

No. 04-340

In the Supreme Court of the United States

SAN REMO HOTEL, L.P., ET AL.

Petitioners

v.

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO,
CALIFORNIA, ET AL.

Respondents

*ON WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE
UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT*

**BRIEF AMICI CURIAE FOR ELIZABETH J.
NEUMONT (AND ALL OTHERS SIMILARLY
SITUATED) IN SUPPORT OF PETITIONERS**

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QUESTION PRESENTED

Whether the “state procedures” aspect of *Williamson County Regional Planning Commission v. Hamilton Bank*, 473 U.S. 172, 194-97 (1985), which mandates that property owners exhaust state judicial remedies before pursuing federal claims for just compensation in federal court, should be overruled.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
QUESTION PRESENTED	i
TABLE OF AUTHORITIES	iv
INTEREST OF AMICI CURIAE	1
INTRODUCTION	2
SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT	3
ARGUMENT	4
I. In Creating the State Procedures Requirement, <i>Williamson County</i> Deviated Sharply from the Established Understanding of the Just Compensation Clause	4
A. At Issue Here Is the Right to Recover Just Compensation for Takings of Private Property for Public Use	4
B. It Was Always the Law That the Right to Recover Just Compensation Accrues at the Time of the Taking	5
II. In Creating the State Procedures Requirement, <i>Williamson County</i> Built a House on Jurisprudential Sand	8
A. The Requirement Was Fabricated Without Benefit of Serious Briefing or Argument	9
B. The Requirement Rests Principally on Two Flawed Analogies to Inapposite Decisions	10
1. <i>Ruckelshaus v. Monsanto Co.</i>	11
2. <i>Parratt v. Taylor</i>	13
C. The Requirement Finds No Support in the Principle That the Amendment Proscribes Only Takings <i>Without Just Compensation</i>	14

TABLE OF CONTENTS—Continued

	Page
III. The State Procedures Requirement Has Other Defects that Show Its Doctrinal Incoherence.	16
A. The Requirement Is Inconsistent with the No-Exhaustion-of-Remedies Rule Governing Other Federal Rights	16
B. The Requirement Is in Practice Ignored by State Courts and by this Court	18
C. The Requirement Invites Disrespect for State Courts by Treating Them as Mere Stations on the Road to Federal Court	20
CONCLUSION	22

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

	Page
Cases	
<i>Alliance of Descendants of Texas Land Grants v. United States,</i> 37 F.3d 1478 (Fed. Cir. 1994)	6
<i>Armstrong v. United States,</i> 364 U.S. 40 (1960)	5
<i>City of Chicago v. International College of Surgeons,</i> 522 U.S. 156 (1997)	16
<i>City of Monterey v. Del Monte Dunes, Ltd.,</i> 526 U.S. 687 (1999)	5
<i>Commonwealth v. DLX, Inc.,</i> 42 S.W.3d 624 (Ky. 2001)	22
<i>Creppel v. United States,</i> 41 F.3d 627 (Fed. Cir. 1994)	7
<i>DLX, Inc. v. Kentucky,</i> 381 F.3d 511 (6th Cir. 2004)	22
<i>Dolan v. City of Tigard,</i> 512 U.S. 374 (1994)	17
<i>Eastern Enterprises v. Apfel,</i> 524 U.S. 498 (1998)	5
<i>Eide v. Sarasota County,</i> 908 F.2d 716 (11th Cir. 1990), <i>cert. denied,</i> 498 U.S. 1120 (1991)	22
<i>First English Evangelical Lutheran Church v. County of Los Angeles,</i> 482 U.S. 304 (1987)	passim
<i>Florida Prepaid Postsecondary Education Expense Board v. College Savings Bank,</i> 527 U.S. 627 (1999)	17

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES—Continued

	Page
<i>Greenfield Mills, Inc. v. Macklin</i> , 361 F.3d 934 (7th Cir. 2004)	7
<i>Grubb v. Public Utilities Commission</i> , 281 U.S. 470 (1930)	21
<i>Hudson v. Palmer</i> , 468 U.S. 517 (1984)	13
<i>Inupiat Community of Arctic Slope v.</i> <i>United States</i> , 680 F.2d 122 (Ct. Cl.), <i>cert. denied</i> , 459 U.S. 969 (1982)	7
<i>Jacobs v. United States</i> , 290 U.S. 13 (1933)	5
<i>Jacobs Wind Electric Co., Inc. v.</i> <i>Department of Transportation</i> , 626 So. 2d 1333 (Fla. 1993)	18
<i>Kavanau v. Santa Monica Rent Control</i> <i>Board</i> , 941 P.2d 851 (Cal. 1997), <i>cert. denied</i> , 522 U.S. 1077 (1998)	18-19
<i>Lawrence v. Texas</i> , 539 U.S. 558 (2004)	2, 22-23
<i>Lucas v. South Carolina Coastal Council</i> , 505 U.S. 1003 (1992)	19, 21
<i>Lucas v. South Carolina Coastal Council</i> , 404 S.E.2d 895 (S.C. 1991), <i>rev'd</i> , 505 U.S. 1003 (1992)	20
<i>Mayhew v. Town of Sunnyvale</i> , 964 S.W.2d 922 (Tex. 1997)	19
<i>Neumont v. Monroe County, Florida</i> , 242 F. Supp. 2d 1265 (S.D. Fla. 2002), <i>appeal docketed</i> , No. 04-13610-EE (11th Cir. July 22, 2004)	1

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES—Continued

	Page
<i>Palazzolo v. Rhode Island</i> , 533 U.S. 606 (2001)	1, 19, 21
<i>Palazzolo v. State</i> , 746 A.2d 707 (R.I. 2000), <i>aff'd in part, rev'd in part</i> , 533 U.S. 606 (2001)	19-20
<i>Parratt v. Taylor</i> , 451 U.S. 527 (1981)	13-14
<i>Patsy v. Board of Regents</i> , 457 U.S. 496 (1982)	16-18
<i>Payne v. Tennessee</i> , 501 U.S. 808 (1991)	2, 22
<i>Pennzoil Co. v. Texaco, Inc.</i> , 481 U.S. 1 (1987)	20-21
<i>Richardson v. City & County of Honolulu</i> , 124 F.3d 1150 (9th Cir. 1997), <i>cert. denied</i> , 525 U.S. 871, 921, 1018 (1998)	22
<i>Ruckelshaus v. Monsanto Co.</i> , 467 U.S. 986 (1984)	11-12, 14-15
<i>San Diego Gas & Electric Co. v. City of San Diego</i> , 450 U.S. 621 (1981)	7-8
<i>Seaboard Air Line Ry. Co. v. United States</i> , 261 U.S. 299 (1923)	6
<i>Seminole Tribe of Florida v. Florida</i> , 517 U.S. 44 (1996)	2
<i>Soriano v. United States</i> , 352 U.S. 270 (1957)	6, 16
<i>Stafford Ordinance Corp. v. United States</i> , 108 F. Supp. 378 (Ct. Cl. 1952)	7

