1	IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES
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3	KEVIN LOUGHRIN, :
4	Petitioner : No. 13-316
5	v. :
6	UNITED STATES :
7	x
8	Washington, D.C.
9	Tuesday, April 1, 2014
10	
11	The above-entitled matter came on for oral
12	argument before the Supreme Court of the United States
13	at 10:04 a.m.
14	APPEARANCES:
15	KEVIN K. RUSSELL, ESQ., Washington, D.C.; on behalf
16	of Petitioner.
17	ANTHONY A. YANG, ESQ., Assistant to the Solicitor
18	General, Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.; on
19	behalf of Respondent.
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1	PROCEEDINGS		
2	(10:04 a.m.)		
3	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear argument		
4	this morning in case 13-316, Loughrin v. United States.		
5	Mr. Russell.		
6	ORAL ARGUMENT OF KEVIN K. RUSSELL		
7	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER		
8	MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it		
9	please the Court:		
10	This case presents the question whether to		
11	commit Federal bank fraud, the defendant must intend to		
12	defraud a bank, or whether, as the Tenth Circuit held,		
13	it's enough that the defendant intended to defraud		
14	someone in order to obtain money the victim keeps in a		
15	bank account. Applying the Tenth Circuit's		
16	interpretation, the government has prosecuted people		
17	whose only relationship to a bank is that they tricked a		
18	third party into issuing them a perfectly valid check,		
19	which the defendant then cashed at a bank.		
20	Such a broad interpretation of the Federal		
21	bank fraud statute threatens to sweep in a garden		
22	variety State law crime a broad sweep of the sort		
23	that this Court has refused to give to Federal criminal		
24	statutes absent a clear statement of congressional		
25	intent. And that		

- 1 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But it fits it fits the
- 2 words Congress used, "obtained funds owned or controlled
- 3 by financial -- a financial institution by means of
- 4 false representation."
- 5 MR. RUSSELL: Well, the problem is there is
- 6 an ambiguity in Subsection 2 about to whom the false
- 7 representation must be directed. Now, I acknowledge
- 8 that ordinarily, you would construe that silence in
- 9 favor of breadth that -- in favor breadth that a false
- 10 statement to anyone would do. But there are compelling
- 11 reasons not to give that ambiguity, that interpretation
- 12 in this case.
- 13 And one is the breadth that I mentioned. It
- 14 enabled the government to bring cases like United States
- 15 v. Rodriguez where the government prosecuted a
- 16 bookkeeper who filed false invoices with her employer
- 17 that led the employer then to issue perfectly valid
- 18 checks to people who didn't do the work.
- 19 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, but the
- 20 breadth is confined -- given the development of the
- 21 banking system, it may not seem as significant a
- 22 limitation today as in years past. But, nonetheless,
- 23 the definition of a financial institution is -- in
- 24 18 U.S.C. 20 is limited to institutions with a
- 25 particular Federal nexus. Federal Deposit Insurance,

- 1 Federal Home Loan Bank, Small Business Investment Act.
- 2 It isn't any financial institution, but institutions in
- 3 which the Federal Government has a particular interest.
- 4 MR. RUSSELL: That's true. But nonetheless,
- 5 for precisely the reason you identified, it -- it covers
- 6 an awful lot of banks. And if you read the statute --
- 7 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But not in this case,
- 8 and that's where I'm having difficulty. Why is it
- 9 illogical to think that a falsehood rendered through a
- 10 third party that might affect a bank, a false check, as
- 11 your client was charged with, that that would be the
- 12 very case Congress would have wanted covered?
- MR. RUSSELL: So that's a question about, I
- 14 think, whether intent to defraud a bank could be
- 15 satisfied in a case like this. And I think that the
- 16 answer to that is possibly it could. So the government,
- 17 I think, tries to put you to a false choice between
- 18 saying you either have to accept the Tenth Circuit's
- 19 interpretation that sweeps in cases like United States
- 20 v. Rodriguez, perfectly valid checks that don't
- 21 implicate either of the core interests in a bank fraud
- 22 case, which is protecting the bank from financial harm
- 23 or protecting the bank from being lied to. You either
- 24 have to accept that or you have to leave unprosecutable
- 25 cases like this one. But that's not true.

- 1 JUSTICE ALITO: How would that -- how would
- 2 that work? Would the jury have to be instructed about
- 3 the U.C.C. and be asked to determine whether the bank or
- 4 Target, in this case, would be liable for the funds if
- 5 the bank had honored a forged check?
- 6 MR. RUSSELL: So that gets the -- we have
- 7 two theories. We have the theory that intent to defraud
- 8 a bank is required and under that theory, the U.C.C.
- 9 doesn't matter. We also argue, though, if you don't
- 10 require intent to defraud a bank --
- 11 JUSTICE ALITO: Why would it not matter?
- MR. RUSSELL: Because under the
- 13 government -- it doesn't matter under the government's
- 14 view or ours, so --
- 15 JUSTICE ALITO: No, under your view. Under
- 16 your view that there has to be an intent to defraud a
- 17 bank. Why would it not matter from -- who would
- 18 ultimately be liable for the -- for the money -- for the
- 19 amount of the check?
- 20 MR. RUSSELL: Under our view, all the
- 21 government has to show is that the defendant intended to
- 22 deceive a bank in order to obtain property that is owned
- 23 by or in the custody of a bank. So in a bank account.
- 24 So a traditional altered check case --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: I think on anybody's

- 1 theory, you -- you have to show that -- that the monies,
- 2 funds, credits, assets, securities or other property was
- 3 owned by or under the custody or control of the
- 4 financial institution.
- 5 MR. RUSSELL: That's right.
- 6 JUSTICE SCALIA: Doesn't either side have to
- 7 prove that?
- 8 MR. RUSSELL: That's correct. So the point
- 9 of departure is to whom the false statement has to be
- 10 directed.
- 11 JUSTICE SCALIA: But -- but the jury has to
- 12 be instructed that the money's coming out of the bank.
- 13 MR. RUSSELL: That's correct. That's
- 14 correct. And so that's -- to the extent you think the
- 15 U.C.C. is implicated in that inquiry, that -- that is
- 16 true under either one. I don't think that it is. I
- 17 think it's just going to be a question of, you know,
- 18 whose money are you trying to get and is it in a bank
- 19 account.
- 20 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Two of the -- two of the
- 21 six checks involved were paid by the drawing bank.
- 22 Isn't that so?
- 23 MR. RUSSELL: That is correct. And so --
- 24 but under our principal view that the problem here is
- 25 that the government -- that the jury wasn't instructed

- 1 that Petitioner had to intend to defraud a bank as
- 2 opposed to Target. And so it doesn't matter whether the
- 3 checks were cashed or not. And it doesn't even matter
- 4 under the risk of loss theory because it only has to be
- 5 a risk of loss, not an actual loss.
- 6 JUSTICE ALITO: I think you have a -- you
- 7 have a credible textual argument, but you run into the
- 8 problem that your interpretation makes Section --
- 9 Subsection 1 surplusage. How do you get around that?
- 10 MR. RUSSELL: I don't know that we do, but
- 11 the Tenth Circuit's interpretation doesn't either,
- 12 because under the Tenth Circuit's interpretation, one is
- 13 rendered surplusage because any prosecution that could
- 14 be brought under (1) could also be brought under (2).
- 15 If it's enough under (2) that you intend to defraud
- 16 someone, it's surely enough that you intended to defraud
- 17 a bank.
- 18 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, under the alternative,
- 19 there is certainly overlap, but (2) reaches a much
- 20 broader category or it reaches a broader category. So
- 21 it's not useless.
- MR. RUSSELL: No, that's true. And --
- 23 JUSTICE ALITO: Representation doesn't have
- to be made to the bank under (2). (2) covers those
- 25 instances where the representation is made to somebody

- 1 else. (1) would be limited to those, perhaps, in which
- 2 the representation is made to the bank. But under your
- 3 interpretation where (2) requires that the
- 4 representation be made to the bank, there is no point in
- 5 having two subsections. You might as well just have
- 6 one.
- 7 MR. RUSSELL: Well, I have two things to say
- 8 to that. One is Congress may have thought that what
- 9 they were doing in (2) is making clear that the statute
- 10 encompasses the broad range of particular kinds of
- 11 property interests that are unique or -- or at least
- 12 common in the banking context. And in that way it
- 13 serves the same function as the second clause in the
- 14 mail fraud statute upon which this statute is premised.
- 15 JUSTICE GINSBURG: It doesn't have the two
- 16 subparts. But here you are essentially asking us to
- read the word "or," "(1) or (2)" to mean (1) including
- 18 (2).
- MR. RUSSELL: Well, that's the same way that
- 20 this Court has repeatedly read the two parallel clauses
- 21 of the bank fraud statute. The only difference being,
- 22 you know, the difference in hardware terms and numerals.
- 23 But I don't think --
- 24 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: What this Court did
- 25 after the -- after -- or before this statute -- this

