noted that EPA in these denial actions had abandoned or rejected an adjudicative 13 14 methodology that it had been applying for more 15 than a decade. 16 JUSTICE GORSUCH: So it came up with 17 this pass-through theory. That's the new 18 development? 19 MR. STEWART: It's partly the 20 pass-through theory and it's partly the 21 statutory interpretation. 2.2 JUSTICE GORSUCH: It's interpretation. 23
- Okay. So, yeah. On those, I guess I struggle
- 24 because statutory interpretation, by gosh, I
- 25 should hope EPA applies a consistent statutory

- 1 interpretation across the country. And when it
- 2 comes to economic theories, same goes.
- 3 Otherwise, it would be arbitrary and capricious.
- 4 So how can it be that that's -- that's
- 5 what we should look at?
- 6 MR. STEWART: Well, I think with --
- 7 turning for a second to the third prong of the
- 8 statute, the "based on a determination of
- 9 nationwide scope or effect, " in -- in our view,
- 10 the word "determination" has the implication of
- 11 resolving a question that was previously
- 12 unsettled.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Sure. And every
- 14 statutory interpretation and economic theory is
- going to -- going to do that, right?
- MR. STEWART: At some time, but I
- think, you know, for instance, if this Court in
- 18 2025 struck down an Act of Congress as
- 19 unconstitutional, you wouldn't say that the
- 20 Court determined in that decision that it had
- 21 the -- the authority to review acts of Congress
- 22 for constitutionality. That --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Well, I guess I'm
- 24 just struggling with, you know, you're trying to
- 25 -- a complete sea change in how these things

- 1 have been reviewed in the past, and when I look
- 2 at a determination, it's an action and a
- determination. And I look at, what is it, 7545,
- 4 right? And the action is, of course, here,
- 5 you're rejecting a hardship application. And
- 6 the determination is -- I mean it's right there
- 7 in the statute, the Secretary has to determine
- 8 whether there's a disproportionate economic harm
- 9 to this particular refinery.
- 10 And so when I'm looking for a
- 11 determination, why wouldn't I look to the
- 12 statute where it uses the very word?
- 13 MR. STEWART: I mean, that's certainly
- one determination, but the agency, in this
- 15 context and others, may be making different
- 16 subsidiary determinations.
- 17 JUSTICE GORSUCH: I -- I accept that
- 18 there are -- that that determination of undue
- 19 hardship is going to rest upon a statutory
- 20 interpretation and an economic theory. But how
- 21 far back does somebody have to do go in the
- 22 chain of reasoning behind the determination that
- there's no undue hardship to determine where to
- 24 bring their suit? This Court has traditionally
- 25 said that venues should be easy and it -- to

- figure out at the outset of a case and shouldn't
- 2 in -- involve undue litigation.
- Now -- now you're asking parties to
- 4 not just look at the action, the -- the
- 5 rejection of this -- of the application, not
- 6 just the determination that there is no undue
- 7 hardship, but the analysis behind that, right?
- 8 And I -- I think you used the word "core," core
- 9 analysis behind it and figure out what's the
- 10 core behind a determination and an action.
- 11 MR. STEWART: I guess I'd say two
- 12 things. The first is that EPA, in a case like
- this one and typically at the time it takes the
- 14 action, will express its own view about where
- any challenges should be brought. And so --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Oh, sure. EPA has
- its view, but we've got a statute here, friend.
- 18 MR. STEWART: It's certainly true --
- 19 JUSTICE GORSUCH: They've got their
- 20 view too. I mean --
- MR. STEWART: My point is simply that
- 22 the -- with respect to that point, is simply
- 23 that the -- the litigant is not kind of starting
- from square one. The litigant knows what EPA's
- 25 view about proper venue is. It knows whether --

Τ	JUSTICE GORSUCH: Yean, It knows
2	the government the government would like to
3	always win, sure, okay. But when it's supposed
4	to be determining where to bring its suit, it
5	has to now look not just at the action and the
6	determination that went into the action but the
7	reasoning behind it and figure out what part of
8	its core. How how is that consistent with
9	this this Court's repeated admonitions that
10	venue is supposed to be easy to determine at the
11	outset of the case?
12	MR. STEWART: Well, clearly, Congress
13	wanted there to be a meaningful role for the
14	D.C. Circuit, not just in reviewing the actions
15	that are enumerated as nationally applicable.
16	JUSTICE GORSUCH: Sure. And it also
17	wanted, you know, regional circuits I mean,
18	it's a cooperative federalism system, the Clean
19	Air Act. It wanted room for both. And we're
20	now trying to figure out where the line is. And
21	you're asking us to change historical practice
22	pretty radically, and I'm just curious how that
23	fits with our our our presumption that
24	venues should be easy to determine at the outset
25	of a case.

MR. STEWART: Well, I think -- that 1 2 was part of the debate that went on in the 1970s after the NRDC cases that we've discussed in our 3 brief. That is, in 1972 and 1973, there were 4 numerous challenges to an EPA action that had 5 6 simultaneously granted extensions to a number of 7 different states for filing -- for -- for 8 meeting a particular type of attainment deadline 9 and had simultaneously approved SIPs submitted 10 by the states. 11 And there was controversy over where 12 those cases should be heard, because although 13 they pertained to a number of different states, 14 the legal challenges were all the same. And 15 both the First Circuit and the D.C. Circuit 16 concluded that venue in that circumstance was 17 proper in the D.C. Circuit. 18 But the real significance of those 19 cases is -- is not about whether they were 20 correct or incorrect in interpreting the statute as it then existed. The real significance was, 21 2.2 after that happened, there was a debate in the 23 mid-1970s. And ACUS, the Administrative Conference of the United States, recommended 24 25 that the statute be amended to provide that a

- 1 challenge to any EPA action with respect to a
- 2 state SIP would be heard in the regional circuit
- 3 for -- that contained the state whose plan was
- 4 involved.
- 5 And part of the justification for that
- 6 approach was, as you say, ease of admission,
- 7 that you -- you would know right off what the
- 8 right forum was.
- 9 But the general counsel of EPA said,
- in most cases, challenges to SIP decisions will
- 11 rest on state-specific circumstances, but
- 12 sometimes EPA's SIP decisions will rest on what
- 13 he referred to as generic determinations of
- 14 nationwide scope or effect. And --
- JUSTICE JACKSON: And so, Mr. Stewart,
- 16 I think the answer to Justice Gorsuch's question
- is that the statute is focusing people's
- 18 attention on what the EPA's reasons are, at
- 19 least in that third prong.
- MR. STEWART: Yes.
- JUSTICE JACKSON: Then --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Where -- where is
- 23 that? I -- I see -- they have to focus on the
- 24 action of the determination. I don't see that
- 25 they have to focus on the reasons behind the

- 1 determination.
- 2 MR. STEWART: Well, the -- the
- 3 determine -- when we talk about an action based
- 4 on determinations, we are talking about the
- 5 determinations are the reasons, the action --
- 6 JUSTICE GORSUCH: The -- the action is
- 7 denying the application, correct?
- 8 MR. STEWART: Yes.
- 9 JUSTICE GORSUCH: And to determine
- 10 whether to deny or grant the application, you
- 11 have to decide whether there is undue hardship.
- 12 That's the statute language, right?
- MR. STEWART: That's the statute's
- 14 language.
- 15 JUSTICE GORSUCH: So that's the
- 16 determination. You've determined that there is
- 17 no undue hardship here, right?
- 18 MR. STEWART: But there can also be
- 19 determinations about what does the term "undue
- 20 hardship" mean, when the question is --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Oh, sure, you've
- lots of reasons for reaching your determination.
- MR. STEWART: But I think what
- 24 Congress was trying to drive at, and what the --
- 25 the EPA's general counsel had in mind was,

- 1 you -- you are correct that in every case the
- 2 EPA is going to be applying some kind of general
- 3 federal rule or policy or framework to local
- 4 facts. Or at least for any locally or
- 5 regionally applicable action, you'll have some
- 6 of both.
- 7 And the -- the venue provision will
- 8 work best if cases are routed to the D.C.
- 9 Circuit when the general methodology is likely
- 10 to be the subject of the judicial challenge,
- 11 because those are the cases where you have the
- 12 greatest risk of duplicative judicial resources
- 13 and inconsistent outcomes.
- JUSTICE JACKSON: Can -- can I say it
- in another way? That -- that the venue
- 16 provision appears to be designed to direct
- 17 challenges that will turn on local facts and
- issues to the local circuits, and challenges
- 19 that turn on national facts and issues to the
- 20 D.C. Circuit.
- Now, I know that's very generalized,
- 22 but to the extent that the challenge in this
- 23 case and other cases are, for example -- or is,
- for example, to the EPA's economic analysis,
- 25 which it drew in this case from national market

- 1 evaluation and it applied to all of the -- all
- of the different refineries, this national
- 3 economic analysis, one might think that that's
- 4 the kind of determination of national scope or
- 5 effect that the third prong, at least, wanted
- 6 directed to the D.C. Circuit.
- 7 MR. STEWART: I -- I think that's
- 8 right, but the -- the additional point I would
- 9 make is it -- it matters a lot whether EPA's
- 10 statutory interpretation and economic analysis
- 11 are new or whether this is the way that the
- 12 agency has been doing it for 10 years.
- JUSTICE JACKSON: Why is that?
- MR. STEWART: It's -- it's that way
- 15 because if the agency has been doing it that way
- 16 for 10 years, then it's very likely that any
- potential challenges to the methodology will
- 18 have brought -- been resolved. They will be --
- 19 they will have been sorted out.
- 20 And at that point, if EPA has -- is
- 21 applying a ten-year-old regulation that was
- 22 challenged in the D.C. Circuit but upheld, it's
- very unlikely that the new action is going to be
- 24 attacked based on the asserted invalidity of the
- 25 rule.

1	JUSTICE GORSUCH: How how is how
2	is a litigant supposed to figure that out?
3	MR. STEWART: Well, part of
4	JUSTICE GORSUCH: So you're saying,
5	okay, when they're new theories of statutory
6	interpretation or new economic theories of
7	nationwide impact, it goes to the D.C. Circuit.
8	But if they're old, ah, then then I can bring
9	it in my own circuit where I actually live and
LO	operate and work.
L1	What is it a ten-year cutoff, is
L2	that is that the is that is that what
L3	I mean, venue is supposed to be simple. And
L4	I guess I'm trying to figure out what's our
L5	simple what simple rule would you have us
L6	apply here?
L7	MR. STEWART: Well, one of the things
L8	you can look at is, is there some metric by
L9	which you conclude the validity of the rule has
20	been established? Was it challenged before and
21	upheld? Has the time for challenging it passed?
22	Another is you can look at the
23	comments that EPA received on the proposed
24	action, because not everything, but a lot of
25	what EPA does, it issues a proposed action and

- 1 then it takes comments and it responds to the
- 2 comments. And here, it was clear from the
- 3 comments that EPA received that any judicial
- 4 challenges were likely to be attacks on the
- 5 methodology predominantly.
- 6 JUSTICE KAGAN: I -- I think what
- 7 would help me, Mr. Stewart, is if you talked in
- 8 -- in a bit more concrete terms about this case.
- 9 And again, focusing on the third sentence, "the
- 10 action based on a determination of nationwide
- 11 scope or effect."
- 12 What was the determination of
- 13 nationwide scope or effect that you are saying
- 14 drove all of these decisions?
- MR. STEWART: The -- the two
- 16 determinations of nationwide scope or effect --
- 17 effect that we've emphasized are, first, the
- 18 statutory interpretation, the requirement that
- 19 the economic hardship come from the blending
- 20 requirement itself and not from other economic
- 21 circumstances.
- 22 And the second was the passthrough
- theory, the presumption that generally small
- 24 refineries can pass their costs of compliance
- 25 along to their customers.