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES—Continued

	Page
<i>Steel Improvement & Forge Co. v.</i> <i>United States</i> , 355 F.2d 627 (Ct. Cl. 1966)	7
<i>Steffel v. Thompson</i> , 415 U.S. 452 (1974)	16-17, 21, 23
<i>Tafflin v. Levitt</i> , 493 U.S. 455 (1990)	21
<i>Tahoe-Sierra Preservation Council v.</i> <i>Tahoe Regional Planning Agency</i> , 535 U.S. 302 (2002)	14
<i>United States v. Causby</i> , 328 U.S. 256 (1946)	11
<i>United States v. Clarke</i> , 445 U.S. 253 (1980)	6, 8
<i>United States v. Dickinson</i> , 331 U.S. 745 (1947)	6
<i>United States v. Dow</i> , 357 U.S. 17 (1958)	6, 8
<i>United States v. Rogers</i> , 255 U.S. 163 (1921)	6
<i>Williamson County Regional Planning</i> <i>Commission v. Hamilton Bank</i> , 473 U.S. 172 (1985)	passim
<i>Yee v. City of Escondido</i> , 503 U.S. 519 (1992)	10
<i>Younger v. Harris</i> , 401 U.S. 37 (1971)	20

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES—Continued

	Page
Statutes, Legislative Materials, and Court Rules	
28 U.S.C. § 1343	17
§ 1491	11
42 U.S.C. § 1983	17
Private Property Rights Implementation Act of 1997, H.R. 1534, 105th Cong.	17
Private Property Rights Implementation Act of 2000, H.R. 2372, 106th Cong.	17
H.R. Rep. No. 106-518 (2000)	17, 20-21
Supreme Court Rule 37.2	1
Rule 37.6	1
Other Authorities	
Michael M. Berger & Gideon Kanner, <i>Shell Game! You Can't Get There from Here</i> , 36 URB. LAW. 672 (2004)	16
Brief for Respondent in <i>Williamson County</i> (No. 84-4)	10
Brief for the United States as Amicus Curiae Supporting Petitioners in <i>Williamson County</i> (No. 84-4)	10
Transcript of Argument in <i>Williamson County</i> (No. 84-4), 1985 U.S. TRANS LEXIS 76 (Feb. 19, 1985)	10

INTEREST OF AMICI CURIAE

Amici curiae are a certified class of property owners in Monroe County, Florida, who are currently litigating a federal takings claim in the Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit. See *Neumont v. State of Florida*, No. 04-13610-EE (appeal docketed July 22, 2004). Like petitioners (and thousands of other property owners across the nation), amici are facing “ripeness” arguments by a governmental defendant who seeks to avoid federal adjudication of a federal constitutional claim. In particular, despite class members having filed at least two actions in state court concerning the regulatory action for which they now seek just compensation, amici have been denied their day in federal court because they have assertedly failed to satisfy the “state procedures” requirement of *Williamson County Regional Planning Commission v. Hamilton Bank*, 473 U.S. 172, 194-97 (1985). See *Neumont v. Monroe County, Florida*, 242 F. Supp. 2d 1265, 1274 (S.D. Fla. 2002) (dismissing amici’s federal claims for just compensation “because plaintiffs have failed to exhaust their state remedies”).

Accordingly, for themselves and their fellow property owners around the country, amici file this brief to explain that *Williamson County*’s state procedures requirement was wrong in its inception and is wrong today. As such, it ought to be scrapped in its entirety.

Amici’s counsel represented the petitioner in *Palazzolo v. Rhode Island*, 533 U.S. 606 (2001), and he has filed numerous briefs in takings cases in this Court and in the lower courts, both federal and state.¹

¹ Pursuant to this Court’s Rule 37.2(a), all parties have consented to the filing of this brief. Letters evidencing such consent have been filed with the Clerk of the Court.

Pursuant to Rule 37.6, amici curiae affirm that no counsel for any party authored this brief in whole or in part and that no person or entity made a monetary contribution for the preparation or submission of this brief.

INTRODUCTION

This Court granted certiorari to consider a particular matter (issue preclusion) arising from *Williamson County*'s mandate that a property owner "ripen [its] federal Takings claim" in state court before litigating that claim in federal court. Pet. for Cert. at i. Amici curiae respectfully submit that consideration of this issue is like rearranging the deck chairs on a legal *Titanic*. As explained at length herein, the "state procedures" requirement of *Williamson County* "was not correct when it was decided, and it is not correct today"; therefore, the requirement "ought not to remain as binding precedent." *Lawrence v. Texas*, 539 U.S. 558, 578 (2004). In a word, it should be *overruled*.

Amici acknowledge that the Court rarely overrules a prior decision without full briefing of that point by the parties. But as set forth in Part II of the Argument below, the state procedures requirement was not one of the questions presented in *Williamson County*, and so that requirement was fabricated without any serious briefing or argument. Accordingly, it is not surprising that the state procedures requirement deviated sharply from the established understanding of the Just Compensation Clause and that it has generated massive doctrinal incoherence. No subsequent decision of this Court has defended the state procedures requirement, and virtually no one in the academy will defend it either as a theoretical matter. And for good reason—the requirement is indefensible, a jurisprudential embarrassment that ought to be discarded as soon as possible.

As the Court has repeatedly stated, when "governing decisions are unworkable or are badly reasoned, this Court has never felt constrained to follow precedent." *Seminole Tribe v. Florida*, 517 U.S. 44, 63 (1996) (quoting *Payne v. Tennessee*, 501 U.S. 808, 827 (1991)). Therefore, now is the time to overrule the unworkable and badly reasoned state procedures requirement of *Williamson County*.

SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

1. It is important to comprehend the precise federal right at issue in cases within the sweep of the state procedures requirement. The property owner in such cases sues to enforce a right to recover just compensation for a taking. That right, and the corresponding obligation of the government to pay just compensation, was always understood to accrue or arise at the time of the taking, and not later. In asserting that the right and the obligation accrued at some later point after the denial of state-law remedies in a state court, *Williamson County* deviated sharply from the established understanding of the Just Compensation Clause.

2. The state procedures requirement was not one of the questions presented in *Williamson County*, and so it received only the most cursory treatment in the briefing and argument. Not surprisingly, therefore, the requirement is poorly reasoned. It rests principally on two flawed analogies to inapposite decisions that decree the unavailability of (1) equitable relief against compensable takings, and of (2) relief under the Due Process Clause for random and unauthorized deprivations of property, neither of which is remotely at issue. Nor can the requirement be justified by the principle that the Fifth Amendment proscribes only takings *without just compensation*, which supports a no-equitable-relief rule but not exhaustion of state judicial remedies.

3. The state procedures requirement has other defects that show its doctrinal incoherence. Among these are that the requirement is really an exhaustion mandate that conflicts with the no-exhaustion-of-remedies rule governing other federal rights, as twice recognized in bills passed by the House of Representatives. In addition, the requirement is in practice ignored by state courts (and by this Court in cases originating from state courts), even though it logically should apply in those fora. Finally, though touted as promoting local decisionmaking, the requirement affirmatively invites *disrespect* for state courts by treating them as mere stations on the road to federal court.

ARGUMENT

For the following reasons, the Court should overrule the state procedures requirement fabricated in *Williamson County Regional Planning Commission v. Hamilton Bank*, 473 U.S. 172, 194-97 (1985).

I. In Creating the State Procedures Requirement, *Williamson County* Deviated Sharply from the Established Understanding of the Just Compensation Clause.

The question presented focuses on the preclusive effect vel non of the “state court proceeding that was required to ripen [petitioners’] federal Takings claim.” Pet. for Cert. at i. That petitioners had to “ripen” that claim by proceeding in state court is, of course, a consequence of this Court’s decision in *Williamson County*. The “state procedures” requirement of that decision—so called to distinguish it from the “final decision” requirement, which is not at issue here—decreed that a property owner must “seek compensation through the [state-law] procedures the State has provided for doing so” before presenting to a federal court a federal claim for just compensation. 473 U.S. at 194.

A. At Issue Here Is the Right to Recover Just Compensation for Takings of Private Property for Public Use.

In fabricating the state procedures requirement, the *Williamson County* opinion referred to a property owner’s claiming or suffering “a violation of the Just Compensation Clause.” 472 U.S. at 194-95; *accord id.* at 195 n.13 (referring to a “constitutional violation” stemming from a taking). While it is not unusual to use the term *violation* in a loose sense in connection with a claim for just compensation, this terminology obscures the true “nature of the constitutional right” at issue. *Id.* Property owners who seek just compensation in court under the Fifth Amendment are not claiming “constitutional violations” in the sense that they sue to enjoin or remedy state action that violates or transgresses

constitutional norms.² Rather, as the Court articulated in *First English Evangelical Lutheran Church v. County of Los Angeles*, these property owners sue to enforce the government’s “constitutional obligation to pay just compensation” along with their corresponding “right to recover just compensation.” 482 U.S. 304, 315 (1987) (quoting *Armstrong v. United States*, 364 U.S. 40, 49 (1960), and *Jacobs v. United States*, 290 U.S. 13, 16 (1933)). Thus, the owners are pursuing a monetary remedy that is “grounded in the Constitution itself.” *Id.* at 315; *accord id.* at 316 (“the Court has frequently repeated the view that, in the event of a taking, the compensation remedy is required by the Constitution”).³

B. It Was Always the Law That the Right to Recover Just Compensation Accrues at the Time of the Taking.

When does the government’s constitutional obligation to pay just compensation arise? Or, to ask the same thing, when does a property owner’s claim for just compensation accrue? The answer is that the taking, the obligation of the taker to pay just compensation, and the owner’s claim for compensation come into being simultaneously, as this Court and the lower federal courts consistently held for decades prior to *Williamson County*. This Court has explained:

² In certain circumstances, of course, one may allege a “violation” of the Takings Clause and ask a court’s aid in enjoining that violation. A typical example is the allegation that a statute effects an uncompensated taking and that just compensation is not even potentially available. *See, e.g., Eastern Enterprises v. Apfel*, 524 U.S. 498, 538 (1998) (plurality opinion) (concluding that “the Coal Act’s allocation of liability to Eastern violates the Takings Clause, and that [the statute] should be enjoined as applied to Eastern”).

³ A three-Justice plurality in *City of Monterey v. Del Monte Dunes, Ltd.*, 526 U.S. 687, 710 (1999), suggested that the property owner “sought not just compensation *per se* but rather damages for the unconstitutional denial of such compensation.” Yet the plurality’s analysis did not turn on the distinction between that view and a view of the case “as a simple suit for just compensation.” *Id.*

When a taking occurs by physical invasion, . . . the usual rule is that the time of the invasion constitutes the act of taking, and “[it] is that event which gives rise to the claim for compensation and fixes the date as of which the land is to be valued”

United States v. Clarke, 445 U.S. 253, 258 (1980) (quoting *United States v. Dow*, 357 U.S. 17, 22 (1958)).