- 1 statute was passed before the Court's interpretation of
- 2 the mail fraud statute.
- 3 MR. RUSSELL: That's right.
- 4 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Every court that had
- 5 looked at it at the time the statute was passed had
- 6 determined there were two separate provisions. So why
- 7 would Congress have any reason to believe they were
- 8 passing a singular case, a singular charge?
- 9 MR. RUSSELL: I think what Congress would
- 10 have intended is simply that when it uses the
- 11 identical -- materially identical language and structure
- in two statutes, that they would have the same meaning
- 13 as determined by this Court.
- 14 The interpretive principle that the
- 15 government relies on that identically-worded statutes
- 16 can mean very different things depending on the state of
- 17 the circuit law at the time Congress copies the language
- 18 is really untenable. And it requires a criminal
- 19 defendant, for example, to know what that circuit
- 20 precedent was and not be able to simply rely on this
- 21 Court's decisions interpreting the identical language in
- 22 another statute.
- 23 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But it's not identical
- 24 because in the bank fraud statute, Congress broke out
- and separately numbered (1) and (2) and they didn't do

- 1 that in the mail fraud.
- 2 MR. RUSSELL: Now, I understand that. But I
- 3 don't think that if Congress intended this statute to
- 4 operate dramatically different from the mail fraud
- 5 statute, the only change it would have made was as those
- 6 sort of typographical changes. I don't think that's the
- 7 way Congress conveys that kind of intent.
- But again, even if you think that Subsection
- 9 (2) creates an independent offense, it's susceptible of
- 10 the interpretation that we give you, which avoids having
- 11 to federalize the kinds of cases that are at issue in
- 12 United States v. Rodriguez.
- 13 JUSTICE KAGAN: One understanding of what
- 14 led to this statute is this Court's decision in Maze,
- 15 which actually seems on all fours with this case, right?
- 16 Use of a fraudulent credit card to a merchant who then
- 17 asks for money from the bank. Essentially the same case
- 18 as this with a fraudulent credit card as opposed to a
- 19 fraudulent check. So if we understand this statute as
- 20 arising from Congress's desire to make that bank fraud,
- 21 why should we rule for you here?
- MR. RUSSELL: Well, I guess I have to just
- 23 dispute the premise. I think Congress was reacting to
- 24 the rule, the principle of law that Maze adopted, which
- 25 made it impossible to use the wire fraud statute and

- 1 mail fraud statute to prosecute a case even when
- 2 somebody goes into a bank and cashes a counterfeit check
- 3 because the then use of the mail to settle the account
- 4 afterwards wasn't good enough. And that's what Congress
- 5 was concerned of.
- 6 In this Court's own decision in Maze, the
- 7 Court noted that Congress had dealt with the specific
- 8 factual problem in Maze through an amendment, then
- 9 recent amendment to the Truth-in-Lending Act, which
- 10 prohibited credit card fraud. Congress added to those
- 11 remedies in another section of the same statute that
- 12 enacted the bank fraud statute and then dealt with the
- 13 parallel problem with respect to altered checks in
- 14 Section 513, which is also part of that same statute, which
- 15 criminalizes any use of an altered check to deceive
- 16 anyone without regard to whose property the defendant is
- 17 intending to obtain.
- So when you're worried about altered check
- 19 cases here, and we need to not just be worried about
- 20 these cases because this decision will implicate a whole host
- 21 of other cases. But if you're thinking just about
- 22 altered check cases, Congress dealt with altered check
- 23 cases in Section 513. And that's important because the
- 24 penalties under 513 and 31 -- and the bank fraud
- 25 provision are very different. It's a 30-year sentence

- 1 for bank fraud and a 10-year sentence for a Section 513.
- 2 And more importantly, the bank fraud statute is a
- 3 predicate for aggravated identity theft, which imposes a
- 4 mandatory 2-year minimum sentence that must be served
- 5 consecutive to any other sentence.
- 6 And so in a petty case like this, the
- 7 difference between somebody being charged for the bank fraud
- 8 and being charged under 513 for a first-time offender
- 9 can be the difference between zero to 6 months and 2 to
- 10 2 and a half years. And that gives the government
- 11 enormous plea bargaining leverage. So you can
- 12 understand why the government wants a broad
- 13 interpretation here.
- But it's also equally understandable that
- 15 Congress would have thought that cases in which
- 16 somebody's using an altered check in a way that
- 17 negligently or knowingly poses some risk to a bank is --
- 18 warrants less punishment than when somebody directly
- 19 targets the bank itself for deception in order to obtain
- 20 bank property.
- 21 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Why -- why is that? Why
- 22 would Congress have wanted to make that difference?
- MR. RUSSELL: Well, because I think
- 24 Congress --
- 25 JUSTICE KENNEDY: I agree with you that the

- 1 disparity in -- in punishment is quite substantial.
- 2 MR. RUSSELL: Yeah. I think that Congress
- 3 would have thought it's more serious for somebody to
- 4 target a bank than it is for somebody to use an altered
- 5 check that has a risk to a bank. Because as this case
- 6 illustrates, using an altered check doesn't necessarily
- 7 impose a financial cost on the bank. Here Target
- 8 intercepted most -- most -- we have a disagreement with
- 9 the government whether it was three or four of the
- 10 checks, but -- and the bank itself made -- discovered
- 11 the alteration and refused to honor the check. But when
- 12 you are intending to defraud the bank, that's -- the
- 13 Congress could think that's a much more serious thing.
- 14 And I do think that, you know --
- 15 JUSTICE KENNEDY: It does -- it does seem to
- 16 me that this case can be distinguished from the example
- 17 you gave in your yellow brief of the person that sells a
- 18 magazine subscription and he gets the check and he never
- 19 intends to deliver the magazines. In that case, the
- 20 bank will -- will honor the check, I assume.
- 21 MR. RUSSELL: Yes.
- 22 JUSTICE KENNEY: And must. And must do so.
- 23 MR. RUSSELL: That's correct. And so --
- 24 JUSTICE KENNEDY: And that's quite different
- 25 than this case.

- 1 MR. RUSSELL: So the question is how to get
- 2 rid of those cases while preserving the government's
- 3 ability to prosecute.
- 4 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, you can do so, I
- 5 suppose, through the government's proposed fallback
- 6 position.
- 7 MR. RUSSELL: Yes.
- 8 JUSTICE KENNEDY: -- at page 40 of its brief
- 9 which talks about a risk of loss.
- 10 MR. RUSSELL: So there are -- there are
- 11 several things wrong with the government's fallback
- 12 position and it leads in most cases to the same result
- 13 as intent to defraud. So in paradigmatic bank fraud
- 14 cases, both our rule and their fallback rule permits
- 15 prosecution.
- The only real difference is that their rule
- 17 is -- is designed to permit prosecution in third-party
- 18 check fraud cases like ours. Because if it's an altered
- 19 check that's presented to the bank, we acknowledge that
- 20 shows intent to defraud the bank. So we're only talking
- 21 about cases like ours where an altered check is
- 22 presented to a third party and the government's rule
- 23 permits them to continue to prosecute those cases.
- Now, even if you agree with them that those
- 25 kinds of cases fall within the scope of the statute,

- 1 that -- all you need to do then is to say, look, those
- 2 cases aren't materially different than when you submit
- 3 the check to the bank in the first place, that the
- 4 altered check shows intent to defraud the bank in
- 5 third-party cases just like it does in a first-party
- 6 case. Now, we think that they're wrong about whether or
- 7 not these kinds of cases are covered. And if we're
- 8 right about that, then there's obviously no reason to
- 9 adopt, you know, a rule that they made up just to deal
- 10 with those kinds of cases.
- 11 And maybe I could turn to that argument just
- 12 for a second.
- 13 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, could I ask you this
- 14 question? Suppose the defendant testifies and suppose
- 15 the jury believes the defendant. The defendant
- 16 testifies as follows: I never intended to defraud the
- 17 bank. I knew that the cashiers at this particular
- 18 retail establishment were incredibly careful -- careless
- 19 and so I got these checks and they were made out to my
- 20 neighbor John Doe. I stole them from his mailbox. I
- 21 crossed out his name and I wrote in the name of the
- 22 retail establishment and I knew these cashiers were so
- 23 careless that they would honor the check. However, I
- 24 never thought any bank would do that. So I didn't
- 25 intend to defraud the bank. I intended to defraud the