1	And and those
2	JUSTICE KAGAN: And how responsible
3	were those two findings, taken together, for the
4	actual determinations made?
5	MR. STEWART: They were I mean, all
6	of the petitions were denied. Now, it's true
7	that EPA, with respect to the passthrough theory
8	in particular, gave each refinery an opportunity
9	to rebut the presumption and show that its own
LO	circumstances were different, that it couldn't
L1	pass through the cost.
L2	But certainly the the challenges in
L3	the the various litigated proceedings have
L4	focused predominantly on the validity of the
L5	nationwide determinations. They haven't
L6	primarily been a
L7	JUSTICE KAGAN: What would a what
L8	would what would you have to do to rebut the
L9	presumption? I mean, is that a very high bar?
20	Is that why it's wasn't met in any case?
21	MR. STEWART: I would think it's a
22	pretty high bar.
23	JUSTICE KAGAN: So your essential
24	argument here is, like, Look, there's the
2.5	statutory interpretation, plus there's this

1 what did you call the other one? The --2 MR. STEWART: The economic analysis. 3 JUSTICE KAGAN: The economic analysis. That together, was basically determining what 4 decision was going to be made in all these 5 6 There was, you know, a way for you to cases. 7 come back and say it shouldn't happen here, but 8 not really. 9 And, you know, given that, like, 10 everybody would want this to be done in one 11 court, because one thing was driving all of 12 these decisions across the country. 13 MR. STEWART: Yes, exactly. 14 JUSTICE BARRETT: But, Mr. Stewart --15 Oh, sorry. Finish. 16 JUSTICE KAGAN: Go ahead. 17 JUSTICE BARRETT: I -- I -- picking up on that, what if one of the refineries wanted to 18 19 challenge both the EPA's denial of the 20 presumption in their favor, like, you know, the 21 non-zero chance, as the Fifth Circuit calls it, 2.2 to say, you know what, you should have given me 23 an exception, because I can show that I uniquely 24 experienced hardship, as well as the economic

theory and the statutory interpretation.

1 So does it depend on how the refinery 2 styles the challenge? 3 MR. STEWART: It doesn't depend on how the refinery challenges -- styles the court 4 challenge, because the determination -- I mean, 5 6 EPA's decision that the third prong applies has 7 to be made at the type it -- time it takes the action. And it has to publish that finding in 8 9 taking the action. 10 And so it -- it may depend, in part, 11 on what sort of comments EPA received during the 12 rule-making, because that -- that may alert it 13 that it is resolving something that is 14 contested. But the right forum thereafter 15 doesn't depend on what particular mix of 16 challenges a particular refinery wants to make. 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, 18 counsel. 19 Justice Thomas? 20 Justice Alito? JUSTICE ALITO: Well, there are a 21 2.2 couple of points about your argument that I 23 would appreciate some clarification. Some of 24 them have been touched on, but just to make 25 them -- present them in simple terms.

1	When do you think an issue is
2	sufficiently settled so that decisions based on
3	that no longer involve a determination?
4	MR. STEWART: Well, we we've
5	referred to the fact that the the denials
6	here were issued roughly contemporaneously with
7	the with the determine the announcement of
8	the determination itself.
9	And we have also referred to the fact
10	that the comments indicated that the nationwide
11	determinations were likely to be the subject of
12	challenge.
13	I don't think, frankly, that there is
14	a time limit, and but I think what the Court
15	should be trying to get at is, kind of, what is
16	the likelihood? Are these determinations
17	sufficiently new? Are they sufficiently
18	unestablished that they can be expected to be
19	the focus of judicial challenge?
20	Because
21	JUSTICE ALITO: Well, that doesn't
22	seem to be a very clear rule. Maybe the
23	application of it here would be clear, but going
24	forward in other cases, that certainly doesn't
25	seem to be clear whether it was sufficiently

2.4

- 1 established to -- so that anything that happens
- 2 later is not a new determination?
- 3 MR. STEWART: I mean, I think one
- 4 thing we would offer is with respect to the
- 5 standard of review here, we certainly think the
- 6 question of what is the test, what is the basic
- 7 standard for applying the third prong, that's a
- 8 question of statutory determination that the
- 9 court decides de novo. So we disagree with
- 10 Respondents' interpretation, but the question
- 11 whether they're right or wrong -- their --
- 12 interpretation, but we -- but the question
- whether they're right or wrong is for the Court
- 14 to decide.
- 15 If the Court accepts our basic
- 16 framework that the test should be were these
- determinations sufficiently new that they are
- 18 likely to be the subject of judicial challenge,
- 19 then I think it would be appropriate to give
- 20 some deference to EPA's determination in that
- 21 regard, because EPA would know the record, it
- 22 would understand to what extent was it departing
- from its past methodology, what had the comments
- 24 been, and --
- JUSTICE ALITO: Okay. Thank you.

1 What -- why should it matter in making 2 this determination whether EPA decides -- makes 3 one -- takes one action by itself or bundles a bunch together? 4 I don't think it 5 MR. STEWART: 6 particularly matters for purposes of the third 7 prong; that is, for purposes of the first prong, the -- the question is whether the action is 8 9 nationally applicable. And that depends on 10 whether the action that EPA announces as the not 11 denial of a lot of petitions or the denial of 12 one. 13 I think for purposes of the third 14 prong, the analysis would be the same regardless 15 of whether there's bundling. 16 JUSTICE ALITO: So you can't just --17 EPA can't just say, look, this is -- we're -we're deciding cases from five different 18 19 circuits and, you know, or a number of different states and they fall into five different 20 21 circuits, ? that shouldn't matter at all? 2.2 MR. STEWART: It -- it doesn't matter 23 for purposes of the third prong, that the 24 question is, even if you think of the action as 25 being the denial of a particular refinery's

- 1 petition, if it is based on -- if that action is
- 2 based on a determination of federal law that's
- 3 likely to be challenged in court, that's an
- 4 appropriate case for the D.C. Circuit to
- 5 exercise review.
- 6 JUSTICE ALITO: What do you think
- 7 "based on" means? And it wasn't exactly clear
- 8 from your brief. At some points, you seem to
- 9 say it's but-for causation, and then at another
- 10 point, you say it's -- it must lie at the core
- of the agency action. Which one is it?
- MR. STEWART: We would say but-for
- 13 causation. That's typically the meaning that
- 14 the Court ascribes to the term "based on." But
- if the Court wanted to have a slightly more
- 16 stringent -- stringent test, it's -- it's really
- 17 the principle that we care most about, rather
- 18 than kind of the exact formulation of the
- 19 standard.
- 20 JUSTICE ALITO: I know the pass- --
- 21 the validity of the pass-through theory is not
- 22 before us, but just out of curiosity, has that
- 23 -- is that being challenged? And what is -- if
- 24 so, where -- what is the status of the
- 25 challenge?

MR. STEWART: Well, it -- it was 1 2 challenged in both the D.C. Circuit and the Fifth Circuit because a lot --3 4 JUSTICE ALITO: Right. MR. STEWART: -- of these cases wound 5 6 up in --7 JUSTICE ALITO: Yeah. MR. STEWART: -- the Fifth Circuit. 8 9 The -- both of those courts ruled against EPA on 10 that issue. And in our motion to hold the 11 briefing schedule in abeyance in this case, we 12 noted that EPA is reconsidering the methodology it's using. I -- I don't have any updates on 13 14 that, but that -- that's what we've represented 15 to the court previously. 16 JUSTICE ALITO: Thank you. 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice 18 Sotomayor? 19 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I am having almost 20 an impossible time understanding how you 21 answered Justice Thomas's question to say that 2.2 there is a limit that's subject to some form of 23 judicial review on your decision to bundle 24 that's not tied directly to the third prong; 25 meaning, I don't see how you can bundle unless

- 1 you meet the third prong, because the first
- 2 prong requires an action, and the action,
- 3 whether it's a national action or a individual
- 4 action, and if it has to be an individual
- 5 action, I don't see how you can make it national
- 6 without the third prong.
- 7 MR. STEWART: Well, I think even if
- 8 EPA was simply applying to new circumstances a
- 9 -- a previously established general methodology,
- 10 EPA would have the authority, if it wished, to
- bundle in the sense of announcing in a single
- 12 Federal Register notice the results of its --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I just don't see
- 14 how that can be, unless that action is based on
- a determination of nationwide scope or effect.
- 16 I can't see how you can bundle a New York -- and
- 17 you said you can't --
- 18 MR. STEWART: Right.
- 19 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- bundle a New
- 20 York and Pennsylvania denial of a SIP and call
- 21 it nationwide.
- MR. STEWART: I -- I think that --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Absent a
- 24 determination of nationwide scope or effect.
- 25 MR. STEWART: I -- I think the answer

- 1 to your question turns on our limiting
- 2 construction of the word "determination." That
- is, when -- if EPA granted or denied, let's say,
- 4 four different refinery proposals in a single
- 5 action, if it were simply applying its
- 6 preexisting methodology, a methodology that no
- 7 one was likely to challenge, but it was applying
- 8 that to disparate circumstances around the
- 9 country, nothing would prevent it from
- 10 announcing those dispositions in a single
- 11 Federal Register notice.
- The reason we would say those don't
- turn on a determination of nationwide scope or
- 14 effect is that the legal principles would be
- preexisting and established. They wouldn't be
- 16 kind of new -- new determinations, resolution of
- 17 an issue.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I think you're --
- 19 you're -- you're digging yourself into a hole
- 20 because I would then say they're individual
- 21 actions that you have to take to the local
- 22 courts.
- MR. STEWART: And -- and, frankly, EPA
- 24 rarely does that kind of bundling in
- 25 circumstances where it isn't announcing new

- 1 rules or new frameworks. We think it has the
- 2 authority to, but I'd -- I'll say we wouldn't
- 3 lose much if the Court said --
- 4 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: All right.
- 5 MR. STEWART: -- we --
- 6 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Assume my
- 7 assumption, that I don't take any meaning from
- 8 your bundling --
- 9 MR. STEWART: Okay.
- 10 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- and that I
- 11 think it's always a issue of what's a
- determination of nationwide scope and effect.
- 13 What's the standard of review? I wasn't sure in
- 14 the answer you gave to -- you -- you talked
- 15 first about de novo and then you talked about
- 16 deference. So --
- 17 MR. STEWART: I -- I would --
- 18 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- assume it's
- 19 only the third prong.
- MR. STEWART: Right.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: All right? What's
- the standard of review?
- MR. STEWART: I would say when you are
- determining what the basic test should be, the
- 25 standard of review is de novo -- de novo. For

- 1 instance, Respondents are arguing -- have argued
- 2 that "determination" here is used as a term of
- 3 art and it refers only to circumstances where
- 4 some other CAA provision instructs EPA to make a
- 5 determination or to determine something on a
- 6 nationwide basis.
- Now, we think that interpretation of
- 8 the statute is wrong, but the question whether
- 9 it is right or wrong is a pure issue of
- 10 statutory construction. That's something the
- 11 court decides de novo.
- 12 If the Court concludes that we're
- 13 right about the basic test, that what we are
- 14 looking for is did EPA in this action announce a
- 15 new principle of federal law or policy that is
- 16 likely to be the subject of judicial challenge,
- 17 if that basic test is correct, then we think EPA
- 18 should get deference when it announces that it
- 19 thinks the test is satisfied with respect to a
- 20 particular action.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Thank you.
- 22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice Kagan?
- JUSTICE KAGAN: I don't know,
- 24 Mr. Stewart. You're making this much more
- 25 complicated than I came in here thinking it was.

1 You know, the way I thought about it 2 was if you have a set of individual actions but 3 they're all based on a common denominator, such that you know how all the individual actions are 4 going to come out or almost all or generally 5 6 all, you know, such that individual -- like, 7 state circumstances are just not playing much of a role, then you -- then it should be in one 8 9 court because that's really all that is going to 10 be up for judicial review. So whether it's old, whether it's new, 11 12 I mean, you just look and you say did -- did one nationwide decision, or two nationwide decisions 13 in this case, drive all of these individual 14 15 decisions or almost all or most of them? And if 16 it did, like, you don't want 11 circuits dealing 17 with the same question. And if it didn't, because there are lots of individual 18 19 circumstances coming into play and relating to -- you know, it's -- it's -- it's like both 20 21 all mixed together so that the individual 2.2 circumstances really are going to count and different decisions are going to go different 23 24 ways, then you do want them done by different 25 courts.

1 So, I mean, that might be just an 2 intuitive way of dealing with it, but it seems 3 like a lot simpler to me than what you're 4 pitching. MR. STEWART: Well, I think part of 5 the reason that we focused on determination as 6 7 we have is the strongest -- to us the strongest argument on the other side is that whenever EPA 8 9 makes a site-specific determination, it is 10 always applying some nationally applicable rule or framework or policy. If it didn't do that, 11 12 the other side appropriately points out, we 13 wouldn't have any assurance that --14 JUSTICE KAGAN: Yeah, sure, there is 15 always some nationwide determination in the mix, 16 but if it's the kind of thing where that 17 nationwide determination as applied is going to 18 come out differently on different decisions, 19 depending on local conditions, then you don't want it in the D.C. Circuit. 20 21 MR. STEWART: Well, you --2.2 JUSTICE KAGAN: I mean, I have a 23 pretty strong intuition -- I won't tell you what it is -- about both of these cases. And one 24 25 goes one way and one goes the other way.

