SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

IN THE	SUPREME	COURT	OF	THE	UNITED	STATES
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DENISE A. BAI	GEROW,)	
	Petition	ner,)	
V	•) No. 2	20-1143
GREG WALTERS,	ET AL.,)	
	Responde	ents.)	

Pages: 1 through 60

Place: Washington, D.C.

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1	IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE	UNITED STATES
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3	DENISE A. BADGEROW,)
4	Petitioner,)
5	v.) No. 20-1143
6	GREG WALTERS, ET AL.,)
7	Respondents.)
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9		
10	Washington, D.C	
11	Tuesday, November	2, 2021
12		
13	The above-entitled matt	er came on for
14	oral argument before the Supre	eme Court of the
15	United States at 11:29 a.m.	
16		
17	APPEARANCES:	
18		
19	DANIEL L. GEYSER, ESQUIRE, Dal	las, Texas; on behalf of
20	the Petitioner.	
21	LISA S. BLATT, ESQUIRE, Washin	ngton, D.C.; on behalf of
22	the Respondents.	
23		
24		
25		

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1	PROCEEDINGS
2	(11:29 a.m.)
3	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear
4	argument next in Case 20-1143, Badgerow versus
5	Walters.
6	Mr. Geyser.
7	ORAL ARGUMENT OF DANIEL L. GEYSER
8	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER
9	MR. GEYSER: Thank you, Mr. Chief
10	Justice, and may it please the Court:
11	The question presented is whether
12	Vaden's look-through approach applies to
13	applications to enforce or vacate an arbitration
14	award under Sections 9 and 10 of the Federal
15	Arbitration Act. The answer is controlled by
16	the FAA's plain text, and the competing
17	statutory arguments are not close.
18	The look-through approach is no
19	ordinary jurisdictional doctrine. It is an
20	express textual departure from the well-pleaded
21	complaint rule. This textual exception is found
22	solely in Section 4. It applies exclusively to
23	petitions under that single section. Congress
24	did not repeat this unique language anywhere
25	else in the Act. In fact, there's not a single

- 1 textual hint in any other section that a
- 2 look-through analysis is allowed or appropriate.
- 3 Yet, according to Respondents, the
- 4 look-through approach somehow applies to every
- 5 section of the FAA instead of the single section
- 6 where it actually appears.
- Respondents' theory fails on every
- 8 conceivable level. For over a century now, the
- 9 well-pleaded complaint rule has governed the
- 10 exercise of jurisdiction in federal courts.
- 11 That's the rule that applies unless Congress
- 12 says otherwise. And Congress said otherwise in
- 13 Section 4 alone. Congress did not isolate the
- 14 look-through clause in Section 4 because it
- wanted it applied in other sections where it was
- 16 excluded.
- 17 Nor did Congress endorse Respondents'
- 18 notion of an upside-down default rule, where
- 19 courts ignore the face of the well-pleaded
- 20 filing and instead look to a nonexistent,
- 21 phantom pleading that never appears in any
- 22 court.
- 23 Respondents' theory would require
- 24 overturning bedrock jurisdictional doctrine and
- abandoning this Court's fidelity to the

- 1 statutory text. There is simply no basis for
- 2 saying the look-through approach applies in
- 3 Sections 9 and 10 without judicially rewriting
- 4 the statute or rendering Section 4's express
- 5 look-through clause wholly superfluous.
- I welcome the Court's questions.
- 7 JUSTICE THOMAS: Counsel, we have said
- 8 or suggested from time to time that the FAA
- 9 doesn't provide federal question jurisdiction.
- 10 So how do you square that with the notion that
- 11 Section 4, Section 8, provide such jurisdiction?
- MR. GEYSER: Well, I think the best
- 13 reading of this Court's cases is it was
- 14 referring generally to the idea that when an
- 15 action arises under federal law, then the
- 16 federal law itself provides jurisdiction. The
- 17 Court wasn't parsing the individual sections of
- 18 the Act and saying whether there's a specific
- 19 independent grant of jurisdiction.
- But, ultimately, I don't think it
- 21 matters because there are only two ways to read
- 22 Section 4. We read Section 4 as providing
- 23 jurisdiction. But the alternative is to read
- 24 Section 4 as providing an instruction to courts
- on how to exercise jurisdiction under sections

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1 like 1331 and 1332, and that instruction says
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- 2 you can look through to the underlying dispute.
- Now that's the departure from the
- 4 well-pleaded complaint rule that traditionally
- 5 governs every other filing in the Act, and that
- 6 exception, that express instruction to depart
- 7 from that traditional rule, is found only in
- 8 Section 4.
- 9 So even if jurisdiction is ultimately
- 10 deemed to vest under 1331, per Section 4's
- instruction, which is basically what this Court
- 12 said in Vaden, you come out to the same -- it
- 13 comes out to the same outcome whether you adopt
- that approach, you say Section 4 itself is an
- independent grant of jurisdiction.
- 16 JUSTICE THOMAS: Well, isn't that an
- 17 odd statute, that you just have one provision in
- 18 a long statute that grants jurisdiction in sort
- 19 of a -- a -- a roundabout way?
- 20 MR. GEYSER: Well, I think that the --
- 21 the Federal Arbitration Act is deemed slightly
- 22 anomalous, but I think what's absolutely clear
- 23 from the FAA is that the only basis for
- 24 departing from the well-pleaded complaint rule
- is, in fact, in Section 4.

1	If Congress wanted that rule to apply
2	to every section of the Act, it could have put
3	it in a free-standing provision that applied
4	globally, just like it did with Section 6 in
5	saying that applications or petitions in the Act
6	are treated as motions, or as it did in the
7	international arbitration context under
8	Section 203.
9	Nothing stopped Congress from saying,
LO	for every pleading under the Federal Arbitration
L1	Act, you should look through to the underlying
L2	hypothetical nonexistent dispute and decide
L3	whether that would give rise to federal
L4	jurisdiction.
L5	That's exactly opposite the way that
L6	courts have functioned in determining federal
L7	jurisdiction on the face of the pleading for
L8	over a century.
L9	JUSTICE THOMAS: Thank you.
20	JUSTICE KAGAN: And, Mr. Geyser, when
21	when you say the well-pleaded complaint rule
22	and that's the alternative, what does the
23	well-pleaded complaint rule indicate in this
24	case? I mean, you say the well-pleaded
25	complaint rule tells you this is the enforcement

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of a state law contract claim, so we're in state
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- 2 court. But I might say, well, if we look to the
- 3 well-pleaded complaint, the well-pleaded
- 4 complaint says something about Section 9 and
- 5 this arises under federal law.
- 6 MR. GEYSER: Sure, Your Honor. Well,
- 7 I -- I think that what's before the Court, and
- 8 just to be very clear, is not the underlying
- 9 dispute; it is clearly the attempt to enforce
- 10 the arbitration contract.
- Now, when you're enforcing the
- 12 arbitration contract, it's true you're looking
- 13 to elements of federal law, but that's exactly
- what this Court has said now for approaching
- 15 four decades. It's not --
- 16 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, I quess what I'm
- saying is that the attempt to enforce the
- 18 contract is -- is -- is through Section 9. And
- 19 so why doesn't Section 9 on the well-pleaded
- 20 complaint rule put you in federal court?
- 21 MR. GEYSER: It -- it typically would,
- 22 Your Honor, except for the fact that for nearly
- 23 four decades this Court said it doesn't. This
- 24 Court said that the Federal Arbitration Act is
- 25 an anomaly and that it normally -- unlike the