- 1 retail establishment.
- Now, under your theory that -- that if the
- 3 jury believed that, the person would not be guilty of
- 4 the offense.
- 5 MR. RUSSELL: That's right. And I don't
- 6 think that those cases are covered for an additional
- 7 reason as well. And that is, the fraud there is not
- 8 intended to obtain bank property. Under Subsection (2),
- 9 it's not any fraud that implicates bank property. The
- 10 object of the fraud must be to obtain the property that
- is owned by or in the custody or control of the -- of
- 12 the bank.
- 13 And in a case like this, what my client
- 14 obtained was DVD players and groceries and a printer,
- and those were not property owned by or in the custody
- 16 or control of the bank.
- 17 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, why doesn't that
- 18 principle cover most of the cases you're worried about?
- MR. RUSSELL: Well, it doesn't cover the
- 20 cases like Rodriguez, because the government can argue
- 21 there that -- so, I don't know if I've finished the
- 22 description of Rodriguez, but in that case, a bookkeeper
- 23 submitted false invoices to her employer. The employer
- 24 issued valid checks to a third party, who then cashed
- 25 it. And the government can say in a case like that,

- 1 cashing the check results in you obtaining money in the
- 2 custody or control of the bank. That's what you get in
- 3 exchange for the check. And you obtained it by means of
- 4 a false statement to someone, i.e., the false invoice
- 5 submitted to the employer. And so it doesn't --
- 6 adopting our view of what bank property is doesn't
- 7 completely eliminate the problem. We would win the
- 8 case. But it doesn't --
- 9 JUSTICE SCALIA: Why -- why wouldn't your
- 10 view have enabled you to win this case?
- 11 MR. RUSSELL: It would -- it should have. I
- mean, we've brought a sufficiency of the evidence
- 13 challenge with respect to whether -- whose property this
- 14 is. And the jury --
- 15 JUSTICE SCALIA: So if we think that was
- 16 wrong, there's a lot less to this case than meets the
- 17 eye.
- 18 MR. RUSSELL: There is -- that could be the
- 19 end of this case. It doesn't resolve the circuit
- 20 conflict, which there is still a circuit conflict about
- 21 whether intent to defraud a bank is required in cases
- 22 not involving this circumstance of a third party.
- 23 But we do think that you shouldn't believe
- 24 that just because -- if you agree with the government
- 25 that third-party altered check cases fall within the

- 1 scope of the statute, that's not a reason to forego
- 2 requiring the government to prove intent to defraud the
- 3 bank. It's just a reason to say that, as a number of
- 4 circuits have, that use of that altered check shows
- 5 intent to defraud a bank.
- 6 The government has been able to prosecute
- 7 altered check cases, including altered third-party
- 8 check -- altered check cases to third parties, in
- 9 circuits that require intent to defraud the bank.
- 10 The other thing that's wrong --
- 11 JUSTICE KAGAN: What's the theory behind
- 12 that? Why would presenting an altered check to a third
- 13 party constitute sufficient evidence of intent to
- 14 defraud a bank?
- 15 MR. RUSSELL: Well, I think the theory is
- 16 that the use of an altered check shows intent to deceive
- 17 the bank. And then these courts simply view obtaining
- 18 the property of a third party using that check as
- 19 materially identical to obtaining that property directly
- 20 from a bank, I think is the theory.
- 21 JUSTICE ALITO: Usually there won't be
- 22 evidence, direct evidence of the defendant's intent. So
- 23 the defendant's intent will be inferred from objective
- 24 evidence -- will be inferred from other evidence, and
- 25 then you will get into the question of whether the

- 1 retailer who initially accepts the check or the bank is
- 2 ultimately going to be liable for the amount of that
- 3 check. If you're -- if you're in a situation in which
- 4 the -- the retailer is going to be liable, that -- maybe
- 5 that supports the -- the inference that the defendant
- 6 never intended to defraud the bank. If you're in a
- 7 situation where the bank is going to be liable, it
- 8 supports the inference that the defendant intended to
- 9 defraud the bank.
- 10 So won't you get into this somewhat
- 11 complicated UCC question about who is ultimately going
- 12 to be liable for the amount? I think that's a problem
- 13 with your argument, but maybe there's an answer to it.
- 14 MR. RUSSELL: Well, I think that there is
- 15 and maybe I'm not explaining it very well. So there's
- 16 two pieces of intent to defraud the bank. There's
- 17 intent to deceive the bank and intent thereby to obtain
- 18 bank property. With respect to intent to deceive the
- 19 bank, I think the courts have uniformly found in -- in
- 20 cases, at least first party cases, that use of an
- 21 altered check is sufficient evidence to show that you
- 22 intend to deceive the bank. And when you intend --
- 23 whether you intend to deceive the bank, it doesn't
- 24 matter who's going to end up bearing the cost at the
- 25 end. It's just a question --

- 1 JUSTICE SCALIA: Doesn't -- doesn't that
- 2 U.C.C. question arise anyway under the requirement that
- 3 you have to -- you have to obtain bank property?
- 4 MR. RUSSELL: It -- it potentially does if
- 5 you're willing to --
- 6 JUSTICE SCALIA: Doesn't it require you to
- 7 ultimately decide who's -- who's going to be stuck with
- 8 the -- with the empty bag?
- 9 MR. RUSSELL: It -- it potentially could if
- 10 you're willing to say that somebody who obtains property
- 11 from Target potentially is obtaining bank property
- 12 because of reasons relating to the U.C.C. We don't
- 13 think you even need to go that far. We think it's
- 14 sufficient to say that in these third-party cases, what
- 15 you're obtaining is the property of somebody else. And
- 16 that doesn't mean that it's not a crime, and it doesn't
- 17 even mean that it's not a Federal crime. It simply
- 18 means it's a Section 513 crime.
- 19 JUSTICE SCALIA: I understand that. But --
- 20 but if you accept the government's view --
- MR. RUSSELL: Yes.
- 22 JUSTICE SCALIA: -- of how these third-party
- 23 cases ought to -- ought to be resolved, you have to get
- 24 into the U.C.C., don't you.
- MR. RUSSELL: I don't know. I mean, maybe

- 1 they can -- they're the better people to answer that
- 2 question for you. But I think that, at least to finish
- 3 the answer to Justice Alito, use of an altered check
- 4 which says -- when you've written, you know, your name
- 5 on the check rather than the person who authored it, is
- 6 an attempt to deceive a bank. We don't disagree with
- 7 that.
- 8 And so then the question in these
- 9 third-party cases is: Are you attempting to obtain
- 10 property of the bank? And we don't think that the
- 11 U.C.C. comes into that. It's just a simple common sense
- 12 thing that a DVD player on Target's shelves is not
- 13 property owned by or in the custody or control of a
- 14 bank. And so --
- 15 JUSTICE BREYER: How does it work -- how
- 16 does it work if you have Mr. Crook, Mr. Crook has a bank
- 17 account at Bank of America, he has \$32 in it. He writes
- 18 a check for 5,000. He sees somebody on the street whom
- 19 he vaguely knows and says, here, take my check; go to
- 20 the bank; give me \$200 or give me 1,000. Now, he's got
- 21 the money from Mr. Smith. He didn't obtain money from
- 22 the bank. It was Mr. Smith who did or did not go into
- 23 the bank to get the money. Does that fall within the
- 24 statute?
- MR. RUSSELL: No. I mean, what that is is a

- 1 typical bad check case. It's the equivalent --
- 2 JUSTICE BREYER: So this doesn't fall within the
- 3 statute at all. In fact -- in other words, have we got
- 4 some cases on that?
- 5 MR. RUSSELL: We don't have this Court's
- 6 cases. I mean --
- 7 JUSTICE BREYER: No, no. This is not good,
- 8 but I mean, you know, what you tried -- you didn't get
- 9 the money from the bank. What you did was just write a
- 10 false check, knowing that in all likelihood the guy you
- 11 give the check to is going to go right to the bank and
- 12 get the money. Now, I just wonder is there some
- 13 authority as to whether that falls within these statutes
- 14 or not.
- 15 MR. RUSSELL: So the government has brought
- 16 those kinds of not-sufficient-funds cases. Ordinarily,
- 17 it goes down somewhat differently, that you've presented
- 18 the check that you know is going to bounce to a
- 19 merchant, not to some guy in the street. And the
- 20 government's theory is that thereby you're obtaining
- 21 bank property. But most of the cases say that that's
- 22 not actually bank fraud because you're not intending to
- 23 deceive a bank. And that's perfectly fine.
- JUSTICE BREYER: It wouldn't matter. Look,
- 25 I don't think you have to -- when you say "intend,"

- 1 "intend" can encompass a known but undesired consequence
- 2 of an intentional act. And so you may not care -- you
- 3 couldn't care less when the money comes from the bank or
- 4 not, but you know that the bank is likely to pay it.
- 5 MR. RUSSELL: But --
- 6 JUSTICE BREYER: So therefore, you have the
- 7 requisite intent. But what I'm trying to figure out
- 8 here is what's the case law on what should be a very
- 9 common situation. If you give it to a third party, your
- 10 fake check, insufficient funds. You just want the money
- 11 from the third party. But you know the bank is likely
- 12 to honor it.
- MR. RUSSELL: Well, if -- if I can quibble
- 14 with that last piece of the sentence. Ordinarily, if
- 15 you give a check that goes to a bank and there's not
- 16 sufficient funds, they bounce the check. They don't
- 17 honor it. So --
- 18 JUSTICE BREYER: All right. Try two --
- 19 JUSTICE SCALIA: That's certainly been my
- 20 experience.
- 21 (Laughter.)
- 22 JUSTICE BREYER: Try two -- two different
- 23 paths here. Path A, he believes that the bank will
- 24 honor Smith's, his check, when presented by Jones. I
- 25 got my names mixed up.