- 1 Because, one, everything is being decided by the
- 2 nationwide determination; and the other, pretty
- 3 much nothing is being decided by the nationwide
- 4 determination.
- 5 MR. STEWART: Well, I think the
- 6 nationwide determination, the new principle of
- 7 law, can be very important and can arouse great
- 8 controversy even if it doesn't, by itself,
- 9 preordain what the outcome of any particular
- 10 proceeding is going to be.
- I mean, I'd look at this -- this
- 12 Court's practice, for instance. In cases where
- 13 the -- this Court determines that the court of
- 14 appeals has erred in its analysis, it's not
- 15 uncommon for the Court to announce the right
- 16 analytic framework and then send it back to the
- lower courts to figure out how that framework
- 18 applies to particular circumstances.
- 19 It leaves the last -- it -- it
- 20 recognizes that its announcement of the
- 21 framework doesn't necessarily foreordain the
- 22 outcome. It leaves the last stage for the lower
- 23 courts.
- 24 But what this Court is still doing is
- 25 still terribly important, and it's the kind

- of -- the task this Court is performing is the
- 2 type of task for which it's important that there
- 3 be centralized review, that you not have a lot
- 4 of courts making the same determination of -- of
- 5 federal law without some means of bringing
- 6 harmony to them, even if that determination
- 7 doesn't dictate the outcome in a particular
- 8 case.
- 9 JUSTICE KAGAN: Thank you.
- 10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 11 Gorsuch?
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Well, harmony can
- also be achieved through appeal, right? I
- 14 mean --
- MR. STEWART: Yes.
- 16 JUSTICE GORSUCH: I mean, the -- the
- 17 government's not afraid of litigating in -- in
- 18 -- in appropriate forums across the country,
- 19 right?
- MR. STEWART: That -- that's correct,
- 21 but --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: And if there are
- 23 circuit splits over the meaning of the law,
- 24 you -- you know how to bring them here, right?
- MR. STEWART: Yes.

- 1 JUSTICE GORSUCH: All right. And so
- 2 I -- I just want to explore the two tests you
- 3 have offered us: the but-for test and the core
- 4 test. Those are the two. And you're happy with
- 5 either one?
- 6 MR. STEWART: Yes.
- 7 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Yeah. So the
- 8 but-for test, I would think, would capture
- 9 pretty much any time you have a standard
- 10 statutory interpretation or economic theory.
- 11 Because but for, you wouldn't have reached the
- 12 result, right?
- MR. STEWART: Well, no, I mean, you --
- 14 with respect to a particular outcome, you could
- 15 have -- you could have EPA issuing rulings in
- the alternative, saying: Under our preferred
- approach, the small refinery's petition would
- 18 be -- should be denied, but even under our old
- 19 approach, this particular refinery wouldn't be
- 20 entitled to an exemption.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: But either of those
- 22 statutory interpretations would be a but-for
- 23 cause of the -- the -- the ultimate --
- one or the other would have to be at least a
- 25 but-for cause?

- 1 MR. STEWART: Well, no. I think -- I
- 2 think if you said under each approach --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Let -- let's make it
- 4 easier. I have one standard statutory
- 5 interpretation I'm going to apply to all of
- 6 these cases. That's a but-for cause?
- 7 MR. STEWART: It would only be a
- 8 but-for cause if -- if there would be a
- 9 different outcome under some alternative
- 10 interpretation.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Right, okay. Yeah.
- 12 Exactly.
- But it was a but-for cause of the
- 14 denial in every case.
- MR. STEWART: Again, only if there
- 16 would be a grant of the exemption under some
- 17 alternative --
- 18 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Sure. Some court is
- 19 going to have to decide whether that is a
- 20 correct interpretation and whether there's an
- 21 alternative that's preferable, but the
- 22 interpretation on which EPA is relying to deny
- the application will be the but-for cause in
- 24 every case. So it -- it captures everything.
- 25 So that's one.

1 And then the core -- what does "core" 2 mean, and where does it come from? MR. STEWART: I mean, I think we were 3 trying to get at circumstances where -- we're 4 trying to weed out circumstances where EPA, in 5 6 the course of an action, may announce some 7 principle of federal law, but it is so peripheral to the decision it's actually making 8 9 that it doesn't appear likely to affect the 10 outcome, and, consequently, it doesn't appear 11 likely to be the focus of judicial challenge. 12 JUSTICE GORSUCH: No, I get -- I 13 get -- I get the impulse. I'm just not sure 14 where it is in the statute. 15 MR. STEWART: I think the word -again, I --16 JUSTICE GORSUCH: "Core" does -- it 17 18 doesn't appear anywhere? 19 MR. STEWART: I think if -- if EPA 20 announced: We -- we think this is the right 21 statutory interpretation and economic analysis, 2.2 this particular small refinery disagrees, and it 23 thinks we should use an alternative interpretation and analysis, we note that under 24 25 either approach we think this small refinery

- 1 would not be entitled to an exemption.
- I think if you -- if EPA said that,
- 3 then you couldn't conclude that EPA's preferred
- 4 interpretation and analysis were a but-for
- 5 cause.
- 6 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Are we going to have
- 7 a jurisprudence on "core"? How core is core?
- 8 MR. STEWART: Again --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Is that what you're
- 10 inviting us to do?
- 11 MR. STEWART: No. I think if the
- 12 Court adopted our basic test, then it would be
- appropriate to give some deference to EPA's
- judgment about how integral to its overall
- analysis was a particular principle of law.
- 16 And, you know --
- 17 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Thank you.
- 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 19 Kavanaugh?
- 20 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: On the reason for
- 21 all of this in the first place, Congress's
- 22 reasons for all of this in the first place,
- obviously it wasn't just harmony. I thought it
- 24 was also -- but correct me if I'm wrong --
- 25 speed.

Т	MR. STEWART: Yean.
2	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: And therefore,
3	American businesses, which have to make
4	millions multi-million-dollar decisions on
5	all of this, have some certainty more quickly
6	about what the rules are. Because they will
7	say: You know, we don't care whether the rule's
8	A or B I mean, they do care but tell us
9	what the rule is so we can make our investment
LO	decisions and our business decisions.
L1	MR. STEWART: Yes. And and that's
L2	reflected not just in the provision for
L3	centralization in the D.C. Circuit but in the
L4	short the 60-day time limit for seeking
L5	review. It's reflected to an extent in in
L6	the fact that you go straight to the court of
L7	appeals in the first place.
L8	Part of the reason for kind of
L9	skipping a potential layer of judicial review
20	was to get things these things resolved
21	quickly. And so if EPA is is told that it's
22	wrong, it can go back to the drawing board. If
23	EPA's methodology is upheld, then it can decide
24	what's the next incremental step from that.
25	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: The fact that

- 1 we're having this argument, though, suggests
- 2 that Congress might have missed the mark on
- 3 that. But, anyway, that was the idea, right?
- 4 Then on ease of application, which
- 5 Justice Gorsuch rightly raises, I just want to
- 6 zero in on the deference point.
- 7 Your point there is when -- I think --
- 8 you know, when EPA makes and publishes and says
- 9 it's making something based on -- on a
- 10 determination of nationwide scope or effect,
- 11 that itself will receive deference?
- 12 MR. STEWART: Again, if -- if you
- think that EPA is applying basically the right
- 14 standard --
- 15 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Assume that.
- 16 MR. STEWART: Yes.
- 17 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Then it gets
- deference in how it applies it in a particular
- 19 case, which helps with respect to ease of
- 20 application.
- 21 MR. STEWART: Yes.
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Okay. And then if
- it does go to the D.C. Circuit, and the D.C.
- 24 Circuit rules for EPA -- I just want to make
- 25 sure you agree with this -- obviously there

- 1 won't be a circuit split on anything. So when
- 2 it comes to this Court on cert, we need to be
- 3 more attentive to cases like that than we might
- 4 be in certain other cases?
- 5 MR. STEWART: I -- I agree. And
- 6 it's -- you know, it's kind of like the federal
- 7 circuit and patent cases, that with respect to
- 8 categories of litigation that can't produce a
- 9 circuit split, then obviously the Court is going
- 10 to -- to take cases even when some of the usual
- 11 metrics for what's a cert-worthy case are
- 12 absent.
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Good. Thank you.
- 14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 15 Barrett?
- 16 JUSTICE BARRETT: Just to crystallize
- 17 your position, Mr. Stewart, can you point me to
- 18 the best textual and contextual evidence that a
- 19 determination is this issue of unsettled --
- 20 unsettled issue of statutory interpretation,
- 21 rather than the decision that the underlying
- 22 hardship appli -- exception doesn't apply?
- 23 MR. STEWART: I mean, I think that the
- 24 basic reason that the two shouldn't be equated
- 25 is that the statute refers -- and this is at

- 1 the -- kind of the carryover sentence from 31A
- and 32A of the appendix to the government's
- 3 brief.
- 4 It says, "Notwithstanding the
- 5 preceding sentence, a petition for review of any
- 6 action referred to in such sentence, namely, an
- 7 action of -- that is locally or regionally
- 8 applicable, may be filed only in the United
- 9 States Court of Appeals for the District of
- 10 Columbia if such action is based on a
- 11 determination of nationwide scope" --
- 12 JUSTICE BARRETT: So the
- 13 distinction --
- MR. STEWART: If the state --
- 15 JUSTICE BARRETT: The use of the words
- 16 "action" and "determination," you would say, is
- 17 your best evidence?
- 18 MR. STEWART: Yes. The -- and the --
- 19 JUSTICE BARRETT: Okay.
- 20 MR. STEWART: -- the linkage "based
- on" indicates that the two are not the same
- 22 thing.
- JUSTICE BARRETT: Okay. And then,
- 24 relatedly, when you've been talking about length
- of time and how we decide whether something is

- 1 settled or not, I mean, these were denied in two
- 2 batches, one April and one June, on the same --
- 3 basis of the same, say, determination of the
- 4 economic theory and the statutory
- 5 interpretation.
- 6 Why were the ones in June, then, in
- 7 the government's view, not based on something
- 8 that was already settled? Or were they?
- 9 MR. STEWART: I -- I -- I think they
- 10 weren't. I mean, for -- for one thing, the
- other metric that -- or criterion that we've
- 12 identified for determine -- for identifying
- 13 things that are determinations, things are --
- that are the resolution of a controversy, is did
- 15 EPA receive comments on the proposed action that
- indicated disagreement with the determination?
- 17 And that was as true for the
- 18 refineries whose petitions were denied in June
- 19 as it was for those that were denied in April.
- 20 In both instances, EPA was told by the
- 21 petitioning refineries that we're not just
- 22 disagreeing with the application of your
- 23 methodology to our circumstances, we're
- 24 disagreeing with the methodology itself.
- JUSTICE BARRETT: Okay.

- 1 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 2 Jackson?
- JUSTICE JACKSON: So I guess I'm just
- 4 trying to understand your statutory
- 5 interpretation. Are you saying that the action
- 6 that was taken here was a nationally applicable
- 7 one at prong 1, such that that's why it goes to
- 8 the D.C. Circuit?
- 9 MR. STEWART: Yes. I mean, we're
- 10 making two arguments. Our -- our first argument
- is because this was the denial of 21 small
- 12 refinery exemptions, rather than only one, it
- was nationally -- and the refineries were spread
- out all over the country, it was a nationally
- applicable action and it goes to the D.C.
- 16 Circuit under prong 1.
- 17 But then we're also arguing in the
- 18 alternative, if instead you view the action as a
- 19 matter of law as separate denials of 21
- 20 different petitions, we would say each of those
- 21 denials falls under prong 3 because each denial
- 22 was based on a determination of nationwide scope
- 23 or effect.
- 24 JUSTICE JACKSON: All right. So going
- 25 back to the prong 1 issue, help -- help me to

- 1 understand your argument. I mean, if the EPA
- 2 had issued each of these denials on a separate
- 3 piece of paper, would you still say that they
- 4 belonged on the D.C. Circuit?
- 5 MR. STEWART: No. I mean, I think our
- 6 argument does depend on the proposition that you
- 7 attach a lot of weight to the -- the way EPA
- 8 frames its action. And so if on the same day we
- 9 had issued 21 separate Federal Register notices
- saying we're applying the same methodology but
- 11 we're engaging in 21 separate denial actions, we
- 12 would say those are --
- JUSTICE JACKSON: But what about the
- statute or Congress's reasons for enacting it or
- 15 the way that it works makes you think that
- 16 Congress intended for this to turn on the formal
- 17 -- the formality of the EPA's determination in
- 18 that way?
- MR. STEWART: Well, it refers to the
- 20 action that EPA takes. And I think to a degree,
- 21 the -- the application of prong 1 will
- 22 necessarily depend at least in part on
- 23 formalities. That is, if EPA had first
- 24 promulgated a regulation that said here is our
- 25 new statutory interpretation, here's our new