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1 normal situation, where that would give
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- 2 arising-under jurisdiction, the Federal
- 3 Arbitration Act departs from that tradition.
- 4 And I think it does so --
- 5 JUSTICE KAGAN: Yeah, but -- so it's a
- 6 little bit of an odd argument that you're
- 7 making, right, because you're saying, well, it's
- 8 got to be the well-pleaded complaint rule, but
- 9 then you're also saying the well-pleaded
- 10 complaint rule, by virtue of one of our
- 11 holdings, actually does not function in the way
- the well-pleaded complaint rule normally does.
- MR. GEYSER: Well, I -- I think two
- 14 responses, Your Honor.
- 15 First, one thing that's very clear is
- that we can, I think, all agree that there's no
- 17 license in under the text of the statute or the
- 18 well-pleaded complaint rule to look through to
- 19 the underlying dispute. You do look at what's
- 20 actually before the Court.
- 21 So then the question is, should the
- 22 Court overturn nearly four decades of this
- 23 Court's precedent saying that even though the
- 24 party is enforcing an element of the Federal
- 25 Arbitration Act to enforce an arbitration

- 1 contract, that that's not enough to get into
- 2 federal court? And I would suggest that there
- 3 the -- the Respondents have not asked this Court
- 4 to reconsider that line of authority.
- 5 I think it would be striking to
- 6 reverse it. And just to imagine the practical
- 7 consequences of doing so. The -- if, in fact,
- 8 it's enough to get into federal court to simply
- 9 invoke an element of the Federal Arbitration
- 10 Act, then every single contract governed by the
- 11 FAA is eligible for federal jurisdiction.
- 12 Even the most mundane state law
- disputes between non-diverse parties, every
- 14 single one of those would come to federal court.
- 15 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: That's -- that's
- 16 not their argument, though.
- MR. GEYSER: Well, that -- that isn't
- 18 their argument, but their argument I think --
- 19 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Their argument, I
- think, is that the look-through applies to at
- 21 least some proceedings under the Act, that we've
- 22 repeatedly said that the Act doesn't affect
- jurisdiction, however, and, therefore, you put
- those two things together, that look-through
- 25 must apply to all the FAA proceedings.

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1 And anomalous as it is, the -- there
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- 2 are -- Julius Cohen and the ABA interpreted this
- 3 Act back in the 1920s as doing this anomalous
- 4 look-through, and correct me if I'm wrong, but
- 5 I've read -- read those.
- 6 MR. GEYSER: Well, I -- I -- I
- 7 disagree that that's what Julius Cohen was
- 8 saying. Now, granted, that -- that isn't even
- 9 legislative history. It's actually a
- 10 post-enactment article, so it's --
- 11 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: No, but it's
- 12 getting at what was the understanding of how the
- 13 Act operated by people who were expert in the
- 14 field at the time, because otherwise this seems
- pretty anomalous, but when you realize, well,
- the experts at the time thought this is how it
- 17 works, it -- it defeats the idea of how
- anomalous it is that it's look-through all the
- 19 way through.
- 20 And I just don't how -- know how you
- 21 get around our repeated statements that the Act
- 22 does not confer jurisdiction or affect
- jurisdiction, as Justice Thomas said, because,
- 24 if you -- if you take that as a given, then
- 25 Section 4 can't -- can't do that either.

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1 MR. GEYSER: Well, a -- a couple
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- 2 points there, Your Honor.
- First, I -- I don't think that Julius
- 4 Cohen even was saying that the look-through
- 5 approach applies to everything. He's saying you
- 6 can apply the look-through approach to enforce
- 7 arbitration agreements, which, in fact, is a
- 8 reference to Section 4.
- 9 So I don't read the legislative -- the
- 10 -- the non-legislative history, the
- 11 post-enactment commentary by a single person as
- actually saying that the look-through approach
- 13 atextually applies to every single provision of
- the Act, even though Congress was very
- deliberate in putting it only in Section 4.
- And saying not only that, it wasn't
- 17 even a free-standing sentence in Section 4. The
- 18 look-through approach is intertwined directly
- 19 with a motion to compel arbitration. And this
- 20 Court in Vaden understood that to instruct
- 21 courts to depart from the well-pleaded complaint
- 22 rule for Section 4 alone and to decide whether
- then jurisdiction would vest under Section 1331
- 24 or 1332.
- So, again, even if you disagree with

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1 our reading that Section 4, in fact, is an
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- 2 independent grant of jurisdiction, I think at
- 3 the very least it's instructing courts how to --
- 4 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Isn't that the
- 5 end -- sorry to interrupt -- but isn't that the
- 6 end of your case if we disagree with that?
- 7 MR. GEYSER: Oh, not -- not at all,
- 8 Your Honor.
- 9 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Okay.
- 10 MR. GEYSER: Not at all because --
- 11 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Keep going then.
- 12 MR. GEYSER: -- because the -- the
- 13 alternative is then jurisdiction -- we know from
- 14 this Court's case law that jurisdiction has to
- independently arise from somewhere. That
- somewhere is Section 1331 and 1332 typically,
- 17 unless it's an admiralty case, which are --
- 18 which are pretty easy under the Act.
- But, under 1331 and 1332, as Vaden
- also confirmed, the well-pleaded complaint rule
- 21 applies. So, if you look to the face of the
- 22 filing, it is not an attempt to adjudicate the
- 23 underlying dispute.
- 24 The only reason that you depart from
- 25 that -- and this is why Vaden said the text of

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1 Section 4 drives our conclusion -- is because
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- 2 Section 4 itself instructs courts to depart from
- 3 the well-pleaded complaint for purposes of
- 4 compelling arbitration. It does not say that in
- 5 Section 9. It doesn't say that in Section 10.
- 6 Congress was well aware how to tell
- 7 courts to retain jurisdiction on the back end if
- 8 they want. That's, in fact, exactly what they
- 9 did in Section 8. When they're dealing with
- 10 maritime cases, they said you can exercise
- jurisdiction to compel arbitration and you can
- 12 retain jurisdiction on the back end.
- 13 That's a very odd command if Congress
- was assuming that the look-through approach
- 15 simply applies across the board.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: So, on your theory,
- when would Section 9 and 10 give federal courts
- 18 jurisdiction? Is it only in diversity cases?
- MR. GEYSER: It's predominantly in
- 20 diversity cases. And I think, again, the --
- 21 JUSTICE KAGAN: And isn't that a
- 22 little bit backwards, that it ends up that you
- 23 put the diversity cases in the federal court
- 24 system and you take all the cases that involve
- 25 federal questions and say, oh, the federal

- 1 courts don't have anything to do with those
- 2 cases?
- 3 MR. GEYSER: Not at all, Your Honor,
- 4 because think about, first, going back to 1925,
- 5 we are predominantly dealing with commercial
- 6 contracts. If you want to talk about what
- 7 Julius Cohen was thinking, he was thinking
- 8 diversity cases and maritime cases. It wasn't
- 9 even clear that federal statutory cases were
- 10 subject to the FAA for decades.
- 11 So I -- I think, if you -- the
- drafters weren't thinking of federal questions.
- But, also, look at the nature of the action
- under Section 9 and Section 10. It's not an
- 15 attempt to readjudicate the underlying federal
- 16 suit. In fact, that would stand the Federal
- 17 Arbitration Act on its head. That would make
- arbitration a prelude to the real event in court
- where you'll readjudicate all these federal
- 20 questions.
- 21 Section 9 is a ministerial function of
- 22 confirming the award. You don't even need to
- know generally what the underlying dispute was
- 24 about, whether it's a federal question or
- 25 otherwise.