- 1 MR. RUSSELL: Sure.
- 2 JUSTICE BREYER: Mr. Crook believes that the
- 3 bank will honor his check when Mr. Smith presents it.
- 4 And the second is the one Justice Scalia said, is being
- 5 sophisticated about these matters, Mr. Crook believes
- 6 that the bank will never own -- never, never pay the
- 7 check when presented by Smith. I just want to know the
- 8 state of the law on those two situations.
- 9 MR. RUSSELL: So the state of the law -- and
- 10 there's only a handful of these not-sufficient-fund
- 11 cases is that most of the circuits have said they do not
- 12 fall within the statute. The ones that have said that
- 13 they do, it's usually because the defendant has some --
- 14 told some additional lie to the bank. They've opened
- 15 the account under a false name, for example. And so
- 16 that's the state of law.
- 17 This Court in United States v. Williams,
- 18 though, said we should go to great lengths --
- 19 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: What is the thinking of
- 20 those courts?
- 21 MR. RUSSELL: What's that?
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: What's the thinking of
- 23 those courts? What's the rationale?
- 24 MR. RUSSELL: So the rationale is that in a
- 25 case where you submit -- I guess they have two. Some of

- 1 them are applying the risk of loss test and say that
- 2 there's not a sufficient risk of loss. I believe some
- 3 of them are saying that there's no intent to defraud the
- 4 bank there because the target of the fraud --
- 5 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: And the courts don't
- 6 hold this way, but hold, as the court did below, that
- 7 it's an intent to deceive anyone so long as the scheme
- 8 is --
- 9 MR. RUSSELL: Yeah. Those -- I don't know
- 10 that this case has come up in those circuits, but I
- 11 think the answer is quite clear that those circuits
- 12 would say they're covered. But in United States v.
- 13 Williams, this Court said we should go to great lengths
- 14 to avoid interpreting a Federal criminal statute to
- 15 criminalize Federally every insufficient funds check
- 16 case.
- 17 JUSTICE BREYER: You come back to those
- 18 general statements, you do have the language of the
- 19 statutes which favors you this question. But I guess
- 20 the theory would simply be where Mr. Crook gives him a
- 21 bad check, to Mr. Smith, he couldn't care less whether
- 22 Smith presents it to the bank, and he, as far as he's
- 23 fairly sophisticated, thinks probably Smith won't
- 24 present it to the bank. He may to an insurance company
- or something and, therefore, he did not either obtain or

- 1 try to obtain or believe he would obtain money from the
- 2 bank.
- 3 MR. RUSSELL: That's right.
- 4 JUSTICE BREYER: Whether it's money that the
- 5 bank itself owns or whether it's money of which the bank
- 6 has custody. That would seem to me the simplest theory.
- 7 And I wonder, is that what courts have said?
- 8 MR. RUSSELL: I think what courts have said
- 9 is that those kinds of schemes are directed at
- 10 victimizing the third party, not a bank, and that leaves
- 11 to the States their traditional authority to prosecute
- 12 bad check cases, which I don't think should be
- 13 troublesome.
- If I could reserve the remainder of my
- 15 time.
- 16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
- 17 Mr. Yang.
- 18 ORAL ARGUMENT OF ANTHONY A. YANG
- 19 ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENT
- 20 MR. YANG: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it
- 21 please the Court:
- Congress drafted Section 1344 with two
- 23 separate clauses, each of which serves a distinct
- 24 function. The first clause targets schemes to defraud a
- 25 bank. That requires intent that the scheme have the

- 1 purpose of defrauding a bank.
- 2 Clause (2) -- and this is at page 5a of the
- 3 government's brief, you can see the structural
- 4 difference quite plainly. Clause (2) targets schemes to
- 5 obtain property that's either owned by or under the
- 6 custody or control of a bank. And Congress enacted
- 7 these broad disjunctive clauses in response to this
- 8 Court's decision in Maze as well as in Williams, which
- 9 had curtailed the Government's ability to prosecute
- 10 precisely these types of fraud.
- 11 JUSTICE KAGAN: But, Mr. Yang, your
- 12 interpretation of the statute goes far beyond Maze.
- 13 Maze was something with a fraudulent credit card or
- 14 forged check or something like that, but if I understand
- 15 your interpretation of the statute, you know, if I sell
- 16 a painting to somebody and I represent it to be by a
- famous artist and in fact I've just made it in my
- 18 kitchen, and that person pays me with a check and it's a
- 19 perfectly valid check, it's a good check, the fraud is
- 20 obviously as to the person who's just bought the
- 21 painting. It has nothing to do with the bank. But your
- 22 interpretation would cover that case as well.
- 23 MR. YANG: That is correct. Our
- 24 understanding of the text, and the reason why that is
- 25 the case is because Congress specified in clause (2)

- 1 that the scheme to obtain money or property from the
- 2 bank has to be by means of a false or fraudulent
- 3 pretense, but it doesn't specify to whom that false or
- 4 fraudulent pretense must be made.
- Now, we understand that that sweeps in
- 6 broader than what Maze --
- 7 JUSTICE KAGAN: And it's just a little bit
- 8 peculiar, right? I mean, if somebody pays me in cash,
- 9 the government can't prosecute the person. If somebody
- 10 pulls out a check, the government can, but that doesn't
- 11 seem to make a whole lot of sense in terms of what the
- 12 statute is about.
- MR. YANG: Well, we think that the text
- 14 suggests that what Congress was doing was enacting a
- 15 broad prophylactic, because what Congress was
- 16 addressing, remember, were situations where this Court
- 17 had construed narrowly statutes which addressed
- 18 situations like this where banks were the inherent
- 19 second-line victims, and so what Congress wanted to
- 20 avoid is --
- 21 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But here the bank is not
- 22 the victim. That's the whole point. In these con
- 23 -artist cases, the bank is incidental and --
- 24 MR. YANG: That's exactly right. That's why
- 25 Congress was not intending specifically to get those,

- 1 but enacted a broader statute so we wouldn't have
- 2 debates about this. Look at the debate that we're
- 3 having in this case. I think everyone can agree that
- 4 the banks are, just like the banks in Maze, they're
- 5 second-line victims. There's an order to the bank.
- 6 It's a check. A check is simply an order to the bank to
- 7 pay a specified sum --
- 8 JUSTICE KENNEDY: But in Justice Kagan's
- 9 hypothetical, the bank didn't have to refund the money.
- 10 And we could sit around here all day with examples, but
- 11 suppose you have a contractor on a cost plus fixed fee
- 12 and he inflates the cost. This would be -- to the
- 13 owner. This would be a violation of the statute. This
- is a sweeping interpretation you're offering us.
- 15 MR. YANG: We think that that is the
- 16 interpretation reflected in the text, for the following
- 17 reason. Although it doesn't fall within the core of
- 18 what Congress was trying to protect, it avoids the
- 19 problems, the kind of debate that we're having here
- 20 about situations that do fall within the core, because
- 21 remember, now we're talking about, Petitioner says,
- 22 well, you know, it wasn't sufficiently targeted, He
- 23 didn't really victimize or harm the bank. Congress was
- 24 trying to get away from that type of inquiry. And they
- 25 said, look, if the scheme has the intent of obtaining

- 1 property either owned by or in the custody or control of
- 2 the bank, so that means it can either be controlled by
- 3 the bank, its own property or custody, property it's
- 4 holding, or it's in the custody or control of others,
- 5 but it's owned by the bank, a very broad coverage. And
- 6 if you try to obtain that property by means of false or
- 7 fraudulent pretenses, we avoid this kind of discussion
- 8 about were you sufficiently targeting, do you really
- 9 intend to --
- 10 JUSTICE SCALIA: You do indeed, but you
- 11 extend Federal law enormously into the kind of stuff
- 12 that we've usually left to the States.
- 13 MR. YANG: I'm not sure that that's actually
- 14 true. It's a very strange federalism argument the
- 15 Petitioner is making. The Petitioner is saying, my
- 16 conduct is a Federal crime. It's a Federal crime under
- 17 this. It could be a Federal crime under that. It's
- 18 just not a FEDERAL crime under the bank fraud statute.
- 19 That is a very strange federalism argument because
- 20 Congress has already put its hands all over the subject.
- 21 And what Congress is trying to do here was to respond to
- 22 cases like Maze by enacting a broad statute. Congress
- 23 couldn't --
- 24 JUSTICE BREYER: If I have it right, I just
- 25 want to be sure, in my Crook case, which you may or may