- 1 economic analysis, in subsequent decisions we
- 2 will apply this interpretation and analysis to
- 3 different refineries, the regulation itself
- 4 would clearly have been nationally applicable.
- 5 It would have been a nationwide rule. And it
- 6 would have been challengeable only in the D.C.
- 7 Circuit.
- 8 JUSTICE JACKSON: But I thought you
- 9 said if they said that and then they had
- 10 separate papers saying that, there would be
- 11 local?
- MR. STEWART: No, I -- I was --
- 13 perhaps I misunderstood the hypothetical. I was
- 14 saying --
- JUSTICE JACKSON: So here's the
- 16 hypothetical. The EPA issues an order that
- 17 consists of a single page for each refinery.
- 18 MR. STEWART: And the -- assuming that
- 19 the order says we are applying this methodology
- and concluding on that basis that your refinery
- 21 doesn't meet the criteria. If it's announcing
- the methodology in the same document where it
- 23 announces the denial, then that would be a
- 24 single -- a single state-specific action.
- 25 I -- I had in mind a circumstance

1 where EPA proceeds in two steps, first 2 promulgating the rule and then issuing separate 3 actions that apply it to different refineries. And our -- and our point is the fact that in the 4 denial actions here EPA chose to announce the 5 6 new methodology in the same document as its 7 application shouldn't affect the nationwide 8 applicability. 9 JUSTICE JACKSON: Thank you. 10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, 11 counsel. 12 MR. STEWART: Thank you. 13 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Mr. Waxman. 14 ORAL ARGUMENT OF SETH P. WAXMAN 15 ON BEHALF OF RESPONDENTS GROWTH ENERGY 16 AND RENEWABLE FUELS ASSOCIATION 17 IN SUPPORT OF THE PETITIONER 18 MR. WAXMAN: Mr. Chief Justice, and 19 may it please the Court: 20 The core objective of Section 307(b) 21 is to avoid inconsistent rules arising from 22 duplicative litigation in the administration of 23 the Clean Air Act. Yet, under the ruling below, 24 eight different courts of appeals will be 25 passing on the merits of EPA's standards for

- 1 eligibility under the small refinery exemption,
- 2 producing, as is already evident from the two
- 3 circuits that have opined, different substantive
- 4 standards, completely the opposite of what
- 5 Congress manifestly intended under the national
- 6 RFS program.
- Now, there has been a lot of
- 8 discussion about prongs 1 and 3 and maybe some
- 9 discussion without identifying it as prong 2,
- which is the locally or regionally applicable.
- 11 As to prong 3, we fully agree with EPA that if
- 12 the actions are deemed locally applicable, the
- disposition of each -- each refinery's petition
- 14 was, indeed, based on a determination of
- 15 nationwide scope and effect.
- I have some different answers to some
- 17 of the questions posed, in particular by Justice
- 18 Gorsuch and Justice Alito, which I hope I'll get
- 19 to, but I want to emphasize at the beginning,
- 20 picking up, I think, on what Justice Jackson's
- 21 questions were alluding to, that we think that
- 22 EPA's actions, whether they are considered
- individually or together as bundled by EPA, were
- 24 nationally applicable under the first prong for
- 25 two reasons.

1	The first reason is because they
2	announced and applied a standard for all
3	refineries, regardless of location. This was an
4	avowed statement by EPA in these adjudications.
5	And, second, the second reason relates
6	to the ubiquity of the RFS program, where every
7	individual exemption determines as a matter of
8	law the renewable fuel requirement binding all
9	non-exempt obligated parties and the total
LO	volume of renewable fuel that must be purchased,
L1	such that the legal effect of even an individual
L2	SRE adjudication is nationally applicable
L3	insofar as it necessarily affects the blending
L4	requirement blending obligations of of
L5	non-exempt obligated parties and will
L6	necessarily affect the total amount of renewable
L7	fuel that is used in the United States.
L8	Now, I guess I should say my time is
L9	I welcome the Court's questions. I I
20	JUSTICE THOMAS: Mr. Waxman, one
21	question.
22	You say that this is a nationally
23	applicable rule. How many refineries would have
24	to be involved for it to be nationally
25	applicable? Is it just more than one?

1 MR. WAXMAN: So I think, Justice 2 Thomas, in -- in this case, since the -- the 3 standard announced and applied avowedly will apply to every refinery wherever it is located 4 in the United States, regardless of location, 5 6 that is nationally applicable. 7 I don't think -- nothing in our 8 submission -- I hope this gets to your question 9 -- depends on whether you agree with us and the 10 House report that any legal issue that can be 11 adjudicated in two different -- in one -- in two 12 different circuits is nationally applicable under the first prong or you agree with my 13 friend on the other side that it has to be all 14 15 50 states. 16 The point here is that when EPA 17 announces and adopts a standard, either in a regulation or other final action, that it says 18 19 will apply to refinery -- to petitioning refineries regardless of location, that is 20 21 national. 2.2 Now, I don't think, just anticipating 23 my friend's argument, that the -- that the rule that in order to -- that it cannot be that it 24 25 has to apply to all 50 states in order to be

- 1 national. That's completely inconsistent with
- 2 the manifest purpose of the 1977 amendments.
- 3 And it's also manifestly not true because there
- 4 are many provisions of the Clean Air Act that
- 5 don't apply to all 50 states --
- 6 JUSTICE THOMAS: But --
- 7 MR. WAXMAN: -- including the
- 8 Renewable Fuel Standard.
- 9 JUSTICE THOMAS: But I'm -- I'm --
- 10 let's just -- if we would just limit it to the
- 11 refineries for now and small refineries, how
- would you know whether it's nationally
- 13 applicable?
- MR. WAXMAN: Well, I think if EPA --
- if EPA adjudicates a refinery -- an individual
- 16 refiner's exemption application by announcing
- 17 and adopting a new metric that will apply to all
- 18 refiners, it is nationally applicable.
- 19 JUSTICE THOMAS: Wouldn't it be --
- 20 wouldn't it be just accepted that if EPA
- announced the rule with respect to one refinery
- 22 and -- that it would apply the same rule to
- 23 future refineries? And would that make it a
- 24 national rule?
- MR. WAXMAN: Yes, I think so. That's

- 1 our --
- 2 JUSTICE THOMAS: The mere fact that --
- 3 MR. WAXMAN: That's our position.
- 4 Now, I -- I recognize that neither of my friends
- 5 in this case agree with this, but I think, you
- 6 know, following on what I -- I took to be the
- 7 point of Justice Jackson's questions, I don't
- 8 see why it's not true.
- 9 If EPA -- everybody agrees that if EPA
- 10 announced a regulation -- in a regulation that
- said from now on all SRE applications are going
- to be adjudged under the following metric:
- Number one, the small refinery has to prove
- causation; that is, it has to prove that the
- disproportionate hardship that it is
- 16 experiencing is due to the RFS obligation and
- 17 not for some other reason.
- 18 And in evaluating that case, based on
- our economic analyses and economic common sense,
- 20 we presume that RFS -- that -- that ring costs
- 21 can be passed on to consumers. That is a
- 22 rebuttable presumption.
- JUSTICE JACKSON: Mr. --
- 24 MR. WAXMAN: If that were done in the
- context of a regulation, even my friend on the

- 1 other side agrees it would be nationally
- 2 applicable.
- JUSTICE JACKSON: Mr. -- Mr. Waxman,
- 4 here's where I need help. If -- if you're right
- 5 about that, I guess I don't understand how we
- 6 ever get to prong 2.
- 7 How -- it seems to me that -- I don't
- 8 understand the distinction between 1 and 3,
- 9 meaning it seems like every case would be one in
- 10 which you would say that there is a national --
- 11 nationally applicable standard. Because, as
- 12 Justice Gorsuch pointed out, we would hope that
- 13 the agency would have consistent metrics for
- 14 making these determinations.
- So it's sort of a given that the
- 16 agency is going to be applying some standard
- and, in our country, a standard that is
- 18 consistently applied across every applicant. So
- 19 then how do we ever have a local determination
- in -- in -- in that scheme?
- 21 MR. WAXMAN: So I think my -- my
- 22 answer to the question is the same -- it's the
- 23 same answer to the question I would give to
- Justice Gorsuch's question about prong 3, how is
- 25 it -- how can you determine that it is of

- 1 national -- what is a determination of
- 2 nationwide scope and effect, and Justice Alito's
- 3 question about so what's the bright line, what's
- 4 the metric under which you can decide that?
- I think the same applies to prong --
- 6 to the -- our -- our first theory for why this
- 7 is nationally applicable under prong 1, which is
- 8 it is not a -- an action of -- a nationally
- 9 applicable action. And it is also, under prong
- 10 3, not a determination of nationwide ^
- 11 significance -- scope and effect if it is simply
- 12 applying settled law.
- Now, I fully -- I -- I appreciate the
- questions about at what point does law become
- 15 settled, and why does that matter for
- 16 determination. In our view, law becomes settled
- 17 when either there is a court ruling -- and
- 18 presumably it would be under prong 3 or prong
- 19 1 -- a ruling of the D.C. Circuit saying EPA is
- 20 right or EPA is wrong.
- 21 The application of that national
- 22 standard thereafter -- the application of that
- 23 standard thereafter would not qualify under
- 24 prong 1 or prong 3, in our view.
- 25 In -- even in the absence of a -- of a

- 1 D.C. Circuit adjudication, this statute, this
- very unique statute, has a 60-day limit on pose
- 3 challenges to any regulation or final action.
- 4 It's a pretty strict time limit that's included
- 5 in the same subsection that we're deciding.
- And I think an argument can be made
- 7 that if there is no -- 60 days goes by and
- 8 there's no challenge, or if there is a
- 9 challenge -- if there is a challenge, let's let
- 10 the D.C. Circuit decide. If there's no
- 11 challenge, it's settled.
- 12 And thereafter, when the EPA uses that
- 13 standard to either grant or deny an exemption
- 14 request, that goes to the regional circuit.
- The other part of my answer that I --
- 16 I don't think -- I'm not sure was fully answered
- in response to the questions before is, like,
- 18 what -- what is it that -- how are you defining
- 19 "determination"? I think this was maybe Justice
- 20 Barrett's question.
- 21 And I think, you know, we define
- 22 "determination" by reference to the accepted
- 23 dictionary definition, which we elucidate in our
- 24 brief, which is: A determination is either the
- 25 resolution of a particular unsettled issue or

- 1 the measure of something. That's the dictionary
- 2 definition of it.
- And we're -- we think that that
- 4 dictionary definition comfortably cabins the
- 5 scope and extent of -- of the third prong.
- 6 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
- 7 counsel.
- I am very sympathetic to the concern
- 9 that venue provisions should be simple. I mean,
- 10 it's the first step. It's where you go. It's
- 11 not about the merits at all. You don't want to
- 12 spend a lot of time litigating that.
- 13 And you have suggested that your
- standard, just recently, is -- is a simple one.
- Now, in what respects do you think Mr. Stewart's
- 16 proposal is not simple?
- 17 MR. WAXMAN: Well, I think -- I think
- 18 Mr. Proposal's -- Mr. Proposal's --
- 19 Mr. Stewart's proposal is simple. And I think
- it can be -- prong 3, with which we agree, can
- 21 simply be decided by a proper understanding of
- the definitionary terms of what is and isn't a
- 23 determination.
- As to prong 1, while I agree with him
- 25 that the relevant actions in this case are the

- 1 two consolidated actions in April and June, we
- 2 have -- we have proposed in our briefing two
- 3 other tests under prong 1 that, if anything, are
- 4 even more straightforward and don't depend on
- 5 bundling.
- 6 One is the point that I've been
- 7 discussing earlier about if it is an action that
- 8 announces and adopts a new standard that will be
- 9 applied across the country, it is nationally
- 10 applicable.
- 11 The other, which in some ways is the
- 12 simplest, but is a real consequence of the
- 13 ubiquity of -- of the RFS standard, which was
- 14 adopted long after these 1977 amendments, is
- that every adjudication of a small refinery
- 16 exemption is nationally applicable as a matter
- 17 of law, because it will determine as a matter of
- 18 legal consequence the refining obligations, the
- 19 blending obligations of non-petitioning
- 20 refiners.
- 21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank -- thank
- 22 you, counsel.
- MR. WAXMAN: Thank you.
- 24 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 25 Thomas, anything further?