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1 Section 10, as the Court said in Hall
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- 2 Street, was designed to check egregious
- 3 departures from the arbitration contract.
- 4 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: And you would send
- 5 those to state court?
- 6 MR. GEYSER: I -- I -- I would, just
- 7 as --
- 8 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: And is it clear --
- 9 I think it's not clear -- that state courts
- 10 would apply Section 10?
- 11 MR. GEYSER: I think some state courts
- 12 apply Section 10 nominally. Others don't.
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: So we're going to
- 14 have a whole collateral thing of do the state
- 15 courts have to apply Section 10 or what other
- 16 standards do they apply?
- 17 MR. GEYSER: And -- and this Court in
- 18 Hall Street said that's perfectly fine. In
- 19 fact, in Hall Street and -- and in Vaden itself,
- 20 it reminded litigants that state courts, in
- 21 fact, play a prominent role in enforcing the
- 22 Act, and -- and in large part, the Act is left
- 23 to enforcement in the state courts.
- 24 And Hall Street confirmed that most
- 25 state courts apply standards that either are

- 1 Section 10, they either apply the FAA directly,
- 2 or they apply a state law standard that -- that
- 3 is a functional equivalent to it.
- 4 JUSTICE BREYER: Can you just explain
- 5 some -- I'm just missing this. I had trouble
- 6 with it. Why would they have jurisdiction in
- 7 diversity cases but not have jurisdiction in
- 8 federal question cases?
- 9 MR. GEYSER: The -- I -- I think the
- 10 idea, Your Honor, is that if you have
- 11 non-diverse parties that are trying to vacate an
- 12 award above the threshold amount, they can get
- into federal court. And we agree with that.
- 14 That's the well-pleaded complaint rule.
- But, in a federal question case, the
- 16 -- the pleading before the Court under Section 9
- 17 and Section 10 is not the underlying case. It's
- 18 the attempt to enforce the arbitration contract.
- 19 It's saying, I want the arbitration contract
- 20 enforced, not I want to adjudicate the federal
- 21 question --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Oh, I see. Okay.
- 23 MR. GEYSER: -- in the underlying
- 24 case.
- 25 JUSTICE BREYER: Okay. Then the odd

- 1 thing is that -- that I -- we have Vaden. And
- 2 so, in the federal question area at least, sure,
- 3 you can come in, the parties are having an
- 4 argument, the argument's about the federal
- 5 question, it is a -- I mean, the argument, they
- 6 say, would be good arbitration. It's an
- 7 antitrust problem or it's an employment problem.
- 8 And -- and Vaden says, yeah, go ahead, they
- 9 won't go, go get an injunction.
- Now, to me, it doesn't seem to make
- 11 very much sense to say: Okay, go there, get an
- 12 injunction. Hey, but when it comes time to
- enforce it, you can't go there. When it comes
- time to issue a subpoena, you can't go there.
- When it comes -- and, you know, that just -- why
- 16 you separate 4 from the rest of it, I can't get
- 17 it.
- Now I understand there's a little bit
- of different language. There is. But you also
- 20 could use the words "such agreement" as being
- 21 the key to this, and they're talking about such
- 22 agreement, and such agreement means the
- 23 agreement we're talking about, which is the
- 24 Section 4 agreement which could get there, and
- if that's the one we're talking about, you can

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1 do these other things too. Okay.
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- 2 Maybe I didn't say it exactly right,
- 3 but you get the point.
- 4 MR. GEYSER: I -- I -- I get the point
- 5 and you said it very well.
- 6 The -- first, I'd say that there is
- 7 radically different language between Section 4
- 8 and the other sections, so --
- 9 JUSTICE BREYER: It says save this
- 10 agreement.
- MR. GEYSER: It's -- it's not -- but
- 12 the -- but I think there are other reasons --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Save this --
- MR. GEYSER: -- not to do that.
- 15 First, the Congress clearly framed
- 16 these different provisions as standalone
- 17 provisions. There's no requirement that a party
- invoke Section 4 on the front end. They can
- only invoke Section 9 or 10 on the back end.
- That's what happened in this case.
- 21 The provisions are framed as
- 22 standalone petitions or applications. Most of
- them have their own service requirements. They
- have their -- their own statute of limitations,
- 25 their own venue rules, their own even

- 1 jurisdictional requirements in Section 4 and
- 2 Section 8.
- 3 This is not Congress thinking that you
- 4 start at the beginning with Section 4 and a
- 5 court, a single court, supervises it all the way
- 6 through. In fact, you can have different
- 7 federal courts enforcing different provisions of
- 8 this Act.
- 9 So this is clearly not a continuum.
- 10 This isn't Congress thinking we need
- 11 jurisdiction from the start to finish --
- 12 JUSTICE BREYER: All right. But, if
- that's the main argument, what we're doing here
- 14 normally is we are having, let's call him an
- 15 arbitration rat. There is the guy who loves
- 16 arbitration and then there is the rat who hates
- it, although he agreed to it, okay?
- Now he will express his ratitude in
- 19 many different ways. First, he will not want to
- 20 go in in the first place. Then, if you make him
- 21 go in in the first place, he's not going to want
- 22 the other guy to get any witnesses. And then,
- if you go and get that, he's not going to want
- 24 the -- anybody to enforce this thing which he
- 25 lost in the third place.

_	50, or course, these don't arr just
2	always follow. It depends on which of these
3	provisions the guy can use and invoke in order
4	to stop what he agreed to, which is the
5	arbitration.
6	MR. GEYSER: A few answers, Your
7	Honor.
8	First, when a federal court compels
9	arbitration or stays a case on the front end, it
10	has discretion where it sees the arbitration
11	rat, the person who is going to fight tooth and
12	nail, to retain jurisdiction over the case, and
13	it can exercise the other authority under the
14	Act as an ancillary matter, which is exactly how
15	the it normally works in the settlement
16	context. You can have a federal claim, and it
17	can it can be settled, and a court can retain
18	jurisdiction over the case to supervise the
19	settlement or put the settlement in the decree.
20	And you can have situations then where
21	the same settlement dispute will either be
22	subject to federal jurisdiction or not, entirely
23	based on whether the court exercises discretion
24	to do that, and there's nothing wrong with that.
25	This Court said in Vaden that federal

- 1 jurisdiction often turns on how litigation
- 2 unfolds. And you can have different situations.
- 3 And where Congress wanted a single court to
- 4 retain jurisdiction, whether it's because of an
- 5 arbitration rat or not, it said it expressly.
- 6 Look at Section 8. Section 8 says
- 7 that the court has jurisdiction to compel
- 8 arbitration in the maritime context and it
- 9 retains jurisdiction to enforce the award.
- 10 Congress did not repeat that language
- in Section 9 or in Section 10.
- 12 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So you could
- 13 call them an arbitration rat or a judicial lion,
- 14 I suppose.
- 15 (Laughter.)
- 16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But, I mean,
- isn't the -- isn't the problem here -- and I
- 18 think your -- your friend will have the exact
- 19 flip side of the problem -- the somewhat unusual
- 20 situation where this is a federal statute that
- 21 we have said does not give rise to federal
- 22 jurisdiction?
- I mean, that's why it seems to me that
- it's so difficult to parse exactly where you're
- going to be in federal court and when you're

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1 going to be in state court.
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- 2 MR. GEYSER: I -- I do think that that
- 3 is an element of what's going on. But given
- 4 that as a premise, the question then is: Can
- 5 you graft the look-through clause, which
- 6 absolutely clearly applies in Section 4 and only
- 7 Section 4, onto these other sections?
- Now I think the reason you haven't
- 9 heard my friend say that the Court should
- 10 reconsider that line of authority is because
- she's perfectly aware of what would happen if
- 12 you were.
- Just to give an example, for the
- 14 12-month period that ended in March of 2020,
- there were 332,000 civil filings in U.S.
- 16 district courts nationwide. So far this year,
- in the AAA alone, they've adjudicated 380,000
- 18 arbitrations.
- 19 And if you're to say that simply
- 20 invoking any provision of the Act is enough,
- 21 then what you have is anyone with a state law
- 22 claim and non-diverse parties, now these 380,000
- 23 cases are all eligible --
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: This -- that's --
- 25 MR. GEYSER: -- for federal