- 1 not remember, you're reading the word "obtained" to mean
- 2 whoever knowingly executes a scheme or artifice to
- 3 obtain. It doesn't mean for him to obtain. It means
- 4 for anybody to obtain. That's how you read it.
- 5 MR. YANG: That's correct because --
- 6 JUSTICE BREYER: And that has been -- and
- 7 that has been pretty much the universal --
- 8 MR. YANG: Understanding of obtain. This
- 9 Court --
- 10 JUSTICE BREYER: Okay, okay, okay. You
- 11 don't have to argue it. I just wanted to know now --
- 12 MR. YANG: That's just the uniform
- 13 understanding of the dictionary as well as this Court's
- 14 cases.
- 15 JUSTICE BREYER: Fine, fine, then is
- 16 the way you see the statute.
- 17 MR. YANG: That's correct.
- 18 JUSTICE BREYER: That Mr. Crook goes to
- 19 Mr. Smith and says, dear Mr. Smith, here is my check for
- 20 \$50,000, knowing he only has \$3 in his account. All
- 21 right. Now, case one is Mr. Smith, not too bright,
- 22 gives him \$500. Now, he might, Mr. Crook, think that
- 23 Smith will then go and present the check to the bank and
- 24 maybe get some money. In that case, he has violated
- 25 this, in your view, because Mr. Smith obtained money

- 1 from the bank and that was part of Mr. Crook's idea as
- 2 what was likely to happen whether he'd wanted it to or
- 3 not.
- 4 MR. YANG: Partially correct.
- 5 JUSTICE BREYER: All right.
- 6 MR. YANG: I would --
- 7 JUSTICE BREYER: There's also Justice
- 8 Scalia's point which is an important matter to me, and
- 9 that is that there also is the case when Mr. Crook
- 10 doesn't know how the banking system works at all and he
- 11 has no idea that the bank will, in fact, give any money
- or whether it will give any money. Those are the two
- 13 cases.
- 14 MR. YANG: I have at least two responses.
- 15 The first is --
- 16 JUSTICE BREYER: It doesn't need a response.
- 17 All I want is explanation.
- 18 MR. YANG: Well, two explanations about that
- 19 one.
- 20 JUSTICE SCALIA: Give an explanation rather
- 21 than a response.
- 22 MR. YANG: I will give an explanation that
- 23 will be connected to the question. The explanation is,
- 24 I think, twofold. First, as the Court explained in
- Neder, the gravamen of this statute, just like the

- 1 gravamen of the mail fraud or the wire fraud is not the
- 2 particular acts or that the particular acts are done
- 3 well or have any likelihood of success. It is the
- 4 scheme. And so therefore questions about reliance --
- 5 the bank doesn't have to believe it or rely on it;
- 6 damages that result don't have to rely. This is a
- 7 scheme. It is criminalizing the scheme to obtain --
- 8 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So what do you do with
- 9 the case, the second part of the hypothetical that
- 10 Justice Breyer didn't repeat where the person knows the
- 11 bank is not going to pay a cent because there's no money
- 12 in this account.
- 13 MR. YANG: I think that --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: And so there is no part
- of the scheme to obtain funds from the bank because they
- 16 know that the bank won't pay it.
- 17 MR. YANG: Well, they may -- they may
- 18 suspect that the bank may not pay it. Banks sometimes
- 19 in fact do pay checks on insufficient funds. Banks have
- 20 only 24 hours after receipt of a check to dishonor it or
- 21 not and if they don't then they are stuck in the UCC and
- 22 have to bring lawsuits. I mean the practical impact of
- 23 this type of situation is significant. About a billion
- 24 dollars a year --
- 25 JUSTICE BREYER: Answer -- what's the answer

- 1 to Justice Sotomayor's question?
- 2 MR. YANG: Well, it depends on --
- 3 JUSTICE BREYER: Mr.Crook is not too bright
- 4 and Mr. Crook doesn't even know what a bank is and all
- 5 he knows is he's can get \$500 from this other not-genius
- 6 Mr. Smith. So he does not care about banks. He doesn't
- 7 know how they work. He has no idea if they pay or don't
- 8 pay. What's the result?
- 9 MR. YANG: I think it would be very hard for
- 10 the government to prove that your inept bank --
- 11 thief had a scheme to obtain money or property from the
- 12 bank, but the government might be able to prove it
- 13 circumstantially because, just as Justice Alito
- 14 explained, you rarely have insight into the heart of
- 15 hearts of criminals. You need to have circumstantial
- 16 evidence.
- 17 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: In what case, what
- 18 Federal statute criminalizes a con game?
- 19 JUSTICE SCALIA: Criminalizes what? I
- 20 didn't --
- 21 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: A con game. What
- 22 Federal statute -- 513 criminalizes altering checks, but
- 23 what other Federal statute makes it a Federal crime to
- 24 engage in a con game without a check?
- 25 MR. YANG: I'm not sure exactly what you

- 1 mean by a con game the there are plenty of Federal
- 2 statutes that address --
- 3 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Well, somebody says I'm
- 4 going to paint your house and takes a check for \$100 and
- 5 doesn't paint the house.
- 6 MR. YANG: Well, the answer is that Congress
- 7 has addressed false statements, schemes to defraud,
- 8 schemes to obtain money or property through all kinds of
- 9 various statutes, mail fraud, wire fraud, false
- 10 statements, bank fraud. It just is done so in
- 11 particular areas where there is a Federal interest
- 12 implicated. And it -- actually, those areas are quite
- 13 sweeping and bank fraud --
- 14 JUSTICE SCALIA: And that would be one of
- 15 them, if you -- if you accept a check, right? If -- if
- 16 you promise to paint the house, you have no intention of
- 17 doing it, so it's fraud, and -- and you accept the
- 18 check. That's it. You're under the statute, right?
- 19 MR. YANG: The government would have to
- 20 prove that the scheme was intended to obtain money or
- 21 property from the bank. If that was shown, and it was
- 22 shown that that was --
- 23 JUSTICE KAGAN: And what does that mean,
- 24 Mr. Yang? I mean, it could mean that the -- that the
- 25 defendant intends that the money come from the bank, or

- 1 you could mean that the defendant intends to obtain
- 2 money which he knows may or is reasonably likely to or
- 3 is foreseeable to come from the bank. Which do you
- 4 mean?
- 5 MR. YANG: I think we kind of mean both.
- 6 And let me explain why. As Justice Alito, I think, kind
- 7 of alluded to, as a practical matter, the way you prove
- 8 these cases is you prove that a defendant generally
- 9 intends the natural consequences of his or her acts.
- 10 And so if, for instance, you have a case like this where
- 11 you have a fraudulent check which is directed to a bank,
- 12 it says, bank, pay the payee this sum of money, that the
- 13 defendant is going to intend, when they tendered that to
- 14 the -- to the merchant, that that check is going to be
- 15 sent to the bank and that the bank is going to -- you
- 16 know, has a reasonable chance of paying it.
- 17 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, I think this does go
- 18 back to Justice Alito's question, because the person can
- 19 say -- the defendant here could have said, I really
- 20 don't care whether the bank ends up paying Target. I
- 21 don't know whether the bank will end up paying Target.
- 22 I don't know how these things work and how often the
- 23 bank honors it and how often the bank doesn't honor it.
- 24 And I really could not care less as long as I get my
- 25 money from Target.

- 1 MR. YANG: Right. But in our legal system,
- 2 I don't think it's -- let me give you another example.
- 3 Let's say you want to kill somebody and you put a car --
- 4 a bomb in their car. All right? And there are two
- 5 people in the car. You see the target go in and you see
- 6 someone else go in, and you detonate the bomb. You
- 7 can't say I was really indifferent about the second
- 8 person being there.
- 9 JUSTICE KAGAN: No, but -- so you're saying
- 10 that my person -- forget the other examples. I mean,
- 11 you're saying that this person who could not care less
- 12 if the money comes from the bank and actually thinks
- 13 that the money may not come from the bank because it's
- 14 quite likely that the bank is not going to honor this,
- 15 you think, nonetheless, that that person has intended to
- 16 obtain bank property?
- 17 MR. YANG: Has -- yes, by the virtue of the
- 18 scheme. The scheme used --
- 19 JUSTICE SCALIA: But wait. I thought -- I
- 20 thought you said earlier, and -- and I was going to ask
- 21 you about that, that he does not have to personally
- 22 receive bank property.
- 23 MR. YANG: Right.
- 24 JUSTICE SCALIA: He just intends that bank
- 25 property be given to somebody.