1	JUSTICE THOMAS: Just briefly.
2	Mr. Waxman, you you mention you
3	discussed determinations a minute ago, but what
4	what would be your view of "based on"? I
5	think that's important as to what what
6	content you give that.
7	MR. WAXMAN: So we think that "based
8	on" means essentially two things. There are two
9	requirements for an action. The action in these
10	cases is was the denial of the exemption.
11	"Based on" means that it is a but-for
12	cause or an essential premise of the action and
13	that it resolves an unsettled issue or that it
14	establishes a standard. When you have those two
15	things, the act you can say confidently that
16	the action is based on that determination.
17	I hope that answers your question.
18	It's the best I got.
19	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice Alito?
20	Justice Sotomayor?
21	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: There's a number
22	of lower courts that have said, with respect to
23	the question of whether a denial is nationally
24	applicable, that what you have to look at is not
25	the downstream consequences of the EPA's of

- 1 the EPA's determination, but what is the effect
- of -- on the parties? Is it a national effect
- 3 or not?
- 4 Your -- one of your two suggestions
- 5 that the -- I see as downstream effects. Yes,
- 6 there are going to be people from each petition
- 7 who might have to do something more later, and
- 8 something less if -- if they are denied, but why
- 9 isn't that just a pure downstream effect? And
- 10 aren't we straying too far when we're
- incorporating that into our analysis?
- 12 MR. WAXMAN: So I think -- I do
- 13 recognize those opinions. And I endorse them,
- in the sense that I think, for example, you
- 15 know, Justice Kavanaugh -- or then Judge
- 16 Kavanaugh had it correctly in -- when he ruled
- in the D.C. Circuit that national applicability
- has to be determined on the face of the action.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: That's the case
- 20 I'm talking about.
- 21 MR. WAXMAN: Yes. And -- and that
- 22 practical effect, downstream effects of what is
- 23 likely to -- what is more than likely not to
- 24 happen is not the crux.
- 25 All parties in this case -- and I

- 1 think all courts -- have agreed that the legal
- 2 effects of the regulation or the action is, in
- 3 fact, the -- something that is viewable and
- 4 consistent with the you have to look on its
- 5 face.
- 6 And with respect to the Renewable Fuel
- 7 Standard, the legal effect -- not just some
- 8 predictable downstream effect, the legal effect
- 9 of every SRE determination extends to the
- 10 national blending standard and the national
- 11 volume requirements by -- as a matter of law.
- 12 And that's how I would address that --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: You know what
- 14 bothers me about that position is you're now
- saying that every exemption has to go to the
- 16 D.C. Circuit --
- MR. WAXMAN: Our -- our --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- whether the
- 19 methodology -- methodology is new or not.
- That's the force of that argument.
- MR. WAXMAN: So that's one of the two
- 22 arguments that we're making for why this is
- 23 nationally applicable. And, yes, it basically
- 24 acknowledges that because of the ubiquity, the
- 25 way that the RFS program, as opposed to many --

- 1 most other Clean Air Act programs, is --
- operates, it is a necessary legal effect of the
- 3 -- any denial that it will be nationally
- 4 applicable in the sense that it has an
- 5 inexorable legal effect on other actors and the
- 6 -- the -- the -- the nation's ability to meet
- 7 its national renewable fuel requirement. But,
- 8 yes, I do --
- 9 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: That prong.
- 10 MR. WAXMAN: That's -- that, that
- 11 argument is -- is asking for a -- an
- 12 acknowledgment -- a rule across the board with
- 13 respect to all exemptions.
- 14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice Kagan?
- 15 Justice Gorsuch?
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Mr. Waxman, do you
- 17 agree that the action here is the denial of a --
- 18 a petition --
- 19 MR. WAXMAN: Yes.
- 20 JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- to be exempt from
- 21 renewable energy mandates?
- 22 MR. WAXMAN: Well, I -- I think -- I'm
- 23 going to be ecumenical about --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Let's not -- no, I'm
- 25 not -- I don't want you to be ecumenical today.

1 MR. WAXMAN: Okay. 2 JUSTICE GORSUCH: No, I just want to 3 know the right answer. That's the action. 4 That's the agency action. 5 MR. WAXMAN: Our view as expressed --JUSTICE GORSUCH: Right, but it's in 6 7 the Federal Register? MR. WAXMAN: Our view as expressed in 8 our brief is that the EPA is correct that the 9 actions that are under review today are the 10 11 consolidated April and June decisions, but that 12 under our understanding of nationally applicable, it doesn't matter. 13 14 JUSTICE GORSUCH: I understand that. 15 I understand the second part. Put that aside. 16 Put prong 1 aside for now. But the actions --17 all right, you want to use the plural -- are the denial of the -- of -- of the exemptions from 18 19 the renewable energy program, right? 20 MR. WAXMAN: Yes. 21 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Okay. And to -- to 22 make that action, EPA had to make a 23 determination about whether there's a particular 24 hardship for a particular refinery, correct? 25 MR. WAXMAN: Correct.

- 1 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Thank you.
- 2 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 3 Kavanaugh?
- 4 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: The third
- 5 sentence, the third prong, the third sentence is
- 6 just difficult to apply in a coherent way
- 7 because it's always going to be -- when you have
- 8 some rule that's being applied to a particular
- 9 entity in a particular state, it's going -- it's
- 10 going to be very difficult.
- 11 What -- what -- so how should we
- 12 handle that?
- MR. WAXMAN: So, you know, this is our
- 14 lot. This is our --
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Because --
- 16 MR. WAXMAN: This is --
- 17 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Because to the
- 18 Chief Justice's point and Justice Gorsuch's, I
- 19 would like to come out of this case with
- something that everyone out there knows, okay,
- 21 this is what we need to do.
- MR. WAXMAN: So I -- we think that the
- 23 simplest way to decide this is under the first
- 24 sentence, rather than the third, but as to your
- 25 question --

Т	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: But II We get to
2	the third yeah.
3	MR. WAXMAN: If we get to the third, I
4	would say what the Court should what the
5	Court should base its interpretation on the
6	meaning of the term "determination" and that
7	under the consistent with dictionary
8	definitions, the determination is either the
9	resolution of a particular issue and/or the
10	measurement of something and that what we have
11	in EPA's two-part test is both.
12	The first part of the test, the
13	causation requirement, is certainly the former.
14	And the the presumption based on EPA's
15	experience with the data is the latter and maybe
16	also the former. And that so long as that
17	the validity of that two-part test is unsettled,
18	meaning that 60 days have passed under the sub-
19	under the very next sentence in the
20	subsection, and no challenge has been raised, or
21	a challenge has been raised but the D.C. Circuit
22	has not yet decided it, it is still a
23	determination as to which review should be in
24	the D.C. Circuit.
25	And as to to Justice Barrett's

- 1 question about, well, June was the second one,
- 2 it wasn't the first one, so how do you -- how do
- 3 you -- how do you -- how do you deal with that,
- 4 I think the answer is that I believe -- I -- I'm
- 5 not -- I don't have a specific recollection, but
- 6 fewer than 60 days passed between the late April
- 7 determination and the June 3rd determination.
- I believe there already had been filed
- 9 at least one petition for review, but even if
- 10 there hadn't, it was still open for review. And
- 11 the consequence of holding that it's only the
- 12 first one, whether it's the first single
- application as I'm intuiting Justice Gorsuch is
- inclined to rule, or the -- the omnibus --
- 15 JUSTICE GORSUCH: I wouldn't be so
- 16 sure.
- 17 (Laughter.)
- 18 MR. WAXMAN: Pardon my indiscretion
- 19 and my presumption. Whether it's one or the
- 36th that were decided in April, the notion
- that, well, June was not April, and, therefore,
- 22 all 67 refineries that were disappointed by the
- 23 outcome in June can go to their eight regional
- 24 circuits and the D.C. Circuit to get resolution
- 25 of the same legal question --

1	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Anything
2	further
3	MR. WAXMAN: is just the opposite
4	
5	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Anything
6	further, Justice Kavanaugh?
7	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: No.
8	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: No?
9	Justice Barrett?
10	JUSTICE BARRETT: Just one question.
11	Do you think under your definition of
12	"determination," which you say is the dictionary
13	definition of "determination," that it would be
14	a determination that the hardship exception
15	didn't apply, kind of to Justice Gorsuch's
16	point? You've got the action, the denial, and
17	then you have the determination that the undue
18	hardship exception is inapplicable to that
19	particular refinery.
20	I understand that the reasoning is
21	is what you want to is what you're hanging
22	your hat on, but do you agree that just by the
23	terms of the definition, it could apply as
24	Justice Gorsuch suggested suggested to the
25	determination that there was not an undue

- 1 hardship?
- 2 MR. WAXMAN: I -- I think in the
- 3 vernacular sense outside of context, you could
- 4 say that that is a determination because it will
- 5 always be the case that if a settled legal test
- 6 says you get a benefit if you prove this
- 7 predicate, a determination that you haven't
- 8 proved the predicate means you don't get the
- 9 benefit.
- 10 But it wouldn't be a determination of
- 11 national scope or effect.
- 12 JUSTICE BARRETT: Thank you.
- 13 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 14 Jackson?
- 15 JUSTICE JACKSON: So I understand the
- 16 general concern about simplicity, but it appears
- that Congress did not share that concern with
- 18 respect to this statute because it's very
- 19 complicated.
- 20 And I'm trying to understand your
- 21 interpretation of the difference between
- 22 nationally applicable and a determination of
- 23 nationwide scope and effect. Are those the same
- or different in your view? Do they rise and
- 25 fall together? Could we ever have one without

1 the other? 2 MR. WAXMAN: They are the same in this 3 case and will perhaps often be the same, but they -- they don't inexorably -- one doesn't 4 inexorably require the other. And I'll give you 5 6 an example each way. 7 A regulation or guidance that is issued by EPA is not a prong 3 issue. It is 8 9 nationally applicable. It is not locally or regionally applicable. 10 11 Likewise, SIP denials, that is state 12 implementation plan denials, are not only specifically listed under the second prong but 13 14 courts have recognized -- and Justice Gorsuch 15 underscored with his questions today -- they are 16 the paradigmatic local or regionally applicable 17 determination because it just asks the question: 18 Did this state plan satisfy its, the state's, 19 requirements under the national air quality --20 national ambient air quality standards? 21 But the courts have recognized 2.2 repeatedly that if in the course of denying or 23 granting a SIP application, EPA adopts a new 24 rule, EPA says, well, there's a new NAAQ 25 requirement for ozone and you haven't met it,

1 that -- those cases all go to the D.C. Circuit. 2 And that's the example that General Counsel 3 Frick was addressing in his comments in 1977. 4 JUSTICE JACKSON: Thank you. MR. WAXMAN: Thank you, Your Honor. 5 6 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, 7 counsel. 8 Mr. Huston. 9 ORAL ARGUMENT OF MICHAEL R. HUSTON ON BEHALF OF RESPONDENTS CALUMET SHREVEPORT 10 11 REFINING, L.L.C., ET AL. 12 MR. HUSTON: Mr. Chief Justice, and 13 may it please the Court: 14 The Clean Air Act's venue provision 15 requires a court to look to the text of the 16 chapter to determine whether an EPA action is 17 nationally applicable or is instead locally or 18 regionally applicable and what that action was 19 based on. 20 When EPA, for example, uses a 21 rule-making to set requirements for all 22 regulated parties wherever they're located 23 throughout the nation, that's a nationally

applicable action. But the relevant text of the

chapter here, Section 7545(o)(9), makes it clear

24

- 1 that EPA's actions on hardship petitions must be
- 2 locally applicable. You can find that text on
- 3 page 23a of your our red brief.
- 4 Unlike the pre-2011 regime where all
- 5 small refineries throughout the nation were
- 6 entitled to an exemption, the text now requires
- 7 each individual refinery to make its own case
- 8 for hardship relief. Quote, "the refinery must
- 9 demonstrate that it would be subject to a
- 10 disproportionate economic hardship."
- 11 And the text then reinforces the
- 12 requirement of individualized action by keying
- 13 EPA's deadline to act to the submission of each
- 14 individual petition. These actions were locally
- applicable because each EPA action on a hardship
- 16 petition affected only one refinery located in
- 17 one place.
- 18 And the actions were required by the
- text to be based on each refinery's economic
- 20 circumstances, not any determination affecting
- 21 the entire nation. EPA moved past theory and
- 22 produced final agency action only by analyzing
- these six small refineries' individualized
- 24 evidence of their disproportionate economic
- 25 hardship.