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1 jurisdiction.
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- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: -- that's not
- 3 their -- that's an amicus argument. That's not
- 4 their argument.
- 5 MR. GEYSER: It isn't their argument,
- 6 but their argument is now what they're --
- 7 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: And so I guess the
- 8 -- of what relevance are those statistics,
- 9 unless we're thinking of adopting the amicus
- 10 position, which --
- 11 MR. GEYSER: Well -- well -- well, I
- 12 certainly hope you're not.
- 13 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Yeah
- MR. GEYSER: I was just trying to
- 15 respond to the -- to the Chief Justice's
- 16 question. But I do think, though, what you look
- 17 at my friend trying to do then is thinking,
- 18 well, we know it's not acceptable to say that
- 19 everything comes in, so now we need to
- 20 artificially limit it to a subset of cases.
- 21 But that's the problem. This is an
- 22 artificial limit. It's very clear that the
- 23 Section 4 language simply does not apply in
- 24 those other sections. And if the Court is to
- 25 say that the look --

- 1 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: But wouldn't
- 2 you -- to pick up on Justice Breyer's questions,
- 3 doesn't it make sense to have a -- a uniform
- 4 rule if you're not going to have, oh, the Act
- 5 itself confers jurisdiction, a uniform way to
- 6 think about jurisdiction? And the uniform way
- 7 that I understood it's always been thought about
- 8 was you look through to the underlying
- 9 controversy, it's pretty simple, and you do that
- 10 kind of all the way through.
- 11 Not that that's easy in every case,
- but at least that's the rule, and you don't get
- into these state court questions about does
- 14 Section 10 apply in state courts, which I think
- 15 is very tricky. Anyway.
- MR. GEYSER: Well, first, Your Honor,
- 17 you're -- you're going to get the question
- 18 whether Section 10 applies under any reading --
- 19 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Yeah.
- 20 MR. GEYSER: -- because you have the
- 21 state law case with the non-diverse parties. So
- 22 you -- that -- that's -- that's inevitable, that
- 23 this case is not the -- for better or worse, the
- last Federal Arbitration Act case the Court is
- 25 going to see.

- But -- but I also think, though,
- 2 again, looking at it, it is not a uniform
- 3 approach. This is an express textual departure.
- 4 And I know Your Honor said the usual way is to
- 5 look through. No, that's the opposite. The
- 6 usual way is you look at the face of the
- 7 pleading. And what parties are seeking to bring
- 8 before the court, whether under Section 4 or
- 9 Section 9 or Section 10, is not the underlying
- 10 dispute. They're trying to adjudicate a
- 11 specific performance right to the arbitration
- 12 contract.
- JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: One other textual
- 14 point. They emphasize that Section 4 should be
- read as a venue provision. Can you address
- 16 that?
- 17 MR. GEYSER: Sure. I -- I think the
- 18 easiest way to address that, Your Honor, is that
- 19 it's -- it's directly at odds with Vaden. In
- 20 Vaden, all nine members of the Court looked at
- 21 Section 4. It was framed as a jurisdictional
- 22 provision by all nine members of the Court. The
- word "venue" doesn't appear in either the
- 24 majority opinion or the dissenting opinion.
- 25 I think it's inconceivable that all

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1 nine members of the Court simply overlooked that
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- 2 they were unwittingly construing a venue
- 3 provision. And I think the reason they didn't
- 4 overlook anything is because Section 4 is
- 5 phrased in jurisdictional terms. It is --
- 6 doesn't look anything like a normal venue
- 7 provision.
- 8 My friend says that there are actually
- 9 two venue provisions in Section 4 and they
- 10 contradict each other. The only case law
- 11 support they have that Section 4 has anything to
- do with venue is a Seventh Circuit case that
- wasn't focused on the look-through clause; it
- 14 was focused on a different sentence, four
- sentences after it, that is completely unrelated
- 16 to the look-through provision and, in fact, said
- the look-through provision does not provide
- 18 venue.
- So it is -- it is truly -- it's a --
- it's a very inventive theory, and my friend, who
- is a very able lawyer, came up with it because
- they realized that if they don't give the
- look-through clause some meaning in Section 4
- and if the default is, as they say, that you
- 25 always look through, then that clause becomes

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1 entirely superfluous. It serves no --
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- 2 JUSTICE BREYER: The same -- I still
- 3 have the same -- were you finished?
- 4 MR. GEYSER: Yes, yes.
- 5 JUSTICE BREYER: I still have the same
- 6 basic problem, if you want to add something to
- 7 it. Look, arbitration goes on all over the
- 8 world. Okay? There are arbitrators. They
- 9 decide the case. And here is a fairly simple
- 10 rule finally. We need to go to a judge to get
- 11 them into arbitration, and we're going to need a
- judge to enforce it. All right? So now we know
- which judges. It's the federal judges who will
- 14 be primarily concerned with enforcing those
- 15 disputes that are related to federal law.
- And that might be a lot of them. Now
- 17 there will be state judges involved in this too,
- but they're going to be involved primarily in
- 19 state law, which they know. All right? And
- we're supposed to know the federal.
- 21 And there the -- we seem to come
- 22 closer to this more unifying simple system if --
- 23 simpler -- if you're wrong, unfortunately for
- 24 you. And -- and -- and that's the notion that
- 25 I'm asking you so you can disabuse me of it.

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1 MR. GEYSER: All right. Well, let --
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- 2 let me try.
- First, for international arbitration,
- 4 there actually is jurisdiction because Congress
- 5 said so in Section 203. For anything under the
- 6 Convention, there's jurisdiction throughout the
- 7 Act.
- 8 Now Congress didn't say that for
- 9 domestic arbitration. So, you know, again,
- 10 Congress can decide that a single jurisdictional
- 11 test, the Section 4 test, in fact, should be
- 12 written into every other section, but that's
- 13 Congress's decision to make. It's not this
- 14 Court's.
- 15 And -- and I'd also say too that the
- 16 -- the test that we're advocating is the same
- well-pleaded complaint test that's applied for
- 18 over a century in all kinds of disputes,
- 19 including settlements. And look at the
- 20 settlement of a federal claim.
- No one thinks there's any problem with
- 22 saying a federal claim is filed in federal
- court, it's settled and dismissed, and then a
- 24 dispute about the settlement goes to state
- court. And, here, there's no federal expertise

- in reviewing these arbitration awards. Think
- 2 about appointing an arbitrator that's simply
- 3 reading a contractual provision and deciding
- 4 what it says about which arbitrator to appoint.
- 5 It's seeking specific performance of an
- 6 arbitration procedure. State courts see that
- 7 all the time. They're very good at that.
- 8 And the -- the narrow provisions under
- 9 Section 10 for reviewing an arbitration award,
- 10 this is not readjudicating the federal question.
- 11 They shouldn't be doing that. That's treating
- 12 court review, again, as a do-over of the
- arbitration, which would frustrate the entire
- 14 point of sending these cases to arbitration in
- 15 the first place.
- This is a very narrow check to make
- 17 sure there weren't things like fraud or bribery
- that distorted the arbitration process. That's
- 19 something that state courts, again, they do all
- 20 the time. They do it with the absolute flood of
- 21 cases that involve state law issues and
- 22 non-diverse parties. And there's no need to
- 23 clog the federal courts' judicial bandwidth with
- 24 deciding what are effectively ministerial
- 25 actions or fairly mundane actions that do not

involve readjudicating the federal suit.