Numerous decisions of this Court state essentially the same rule using slightly different phraseology. In *United States v. Dickinson*, 331 U.S. 745 (1947), the Court rejected the government’s argument that Dickinson’s reclamation of a portion of property previously taken by flooding rendered him ineligible to be paid for the original taking: “[N]o use to which Dickinson could subsequently put the property by his reclamation efforts changed the fact that the land was taken when it was taken and *an obligation to pay for it then arose.*” *Id.* at 751 (emphasis added). In *Soriano v. United States*, 352 U.S. 270, 275 (1957), the Court affirmed as time-barred the dismissal of petitioner’s claim against the government “for just compensation for supplies . . . taken from him . . . during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines.” As it rejected petitioner’s argument that the hostilities tolled the applicable statute of limitations, the Court agreed that petitioner’s compensation claim “accrued at the time of the taking.” *Id.*; accord *United States v. Rogers*, 255 U.S. 163, 169 (1921) (“Having taken the lands of the [claimants], it was the duty of the government to make just compensation as of the time when the owners were deprived of their property.”); *Seaboard Air Line Ry. Co. v. United States*, 261 U.S. 299, 306 (1923) (same).⁴

⁴ The law in the Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit and the old Court of Claims is the same. See *Alliance of Descendants of Texas Land Grants v. United States*, 37 F.3d 1478, 1481 (Fed. Cir. 1994) (“A claimant under the Fifth Amendment must show that the United States, by some specific action, took a private property

The foregoing cases involved physical takings rather than regulatory takings, but that distinction makes no difference in this context. Thus, the Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit applies the above-described rule to regulatory takings claims. *See Creppel v. United States*, 41 F.3d 627, 633 (Fed. Cir. 1994) (applying rule to a claim that the EPA effected a regulatory taking by blocking a reclamation project). Moreover, nothing in *Williamson County's* discussion of state procedures hinges on the physical/regulatory distinction: the opinion purports to rest on “the nature of the constitutional right” in general, 473 U.S. at 195 n.13, not the nature of a specifically *regulatory* taking. *See, e.g., Greenfield Mills, Inc. v. Macklin*, 361 F.3d 934, 958 & n.28 (7th Cir. 2004) (applying the state procedures requirement to physical takings, in accord with other courts of appeals).

In any event, the limited discussion in this Court regarding the accrual of regulatory takings claims confirms the coincidence of taking and duty to pay compensation. In *San Diego Gas & Electric Co. v. City of San Diego*, 450 U.S. 621, 623 (1981), the Court ruled that it lacked jurisdiction to address the question presented—whether “a State must provide a monetary remedy to a landowner whose property allegedly has been ‘taken’ by a regulatory ordinance.” But writing for four Justices—and commanding the substantial agreement of a fifth, *see id.* at 633-34 (Rehnquist, J., concur-

interest for a public use without just compensation. Therefore, a claim under the Fifth Amendment accrues when that taking action occurs.”); *Inupiat Community of Arctic Slope v. United States*, 680 F.2d 122, 127 (Ct. Cl.) (holding that because the “alleged act of taking was the Settlement Act, the takings claims “accrued on . . . the date on which the Settlement Act became effective”), *cert. denied*, 459 U.S. 969 (1982); *Steel Improvement & Forge Co. v. United States*, 355 F.2d 627, 631 (Ct. Cl. 1966) (“It is axiomatic that a cause of action for an unconstitutional taking accrues at the time the taking occurs.”); *Stafford Ordinance Corp. v. United States*, 108 F. Supp. 378, 381 (Ct. Cl. 1952) (holding that a “claim accrues in requisitioning property at the time of the actual taking of the property.”).

ring)—Justice Brennan would have reached that question and answered it in the affirmative, *see id.* at 653-60 (Brennan, J., dissenting). His analysis was grounded in part on the recognition that “[a]s soon as private property has been taken, . . . ‘the self-executing character of the constitutional provision with respect to just compensation’ is triggered.” *Id.* at 654 (quoting *Clarke*, 445 U.S. at 257). When Justice Brennan’s dissent later became law in *First English*, and the Court expressly reaffirmed “the self-executing character of the constitutional provision with respect to just compensation,” 482 U.S. at 315, the Court necessarily reaffirmed as well that this constitutional provision is triggered “[a]s soon as private property has been taken.”

In short, it was the consistent rule of this Court and the lower federal courts for many decades that the constitutional obligation to pay just compensation arises, and the claim for just compensation accrues, at the time of the taking. Whether stated that the event of taking “gives rise to the claim for compensation,” *Dow*, 357 U.S. at 22; *Clarke*, 445 U.S. at 258, or that the obligation to pay just compensation is triggered “[a]s soon as private property has been taken,” *San Diego Gas*, 450 U.S. at 654 (Brennan, J., dissenting), the rule was well-established. In asserting that a property owner’s monetary claim under the Just Compensation Clause does not accrue “until just compensation has been denied” by the state judicial system, 473 U.S. at 195 n.13, *Williamson County* deviated sharply from the traditional understanding of that Clause.

II. In Creating the State Procedures Requirement, *Williamson County* Built a House on Jurisprudential Sand.

Did such a sharp deviation from decades of consistent constitutional interpretation come after sustained reflection in the face of compelling new authority? Was the state procedures requirement forged in the fires of intensive and extensive doctrinal reassessment in light of developments in

the law of just compensation? In a word, *no*. In fact, quite the opposite: as explained below, the requirement was fabricated without benefit of serious briefing or argument, and it rests principally on flawed analogies to inapposite cases, as well as other misreadings of precedent.

A. The Requirement Was Fabricated Without Benefit of Serious Briefing or Argument.

In the Court’s own words, it granted certiorari in the *Williamson County* case to decide “whether Federal, State, and Local governments must pay money damages to a landowner whose property allegedly has been ‘taken’ temporarily by the application of government regulations.” 473 U.S. at 185. The attorneys general of 19 states and territories, together with the Solicitor General of the United States, the National Association of Counties, the City of New York, and the City of St. Petersburg, Florida, joined the petitioner in urging the Court to reverse the court of appeals’ judgment in favor of the property owner on two alternative grounds: “that a *temporary* regulatory interference with an investor’s profit expectation does not constitute a ‘taking,’” and “that even if such interference does constitute a taking, the Just Compensation Clause does not require *money damages* as recompense.” *Id.* at 175 (emphases added). Four professional and public-interest organizations filed amicus curiae briefs urging affirmance of the judgment. *See id.* at 174.

In the end, all of this briefing was for naught, because the Court did not decide the questions presented. Instead, *Williamson County* left the temporary takings issue “for another day,” as it concluded that the property owner’s claim for just compensation was “premature.” *Id.* at 186; *cf. First English*, 482 U.S. at 310 (deciding the issue after observing that *Williamson County*, among other cases, had left it undecided). The conclusion that the just compensation claim was premature rested primarily on the Court’s applying the rule that a regulatory takings claim “is not ripe until the government entity charged with implementing the regulations has reached a final decision regarding the application

of the regulations to the property at issue.” *Id.*; *see also id.* at 186-94 (explicating this “final decision” requirement).