1	Now, to be sure, we think EPA's
2	analysis of those economic factors was wrong on
3	the merits. But the important point for venue
4	purposes is this: Analyzing the evidence of
5	local economic conditions facing small
6	refineries in San Antonio, Texas and Shreveport,
7	Louisiana is a task that Congress assigned to
8	the Fifth Circuit, not the D.C. Circuit.
9	I welcome the Court's questions.
10	JUSTICE THOMAS: But the argument
11	would be: If EPA develops a new rule and
12	applies it to the refineries, that that that
13	is a nationwide rule. That at least that's
14	how I understand their argument.
15	MR. HUSTON: Justice Thomas, I think
16	EPA is very clear in this case. You can see
17	this at Pet. App. 330 in the denial decisions.
18	They say: This is not a rule-making.
19	If EPA wanted to promulgate a new
20	analytical framework and centralize review of
21	that framework in the D.C. Circuit
22	JUSTICE THOMAS: Well, let's say a new
23	framework for determining whether or not the
24	exemption applies to the small refineries.
25	MR. HUSTON: Yes, understood. And I

- 1 think what I'm saying is if EPA wanted to set
- 2 that new framework for adjudicating small
- 3 refinery hardship additions, it could use a
- 4 rule-making to do so.
- 5 EPA consciously chose not to use its
- 6 rule-making authority here. It expressly
- 7 invoked only its adjudication authority. It did
- 8 so for a very particular reason.
- 9 This is April and June of 2022. EPA
- is adjudicating hardship petitions from 2018,
- 11 '19, and '20. They're retroactively denying
- 12 petitions submitted three years earlier. It
- 13 would have been illegal under Black Letter
- 14 administrative law for EPA to put out a new rule
- that retroactively denied old hardship
- 16 petitions.
- 17 But if they want to do that --
- JUSTICE THOMAS: Well, they could --
- 19 EPA, however, could make a determination that's
- 20 national in scope and effect. Why -- how is
- 21 that different?
- 22 MR. HUSTON: So EPA -- I -- I think
- 23 they could theoretic -- they could make a rule
- 24 that would say: This is how we interpret the
- 25 statute. This is how we're going -- what we

- 1 want future small refineries to demonstrate when
- 2 they are petitioning for hardship relief.
- 3 And if they use their rule-making
- 4 authority, I think that's going to be a
- 5 nationally applicable action. But that was not
- 6 the final actions here. EPA said these are
- 7 adjudications of these hardship petitions.
- 8 And the -- the right text -- I think
- 9 the simple way to answer the third prong, the
- 10 third sentence -- there's been a lot of, you
- 11 know, talk today about how can we simplify this.
- 12 Here is the easy answer to how you determine
- what an action was based on: You look at what
- 14 the text of the chapter required it to be based
- 15 on.
- And here, the text tells you when EPA
- 17 produces this kind of final action, the denial
- of a hardship petition, that denial has to be
- 19 based on a conclusion about whether the refinery
- 20 is experiencing disproportionate economic
- 21 hardship.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Counsel, give me
- 23 meaning to 3. 3 basically says that something
- that would otherwise be looked at as locally or
- 25 regularly -- or regionally applicable, it says,

- 1 notwithstanding that, that there are -- that
- 2 there are some -- "if the action is based on,"
- 3 seems to me that you have to give that a
- 4 difference.
- 5 Tell me, outside of an announcement of
- 6 a regulation or a new rule, some action that EPA
- 7 could take that's local on its face, regional on
- 8 its face, one application, but could still fit
- 9 the third exception.
- 10 MR. HUSTON: So if I might just -- I
- 11 want to answer your question directly,
- 12 Justice -- Justice Sotomayor, but before doing
- so I just want to observe that neither the
- 14 government -- neither the government nor we have
- 15 been able to locate any Clean Air Act case
- 16 that -- where venue has been decided solely on
- 17 the third prong.
- 18 So I think this has always been
- 19 intended to be --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Well, the -- yes,
- 21 but that doesn't answer the question.
- MR. HUSTON: Understood.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Congress had in
- 24 mind something. When I try to figure out what
- 25 Congress has in mind, I look at the -- my --

- 1 some of my colleagues don't, but I look at the
- 2 legislative history to tell me what the examples
- 3 were that they were dealing with.
- 4 MR. HUSTON: Sure.
- 5 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: And they were
- 6 dealing with something very similar to this.
- 7 And then they created the third sentence. So
- 8 you give me another reason for the third
- 9 exception.
- 10 MR. HUSTON: Justice Sotomayor, so
- 11 I'm happy -- let's talk directly about what
- 12 Congress had in mind. As the government --
- 13 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: No. Tell me how
- 14 you would read it to give it meaning.
- 15 MR. HUSTON: Sure. I think in a
- 16 circumstance for a statutory provision like the
- one that then EPA General Counsel Frick brought
- 18 to Congress and said this is why we need the
- 19 third sentence, that was an instance in which
- 20 the statute authorized EPA to grant individual
- 21 extensions to individual states, but that was
- 22 based on a "determination" about the technology
- 23 that was available throughout the nation.
- 24 So --
- JUSTICE JACKSON: Why isn't that

- indistinguishable from this?
- 2 MR. HUSTON: Because, Justice
- 3 Jackson --
- 4 JUSTICE JACKSON: I mean, the
- 5 determination here was based on a national
- 6 survey economic understanding of how these
- 7 markets work.
- 8 MR. HUSTON: Justice Jackson, the EPA
- 9 produced an economic hypothesis. That's what
- 10 RIN cost passthrough was. According to --
- 11 JUSTICE JACKSON: I understand. But
- 12 it was nationwide in scope. It seems to me to
- be exactly the same thing that you just read, in
- terms of the examples that were before Congress
- as to the reason why the third sentence was
- 16 needed.
- 17 So I appreciate your argument about
- 18 the first sentence, the first statement. It
- 19 seems quintessentially local. They're making
- 20 individualized hardship determinations. But in
- 21 making them in this context, when they are doing
- 22 the localized analysis, they are applying an
- 23 evaluation or an assessment that is a nationwide
- economic analysis.
- 25 MR. HUSTON: But that was not the

- 1 basis for their determination at the end of the
- 2 day. Their determination was that this
- 3 refinery, each of them individually, you and you
- 4 and you and you --
- 5 JUSTICE JACKSON: Right. But then I'm
- 6 back to Justice Sotomayor's question. If you're
- 7 defining "determination" as just the answer, do
- 8 you get it, then you're never going to have a
- 9 situation in which you have a localized
- 10 assessment that has a nationwide scope or
- 11 effect, because you've now eliminated the idea
- 12 that the reasons being nation -- nationwide
- 13 count.
- 14 You say it can't be nationwide if the
- answer -- the determination is yes, you get it;
- 16 no, you don't. And that's going to happen in
- 17 every one of these cases.
- 18 MR. HUSTON: No, Justice -- Justice
- 19 Jackson, I think it's important to separate what
- is the action and what determination is it based
- 21 on.
- 22 Here, I -- I think the -- I've taken
- 23 my friends to agree, the relevant action is the
- 24 denial of the hardship petition that was
- 25 submitted by the Calumet Shreveport refinery for

1 itself. What was that action based on? 2 Here, the statutory text tells you. It was based on EPA's conclusion that the 3 Calumet Shreveport refinery is not experiencing 4 disproportionate economic hardship. 5 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Wouldn't that 6 7 always be the case -- and this is not meant as a hostile question, but won't that always be the 8 case when a local or regional action is taken 9 10 affecting the local or regional entities, even 11 though there's a nationwide rule it's applying? 12 In other words, it's always going to 13 be applying a nationwide rule or regulation, as 14 Justice Gorsuch said, to something local. And 15 you're saying when it's being applied, it's no 16 longer based on the -- the nationwide 17 determination. I think that's what you're 18 saying. 19 So it will really have no effect. maybe that's the answer. And I -- I'm not sure 20 you should shy away. And you've said it's never 21 2.2 been applied. Maybe the answer is it's -- it's, 23 you know, inconsistent on its face and it just 24 really has no impact. Is that where we end up?

MR. HUSTON: I think it was --

1 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: And I'm not saying 2 that's where we shouldn't end up, just to be 3 clear. 4 MR. HUSTON: Justice Kavanaugh, I 5 think it was always intended to be a narrow exception to the rule for locally applicable 6 7 actions, which is they're meant to go to the regional circuits and get review there. 8 9 There have not been hardly any -- we 10 can't find a single example where a court has 11 adjudicated a Clean Air Act venue dispute and 12 said: This case is locally applicable, but it 13 goes to the D.C. Circuit because of the third 14 sentence. 15 I'm not trying to tell you it's 16 impossible that there could be. And I think 17 that the sentence --JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: But you can't 18 19 articulate a good example. 20 MR. HUSTON: So --21 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Which maybe it is 22 impossible. 23 MR. HUSTON: So I will give you --24 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Which is fine. 25 MR. HUSTON: I will give you one more

- 1 that we have thought of that I think comes
- 2 closer to this and that a court has -- has
- 3 suggested would get there, which is there was
- 4 something called the alternative compliance
- 5 demonstration approach. It's discussed in these
- 6 papers.
- 7 It was issued along the -- at the same
- 8 time as the April and June 2022 denials. And
- 9 what EPA said is although we're denying these
- 10 2018 hardship petitions, that was so long ago
- 11 that to attempt to ask those refineries to
- 12 retire RINs now would really have a
- destabilizing effect on the RIN market and the
- 14 RIN bank.
- 15 And on that basis, they created an
- 16 alternative path to compliance for those
- 17 refineries. That, to me, looks closer to, like,
- 18 a locally applicable determination. They're
- 19 telling each refinery what they want them to do,
- 20 but it's based on a conclusion about the RIN
- 21 bank overall.
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Or --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: But why isn't this
- 24 case the example here? I mean, you have these
- 25 individual denials. It is you and you and you

- and you, but it turns out that all these you and
- 2 you and you and you's are going to come out the
- 3 exact same way.
- 4 And the reason that they're going to
- 5 come out the exact same way is that
- 6 notwithstanding all the differences among the
- 7 you, you, you, and you's, that there are local
- 8 circumstances, there are local conditions,
- 9 notwithstanding all of those, EPA has reached
- 10 two conclusions that are going to drive the
- analysis in every case, or pretty much every
- 12 case.
- 13 And in that circumstance, that seems
- 14 like a perfect case for a single court to
- 15 adjudicate the question.
- 16 MR. HUSTON: Justice Kagan, EPA did
- 17 not make a determination that drove the
- 18 analysis. EPA said it "had an economic theory
- for how we expect small refineries' operations"
- 20 --
- 21 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, here's a
- 22 determination. I mean, it's a statutory
- 23 determination that hardship has to stem from the
- 24 Renewable Fuel Program. And it's an economic
- determination that everybody can recover their

- 1 RIN costs. And that's a totally, like, normal
- 2 understanding of what the determination -- a
- 3 determination means.
- 4 So you have a statutory determination.
- 5 You have an economic determination. And those
- 6 determinations, taken together, are going to
- 7 produce the exact same outcome in every case, no
- 8 matter what the individual local situations and
- 9 circumstances are.
- 10 MR. HUSTON: So, Justice Kagan, I
- 11 would love an opportunity to talk about both of
- 12 EPA's purported determinations, but let me go
- 13 right to the very end of your question. It is
- 14 not the case, EPA emphatically denied in the
- 15 lower courts and they deny here, that it was
- 16 true that those determinations, those -- their
- 17 statutory interpretation and their economic
- 18 theory were sufficient to decide the hard --
- 19 hard -- the hardship petitions.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, they gave you an
- 21 opportunity. They gave the -- all the different
- 22 "you's" an opportunity to rebut what they said.
- 23 It's very nice that they gave you that. Nobody
- 24 was able to come up with anything to rebut what
- 25 they said. Maybe in some crazy circumstance

- 1 there could have been a rebuttal.
- 2 But what you basically know about what
- 3 EPA has done here is that it's going to apply
- 4 the same way in Ohio and New York and Alabama.
- 5 And so in that circumstance, you don't want the
- 6 Sixth Circuit and the Second Circuit and the
- 7 Eleventh Circuit to be all deciding the same
- 8 question. You want one court to be deciding the
- 9 question as to whether the EPA conclusions are
- 10 correct.
- 11 MR. HUSTON: Your Honor, I would urge
- 12 the Court to take a look at the start of page
- 13 277 in the Joint Appendix, really moving for the
- 14 next 50 pages. That's 50 pages of analysis that
- 15 EPA produced just for the six refineries that
- are before you today, to say nothing of the
- many, many more refineries that were in this
- 18 case.
- 19 The -- the opportunity to rebut the
- 20 presumption was not just like some pro forma
- 21 thing that didn't actually mean anything.
- 22 There's pages and pages and pages -- hundreds of
- 23 --
- 24 JUSTICE KAGAN: Was any of that --
- 25 those pages, were they ever successful --

1	MR. HUSTON: They
2	JUSTICE KAGAN: in rebutting the
3	presumption?
4	MR. HUSTON: No. EPA did EPA
5	concluded that it after looking at every
6	individual refinery's evidence, that it believed
7	that these refineries were, in fact, passing
8	their RIN costs
9	JUSTICE KAGAN: I think EPA gave you
10	every reason to think that at the start, that
11	this was going to be a super-high bar to
12	rebutting the presumption, that once EPA made
13	this statutory conclusion and this economic
14	conclusion, the game was pretty well done.
15	And so who is it that we should want
16	to address those conclusions that is doing a
17	a you know, if not all the work, almost all
18	the work?
19	MR. HUSTON: Justice Kagan, again, I
20	just I really respectfully disagree with the
21	your your characterization of the fact
22	that there was not meaningful study by EPA of
23	the individual economic evidence submitted by
24	the refineries.
25	And I would just say take EPA at their

- 1 word on this point. They say, on the face of
- 2 the actions, we completed a thorough evaluation
- 3 of the data and information provided in the SRE
- 4 petitions. They go on and on and on. And,
- 5 again, there's hundreds of pages cumulatively of
- 6 analysis where EPA looks at the
- 7 refinery-specific factors, the San Antonio
- 8 refinery and how small it is and the lots that
- 9 it can buy RINs, the RIN contracts that Placid
- 10 has and, you know, the situation facing Calumet
- 11 Shreveport with its competition in the Gulf
- 12 Coast.
- 13 EPA walks through each of this and
- they say here's why that doesn't persuade me and
- this doesn't persuade me and the like. We -- we
- 16 certainly disagree with them, and on the merits
- 17 of that --
- 18 JUSTICE KAGAN: You know what they
- 19 said? They said this doesn't persuade me.
- 20 Because they had already decided. Subject to
- 21 somebody coming up with something super-unusual
- 22 that they hadn't thought about, they had already
- 23 decided. And that decision was a uniform one
- 24 that stretched from one end of this country to
- 25 the other.