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- 2 The well-pleaded complaint rule governs just fine, and the -- it is fairly 3 simple. And the alternative will give rise to 4 complicated questions, including what do you do 5 with the state law questions that have a federal 6 7 ingredient? The Grable inquiry is very 8 9 challenging, and that will come up all the time
- decide whether they have jurisdiction under a Grable analysis just to decide whether they're

in these cases and will make federal courts

- going to apply these very narrow provisions
- 14 under Section 10 for confirming the award, as
- opposed to simply looking at the award on its
- 16 face and saying the parties are bringing an
- 17 attempt to confirm a state law arbitration
- 18 contract before a federal court.
- 19 If there's diversity, then maybe it
- 20 makes sense to have the federal court there to
- 21 protect against local bias. But, if there's not
- 22 diversity, there's no reason to say just because
- 23 the underlying dispute involved a federal
- 24 question, which isn't relevant at the
- confirmation stage, that we should nonetheless

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1 have federal courts spending their time looking
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- 2 at those awards.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Thank you.
- 4 MR. GEYSER: If the Court has no
- 5 further questions.
- 6 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 7 Thomas?
- 8 Justice Breyer?
- 9 Justice Alito, anything? Okay? Good?
- 10 Justice Gorsuch?
- 11 JUSTICE GORSUCH: No further
- 12 questions. Thank you.
- 13 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
- 14 Barrett?
- Okay. Thank you, counsel.
- MR. GEYSER: Thank you.
- 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Ms. Blatt.
- 18 ORAL ARGUMENT OF LISA S. BLATT
- 19 ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENTS
- MS. BLATT: Thank you, Mr. Chief
- 21 Justice, and may it please the Court:
- 22 If federal courts would have
- 23 jurisdiction over the parties' underlying
- 24 dispute, federal courts can hear motions to
- 25 confirm or vacate arbitral awards resolving that

- 1 dispute.
- 2 First, the FAA's text treats requests
- 3 to confirm or vacate arbitral awards as motions.
- 4 Motions are not free-standing lawsuits that need
- 5 an independent jurisdictional basis. Rather,
- 6 motions seek relief within a larger controversy
- 7 between the parties. Courts thus assess their
- 8 jurisdiction by looking to that underlying
- 9 controversy.
- 10 Here, the FAA is structured
- 11 sequentially to facilitate all stages of
- 12 arbitration to resolve the same underlying
- 13 controversy. Because FAA motions are adjuncts
- 14 to that broader controversy, federal courts can
- 15 hear FAA motions when they have jurisdiction
- 16 over that controversy.
- 17 Second, Petitioner's approach would
- decapitate the FAA. The Act pervasively refers
- 19 to federal courts. But, in Petitioner's world,
- 20 federal courts can't hear most Section 9 and 10
- 21 motions. They don't on their face raise federal
- 22 questions. And most of the motions wouldn't
- 23 satisfy diversity jurisdiction either, like
- 24 ubiquitous zero dollar awards that reject the
- 25 plaintiff's claim. And uncontested motions to

1 confirm would fail adversarialness under Article

- 2 III.
- 3 Petitioner says state courts are
- 4 equally good. But, unlike the FAA's standards
- 5 for confirmation and vacatur, state courts often
- 6 revisit the merits under their own state
- 7 arbitration acts.
- 8 Congress presumably did not want
- 9 federal courts to enforce arbitration agreements
- 10 at the front end, only to see state courts to
- 11 force do-overs at the back end.
- 12 And, third, it's implausible the FAA
- imposes one jurisdictional test for motions
- under Section 4 and a different jurisdictional
- test for motions under Sections 5, 7, 9, 10, and
- 16 11.
- 17 And it would encourage needless
- 18 gamesmanship for jurisdiction under these latter
- 19 provisions to turn on the happenstance whether
- there was an earlier Section 4 order.
- I welcome your questions.
- JUSTICE THOMAS: Ms. Blatt, would you
- 23 comment on Petitioner's assessment of your
- 24 Section 4 venue argument?
- 25 MS. BLATT: Sure. I didn't make it

- 1 up. This Court called it a venue provision in
- 2 Cortez Byrd, but here's why we think it's a
- 3 venue provision. We've got three very solid
- 4 arguments.
- 5 First, it reads like a venue
- 6 provision. It's framed in classic venue terms
- 7 saying where a petition may be filed. If you
- 8 look at the title of that provision, it says
- 9 petition in a court having jurisdiction. So
- 10 it's not conferring jurisdiction, Justice
- 11 Thomas. It's talking about jurisdiction that's
- 12 already there.
- 13 And, second -- and this is important
- 14 historically -- there was -- this was an
- expansion, a liberal expansion of venue because,
- 16 at the time, venue only was limited to places
- 17 where the defendant resided. And in the
- 18 arbitration context, the -- Congress wanted it
- 19 broader because you wouldn't know necessarily
- where the arbitration would begin.
- Now, in the later provisions, the rest
- 22 of the venue provisions under the Act, it -- you
- 23 wouldn't need that same broad conferring of
- 24 venue because you -- you know where the
- 25 arbitration occurs.

- 1 And the third reason is just it looks
- 2 awfully like structurally the "save for" venue
- 3 provision under Section 204, which Congress
- 4 labels a venue provision.
- 5 And then, if we -- if we needed a
- 6 fourth reason, Congress often refers to
- 7 jurisdictional tests in -- in venue provisions.
- 8 And we offer the example of the generic venue
- 9 provision in 1391, which extends -- it kind of
- 10 has this catch-all extending venue to where a
- 11 court has personal jurisdiction. So it's not
- 12 completely uncommon. And we also cite two
- 13 habeas examples.
- 14 But this Court did call it a venue
- 15 provision in Cortez Byrd. It said it was a very
- 16 permissible venue provision.
- 17 JUSTICE KAGAN: I mean, Vaden
- obviously calls it a jurisdictional provision
- 19 about 20 times without using the word "Vaden."
- I mean, I stopped counting when I got to 20.
- MS. BLATT: Right. But the important
- thing is that the opinion twice says Section 4
- 23 is not creating jurisdiction, which --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Yeah, but, I mean,
- 25 that's even -- you -- maybe it's a venue

- 1 provision. I mean, it's possible, I suppose. I
- 2 -- I -- that seems to me to create a problem for
- 3 you rather than to get rid of it.
- I mean, your problem is that you have
- 5 no textual hook, no textual basis for a
- 6 look-through rule outside of Section 4. I mean,
- 7 you have to say that somehow there's a kind of
- 8 implicit look-through provision in all the rest
- 9 of the statute so that Section 4 can then become
- 10 just a venue provision.
- 11 But -- but -- but you need some kind
- of jurisdictional hook, don't you? I mean,
- 13 Congress didn't just expect everybody to
- 14 understand that this was look-through
- 15 jurisdiction. Look-through jurisdiction is very
- 16 odd. It's very unusual.
- 17 You would think, if Congress wanted to
- impose a look-through jurisdictional provision
- 19 throughout the statute, we would have a
- 20 look-through jurisdictional provision throughout
- 21 the statute.
- MS. BLATT: Sure. And that's why so
- 23 much of our argument hinges on the fact that the
- 24 statute is plastered with the words "motion" and
- 25 "application." When you get a motion for

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1 divided argument, you don't go around applying
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- 2 the well-pleaded complaint rule to your motion
- 3 by the SG's office. You know that there's an
- 4 underlying jurisdictional basis in the
- 5 controversy before you.
- This entire Act refers to the parties'
- 7 controversy, and then it uses the word "motion"
- 8 in provision after provision, "application." In
- 9 Sections 9, 10, 12, and 13, it talks about a
- 10 motion and application. Says -- Section 6 says
- 11 --
- 12 JUSTICE KAGAN: But your -- your
- argument then is just by using the words
- 14 "motion" and "application" Congress thought that
- by using the words "motion" and "application" it
- 16 would be clear to everybody that jurisdiction
- was by the look-through method.
- MS. BLATT: And that's a fair point,
- 19 and I do think that's why what Justice Kavanaugh
- 20 said when it was passed, that was the
- 21 understanding that this would be a look-through.
- 22 It reads like a procedural -- a
- federal, you know, arbitration procedural act.
- 24 The Federal Rules of Procedure didn't exist.
- The whole statute is telling you, you know, how