- 1 MR. YANG: To be transferred per his
- 2 direction.
- 3 JUSTICE SCALIA: Yes.
- 4 MR. YANG: Yes, that's exactly right.
- 5 JUSTICE KENNEDY: And -- and you've been
- 6 slipping back into the hypotheticals where the bank is
- 7 going to bear the loss. But your position also covers
- 8 instances where the bank does not bear any loss, the
- 9 fraudulent contractor that -- Justice Kagan's
- 10 hypothetical about the phony painting, the bank is not
- 11 going to give that money back.
- 12 MR. YANG: And -- and for good reason, for
- 13 multiple reasons. One, this is prohibiting the scheme,
- 14 not a good scheme, not a completed scheme, not an
- 15 effective scheme and --
- 16 JUSTICE KENNEDY: So you have federalized
- 17 every fraudulent transaction in the economy whenever a
- 18 check is involved.
- 19 JUSTICE SCALIA: Absolutely.
- 20 MR. YANG: Not whenever a check is involved.
- 21 The government would still have to show that the scheme
- 22 itself was intended to obtain money or property from the
- 23 bank and did so by --
- 24 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, I mean, I can think
- about it tonight, but I'd like an example of a check

- 1 where the money doesn't come from a bank.
- MR. YANG: Well, in the check context, I
- 3 think there is none. I mean, what you have, if you're
- 4 obtaining that check in order to get the money from --
- 5 or property from the bank, I think it would fall within.
- 6 And again, we understand this is a broad reading. We --
- 7 we own -- own up with -- for that.
- 8 JUSTICE KAGAN: Can I just make sure I -- I
- 9 understand your -- your answer to my question. Suppose
- 10 that this defendant did not return the merchandise for
- 11 cash. In other words, suppose he just wanted an Xbox
- 12 and he did the exact same thing. So he never himself
- 13 wanted cash and, again, could not have cared at all
- 14 whether the bank was going to give the vendor cash.
- 15 Still, you would say that person intended to obtain bank
- 16 property?
- MR. YANG: By virtue -- yes, we would say
- 18 that by virtue of the scheme -- remember, he's not just
- 19 walking in and saying, you know, I'll pay you tomorrow
- 20 if you give me a hamburger today. The -- he's going in
- 21 with a check. A check is -- everyone knows what a check
- 22 is. It is an order to a bank to pay money. He's giving
- 23 it to the -- to the bank or to the merchant --
- 24 JUSTICE SCALIA: But he's -- he's not
- obtaining the bank's money. You -- you read to

- 1 obtain -- a scheme or artifice to obtain, you read that
- 2 for anybody to obtain. I would read it to mean for him
- 3 to obtain. But that's not how you read it. And you say
- 4 that's -- everybody reads it the way you do?
- 5 MR. YANG: Well, this -- this Court has long
- 6 recognized that the word "obtain" not only means that
- 7 you obtain it for yourself, but you can obtain something
- 8 by directing the transfer of -- of property to someone
- 9 else. And that's exactly what a check does. You are
- 10 directing the --
- 11 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Mr. Yang, before you
- 12 finish, Mr. Russell pointed out -- and I think Justice
- 13 Sotomayor -- that there is Section 513. It deals
- 14 with -- expressly with altered checks, but the penalty
- is much, much less. Is everything that is covered by
- 16 513 covered by 1344, too?
- 17 MR. YANG: Well, I think the answer is that
- 18 has not been decided. And let me just explain in -- in
- 19 a few ways. One, Section 513 deals with securities,
- 20 which includes checks of States or organizations, and
- 21 then it defines organizations. There is a substantial
- 22 question whether that applies to personal checks. One
- 23 court of appeals has said it has. The Department of
- 24 Justice's Criminal Resource Manual says it does not
- 25 apply to personal checks.

- 1 So there is a real question about whether
- 2 this Section 513 would apply. But even if it were to
- 3 apply, it applies to protect the integrity of certain
- 4 writings. It is a different provision than a
- 5 scheme-based provision like Section 1344, which more
- 6 broadly prohibits types of schemes to obtain money or
- 7 property from banks.
- 8 JUSTICE KENNEDY: And is it -- is it true
- 9 that there's a 2-year mandatory minimum?
- 10 MR. YANG: Not for bank fraud. There is
- 11 aggravated identity theft for which --
- 12 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Under this statute, is
- 13 there -- is there a mandatory minimum?
- MR. YANG: No. Well, this -- this statute,
- 15 the bank fraud statute has a punishment of up to 30
- 16 years to reflect that frauds come in various sizes.
- 17 It's not a mandatory minimum. It's just a maximum. And
- 18 in this case, the defendant actually got 1 year for this
- 19 bank fraud. He got a -- a stacked sentence of 2 years
- 20 for identity theft, which is separate from this
- 21 provision.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Mr. Yang, if we are
- 23 concerned about federalizing every case involving a
- 24 check, okay, you -- your brief does give us an
- 25 alternative.

- 1 MR. YANG: Yes.
- 2 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: My problem is, I can't
- 3 locate that alternative in the language of the statute.
- 4 MR. YANG: Well, I think --
- 5 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So are you asking us
- 6 just to make it up? Or if not, how do we reach it?
- 7 MR. YANG: We're not asking you actually
- 8 to -- to make that interpretation. It would be if the
- 9 Court concludes that our first interpretation is somehow
- 10 problematic, then we think that that is a superior
- 11 reading than Petitioner's for the following reason:
- 12 Congress addressed --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: No, no, no. Please
- 14 answer, how do we get to your reading from the text of
- 15 the statute.
- 16 MR. YANG: I will. The way you get there is
- 17 that Congress, in Clause 2, again, remember, specifies
- 18 you have intent to obtain money or property from a bank
- 19 by means of false or fraudulent pretenses,
- 20 representations, or promises. It does leave silent to
- 21 whom those false or fraudulent representations must be
- 22 made.
- Now, if you look at the legislative history,
- 24 it's very clear that Congress was at least concerned
- 25 with situations like Maze where a bank would be a victim

- 1 of a fraud. And those -- and Maze involved a situation
- 2 precisely like what we have here, where the reason that
- 3 the bank is a secondary victim is because that false
- 4 signature, the false charge slip --
- 5 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So far I'm with you, but
- 6 you haven't answered my question.
- 7 MR. YANG: But the way it is in that
- 8 context, the reason that the bank is the victim of the
- 9 scheme is because the fraudulent method is actually
- 10 transferred to the bank as an inherent part of the
- 11 scheme itself. And so --
- 12 JUSTICE KENNEDY: I -- I agree that that
- 13 interpretation substantially narrows the statute because
- 14 the altered check, the bank is going to be certainly at
- 15 risk of loss. If -- if we were to agree with that
- 16 suggestion and were inclined to read the statute that
- 17 way, is there a case that you can cite to us that says
- 18 we have a duty to save poorly drawn statutes by a
- 19 sensible amendment?
- 20 MR. YANG: No. No, I don't think we --
- 21 JUSTICE KENNEDY: I mean, what -- what case
- 22 do you -- what case do you want me to cite if I adopt
- 23 your alternate -- your fallback position?
- 24 MR. YANG: I don't think we are relying on
- 25 the idea that the -- what the Court is -- would be doing

- 1 is construing the statute in light of, presumably, some
- 2 good reason to reject what we think is what the statute
- 3 normally says.
- 4 JUSTICE SCALIA: Why don't you try the rule
- of lenity. Why don't you try the rule of lenity?
- 6 MR. YANG: We think that the rule of lenity
- 7 doesn't apply for the reasons that we said on our
- 8 broader argument. If the Court rejects that, that might
- 9 be a reason but, again, it's construing the term
- 10 "means."
- 11 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Does the rule of lenity
- 12 provide a precedent for us to adopt the narrowing
- 13 interpretation, your fallback position?
- 14 MR. YANG: I think just in any context where
- 15 you might have constitutional doubt, the Court
- 16 sometimes, you know, construes a statute in a way that
- 17 it might not otherwise do.
- 18 And here what we're giving you the hook for
- 19 this is that the means specified leaves open to whom
- 20 that false or fraudulent communication must be directed.
- 21 You could read, in light of the history and in light of
- 22 what Congress's main intent was here, to read the
- 23 statute as saying, ah, Congress actually in clause 2 was
- 24 concerned with the specific type of means, that is the
- 25 means that are directed to the bank.