1 MR. HUSTON: Your Honor, I think what 2 they very clearly had was a economic 3 presumption. They said we've got a presumption; we're giving you an opportunity to rebut it. 4 Why are we doing that? Because we have to. 5 6 law compels us to give you this opportunity. 7 And we took advantage of it. We submitted voluminous evidence. 8 9 JUSTICE KAGAN: Thank you. 10 MR. HUSTON: EPA says that it studied 11 that evidence and --12 JUSTICE BARRETT: Counsel --13 MR. HUSTON: -- not that it had to be the basis of this. 14 15 JUSTICE ALITO: I mean, somebody --16 JUSTICE BARRETT: -- can I ask you a 17 question? We've had a lot of talk about 18 important about how it's important for venue 19 rules to be clear. And N given what Justice 20 Kagan just said, you know, EPA made very clear 21 this was going to be apply nationwide and it was 2.2 fundamentally shifting the way that it treated small refineries. 23 Could you have determined or why 24

couldn't you have determined at the outset of

- 1 the suit, that the D.C. Circuit was the right
- 2 venue? Why wouldn't there be clarity when you
- 3 have that kind of national determination?
- 4 MR. HUSTON: Well, Your Honor, I mean,
- 5 I suppose the clearest possible rule would just
- 6 be that whatever EPA says is the right venue is
- 7 the right venue. But I don't think that that's
- 8 the venue rule that this statute requires.
- 9 JUSTICE BARRETT: I agree with you. I
- 10 agree with you. But given the existence of this
- 11 determination on the economic theory and the
- 12 statutory interpretation -- and -- and maybe the
- answer is, you know, it wouldn't have been clear
- to us, but, I mean, given the importance of the
- 15 clarity of venue rules, I just want to
- 16 understand why it wouldn't have been clear to
- 17 you.
- 18 MR. HUSTON: I think --
- 19 JUSTICE BARRETT: Maybe it would have
- and you just didn't want to be in the D.C.
- 21 Circuit.
- MR. HUSTON: I think it -- it wouldn't
- 23 have been clear because if you are Ergon
- 24 Refining, you're a refinery, one of the
- 25 Respondents before you located in Vicksburg,

- 1 Mississippi, and your argument is we produce
- 2 100 percent diesel fuel, and it's because we
- 3 only produce diesel that we are economically
- 4 burdened, that we face disproportionate economic
- 5 hardship from the RFS, that's an argument that
- 6 you would naturally think when -- when EPA
- 7 rejected my evidence, when EPA said to Ergon
- 8 that doesn't persuade it, Ergon, I think quite
- 9 rationally, said we want the Fifth Circuit, our
- 10 home circuit, to have an opportunity to address
- 11 --
- 12 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Answer the
- 13 question.
- MR. HUSTON: -- the circumstances in
- 15 our market.
- 16 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: They refused
- 17 because the EPA is saying to you we have a
- 18 national rule. It doesn't matter whether you're
- 19 an Ergon. The national rule is we presume you
- 20 can. We presume that you can pass the cost on,
- 21 and we presume that you have to show us hardship
- 22 that doesn't have to do with your diesel fuel --
- fuel but has only to do with relying on this reg
- 24 -- or being forced by this regulation to buy the
- 25 credits you need to.

1 MR. HUSTON: Your Honor, EPA said we 2 have an economic hypothesis that when we look at 3 your evidence related to your diesel disparity, related if you're Calumet Shreveport, the 4 intense competition --5 6 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Let's go back to 7 Justice Barrett's question, which is you knew that they were basing it on two national 8 9 presumptions. Why doesn't that tell you where 10 to go? 11 MR. HUSTON: Because at the -- we 12 looked to the text of the statute, which said 13 whether --14 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: The text tells you 15 the EPA has some form of discretion or ability -- the EPA has the ability to make a 16 17 determination that this has a national effect. 18 So you've got a determination that says the EPA 19 believes this has a national effect, one prong of the requirement, and the second is we're 20 basing it on national presumptions. 21 2.2 MR. HUSTON: Your Honor --23 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So what's hard about understanding you go to D.C.? 24 25 MR. HUSTON: What's hard about it is

1 that you're taking refineries that want the opportunity to have their local economic 2 evidence that is their case --3 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: You want --4 MR. HUSTON: -- for hardship relief. 5 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: That -- that's --6 7 you're begging the question. I know the EPA wants national. The question is what Congress 8 wanted, not what you wanted or the EPA wanted. 9 10 The question is what Congress wanted. And I 11 kept asking you at the beginning, given the way 12 they structured this third exemption -- this 13 third category, they are saying that some local 14 actions have to go to the D.C. Circuit. 15 MR. HUSTON: Yes, there is a --16 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So why isn't the answer that when the EPA makes a determination 17 and says we're basing it on two national 18 19 presumptions, that clear enough? 20 MR. HUSTON: Two -- two points about that, Your Honor. The first is that it -- it 21 2.2 does not suffice, as I think even the government 23 agrees, for EPA to just make and find -- make a

determination of nationwide scope or effect.

finding that an action is based on a

24

- 1 The action has to actually be based on
- 2 a determination of nationwide scope or effect.
- 3 That's written directly into the text of Section
- 4 7607.
- 5 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Those are the
- 6 presumptions. Okay.
- 7 MR. HUSTON: That is --
- 8 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But what is --
- 9 MR. HUSTON: That is their
- 10 presumption --
- JUSTICE JACKSON: What do you make of
- 12 that, the fact that Congress specifically says
- that the administrator has to make that finding?
- I mean, doesn't that tell us that Congress
- 15 really cared about what the agency thought in
- 16 this way?
- 17 MR. HUSTON: I don't think so, Justice
- 18 Jackson. What I take that to mean is that EPA
- 19 has the opportunity to maintain locally
- 20 applicable actions in the D.C. Circuit.
- 21 I think the Congress probably foresaw
- 22 that you get -- once you start talking about
- what was the basis of the action, was it core or
- 24 not, is it, according to my friend, new but
- 25 still insufficiently settled, it gets pretty

- 1 metaphysical pretty quickly to decide what the
- 2 basis was of an EPA action.
- I think what Congress was thinking
- 4 was: In any EPA action, there's going to be a
- 5 description by the agency of the interpretation
- of its statutory authority, the basic framework
- 7 through which it filters the individual facts.
- 8 And I think Congress wanted to ensure that the
- 9 agency has some control to avoid -- to maintain
- 10 locally applicable actions in their region --
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: That's why I think
- 12 the --
- MR. HUSTON: -- where they are
- 14 supposed to be.
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: That's why I think
- 16 the deference question is really important. And
- 17 Mr. Stewart said that the agency -- and Justice
- 18 Sotomayor is just following up on this -- the
- 19 agency should get some deference.
- 20 Should they get any deference, in your
- 21 view? Or how does that work?
- MR. HUSTON: So recall that the text
- 23 has two requirements in order for the third
- sentence to be activated. First, the action
- 25 must be based on a determination of nationwide

- 1 scope or effect, and if in taking such action
- 2 the administrator finds and publishes that such
- 3 action --
- 4 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: So if it's found
- 5 and published --
- 6 MR. HUSTON: That's --
- 7 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: -- does the agency
- 8 get deference, some deference on the question of
- 9 whether it is a determination of nationwide
- 10 scope or effect?
- 11 MR. HUSTON: So I think with respect
- to the agency's making of that finding, I think
- that's textually committed to the agency. So I
- don't think it's generally subject to -- to --
- 15 to judicial review.
- You can't say the agency didn't
- 17 actually make this finding. But on the --
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Yeah. On -- on
- 19 the key part --
- MR. HUSTON: Yeah, the legal question.
- 21 Right. Right.
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: You're -- you're
- 23 talking about the part that's not key. Talk
- 24 about the key part, which is --
- MR. HUSTON: No. No deference at all.

1	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: No deference at
2	all?
3	MR. HUSTON: Absolutely not. It's a
4	legal question for the Court. That set it out
5	as a separate legal requirement. It that
6	sentence, that first I should that first
7	clause
8	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: But if that
9	standard if we have a set definition of what
10	what's a determination, ordinary administrative
11	law would say when you apply that set standard
12	to a given set of facts, that that gets some
13	deference.
14	MR. HUSTON: But not in a situation,
15	Your Honor, I think where Congress has actually
16	required the legal finding excuse me the
17	legal issue to be resolved, and then said, in
18	addition, the agency has to make a finding with
19	respect to that.
20	That two
21	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: So you're saying
22	the ordinary deference that it would get is
23	taken away by the second sentence or the
24	second part of the sentence that requires the
25	publication and finding?

1 MR. HUSTON: That's correct. I think 2 the -- the -- the structure of --3 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: That's intriguing. MR. HUSTON: -- the sentence only 4 makes sense -- that first clause only makes 5 sense if that's a legal determination for the 6 7 court. In other words, if both the court and the agency have to agree that the action is 8 9 based on a determination of nationwide scope or effect. 10 11 Now, that's going to make the third 12 sentence --13 JUSTICE ALITO: When a venue --14 MR. HUSTON: -- smaller --15 JUSTICE ALITO: -- when a venue issue 16 arises, it arises because both parties to the 17 dispute think they would be better off in a 18 particular forum. 19 And isn't it very odd to say that one -- that the court, in deciding whether 20 there's venue in one place or the other, should 21 2.2 defer to the view of one of these -- one of 23 these parties who are contesting the right to 24 get home court advantage? 25 MR. HUSTON: I certainly agree with

- 1 that, Justice Alito. And I -- I think just to
- 2 put a sharper point on it, if, in fact, it were
- 3 the case that Congress wanted there to be any
- 4 deference to EPA's venue determination, it could
- 5 have just written the third sentence to say:
- 6 The action goes to the D.C. Circuit if EPA finds
- 7 and publishes that it's based on a determination
- 8 of nationwide scope or effect.
- 9 JUSTICE ALITO: But suppose the EPA's
- 10 economic theory is that: We think that there
- 11 will almost always be -- I mean, we think that
- 12 the small refineries are always going to -- as
- far as we're aware, they're always going to be
- able to pass through these costs, but, you know,
- we're -- we can't say that it's inconceivable
- 16 that some small refinery could come up with some
- 17 reason that we haven't been able to think of why
- 18 they wouldn't be able to do it.
- 19 You know, it's like saying we really
- 20 think that -- that no Martian has ever landed
- 21 here, but, you know, we're not going to say
- 22 we're going to close our minds to the
- 23 possibility that somebody could prove it.
- 24 If that's the situation, then what
- would your answer be?