- do you get your arbitrator picked, where do you
- 2 go for discovery disputes, how do you get a -- a
- 3 judgment at the end of the day.
- 4 And the judgment at the end of the day
- 5 is supposed to, under Section 13, be treated as
- 6 if the case were tried in federal court. So
- 7 this is a whole fiction and a sui generis
- 8 situation where, instead of being in a federal
- 9 court, the -- the Act on its face only talks
- 10 about federal courts. It's not being
- 11 adjudicated, this federal controversy. It's
- being adjudicated before an arbitrator, but it
- 13 ends up in a judgment.
- 14 And the other just strong textual hook
- 15 besides the words -- and motions are text, it's
- 16 -- it's a word, and -- and controversy, is the
- 17 word "federal." They have no good example for
- 18 when you can get into federal court. It's
- 19 basically a nullified act.
- You weren't pressing him on his
- 21 jurisdiction -- diversity of jurisdiction, but
- 22 if you have a zero dollar award, which just
- 23 means the defendant wins, you can't get into
- federal court unless he has to cheat by saying,
- 25 well, you can look at the underlying controversy

- in that case because we all know the plaintiff
- 2 was asking for more money and in a future case
- 3 he might be getting more money.
- And so he's got no other way and -- or
- 5 to get to adversarialness. If you have an
- 6 uncontested motion to confirm, the only
- 7 adversarialness is the underlying controversy.
- 8 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, if it's
- 9 -- but, if the plaintiff is seeking \$20 million
- and the defendant wins, so that the award is
- 11 zero dollars, you don't say that zero dollars is
- 12 the amount in -- in dispute. You say that
- whether he's going to win or lose, it's \$20
- 14 million.
- 15 MS. BLATT: In his view under this
- well-pleaded complaint, the face of the motion
- 17 says nothing other than please confirm. And the
- 18 court under Section 9 has no choice but to
- 19 confirm. It doesn't look at anything else,
- 20 especially if there's no contrary motion to --
- 21 to vacate.
- 22 So there's nothing on the face of the
- 23 motion that mentions how much the plaintiff
- 24 wanted. It just says -- like this case just
- 25 says on the awards face, all claims are

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1 rejected, defendant wins. There's --
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- 2 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So --
- 3 MS. BLATT: -- there's nothing about
- 4 the amount.
- 5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: -- to -- to
- 6 sort of go to the 30,000 feet perspective, the
- 7 consequence of your position is to federalize a
- 8 lot more of FAA actions, procedures, than it
- 9 seems would make sense if you buy the idea that
- this is a statute that doesn't give generally
- 11 federal jurisdiction.
- 12 And what's wrong with his analogy to
- 13 settlements? I mean, you have a federal
- 14 dispute. It's a federal case. You're in
- 15 federal court. And you say, well, let's settle
- 16 this. You reach a settlement. It's a contract.
- 17 If there's a violation of that settlement, you
- don't go back to federal court. It's a state
- 19 contract matter. You go to state court.
- 20 Why isn't that just like what he's
- 21 talking about here?
- MS. BLATT: Well, it's absolutely
- 23 correct that Kokkonen -- and I hope I'm
- 24 pronouncing that correctly -- says if parties
- 25 settle and there's litigation over that

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1 settlement, but the court has already dismissed
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- 2 the case, collateral litigation over that
- 3 settlement has to go to state court.
- 4 And the reasoning behind that is
- 5 because there's been a case-ending dismissal by
- 6 the federal court, and at that point, the
- 7 federal court loses jurisdiction.
- 8 Here, the only -- there, the analogy
- 9 would not be the arbitral award. It would be
- 10 the court order under Section 9 and 10 and 13
- 11 confirming the case and dismissing it. So, if
- 12 -- if that's the right analogy, we still have a
- live controversy at the time there's a motion to
- 14 confirm the award.
- 15 And they really don't want to bring
- 16 that settlement analogy anyway because, in that
- sense, everything leading up and to the award
- 18 would be part and parcel of a live federal
- 19 controversy.
- 20 But, in terms of your first question
- 21 about are we federalizing cases, I mean, this is
- the majority rule, although there's -- there's
- circuits that have gone the other way, and the
- only cases that we're talking about are going to
- 25 federal court are federal question jurisdiction

- and diversity jurisdiction, with the option of
- 2 being no cases going to federal court, and you
- 3 have Congress passing a very odd Act.
- 4 Now if I could just get into this bit
- 5 about this being jurisdictional. So he's got
- 6 two arguments. And I agree, Justice Kagan, I
- 7 mean, Vaden, it -- it -- I just don't think the
- 8 Court had before it -- even though it was
- 9 mentioned at oral argument and mentioned in the
- 10 briefing, the Court didn't have this situation
- about what -- what we're going to do about the
- 12 rest of the Act. Is there going to be a
- 13 look-through? And so -- but the Court did twice
- 14 say Section 4 is -- is not jurisdictional.
- But the problem the other side has is
- they really don't want to live with the text
- 17 because, if Section 4 is jurisdictional, they
- lose this case, and that's because no one could
- 19 read that "save for" clause as an isolated grant
- 20 of jurisdiction. It would only be
- jurisdictional because it's a carve-out written
- 22 in words of limitation.
- In other words, if Section 4 has
- 24 jurisdiction, it's only because it's taking away
- 25 jurisdiction that would be conferred by the

- 1 first section of that Act.
- 2 And this is a little bit of what the
- 3 -- the Chamber of Commerce was arguing in their
- 4 brief, but that is to say the first question
- 5 just says go file in any court without regard --
- 6 any motion in federal court, but then it takes
- 7 away and says but only if you have jurisdiction.
- 8 So, in that sense, you've got a limiting clause.
- 9 Well, the only logical inference then
- 10 is, if that limiting clause is omitted from the
- 11 rest of the sections, the rest of the Act is
- 12 broader.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: But I took that to not
- 14 be your position.
- MS. BLATT: It's not our position.
- 16 That is the consequence. If he wants to live by
- 17 the text, he needs to die by the text. And he
- 18 doesn't want to do that.
- 19 Our position is that you have the
- 20 common-sense approach of what Congress was
- 21 trying to -- to actually accomplish with this --
- 22 with this Act. And you have plenty of textual
- hooks because you've got the word "motion," and
- 24 it's an adjunct, and courts every day understand
- 25 that motions aren't -- you know, motions don't

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1 need a free standing.
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- We gave Federal Rule 20 -- 27, but I
- 3 know another very familiar example to you will
- 4 be the search warrant. When courts go to
- 5 federal court for a search warrant, they -- that
- 6 is because a court underlying has jurisdiction
- 7 over offenses against the United States. So
- 8 it's an adjunct to a broader controversy, and
- 9 that's just the way motions function, is that
- 10 they aren't free-standing lawsuits.
- 11 The Federal Rules are very specific
- between motions and complaints. Complaints
- invoke a court's jurisdiction. They are a cause
- of action. A motion is just an adjunct, and it
- 15 --
- 16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, but it
- 17 doesn't -- it -- it doesn't say the application
- is a motion. It says it'll be heard as a
- 19 motion.
- 20 MS. BLATT: Correct. Correct.
- 21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, but, I
- 22 mean, that's -- you seem to be saying that --
- 23 treating them as -- calling them motions. I --
- 24 I think they are still a separate animal, as
- opposed to the -- the motion itself.