Logically, the opinion could have stopped at that point, but it did not. Instead, the opinion put forth a “second reason [why] the taking[s] claim is not yet ripe,” namely, that the property owner “did not seek compensation through the procedures the State has provided for doing so.” *Id.* at 194. Of the twelve merits briefs filed in *Williamson County*, only the Solicitor General’s amicus brief—and only in a single paragraph in its *Summary of Argument*—argued for anything approaching this “second reason.” *See* Brief for the United States as Amicus Curiae Supporting Petitioners at 10; *see also* Brief for Respondent at 39 (responding to point in two short paragraphs). Furthermore, although the “state procedures” issue did arise very briefly at oral argument in *Williamson County*, the Solicitor General’s representative refused even to give an unequivocal answer to the question whether “a property owner would have to follow judicial review remedies as well for [regulatory action] to ripen into a taking.” 1985 U.S. TRANS LEXIS 76, at *25-26 (Feb. 19, 1985); *see also id.* at *26 (“I think it tends to blend in with the question of whether there should be abstention on the state law question of whether the commission had properly applied state law.”).

B. The Requirement Rests Principally on Two Flawed Analogies to Inapposite Decisions.

There are very good reasons why the Court “ordinarily do[es] not consider questions outside those presented in the petition for certiorari,” and why the Court disregards that rule “only in the most exceptional cases.” *Yee v. City of Escondido*, 503 U.S. 519, 535 (1992). The “state procedures” aspect of *Williamson County* is a perfect illustration of such reasons. Given that the questions presented did not even touch on state judicial remedies and that the matter did not receive serious briefing or argument, it is no surprise that the fabrication of the state procedures requirement rested principally on two flawed analogies to inapposite decisions.

1. *Ruckelshaus v. Monsanto Co.*

First, the opinion cited *Ruckelshaus v. Monsanto Co.*, 467 U.S. 986, 1016-20 (1984), for the notion that “takings claims against the Federal Government are premature until the property owner has availed itself of the process provided by the Tucker Act.” 473 U.S. at 195. From this notion, the opinion purported to draw an analogy: “Similarly, if a State provides an adequate procedure for seeking just compensation, the property owner cannot claim a violation of the Just Compensation Clause until it has used the procedure and been denied just compensation.” Granting that the analogy is not wholly implausible, the premise is wholly bogus. If “takings claims” are meant in this passage to refer to monetary claims for just compensation for completed takings of private property—the very claim that the property owner asserted in *Williamson County*—then the cited passage in *Monsanto* did not even consider such claims, let alone declare them “premature” until after the property owner had sued the United States under the Tucker Act.⁵

In *Monsanto*, a company sued in federal district court “seeking *injunctive and declaratory relief* from the operation of” various provisions of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA), alleging that “all of the challenged provisions effected a ‘taking’ of property without just compensation, in violation of the Fifth Amendment.” 467 U.S. at 998-99 (emphasis added). Having concluded that some of the challenged provisions might conceivably operate to take the company’s property in some circumstances, the Court proceeded to consider (in the passage later cited by

⁵ The Tucker Act grants subject matter jurisdiction to the Court of Federal Claims to hear “any claim against the United States founded upon . . . the Constitution.” 28 U.S.C. § 1491(a)(1). This grant authorizes the Court of Federal Claims to adjudicate monetary claims against the United States for just compensation. *See, e.g., United States v. Causby*, 328 U.S. 256, 267 (1946) (“If there is a taking, the claim is ‘founded upon the Constitution’ and within the jurisdiction of the Court of Claims to determine.”).

Williamson County) whether that conclusion supported the requested injunctive relief. *Monsanto* ruled that it did not, based on the established rule that “[e]quitable relief is not available to enjoin an alleged taking of private property for public use . . . when a suit for compensation can be brought against the sovereign subsequent to the taking.” *Id.* at 1016 (emphasis added); *see also id.* at 1017-19 (concluding that such a suit could be brought under the Tucker Act). Thus, the company’s request for equitable relief under the Fifth Amendment was not merely *premature*, it was *not available* at all. In other words, there was nothing the company could do to “ripen” its claim for equitable relief; that claim simply had no merit, period.

What about a Tucker Act suit against the government in the Court of Federal Claims? Could such a suit be called a *prerequisite* to asserting a *monetary* claim against the government for just compensation for a taking of property? No, as the *Monsanto* decision confirms, a Tucker Act suit *is* the assertion of a claim for just compensation: “whatever taking may occur is one for public use, and a Tucker Act remedy is available to provide Monsanto with just compensation.” *Id.* at 1020; *accord supra* note 5. So if *Williamson County* were correct that a property owner must “avail[] itself of the process provided by the Tucker Act” *before* pursuing its claim for just compensation, 473 U.S. at 195, then it would be the rule that a property owner must essentially bring a Tucker Act suit before bringing a Tucker Act suit. In other words, an owner’s Tucker Act suit for just compensation would be “premature” until the property owner had brought a Tucker Act suit for just compensation. *Id.* Obviously, this *reductio ad absurdum* deserves no respect, and *Monsanto* provides no reasoned basis for the state procedures requirement.⁶

⁶ Although the no-equitable-relief rule could be applied to claims against state and local governments, it has no relevance for the state procedures aspect of *Williamson County*, which makes property owners “seek *compensation* through the procedures the State has provided for doing so.” 473 U.S. at 194 (emphasis added).