- 1 MR. HUSTON: I -- I still think I'm
- 2 going to have to end up with the same answer,
- 3 which is that even in that situation, EPA
- 4 compel -- excuse me -- the statutory text of the
- 5 chapter compels EPA to perform an examination of
- 6 whether each petitioning small refinery does or
- 7 does not experience disproportionate economic
- 8 hardship.
- 9 But, notably, the situation that you
- 10 describe, Your Honor, is very different from how
- 11 EPA acted here.
- 12 And, again, I just think take EPA at
- 13 their word. EPA said: We have an economic
- theory for how we expect small refineries'
- 15 operations to be affected. We then analyzed the
- 16 most current data available to determine whether
- 17 finished fuels markets move in the way that
- 18 economic theory predicts.
- 19 JUSTICE GORSUCH: So, for example,
- 20 counsel, if -- if EPA had put its economic
- 21 theory in a rule and promulgated that rule, the
- 22 challenge to that would have to be in the D.C.
- 23 Circuit.
- MR. HUSTON: Almost certainly, yes,
- 25 Justice Gorsuch.

1 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Yeah. And then its 2 application in later licensing applications, you would be kind of foreclosed on that, but you 3 might have a local challenge otherwise? 4 MR. HUSTON: Yes, I think that's 5 6 basically right. I think that's how generally 7 administrative law works. An agency --JUSTICE GORSUCH: That's how I 8 remembered it. 9 10 MR. HUSTON: An agency uses its 11 rule-making authority to pronounce how it 12 understands the statutory framework, how its -and what its adjudicative --13 14 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: The problem is --15 JUSTICE GORSUCH: That rule would be 16 maybe locally applicable, but it would be 17 nationwide effect. And -- and so the -- the EPA 18 could sign off on that, and off to the D.C. 19 Circuit. 20 MR. HUSTON: Yes, Your Honor, but it would be an innovation of the agency's 21 22 rule-making authority. 23 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But the problem is that that's what the third exception says. 24 25 says that the -- the court is giving the -- the

- 1 EPA adjudicatory authority to find -- to -- to
- 2 find and publish that such an action is based on
- 3 a determination of nationwide scope and effect.
- 4 So Justice Gorsuch is talking about
- 5 what the norm is, but they needn't have created
- 6 the exemption 3 at all. They could have just
- 7 stayed to 1 and 2.
- 8 MR. HUSTON: Your Honor, I think that
- 9 the purpose of the exception, as we discussed
- 10 earlier, is for a certain kind of unusual Clean
- 11 Air Act provision where the text of the chapter
- 12 directs EPA to make a determination about the
- 13 whole country.
- But that's not how this provision of
- 15 the chapter works.
- 16 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: That's what it has
- 17 done.
- 18 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Or it could have a
- 19 rule, perhaps, that wouldn't be nationwide --
- 20 nationally applicable, but would be regionally
- 21 applicable. And perhaps that might wind up --
- that rule might be reviewed in the D.C. Circuit,
- or it applies to an industry or whatever.
- MR. HUSTON: It could -- it --
- certainly if it applies to the whole industry,

- 1 it says this is how we're going to regulate
- 2 stationery sources or power plants, all --
- 3 wherever they are located throughout the
- 4 nation --
- 5 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Even if it isn't all
- 6 across the nation. It doesn't have to be the
- 7 whole nation.
- 8 MR. HUSTON: That's -- of course.
- 9 That's exactly right. If there is no Rhode --
- there's no refineries in Rhode Island, a rule
- 11 that regulates all refineries is still clearly
- 12 nationally applicable.
- 13 But consider the sort of absurd
- 14 textual consequence of my friend's position.
- 15 The Kansas City Metropolitan Air Quality Control
- 16 Region, when EPA promulgates a regional air
- 17 quality action for that region, my friends say,
- well, that's actually a nationally applicable
- 19 action, it's not a regionally applicable action,
- 20 because it just happens to touch more than one
- 21 state and more than one circuit.
- I think that's just brutally hard to
- 23 square with the ordinary meanings of the term
- 24 "nationally" and "regionally."
- To come back to the third sentence, I

- 1 think the easiest way to understand that third
- 2 sentence is, Number 1, to just keep in mind that
- 3 the instructions that the court gives about it
- 4 need to maintain it as a narrow exception,
- 5 because it's supposed to be an exception to the
- 6 general rule for locally applicable actions.
- 7 And then I think the easiest way to
- 8 cut through the metaphysical questions about
- 9 what was involved in the process of every EPA
- 10 action that it might take is to simply ask:
- 11 When you're looking at the text of the
- 12 chapter -- when you're looking for what was this
- 13 final action under this chapter based on, go
- 14 consult the text of the chapter and see what it
- 15 directed EPA to base that action on.
- And here, that leads a very -- that
- 17 leads to a very simple answer. Because Congress
- 18 directed EPA, when it takes this kind of action,
- 19 to base that action on its consideration of a
- 20 refinery's local economic circumstances.
- 21 And that's what this refinery --
- that's what EPA did, according to the agency's
- 23 own description.
- 24 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
- 25 counsel.

1	Justice Thomas?
2	Justice Alito?
3	Justice Sotomayor?
4	Justice Kavanaugh?
5	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: On that last
6	point, which I think is a good point for you, it
7	does I think most cases are going to end up
8	that way. And so the the third sentence ends
9	up being a null set, or close to a null set, in
LO	your view.
L1	And that's fine if that's the case. I
L2	just want is that how you see it playing out?
L3	It's been essentially a null set historically.
L4	MR. HUSTON: It has, Your it has,
L5	Your Honor. And I would really urge the Court
L6	not to, you know to breathe enormous life
L7	into this third sentence, because I think to do
L8	so would very significantly disrupt the balance
L9	that has prevailed in the lower courts.
20	Now, obviously we're here because the
21	lower courts can benefit from some guidance
22	about the application of this venue provision,
23	but it is it has absolutely been the case
24	that since 1977 that this third sentence has
25	heen extraordinarily narrow

1	The government hasn't been able to
2	come up with any case. We haven't identified
3	one. And and, you know, we've looked. It's
4	not for lack of trying. It's hard to come up
5	with something that fits this. I think that's
6	okay.
7	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: And and just
8	for last question. Just to so I say it
9	again, it's because when a local or regional
LO	action is based on a determination of nationwide
L1	scope or effect, the application of that to the
L2	particular local or regional entity will mean
L3	it's it's being applied it's not based
L4	solely on the nationwide scope determination
L5	of nationwide scope or effect? Is that right?
L6	MR. HUSTON: I I'm not certain I
L7	understand the question, Justice Kavanaugh.
L8	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Well, any
L9	you're saying it can't happen that it's based
20	solely on the determination of nationwide scope
21	or effect because it's being applied to the
22	particular entity, right?
23	MR. HUSTON: Yes.
24	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Okay.
25	MR. HUSTON: Yes. I think that's

- 1 right. It is -- it has to be -- in order to
- 2 adjudicate --
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: In other words, to
- 4 Justice Gorsuch, it's not like a rule-making --
- 5 MR. HUSTON: Yes.
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: -- being applied;
- 7 it's an adjudication.
- 8 MR. HUSTON: Correct. In an
- 9 adjudicatory posture, it is almost always going
- 10 to be the case that the action, a locally
- 11 applicable action, will be based on the local
- 12 facts and circumstances of the individual
- 13 petitioner.
- 14 That actually makes perfect sense
- because, remember, the enumerated sections of
- 16 Section 7607 that Congress assigned as locally
- applicable, they all have that form. They're
- 18 all adjudications of local factors. They're not
- 19 rule-makings unlike the enumerated nationally
- 20 applicable actions.
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Exactly. Okay.
- 22 Thank you.
- 23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 24 Barrett?
- 25 Justice Jackson?

1 JUSTICE JACKSON: But, of course, the 2 rule -- the -- the statute could have said 3 something about rule-making versus adjudication. I mean, I -- I appreciate the distinction that 4 you're making turning a determination of 5 6 nationwide soap -- scope or effect into 7 something akin to a rule-making, but that's not 8 what it says. MR. HUSTON: I'm not trying to say, 9 10 Justice Jackson, that it can only be a 11 rule-making. What I -- what I am saying, 12 though, is when you look at the structure of the 13 overall venue provision, Congress said here are 14 some things that we are designating as national. 15 Here are some things that we are designating as 16 local. 17 The national things, they all pretty 18 much are rule-makings or they look a lot like 19 rule-makings. The locally designated things 20 that Congress assigned all are either -- are individualized adjudications. I think that's a 21 2.2 strong clue about how Congress expected this 23 provision to work. JUSTICE JACKSON: Right. 24 And then

you're reading the exception to say that if you

- 1 are then applying some sort of standard to the
- 2 individual case in the context of an
- 3 adjudication, then it's being based on the facts
- 4 of that case and can never really be considered
- 5 to be based on a determination of nationwide
- 6 scope or effect?
- 7 MR. HUSTON: Well, it -- the third
- 8 sentence cannot be triggered any time EPA is
- 9 basing its individual action on a -- a
- 10 nationwide standard.
- 11 JUSTICE JACKSON: Oh, I understand.
- 12 But you -- you -- you flip all the way to the
- other side. You're saying it's never triggered
- 14 because you are just applying it to the facts of
- 15 the particular case.
- MR. HUSTON: It's -- I'm saying it's
- 17 very rarely triggered. That's why it's an
- 18 exception to the general rule.
- 19 JUSTICE JACKSON: I understand.
- 20 MR. HUSTON: And -- and what --
- JUSTICE JACKSON: Thank you.
- 22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
- 23 counsel.
- 24 Rebuttal, Mr. Stewart?

1	REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF MALCOLM L. STEWART
2	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER
3	MR. STEWART: Thank you, Mr. Chief
4	Justice.
5	First, Mr. Huston said that we haven't
6	found a case in which a court of appeals has
7	upheld an EPA prong 3 finding. But I think
8	there are a fair number of cases in the D.C.
9	Circuit in which you have a pattern like this:
10	EPA announces a new framework, it applies the
11	framework to a number of different states or
12	regulated entities, says we regard this as
13	nationally applicable, says we find also that
14	it's based on a determination of nationwide
15	scope or effect, and parties sue in the D.C.
16	Circuit and because there's no dispute about
17	venue, the D.C. Circuit decides the case on the
18	merits without issuing an opinion that addresses
19	the question. I think that's the explanation
20	for why you don't have published decisions that
21	endorse our view of prong 3.
22	I think it's equally true to say that
23	Mr. Huston hasn't identified a case in which EPA
24	has made a prong 3 finding and a court of
25	appeals has rejected it. So I think that

- 1 adopting his rule would significantly change
- 2 prevailing D.C. Circuit practice even though it
- 3 wouldn't overturn any D.C. Circuit published
- 4 opinions.
- 5 The next thing I'd say is I think
- 6 there's an analogy here between prongs 1 and 3
- 7 and the types of cases this Court decides that
- 8 is sometimes this Court decides cases that
- 9 present facial challenges to an Act of Congress
- or a challenge to the validity of a nationwide
- 11 executive branch program, and the bottom line
- 12 disposition of the case will have national
- 13 impacts. But there are also cases that this
- 14 Court reviews that present purely local
- disputes, really nobody but the parties cares
- 16 who wins and loses on the bottom line, but the
- 17 case presents a legal issue that has divided the
- 18 court of -- courts of appeals and is being
- 19 litigated all over the country, and it's
- 20 important to have centralization. And that's
- 21 the type of thing that prong 3 is for, the local
- 22 disputes that present recurring questions of
- 23 federal law.
- 24 There was a colloguy about does it
- 25 make is sense to give deference to the view of

- 1 an interested party as to where the case should
- 2 be heard? We know that the Congress wanted EPA
- 3 to have some role in determining venue because
- 4 it allowed the EPA to make a prong 3 finding or
- 5 not.
- 6 And under our view, the two things
- 7 that will be important are did EPA regard what
- 8 it was doing as the resolution of a controversy,
- 9 or was it simply stating an undisputed
- 10 proposition of federal law? And, second, how
- integral was that proposition to the ultimate
- 12 decision? Those are two things that are right
- 13 within EPA's bailiwick. It makes perfect sense
- 14 to give deference to them.
- 15 Finally, we agree that prong 3 should
- be an exception, that most locally or regionally
- 17 applicable actions should be reviewable in the
- 18 regional circuits, but if the exception doesn't
- 19 apply here, where nationwide determinations
- 20 drove all of the site-specific actions and where
- 21 the attack on the nationwide determinations has
- been the focus of judicial challenges, you're
- 23 basically reading prong 3 out of the statute
- 24 altogether.
- Thank you.

1		CHIEF	JUSTI	CE I	ROBERTS	S: Th	ank y	ou,
2	counsel.							
3		The ca	ase is	sul	omitted	d.		
4		(Where	eupon,	at	11:48	a.m.,	the	case
5	was submi	tted.)						
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