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MS. BLATT: When you look at the Act,
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- 2 sort of, you know, unitary, harmonious,
- 3 interlocking, it is the -- they are motions
- 4 bringing that are all adjuncts to a controversy.
- 5 I mean, this is the Federal Arbitration Act, so
- 6 they were obviously thinking about cases that
- 7 could otherwise be litigated in federal court.
- 8 Whether that's just diversity or a
- 9 federal question, these are federal question --
- 10 federal controversies, and these are treated as
- 11 applications or requests to facilitate the
- 12 arbitration from cradle to grave.
- 13 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, your --
- but it is the Federal Arbitration Act, but it's
- 15 an odd creature in that, unlike most other
- 16 federal statutes, it doesn't by itself give rise
- 17 to jurisdiction. And it seems to me that one
- 18 reason that -- why that is, is because they
- 19 recognize that people arbitrate all sorts of
- disputes, and they didn't want all the 380,000
- 21 whatever cases being brought in federal court,
- 22 just like you don't want the settlement
- 23 agreements, the enforcement of that, being
- 24 brought in federal court just because it arose
- 25 out of a federal case.

1	MS. BLATT: Agreed. But there's no
2	question, under the other side's view, everybody
3	and anybody can go to Section under Section 4
4	as long as there's a federal controversy and
5	sort of get the hook of the federal court
6	jurisdiction. And even if it's frivolous, the
7	court could deny the motion because the parties
8	are already arbitrating but retain jurisdiction.
9	So I don't see how we're bringing any
LO	more cases. The only cases that can be brought
L1	under 5, 7, 9, and 11 under our view are the
L2	same cases where the federal court has authority
L3	under Section 4 to compel arbitration in the
L4	first place.
L5	And that just was the contemporaneous
L6	understanding of the Act when it was passed.
L7	Also, we think, that's what the Court understood
L8	in Marine Transit, which was I don't know,
L9	it's a few years after the passage of the Act.
20	The Court seemed to suggest, look, if a court
21	has power to order the arbitration, it should
22	it's kind of it's too it's too silly to
23	even talk about, they have authority to enter
24	the award at the end of the day.
25	And it is an odd as vou said. it's

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an odd Act, but it's even odder if you -- if you
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- 2 reverse. Then I don't know what this is. It's
- just a -- it's a dead Act, I guess. I don't --
- 4 I don't know what Congress was doing if even
- 5 diversity jurisdiction, you're going to have to
- 6 look at the underlying controversy.
- 7 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Counsel, what do
- 8 we do with Section 8?
- 9 MS. BLATT: The admiralty provision?
- 10 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: The admiralty
- 11 provision that has the safe -- the saving
- 12 language. It's superfluous under -- that's the
- one thing that gives me pause with your
- 14 argument. It's logical, what you're saying,
- 15 that we treat this like a motion, and in a
- motion, you look at the underlying controversy.
- 17 That -- that's very logical.
- 18 But why put it in --
- 19 MS. BLATT: So I --
- 20 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- Section 8 and
- 21 not in 9 or 10?
- MS. BLATT: Yeah. So Section 8,
- again, I think the "save for" clause is not in
- 24 the rest of the sections because the venue is
- 25 much narrower. But the -- under Section 8, I

- 1 think it is a peculiarity of admiralty
- 2 jurisdiction. So it says that you can proceed
- 3 by libel and seizure -- seizure of the vessel.
- 4 And libel is a complaint.
- 5 And so, if you did not have the "and
- 6 then the court shall have jurisdiction and
- 7 retain jurisdiction," if that language was just
- 8 excised, the provision would read as follows:
- 9 "You can go file a libel complaint in admiralty
- 10 and seize your ship, "period.
- 11 And then I think it would be sort of
- 12 -- raise a lot of questions about, well, what
- does that mean now? I filed a complaint in
- 14 federal court. What do I do about arbitration?
- 15 And so that language, I think it's
- 16 even less superfluous than the "save for"
- 17 language. It's making clear that you have every
- 18 right to proceed throughout the arbitral process
- and invoke the FAA, and at the same time, you
- 20 can actually go to court and file your -- your
- 21 federal complaint.
- 22 And you wouldn't do that in a civil
- 23 case. Obviously, if you've agreed to arbitrate,
- 24 you're not filing a -- a -- a complaint in
- 25 federal court. You're going just straight to

- 1 arbitration.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Thank you.
- 3 MS. BLATT: And I -- the only other
- 4 thing I wanted to say is on the -- I -- I think
- 5 the other side is trying to say, well, maybe
- 6 it's not a jurisdictional grant; it's just an
- 7 instruction on how to use your jurisdiction.
- 8 And I think that --
- 9 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I'm sorry,
- before -- what's "it"?
- 11 MS. BLATT: It? Oh, sorry. I've lost
- my train of thought. The Petitioner says there
- 13 are two ways for him to win. One is that
- 14 Section 4 is a free-standing jurisdictional
- grant, contrary to what this Court has said in
- 16 three separate Supreme Court cases.
- 17 So he then has a fall-back argument
- 18 saying it's not a jurisdictional grant; it's
- just an -- Section 4, the "save for" clause, is
- just an instruction: Hey, federal courts, I'm
- 21 not giving you jurisdiction. I'm just telling
- you here's how you might look at seeing if you
- 23 have jurisdiction.
- 24 And I think that's just a fancy way of
- 25 saying it's a jurisdictional provision because,

- 1 without that language, the court -- in other
- words, if the court didn't look through, it
- 3 wouldn't have jurisdiction. So I'm just saying
- 4 I think it's word games.
- 5 JUSTICE KAGAN: Ms. Blatt, I mean,
- 6 this might just be repeating my last question,
- 7 but there's a set of arguments one can make on
- 8 both sides about what would make for a sensible
- 9 Act, so if we were writing the Act from scratch,
- 10 how we would write it to do the things we want
- it to do and not do the things we don't want it
- 12 to do.
- But I -- I -- I just want to put those
- 14 arguments aside and say that we're trying to
- 15 make sense out of the actual language that
- 16 Congress offered, and then it seems as though
- 17 there are two different positions. And one
- 18 position is we just sort of -- by some -- by the
- word "motion" and then by something, we just
- 20 sort of, like, get that Congress meant for there
- 21 to be look-through jurisdiction.
- 22 And the other, which is Mr. Geyser's,
- is, you know what, we have look-through
- 24 provision where Congress says there's
- look-through provision, whatever you want to

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1 call it, jurisdiction, venue, anything else in
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- 2 between. There are particular places where
- 3 Congress makes clear look-through -- the
- 4 look-through method is the right one, and where
- 5 those things don't exist, it's not the right one
- 6 because we can't just sort of make up
- 7 look-through jurisdiction out of nothing.
- 8 MS. BLATT: Yeah, and I -- I think
- 9 that it's fair to say what do I do if you -- if
- 10 the other side tries to make a compelling
- 11 textual argument? And I think you've got to ask
- 12 yourself, A, how compelling is it? And, B, are
- 13 there other texts in the statute that are
- telling me he's -- he's crazy?
- 15 And I think you have that here because
- 16 you just look at the Act and you get to look at
- things like structure, context, purpose, and
- other textual cues throughout the Act, including
- 19 the title of Section 4 itself and the fact that
- it's written in classic venue-framing terms, and
- 21 your precedents, which all say Section 4 is not
- jurisdictional, starting in Southland and then
- 23 in Moses Cone.
- 24 So I -- I just think it -- it --
- 25 it -- it over-assumes that there is a compelling