2. *Parratt v. Taylor*

The fabrication of the state procedures requirement in *Williamson County* also rested on the supposed analogy between takings of private property “without just compensation” and deprivations of property “without due process of law.” The Court relied on *Parratt v. Taylor*, 451 U.S. 527 (1981), which it described as having “ruled that a person deprived of property through a random and unauthorized act by a state employee does not state a claim under the Due Process Clause merely by alleging the deprivation of property.” 473 U.S. at 195. In such circumstances, “the State’s action is not ‘complete’ in the sense of causing a constitutional injury ‘unless or until the State fails to provide an adequate postdeprivation remedy for the property loss.’” *Id.* (quoting *Hudson v. Palmer*, 468 U.S. 517, 532 n.12 (1984)). Then, another purported analogy: “Likewise, because the Constitution does not require pretaking compensation, and is instead satisfied by a reasonable and adequate provision for obtaining compensation after the taking, the State’s action here is not ‘complete’ until the State fails to provide adequate compensation for the taking.” *Id.*

This analogy has two fatal flaws.⁷ First, it provides no support for the go-first-to-state-court requirement actually imposed by the second prong of *Williamson County*. When a state does indeed “provide an adequate postdeprivation remedy for the property loss” as contemplated by *Parratt*, the deprived property owner does not pursue that state-law remedy *before* suing in federal court under the Due Process

⁷ One should really say two fatal flaws in addition to the one that the Court itself acknowledged: “The analogy to *Parratt* is imperfect because *Parratt* does not extend to situations . . . in which the deprivation of property is effected pursuant to an established state policy or procedure.” 473 U.S. at 195 n.14. By definition, a taking is *always* effected pursuant to an established state policy or procedure, for if the relevant injury to property results from a truly “random and unauthorized act by a state employee,” the property owner has suffered a tort, not a taking.

Clause. To the contrary, the property owner must pursue the state-law remedy *instead of* suing in federal court. As *Williamson County* put it, the owner who has such a remedy categorically “does not state a claim under the Due Process Clause.” 473 U.S. at 195. If the analogy with the Just Compensation Clause were valid, the property owner having a state-law remedy for just compensation categorically could not state a claim under the Just Compensation Clause *in any court*. Obviously, no one believes that, then or now.

Second, and more important, the specific notion that “the State’s action [in respect to a taking] is not ‘complete’ until the State fails to provide adequate compensation for the taking,” *id.*, is flatly contrary to the Court’s sustained and reasoned consideration of the matter in *First English*. There, the Court held that the government’s taking of property, without more, gives rise to an “obligation to pay just compensation” on the part of the government, and a corresponding “right to recover just compensation” on the part of the owner. 482 U.S. at 315. While a postdeprivation remedy might allow the government to escape liability for a denial of procedural due process (as in *Parratt*), once a taking has occurred, governmental liability for just compensation is inescapable: “*no subsequent action* by the government can relieve it of the duty to provide compensation.” *Id.* at 321 (emphasis added). This formulation has continued to command the Court’s assent. See *Tahoe-Sierra Preservation Council v. Tahoe Regional Planning Agency*, 535 U.S. 302, 328 (2002) (quoting passage and opining that “nothing that we say today qualifies [that] holding” of *First English*).

C. The Requirement Finds No Support in the Principle That the Amendment Proscribes Only Takings Without Just Compensation.

Along with flawed analogies to *Monsanto* and *Parratt*, *Williamson County* relied on the uncontroversial principle that the “Fifth Amendment does not proscribe the taking of property; it proscribes taking without just compensation.” 473 U.S. at 194. Indeed, this principle was so significant

that the opinion both reiterated and emphasized the point: “because the Fifth Amendment proscribes takings *without just compensation*, no constitutional violation occurs until just compensation has been denied.” *Id.* at 195 n.13.

Both of these propositions are quite true; both are also quite irrelevant to whether property owners must seek just compensation in state court under state law. As explained in Part I.A above (pp. 4-5), property owners who seek just compensation under the Fifth Amendment are neither seeking to “proscribe” (i.e., enjoin) takings nor asserting “constitutional violations.” Instead, they are asserting a federal “right to recover just compensation,” the monetary remedy that is “grounded in the Constitution itself.”⁸

To put the point another way, the principle that the Fifth Amendment proscribes (only) those takings that are without just compensation leads not to the state procedures requirement but rather to the rule (reiterated in *Monsanto*) that “[e]quitable relief is not available to enjoin an alleged taking of private property for public use . . . when a suit for compensation can be brought against the sovereign subsequent to the taking.” 467 U.S. at 1016, *discussed at supra* note 6 and accompanying text. That is, the “proscribes takings without just compensation” point cited by *Williamson County* is a fine basis for rebuffing property owners who ask federal courts to *enjoin state regulatory programs*; however, it is no basis at all for rebuffing property owners who ask federal courts to *award just compensation*.

⁸ *First English*, 482 U.S. at 315. There is no tension between *First English* and principle that the Fifth Amendment proscribes takings *without just compensation*. To the contrary, in the sentence immediately preceding the opinion’s reiteration that takings trigger the “constitutional obligation to pay just compensation,” *First English* emphasized that the Fifth Amendment “is designed not to limit the governmental interference with property rights *per se*, but rather to secure *compensation* in the event of otherwise proper interference amounting to a taking.” 482 U.S. at 315.

III. The State Procedures Requirement Has Other Defects that Show Its Doctrinal Incoherence.

If *Williamson County*'s state procedures requirement was not correct when it was decided, then it is also defective in additional ways that have come to light in the past two decades. Other amici have described many of these defects: the requirement is fundamentally unfair (the present case, for example, has consumed *twelve years* without a resolution on the merits, and amici began their own state-court actions nearly *ten years* ago); it is irreconcilable with *City of Chicago v. International College of Surgeons*, 522 U.S. 156 (1997); and it spawns litigation about litigation instead of promoting resolution of federal constitutional claims on the merits. Two longtime and respected advocates in this Court have exhaustively catalogued the depths to which *Williamson County* has brought takings procedure. See Michael M. Berger & Gideon Kanner, *Shell Game! You Can't Get There from Here*, 36 URB. LAW. 672 (2004). In the following sections, amici discuss three other defects.

A. The Requirement Is Inconsistent with the No-Exhaustion-of-Remedies Rule Governing Other Federal Rights.

The intended effect of *Williamson County*'s state procedures requirement is to remit property owners with what had long been described as "accrued" federal claims for just compensation, *Soriano*, 352 U.S. at 275, to state courts to pursue remedies under state law. This result is anomalous on its face, and it is especially jarring in light of the Court's long-standing and firm refusal, with respect to other federal claims asserted pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983, to "require[] exhaustion of state *judicial* . . . remedies, recognizing the paramount role Congress has assigned to the federal courts to protect constitutional rights." *Steffel v. Thompson*, 415 U.S. 452, 472-73 (1974) (emphasis added), *quoted in Patsy v. Board of Regents*, 457 U.S. 496, 500 (1982). In practice, therefore, the state procedures requirement has effectively caused the Just Compensation Clause, "as much a part of

the Bill of Rights as the First Amendment or [the] Fourth Amendment, [to] be relegated to the status of a poor relation,” notwithstanding the Court’s protestations to the contrary in *Dolan v. City of Tigard*, 512 U.S. 374, 392 (1994).