1	And	the	reason	I	think	this	is	far	superior

- 2 than what Petitioner suggests is because we are at least
- 3 construing silence in the statute. Congress
- 4 specifically addressed intent already in clause 1, that
- 5 is intent to defraud a bank, which is what Petitioner
- 6 says clause 2 does. But clause 2 says there's intent to
- obtain money or property from the bank. There's no
- 8 reason to run over Congress's choice about what types of
- 9 schemes have to be intended in order to achieve this
- 10 result. Again, this is our fallback position --
- 11 JUSTICE SCALIA: If -- if we adopt your
- 12 fallback position, does (2) do anything that (1) doesn't
- 13 do? I mean, if you made -- if you made your false or
- 14 fraudulent representations to the bank, surely you
- 15 intend to defraud the bank.
- MR. YANG: Both clauses, actually, under our
- 17 fallback or our main position cover things that the
- 18 others will not. And I'll give you two examples. On
- 19 clause 1, clause 1 covers what's called bare check
- 20 kiting, where you write a check, it hasn't sufficient
- 21 funds, you withdraw the money, then you write another
- 22 check to cover it and another check and you play the
- 23 float. Nine courts of appeals have addressed this
- 24 question. All of them have concluded that it falls
- 25 under clause 1. Six of them have concluded it doesn't

- 1 fall under clause 2, and the additional three court of
- 2 appeals that have criminal jurisdiction in either
- 3 unpublished or in dictum have suggested agreement.
- 4 So it's pretty well established check kiting
- 5 falls under (1), not (2).
- 6 With respect to (2), it covers schemes like
- 7 this, where you can argue maybe you didn't intend to
- 8 defraud the bank itself, but you used false or
- 9 fraudulent means that would inherently go to the bank
- 10 because of the nature of the means themselves. Here
- 11 where you direct a check, it's a financial instrument.
- 12 It is ordering a bank to pay money. It goes to the
- 13 bank, and one normally intends the natural consequences
- of their acts. It goes to the bank in the ordinary
- 15 course.
- 16 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Which part of the
- 17 statute are you interpreting with this limiting
- 18 principle, the "obtain" part?
- 19 MR. YANG: "By means of."
- 20 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: "By means of."
- 21 MR. YANG: By means of the false or
- 22 fraudulent pretenses in this, understanding these false
- 23 or fraudulent pretenses to be ones which are directed to
- 24 the bank as an inherent consequence of the scheme
- 25 itself.

- 1 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Yang, your first order
- 2 argument, which is, you know, the natural way one would
- 3 read a statute that says "(1) or (2)," is to interpret
- 4 it as meaning two different things.
- 5 MR. YANG: Yes.
- 6 JUSTICE KAGAN: But that requires us to read
- 7 it differently from the way we read the exact same
- 8 words, without the numbers, but the exact same words in
- 9 McNally. And we know that Congress wanted the bank
- 10 fraud statutes to mirror the mail and wire fraud
- 11 statutes. So we end up with this -- you know, if we --
- 12 if we go with your friend over there, we read a statute
- in a way we wouldn't normally. But if we go with you,
- 14 we have to read these two statutes that say the same
- 15 thing and that we know Congress meant to say the same
- 16 thing differently.
- 17 MR. YANG: Right. And I think that there
- 18 are very sound reasons for doing that and I'll explain
- 19 why. First, when you look at the statute, Section 1344,
- 20 this is on page 5A in the bank frauds -- or the mail
- 21 fraud statute is 1341 on 2A, they are quite different.
- I mean, even when we just look at the statutory
- 23 structure alone, Congress broke these clauses up, put
- them on different lines, numbered them, indented them
- 25 equally. One would not naturally say you have the

- 1 option of one, Option A, or two, Option B --
- 2 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I take your point that
- 3 the words on the page look very good for you. But we
- 4 also know that Congress didn't intend for those
- 5 differences in spacing and numerology to have a
- 6 difference in meaning, don't we?
- 7 MR. YANG: No, no. Congress modeled -- it's
- 8 certainly true that Congress modeled the bank fraud
- 9 statute on the mail fraud statute. But that doesn't
- 10 mean that Congress wanted the two statutes to be
- 11 coterminous. In fact, Congress not only expressed its
- 12 understanding that these were disjunctive for the
- 13 various structural reasons, which I think are
- 14 inescapable from the text. But also Congress modified
- 15 the text itself. Congress didn't simply say a scheme to
- 16 defraud. It requires a scheme to defraud a financial
- 17 institution. Congress did not say a scheme to obtain
- 18 money or property. It specified that it's not only
- 19 property of the bank, owned by the bank; it is property
- 20 under the bank's custody that the bank doesn't own and
- 21 bank -- property that the bank owns, but is not even
- 22 under its custody or control, it's under the custody or
- 23 control of others.
- 24 This is a different statute, of course
- 25 modeled on the mail fraud statute, but it's different.

- 1 And Congress I don't think in 1984 could have been more
- 2 clear about its intent to make these two provisions,
- 3 that is the intent to defraud and the intent to obtain
- 4 provisions, distinct based on the choices that it made
- 5 in text.
- It's just, I think, impossible to read the
- 7 text and come away with the conclusion that in 1984 what
- 8 Congress intended, regardless of what happened in the
- 9 mail fraud statute in 1987, that Congress intended that,
- 10 or notwithstanding the only reading of "or" in this
- 11 context that makes any textual sense, since it's not
- 12 even defended in the textual argument on the other side,
- 13 that Congress meant that "or" in that structure to mean
- 14 anything but "or." That is, a disjunctive, two separate
- 15 clauses having independent meaning.
- And in fact, it would be anomalous to do so
- 17 because Section (2) covers, for instance, bank-owned
- 18 property that's not under the custody or the control of
- 19 the bank. So why would you intend to defraud the bank
- 20 when you're trying to really get it from the custodian
- 21 of the bank's property? The idea would be that the
- 22 means obtained, at the very least, would probably be
- 23 directed to the custodian of the property, not -- which
- 24 is not always the bank under clause 2.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Is the government still

- 1 taking the position that it took in the district court,
- 2 that 1344(1) also covers this case?
- 3 MR. YANG: Well, we disagree with the court
- 4 of appeals precedent which says you need a risk of loss
- 5 under clause 1. But the government acquiesced to the
- 6 district court's narrowing of this to clause 2.
- 7 JUSTICE ALITO: Along those lines, if we
- 8 were to agree that under sub (2) it was necessary to
- 9 show an intent to defraud the bank, what would the
- 10 government have to prove in an altered check case?
- MR. YANG: Well, I guess you've --
- 12 JUSTICE ALITO: Or what would you have had
- 13 to prove under sub (1) if this case could properly be
- 14 prosecuted under sub (1)?
- 15 MR. YANG: Well, you'd have to show that the
- 16 scheme was actually intended to obtain, to deceive the
- 17 bank, as well as obtain its property, as opposed to a --
- 18 and that intent difference can be significant in cases.
- 19 What we will have to show in here --
- 20 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, how can that intent
- 21 difference be significant? I mean, I would have thought
- that you would said the same proof that goes to whether
- 23 you intend to obtain bank property, even though you're
- 24 presenting this check only to a third party, and the
- 25 check may or may not be honored by the bank. You could

- 1 say the exact same thing about whether you intend to
- 2 defraud the bank.
- 3 MR. YANG: We certainly would probably rely
- 4 on the same types of evidence. We would then have the
- 5 additional burden of having to show that the intent was
- 6 to deceive the bank specifically.
- 7 JUSTICE ALITO: What I'm getting at is would
- 8 this require delving into the defendant's knowledge of
- 9 the legal relationship between the merchant here and the
- 10 bank?
- 11 MR. YANG: I think it inevitable is going to
- 12 come to that, and you're going to throw to juries these
- 13 questions of, like, you know, despite the fact that the
- 14 defendant has used a check, did the defendant really
- 15 know what a check was or did the defendant -- what is a
- 16 check --
- 17 JUSTICE KAGAN: But why isn't that the
- 18 same under the intent to obtain bank property? Where
- 19 you also, the defendant, might say: No, I really didn't
- 20 intend to obtain property, because I didn't really know
- 21 whether the bank would honor the check and, in fact, I
- 22 thought it wouldn't.
- 23 MR. YANG: Well, the scheme would be to
- 24 obtain. You don't have to necessarily show that the
- 25 specific means that you were using were intended to

- 1 deceive the bank, because that requires a lot more
- 2 inquiry --
- 3 JUSTICE KAGAN: But even on the obtain
- 4 property wing, it's obtain property from the bank, isn't
- 5 it?
- 6 MR. YANG: Not obtain property from the
- 7 bank. It is obtain property that is --
- 8 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, in the custody of the
- 9 bank?
- 10 MR. YANG: It doesn't have to be in the
- 11 custody of the bank. It can be bank-owned property in
- 12 the custody of others. So, for instance, banks have a
- 13 lot of assets. For instance, they can foreclose on
- 14 houses and such. In those contexts, you might have
- someone who is scheming to obtain bank property by
- 16 directing their fraud to a third party to whom the bank
- 17 has entrusted their assets.
- 18 JUSTICE KAGAN: No, but in a case like this,
- 19 wouldn't the difficulties of proof be the same? The
- 20 person -- whether you charge somebody with trying to
- 21 defraud the bank or with trying to obtain property owned
- 22 by or in the custody of the bank. If Justice Alito is
- 23 right as to the one, that all these questions about the
- 24 relationship between a bank and a retailer are going to
- come in, isn't he also right as to the other?