- 1 textual argument in the first place when it's
- 2 not because, as a logical matter, his textual
- 3 argument takes him a place that no party wants
- 4 to go, which is that everything ends in federal
- 5 court.
- I'm not saying it's an easy case for
- 7 you. I'm saying our case is better than his
- 8 case.
- 9 JUSTICE KAGAN: I mean, it -- it --
- 10 you said the -- the idea that our precedent
- 11 precludes his case, you know, seems -- it seems
- 12 like the -- the Moses Cone kind of precedent --
- MS. BLATT: Yeah.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: -- which is that the
- 15 FAA doesn't do anything with respect to
- jurisdiction, is equally a problem for you.
- 17 MS. BLATT: I -- I --
- 18 JUSTICE KAGAN: Both of you are doing
- 19 something with respect to federal jurisdiction.
- You're doing it by way of a default rule. He's
- 21 doing it by way of a selective
- 22 Section 4/Section 8 rule.
- MS. BLATT: Yeah, that -- that's a
- 24 fair point. So if we just look at this Act and
- 25 I think why it got in footnotes in your

- 1 precedent is because the Court looked at this
- very quickly and said, wait a minute, this is
- 3 not a jurisdictional act. And Section -- they
- 4 cited Section 4 as the example.
- 5 And I think this -- what gets into the
- 6 professor's amicus brief that this was based on
- 7 the New York Arbitration Act, and if you just
- 8 passed the New York Arbitration Act, this whole
- 9 Act would read like one big giant jurisdictional
- 10 grant.
- 11 And, again, I hate to do what this
- 12 Court did, but this Court said, hey, wait a
- minute, you see that Section 4 and it says, you
- 14 know, the court already has jurisdiction or must
- have it, that's reflective of this can't be a
- 16 jurisdictional grant.
- So, yeah, I'm -- I'm using your
- 18 precedent, but I think your precedent very
- 19 quickly looked at the Act and said it made a
- 20 choice that this can't be what Congress intended
- and it is what the drafter said he was doing.
- 22 And I don't -- I mean, sure, it's
- 23 legislative history, but it is the 1925
- contemporaneous understanding by the ABA too.
- 25 And it's not -- doesn't mention Section 4. It

- 1 says how we're going to enforce arbitration
- 2 agreements is going to be through, you know,
- 3 this look-through approach.
- 4 And just in terms of textually, if you
- 5 just start with Section 2, which you said is the
- 6 cornerstone, I mean, that's what to me answered
- 7 the case for me, is that Congress thought we're
- 8 going to have a whole substitute for a federal
- 9 controversy not to be litigated in federal
- 10 court. We're going to take it out of the -- you
- 11 know, not in front of a jury. But it left the
- 12 federal court in at every stage to get -- to
- help to facilitate it, and so that's why there's
- 14 not, you know, a free-standing jurisdictional
- 15 grant in -- in -- in the case.
- That's the best I've got.
- 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Okay. Justice
- 18 Thomas?
- 19 JUSTICE THOMAS: No, nothing, Chief.
- 20 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: All right.
- 21 Justice Breyer?
- 22 Justice Gorsuch?
- 23 JUSTICE GORSUCH: All set here. Thank
- 24 you, Chief.
- 25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Okay. Justice

	Ballett:
2	Okay. Thank you, counsel.
3	MS. BLATT: Thank you.
4	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Rebuttal,
5	Mr. Geyser?
6	
7	REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF DANIEL L. GEYSER
8	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER
9	MR. GEYSER: Thank you, Your Honor. A
10	few quick points.
11	First, starting with the venue
12	argument, my friend said that Cortez Byrd called
13	Section 4 a venue provision. That's simply
14	false. Cortez Byrd mentioned Section 4 when
15	they were comparing the terms "may" and "shall."
16	And they were looking for examples in the
17	Federal Arbitration Act that used the permissive
18	term "may" versus the the mandatory term
19	"shall."
20	It specifically did not refer to
21	Section 4 when it was listing other venue
22	provisions in the Act, and my friend has still
23	not cited a single case. If the Court says that
24	the look-through clause is now a venue
25	provision, it will literally be the first court

1 in the nation that has said that. I think that

- 2 would be fairly striking.
- 3 My friend said that our reading will
- 4 decapitate the Federal Arbitration Act. I think
- 5 that's odd because our reading is, in fact, the
- 6 reading that was the overwhelming majority view
- 7 in the country for a quarter of a century. The
- 8 only courts that have started questioning
- 9 whether our reading is correct is in light of
- 10 this Court's opinion in Vaden and only because
- 11 they said, not because of any textual reason --
- they admitted their approach is profoundly
- 13 atextual -- they said, as a policy matter, it
- seems to make sense that if the look-through
- approach applies at the start, it should
- 16 probably apply at the finish.
- 17 That is not the way that this Court
- 18 construes statutes, and it's a -- it's a
- 19 senseless reading of the statute itself. Again,
- 20 Congress did not frame this as a continuum.
- 21 These are independent, free-standing filings.
- 22 My friend says that these are simply
- 23 motions. Now the Chief Justice is exactly
- 24 correct. Section 6 does not say that these
- 25 applications and petitions are motions. It said

- 1 they shall be handled like motions. And as the
- 2 Court said in Hall Street, that's simply to
- 3 streamline the proceeding. And Hall Street said
- 4 in the next -- the -- the next words it used, I
- 5 think, underscores our point. It said it
- 6 streamlines the proceeding so that the party
- 7 doesn't have to file a separate contract action.
- 8 It's making clear that it's just an independent
- 9 way to get a specific performance request to
- 10 enforce an arbitration contract before the
- 11 court.
- 12 And to the extent that my friend says
- 13 that this is -- a motion is an adjunct to this
- missing underlying case, my friend's exactly
- 15 right that, typically, when you have a
- 16 jurisdictional anchor, you have an actual
- 17 federal case in an actual federal court. The
- 18 court doesn't say, do I have jurisdiction over
- 19 every subsequent motion.
- 20 But you need the initial federal case.
- 21 I'm not aware of any precedent that this
- 22 Court's -- in this Court's jurisprudence that
- 23 says you can pretend there's a case in court.
- 24 That's not the way it works with ancillary
- 25 jurisdiction, as the Court made clear in Peacock

- 1 versus Thomas.
- 2 It's not the way it works with
- 3 settlements. A settlement is certainly adjunct
- 4 to the underlying federal case. But, if a party
- 5 settles a federal claim and then shows up in the
- 6 court to -- with a dispute about the settlement,
- 7 they certainly can't say, well, this is a motion
- 8 that's adjunct to our missing federal case,
- 9 please assert jurisdiction.
- 10 Kokkonen squarely rejects that
- 11 position. I think this Court would have to
- overturn Kokkonen to accept my friend's version
- 13 of it.
- 14 Marine Transit does not support my
- 15 friend. It was expressly premised on Section 8.
- 16 The Court couldn't have been clearer in multiple
- 17 points in the opinion of saying that the
- 18 district court entered jurisdiction in
- 19 confirming the award under the authority granted
- 20 in Section 8, which shows again that Section 8
- 21 is not superfluous. In fact, it has a very
- 22 clear meaning. And when Congress intended to
- have courts retain jurisdiction, they said so.
- 24 They did that in Section 8. They did not put
- 25 the look-through approach in any other section

1	of the Act.
2	And I do think that if we do adopt
3	if the Court does adopt my friend's approach,
4	you are certainly departing from the majority
5	view and you're expanding federal jurisdiction
6	to decide a bunch of cases that where there
7	is no advantage to having a federal court spend
8	its expertise and bandwidth looking at cases
9	that the state courts have faithfully handled
10	and enforced for a quarter of a century.
11	I think the most striking thing here
12	is not only has the sky not fallen, my my
13	friend and her very able amici could not
14	identify a single systemic study or empirical
15	analysis suggesting that that this has
16	presented a single problem for any arbitration
17	arbitration agreements by leaving the the
18	enforcement of the Act in large part to state
19	court, which is what this Court has said for
20	multiple occasions is what Congress intended.
21	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
22	counsel. The case is submitted.
23	(Whereupon, at 12:21 p.m., the case
24	was submitted.)

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