The House of Representatives views the state procedures requirement as an “exhaustion” mechanism applying only to claims for just compensation, and has twice passed bills to eliminate it.⁹ The House Judiciary Committee’s report on the latter bill made clear that the non-exhaustion provision had as its target *Williamson County*’s state procedures requirement because the House viewed the requirement as a kind of exhaustion-of-judicial-remedies rule that was *rejected* in *Steffel*, *Patsy*, and many other decisions of this Court. *See* H.R. Rep. No. 106-518, at 13 & n.3 (2000). The committee report explained that the “combined effect of *Williamson County*, and the application of issue and claim preclusion [as presented in this case], is to drive out of Federal court virtually all Federal claims for just compensation for takings of private property by local governments.” *Id.* at 13. As a result of the state procedures requirement, then, “property rights are procedurally disadvantaged compared to other civil rights.” *Id.* (section heading).¹⁰

⁹ *See* Private Property Rights Implementation Act of 1997, H.R. 1534, 105th Cong., § 2 (adding 28 U.S.C. § 1343(e)(3) to provide that property owners seeking to enforce the Just Compensation Clause pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 need not “exhaust judicial remedies provided by any State or territory”); Private Property Rights Implementation Act of 2000, H.R. 2372, 106th Cong., § 2 (adding 28 U.S.C. § 1343(e)(4) to provide that claims for just compensation asserted pursuant to § 1983 are “ripe for adjudication even if the party seeking redress does not exhaust judicial remedies provided by any State or territory”).

¹⁰ If the present brief echoes the language of the cited committee report, that is because the report echoes the language of the Brief Amicus Curiae of Pacific Legal Foundation authored and filed by present amici’s counsel in *Florida Prepaid Postsecondary Education Expense Board v. College Savings Bank*, 527 U.S. 627 (1999).

**B. The Requirement Is in Practice Ignored
by State Courts and by this Court.**

If the state procedures requirement truly derives from the “nature” of the federal right to just compensation—as opposed to being merely a “procedural scheme under which claims may be heard in federal courts,” *Patsy*, 457 U.S. at 501—then the requirement necessarily governs regardless of the judicial forum in which the federal right is asserted. That is, under the logic of *Williamson County*, “a property owner cannot claim a violation of the Just Compensation Clause” *even in state court* until it has used the “procedure for seeking just compensation” provided by the state. 473 U.S. at 195. In other words, no *federal* claim for just compensation may be presented to a *state* court unless and until the property owner has fully (and unsuccessfully) litigated his state-law claim for compensation (in the state judicial system).

This precept follows unassailably from the state procedures requirement; this precept is also uniformly ignored both by state courts themselves and by this Court. As for state courts, amici are aware of none that refuses to adjudicate *federal* claims for just compensation on the ground that they are premature until a property owner has pursued to completion all claims for compensation under *state* law. To the contrary, it is not difficult to cite numerous examples of state judicial systems that will hear and determine federal claims for just compensation *before* state-law compensation claims have been fully litigated.¹¹

¹¹ See, e.g., *Jacobs Wind Electric Co. v. Department of Transportation*, 626 So. 2d 1333, 1337 (Fla. 1993) (contemplating that a patent holder would assert its claims under the Just Compensation Clause *along with* its claims under the state analogue thereto and under state common law); *Kavanau v. Santa Monica Rent Control Board*, 941 P.2d 851, 855 (Cal. 1997) (observing that the property owner brought a claim for “‘just compensation’ in the form of lost rental income and interest” under both “article I, section 19 of the California Constitution and the Fifth Amendment of the United

As for this Court, consider the last two pure regulatory takings cases it has entertained on certiorari to state courts. In *Lucas v. South Carolina Coastal Council*, 505 U.S. 1003, 1009 (1992), the Court observed that following enactment of the relevant state statute, “Lucas promptly filed suit in the South Carolina Court of Common Pleas, contending that the Beachfront Management Act’s construction bar effected a taking of his property without just compensation.” Even though the Court postponed its discussion of the merits to address whether Lucas had satisfied *Williamson County*’s “final decision” requirement, *see id.* at 1010-14, the Court was not concerned in the least whether Lucas had also satisfied *Williamson County*’s “state procedures” requirement by litigating to completion whatever state-law claims for compensation he might have prior to asserting his federal claim for just compensation.

Likewise, in *Palazzolo v. Rhode Island*, 533 U.S. 606, 611 (2001), the Court observed that following proceedings before the state Coastal Resources Management Council, Palazzolo “sued in state court, asserting the Council’s application of its wetlands regulations took the property without compensation in violation of the Takings Clause of the Fifth Amendment.” Again, while the Court addressed the final decision requirement at length, *see id.* at 618-26, it gave no attention to the state procedures requirement. In contrast to *Williamson County*, the Court certainly did not go out of its way to assure itself that, *before* Palazzolo first asserted his federal claim for just compensation, he did indeed “seek

States Constitution”), *cert. denied*, 522 U.S. 1077 (1998); *Mayhew v. Town of Sunnyvale*, 964 S.W.2d 922, 930 (Tex. 1997) (finding ripe the plaintiff’s “just compensation takings claims” brought at the same time “under the United States Constitution and Texas Constitution”); *Palazzolo v. State*, 746 A.2d 707, 711 (R.I. 2000) (observing that plaintiff “brought an inverse condemnation action” that asserted “a taking of his property for which he was entitled to compensation pursuant to the United States and Rhode Island Constitutions”), *aff’d in part, rev’d in part*, 533 U.S. 606 (2001).

compensation through the procedures the State has provided for doing so.”¹²

Amici point out these anomalies not to urge the state courts to be more eager in rebuffing federal takings claims on procedural grounds (or this Court to be more vigilant in exercising its certiorari jurisdiction) but rather to highlight the profound impact to state courts that would result from applying the state procedures requirement to the limits of its ineluctable logic. As explained in the following section, that impact also includes the fostering of an institutional disrespect for state courts.