- 1 MR. YANG: I'm not quite -- I don't think
- 2 that's quite right. And the reason is that whenever you
- 3 have to show an additional intent requirement, it ups
- 4 the ante. Just like in homicide, you have various
- 5 gradations of a homicide including up to murder. When
- 6 you have an additional --
- 7 JUSTICE ALITO: Doesn't the answer depend on
- 8 from whom -- for whom the money, either owned or
- 9 under -- in the custody of the bank has to be obtained?
- 10 If it -- if it doesn't have to be obtained by the
- 11 defendant, then it wouldn't seem to me that there would
- 12 be much of a question. Because even if the only thing
- 13 that the defendant obtains from the merchant is an Xbox,
- 14 if the -- if the check is honored, it is going to be
- obtained by the merchant. Somebody is going to be
- 16 obtaining money from the bank if the check is ultimately
- 17 honored.
- 18 MR. YANG: May I just -- I would just
- 19 qualify that by saying that the defendant is obtaining
- 20 the money. It's obtaining it through the check to be
- 21 paid to the merchant. That's --
- 22 JUSTICE ALITO: Right. The ultimate --
- 23 JUSTICE SCALIA: Excuse me. You have -- you
- 24 have to posit his expectation that the check will be
- 25 honored, don't you?

- 1 MR. YANG: It has to -- the scheme has to
- 2 contemplate that.
- 3 JUSTICE SCALIA: Exactly.
- 4 MR. YANG: The scheme has to contemplate
- 5 that.
- 6 JUSTICE SCALIA: And if it's a scheme
- 7 that -- that's making alterations that no reasonable
- 8 person would expect the bank to honor, it seems to me
- 9 you're out of luck.
- 10 MR. YANG: Well, I don't -- if I might
- 11 respond, Mr. Chief Justice.
- 12 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Sure.
- 13 MR. YANG: The -- I don't think that
- 14 actually plays out in fact. Banks suffer about a
- 15 billion dollars in check fraud a year. There are \$10
- 16 billion that banks put into check fraud prevention.
- 17 There are so many checks that fly through, including the
- 18 checks here. If you look at the checks here, the ones
- 19 that he got caught for, not the ones that he might have
- 20 washed and dried, weren't artfully done. But some still
- 21 go through. And the transaction costs that it imposes
- 22 on the financial system is something that Congress could
- 23 have been concerned with. In fact, we think it was.
- 24 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
- 25 Five minutes, Mr. Russell.

2	ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER
3	MR. RUSSELL: Thank you. Congress was
4	concerned about the the risks to banks of altered
5	checks, but it dealt with that in Section 513, not
6	Section 1344.
7	JUSTICE GINSBURG: Mr. Yang said it
8	wasn't wasn't the scope of 513 wasn't clear.

REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF KEVIN K. RUSSELL

1

9

- 10 correct. I mean, we cited a case in our brief in which
- 11 the government actually succeeded in prosecuting someone

MR. RUSSELL: I don't think that that's

- 12 for an altered check under Section 513. I don't
- 13 understand the argument that checks aren't encompassed
- 14 within 513. We've reproduced the language at 10-A of
- 15 the blue brief. And what it says is that it
- 16 criminalizes the use of a forged security. And it
- 17 defines "forged" to mean altered. It defines "security"
- 18 to mean check. And then it has to be a forged security
- 19 of an organization. And it defines "organization" to
- 20 mean any legal entity other than a government
- 21 established or organized for any purpose and includes
- 22 any corporation, company, association, firm, et cetera.
- I just don't understand what the argument is
- that Section 513 doesn't cover some species of altered
- 25 checks. But at the very least, if you thought that

- 1 Congress must have intended to Federally criminalize use
- of all altered checks, it's an easier interpretation to
- 3 say that 513 covers it than the bank fraud statute.
- 4 The government's argument here today makes
- 5 utterly clear how broad the Federal bank fraud statute
- 6 will be if you adopt their interpretation. They're
- 7 going -- it encompasses the fake Renoir example and all
- 8 of the ones in our briefs and it includes every
- 9 not-sufficient-funds case. And -- and the government
- 10 acknowledges --
- 11 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Could you please tell me
- 12 why -- what your objections are to the "by means of
- 13 limiting principle" the government gives as an
- 14 alternative?
- 15 MR. RUSSELL: So there's -- there's several
- 16 objections. One is the one that you raised. There's no
- 17 basis for it in the text. It is a limitation on what
- 18 the -- the statute says. Any false representation, then
- 19 they say no, only those false representations that would
- 20 foreseeably go to a bank and might fool them into paying
- 21 a check.
- 22 Second, it doesn't do any useful work
- 23 because all it does is -- the only difference between
- 24 their fallback position and intent to defraud a bank is
- 25 two things. One is it permits them to bring cases in

- 1 these third-party altered check cases, and we've argued
- 2 we don't think that those fall under the statute anyway.
- 3 But even if you think that they do, the much
- 4 easier thing to say is they fall under the statute.
- 5 Intent to require -- you know, defraud a bank is
- 6 required, but the use of the altered check is sufficient
- 7 evidence.
- 8 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, I think it does a
- 9 lot of work because it -- it takes out of the equation
- 10 schemes to defraud where the bank is not going to be
- 11 liable.
- 12 MR. RUSSELL: Right. I'm -- I'm saying it
- doesn't do any work that intent to defraud a bank
- 14 doesn't already do. So if you're choosing between our
- 15 test and their test, both tests allow prosecutions of
- 16 paradigmatic fraud cases. Both cases, both tests
- 17 eliminate the Renoir example. But their test permits --
- 18 the only difference, practical difference, is their case
- 19 facilitates prosecution in these third-party cases that
- 20 we don't think are covered by the statute anyway, but
- 21 even if there are, you don't have to adopt this extra
- 22 textual interpretation. Instead --
- 23 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But I don't understand
- 24 how, if the falsehood is made to Target, who gives the
- 25 person the DVD off the shelf, how you prove that that's

- 1 an intent to defraud the bank as opposed to defraud
- 2 Target.
- 3 MR. RUSSELL: Well, so there's the --
- 4 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So what's the charge you
- 5 give to the jury to get to that? I think the limiting
- 6 principle is the charge that they want to get.
- 7 MR. RUSSELL: You say that they have to show
- 8 that the defendant intended to deceive a bank, and the
- 9 government can argue -- and the government has
- 10 successfully argued in many cases that use of an altered
- 11 check shows that the defendant intended to deceive a
- 12 bank.
- 13 And the government raises -- you know, the
- 14 government never likes to have to prove intent. But the
- 15 government raises these theoretical difficulties in
- 16 proving intent, but it hasn't shown that this actually
- 17 ever arises. In fact, the government routinely convicts
- 18 people in circumstances like this case, even in circuits
- 19 where intent to defraud a bank is required. It's just
- 20 they didn't try to do that here because they didn't ask
- 21 the jury to make that finding.
- In addition, the difficulty of their test is
- 23 it's just plain strange. They say you should adopt
- 24 their test because Congress didn't care about intent to
- 25 defraud a bank. Then they adopt a rule that looks very

- 1 much like the kind of rule you would adopt if you
- 2 thought Congress cared about intent to defraud a bank.
- 3 It's simply substituting some circumstantial evidence
- 4 that one could argue to a jury shows intent to defraud a
- 5 bank and saying that's all the government has to prove.
- 6 JUSTICE ALITO: Your textual hook is that
- 7 there -- that the representation has to be made to the
- 8 bank, right? That's the only way you can get this
- 9 within the statute.
- 10 MR. RUSSELL: That's correct.
- 11 JUSTICE ALITO: But that's different from an
- intent to defraud the bank, isn't it?
- 13 MR. RUSSELL: I think -- well, that's the
- 14 first half. So there's two pieces: Intent to deceive
- 15 the bank, intent to obtain bank property.
- We say that you can read the statute to
- 17 require intent to deceive the bank because there's a
- 18 statutory silence. And then the government has to prove
- 19 intent to obtain bank property. That's easily proven
- 20 when the check is directly presented to a bank. We
- 21 don't think it can be proven in a case like this because
- 22 our client intended to obtain Target's property, not the
- 23 bank's.
- 24 JUSTICE ALITO: But where is the textual
- 25 silence about -- where do you get intent to deceive the

1	bank into this?
2	MR. RUSSELL: I think that's what I get
3	it from this Court's decision, for example, in McNally
4	where it said
5	JUSTICE ALITO: Where do you get it the from
6	the text? I understand the argument. It's a it's a
7	very credible argument. It doesn't say to whom the
8	representations have to be made. So you put in to the
9	bank.
LO	MR. RUSSELL: Right.
L1	JUSTICE ALITO: I don't see how you get from
L2	there to defrauding the bank.
L3	MR. RUSSELL: So if you read it to mean that
L 4	you have to direct the false statement to the bank, that
L5	is the first half of what McNally said intent to deceive
L 6	a bank or intent to defraud a bank is, you have to
L7	intend to deceive a bank. And the second half is you
L8	have to get intend the deceit to obtain bank
L9	property, which is on the face of Subsection (2).
20	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
21	The case is submitted.
22	(Whereupon, at 11:06 a.m., the case in the
23	above-entitled matter was submitted.)
24	

25

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