C. The Requirement Invites Disrespect for State Courts by Treating Them as Mere Stations on the Road to Federal Court.

In a letter expressing its (unsuccessful) opposition to passage by the House of a bill eliminating the state procedures requirement, *see supra* note 9 and accompanying text, the Department of Justice cited “‘a proper respect for State functions’” in arguing that “State courts are as capable as Federal courts in adjudicating local land use cases.” H.R. Rep. No. 106-518, at 37, 42 (quoting *Younger v. Harris*, 401 U.S. 37, 44 (1971)). These arguments naturally evoke the decisions of this Court that call for a “proper respect for the ability of state courts to resolve federal questions presented in state-court litigation.” *Pennzoil Co. v. Texaco, Inc.*, 481

¹² In fact, neither Lucas nor Palazzolo litigated state-law claims to completion prior to asserting their federal claims. It is doubtful whether Lucas even asserted a state-law claim at all, the majority opinion of the South Carolina Supreme Court being devoid of any references to such a claim. *See Lucas v. South Carolina Coastal Council*, 404 S.E.2d 895 (S.C. 1991); *but cf. id.* at 907 (Hartwell, J., dissenting) (“Having determined that application of the Act constitutes a taking under the Constitution of the United States, it is not necessary to examine whether it constitutes a taking under the South Carolina Constitution.”). Palazzolo did assert a state-law claim—at the same very time as he asserted his federal claim. *See Palazzolo v. State*, 746 A.2d 707, 711 (R.I. 2000).

U.S. 1, 14 (1987). Amici concur with the Department that this respect should influence the Court's thinking about the state procedures requirement. As set forth below, however, the requirement actually invites *disrespect* for state courts and their ability to resolve federal questions.

It has long been recognized that, notwithstanding "the paramount role Congress has assigned to the federal courts to protect constitutional rights," *Steffel*, 415 U.S. at 473, as a general matter "the state and federal courts have concurrent jurisdiction of suits of a civil nature arising under the Constitution and laws of the United States." *Grubb v. Public Utilities Commission*, 281 U.S. 470, 476 (1930); *accord*, e.g., *Tafflin v. Levitt*, 493 U.S. 455, 459 (1990). Monetary claims arising under the Just Compensation Clause are encompassed by this general rule, and state courts routinely adjudicate such federal claims against state and local governments. *See, e.g., Lucas*, 505 U.S. at 1010-32 (reviewing South Carolina courts' disposition of such claim); *Palazzolo*, 533 U.S. at 617-32 (reviewing Rhode Island courts' disposition of such claim).

Consider a procedural regime in which both the state courts and the lower federal courts adjudicate the federal claims for just compensation respectively presented to each. Property owners who agree with the Justice Department's prediction that "State courts are likely to be as sympathetic to local property owners as Federal courts," H.R. Rep. No. 106-518, at 37, will naturally gravitate toward the former; those who disagree, the latter. Each court system will develop federal takings law subject to this Court's review and, significantly, without interference from the other. Such a regime would not only yield more efficient decisionmaking, it would also truly show that "proper respect for ability of state courts to resolve federal questions presented in state-court litigation" enunciated in *Pennzoil Co.*, 481 U.S. at 14.

By contrast, consider the regime created by the state procedures requirement of *Williamson County*. Under that regime, federal courts consider state courts not as parallel

departments of a dual sovereign but rather as “hurdles” to be overcome on the road to resolution of claims by federal courts. *E.g.*, *Richardson v. City & County of Honolulu*, 124 F.3d 1150, 1165 (9th Cir. 1997), *cert. denied*, 525 U.S. 871, 921, 1018 (1998); *Eide v. Sarasota County*, 908 F.2d 716, 720-21 (11th Cir. 1990), *cert. denied*, 498 U.S. 1120 (1991). Moreover, federal courts send property owners packing off to state courts to litigate state-law claims they do not wish to pursue and to obtain rulings that may have absolutely no consequence in subsequent federal proceedings.¹³ Forcing pointless detours to state courts to litigate sideshow issues demonstrates affirmative *disrespect* for those courts rather than the requisite proper respect.

CONCLUSION

As the Court recently reiterated, the doctrine of *stare decisis* is “not . . . an inexorable command.” *Lawrence*, 539 U.S. at 577 (quoting *Payne*, 501 U.S. at 828). It is, instead, “a principle of policy” that must yield when the rationale of a prior decision “does not withstand careful analysis.” *Id.* As this brief has shown, the state procedures requirement of *Williamson County* does not withstand such analysis: it was fashioned in circumstances that warrant no confidence in its soundness, and “precedents before and after its issuance contradict its central holding.” *Id.* Though state and local governments “rely” on it as a ready means to exhaust those

¹³ *DLX, Inc. v. Kentucky*, 381 F.3d 511, 515-16 (6th Cir. 2004), is a very recently reported example. The property owner spent four years fulfilling the state procedures requirement in the Kentucky Circuit Court, the Kentucky Court of Appeals, and the Kentucky Supreme Court. *See Commonwealth v. DLX, Inc.*, 42 S.W.3d 624 (Ky. 2001). At the end of this marathon, the state courts denied compensation under state law based on “the operation of a state procedural rule without analogue in federal law,” 381 F.3d at 520—a ruling that advanced resolution of the owner’s federal claim for just compensation not a single bit, *see id.* at 516-26.

property owners having temerity enough to assert federal claims for just compensation, “there has been no individual or societal reliance on [the state procedures requirement] of the sort that could counsel against overturning its holding once there are compelling reasons to do so.” *Id.*

This last point is crucial, for we may expect a chorus from respondents and their amici about how the state procedures requirement is a pillar of Western Civilization and how overruling it will usher in a new Dark Ages. We think this chorus is largely driven by the desire of governments and their allies to narrow the substantive scope of regulatory takings law. Although that desire is understandable and, in the proper case, a legitimate litigating position, we trust that Members of this Court will resist the temptation to treat the state procedures requirement as a stand-in for disputing the substantive reach of the Just Compensation Clause. Whether that Clause affords broad relief to regulated property owners, narrow relief, or even no relief at all ought not to matter here: consistent with “the paramount role Congress has assigned to the federal courts to protect constitutional rights,” *Steffel*, 415 U.S. at 473, the answers to that question should be resolved in federal court without requiring exhaustion of state-law remedies in state court.

For these reasons, the state procedures requirement of *Williamson County* should be overruled, and the judgment of the court of appeals should be reversed.

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