THE DEFINITION OF “EMOLUMENT” IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LEGAL DICTIONARIES, 1523-1806

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In its motion to dismiss in CREW et al. v. Trump, the Department of Justice (DOJ) defines the word “emolument” as “profit arising from office or employ.” DOJ claims that this “original understanding” of “emolument” is both grounded in “contemporaneous dictionary definitions” and justifies an “office-and-employment-specific construction” of that term. On this basis, it argues that the Emoluments Clauses of the Constitution “do not prohibit any company in which the President has any financial interest from doing business with any foreign, federal, or state instrumentality.”

Unfortunately, DOJ’s historical definition of “emolument” is inaccurate, unrepresentative, and misleading. Particularly because the government might seek to rely on its flawed definition in subsequent court filings, this Article seeks to correct the historical record. It does so based on a comprehensive study of how “emolument” is defined in English language dictionaries published from 1604 to 1806, as well as in common law dictionaries published from 1523 to 1792.

Among other things, the Article demonstrates that every English dictionary definition of “emolument” from 1604 to 1806 relies on one or more of the elements of the broad definition DOJ rejects in its brief: “profit,” “advantage,” “gain,” or “benefit.” Furthermore, over 92% of these dictionaries define “emolument” exclusively in these terms, with no reference to “office” or “employment.” By contrast, DOJ’s preferred definition—“profit arising from office or employ”—

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appears in less than 8% of these dictionaries. Moreover, even these outlier dictionaries always include “gain, or advantage” in their definitions, a fact obscured by DOJ’s selective quotation of only one part of its favored definition from Barclay (1774). The impression DOJ creates in its brief by contrasting four historical definitions of “emolument”—two broad and two narrow—is, therefore, highly misleading.

The suggestion that “emolument” was a legal term of art at the founding, with a sharply circumscribed “office-and-employment-specific” meaning, is also inconsistent with the historical record. A vast quantity of evidence already available in the public domain suggests that the founding generation used the word “emolument” in broad variety of contexts, including private commercial transactions. This Article adds to that emerging historical consensus by documenting that none of the most significant common law dictionaries published from 1523 to 1792 even includes “emolument” in its list of defined terms. In fact, this term is mainly used in these legal dictionaries to define other, less familiar words and concepts. These findings reinforce the conclusion that “emolument” was not a term of art at the founding with a highly restricted meaning.

Finally, the Article calls attention to the fact that the government’s dictionary-based argument is flawed in another, more fundamental respect. Little or no evidence indicates that the two historical dictionaries—Barclay (1774) and Trusler (1766)—on which DOJ relies in its brief to defend its “office-and-employment-specific” definition of “emolument” were owned, possessed, or used by the founders, let alone had any impact on them or on the American people who debated and ratified the Constitution. For example, neither of these dictionaries is mentioned in the more than 178,000 searchable documents in the Founders Online database, which makes publicly available the papers of the six most prominent founders. Nor do these volumes appear in other pertinent databases, such as the Journals of the Continental Congress, Letters of Delegates to Congress, Farrand’s Records, Elliot’s Debates, or the Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution. By contrast, all of the dictionaries that the founding generation did possess and use regularly—e.g., Johnson, Bailey, Dyche & Pardon, Ash, and Entick—define “emolument” in the broad manner favoring the plaintiffs: “profit,” “gain,” “advantage,” or “benefit.”

To document its primary claims, the Article includes over 100 original images of English and legal dictionaries published between 1523 and 1806, as well as complete transcripts and easy-to-read tables of the definitions contained therein. A second study is currently underway of dictionaries from 1806 to the present, which seeks to determine how and why definitions of “emolument” may have changed over time. Collectively, these inquiries are designed to accomplish more than simply aiding judges and holding lawyers’ feet to the fire in the emoluments cases now pending in three federal courts. They also provide a basis for educating members of Congress, government officials, journalists, scholars, and the broader public about the historical meaning of this important yet obscure constitutional term.
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INTRODUCTION

On June 9, 2017, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) filed a brief in support of President Donald Trump’s Motion to Dismiss in CREW et al. v. Trump,1 one of three emoluments lawsuits currently pending against the President.2 In its brief, DOJ argues *inter alia* that:

- “Plaintiffs’ expansive reading of the Emoluments Clauses is contrary to the original understanding of the Clauses and to historical practice. The term ‘Emolument’ in this context refers to benefits arising from personal service in an employment or equivalent relationship.”3
- “Neither the text nor the history [of the Emoluments Clauses] shows that they were intended to reach benefits arising from a President’s private business pursuits having nothing to do with his office or personal service to a foreign power.”4
- “At the time of the Nation’s founding . . . an ‘emolument’ was a common characteristic of a federal office and comprehensively described ‘every species of compensation or pecuniary profit derived from a discharge of the duties of the office.’”5
- In light of “common usage” at the time of the founding, “the term ‘Emolument’ in the Emoluments Clauses should be interpreted to refer to a ‘profit arising from an office or employ.’”6
- “The history and purpose of the [Emoluments Clauses] is devoid of concern about private commercial business arrangements.”7

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3 DOJ Brief, supra note 1, at 2-3

4 Id. at 26.

5 Id. (quoting Hoyt v. United States, 51 U.S. 109, 135 (1850) (emphasis omitted)).

6 Id. at 28 (quoting JAMES BARCLAY, A COMPLETE AND UNIVERSAL ENGLISH DICTIONARY ON A NEW PLAN (1774)).

7 Id. at 34.
To defend these and other historical claims, DOJ leans on two founding-era dictionaries: A Complete and Universal English Dictionary on a New Plan by James Barclay and The Difference between Words, Esteemed Synonymous, in the English Language by John Trusler. According to DOJ, Barclay defines “emolument” as “profit arising from an office or employ,” while Trusler explains that the term “relates to commissions and employments; intimating, not only the salaries, but, all other perquisites.” Repeatedly invoking these definitions in support of President Trump’s Rule 12(b)(6) motion, DOJ argues that they justify what it calls an “office-and-employment-specific construction” of “emolument,” which, it claims, categorically precludes the possibility that any of the profits, gains, or advantages President Trump or his businesses receive from foreign, federal, or state governments constitute violations of the Emoluments Clauses.

DOJ concedes that “the plaintiffs’ definition of [‘emolument’] as encompassing ‘anything of value’ resembles a broader definition that also existed at the time of the founding.” It insists, however, that “common usage” at the time reflects Barclay’s narrower definition. DOJ also argues that if the term “emolument” is ambiguous, that ambiguity ought to be resolved in favor of Barclay’s definition. For these and other reasons, DOJ maintains, the plaintiffs fail to state a valid claim upon which relief can be granted.

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8 See, e.g., id. at 27 (“The Emoluments Clauses Prohibit Benefits Arising from the U.S. Official’s Provision of Service Pursuant to an Office or Employment”); id. (“[T]he Emoluments Clauses apply only to the receipt of compensation for personal services and to the receipt of honors and gifts based on official position”); id. (“[T]he Emoluments Clauses . . . do not prohibit any company in which the President has a financial interest from doing business with any foreign, federal, or state instrumentality”). DOJ does not identify these additional claims as originalist, but their context implies that it regards them as such.

9 JAMES BARCLAY, A COMPLETE AND UNIVERSAL ENGLISH DICTIONARY ON A NEW PLAN (1774).

10 JOHN TRUSLER, THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WORDS, ESTEEMED SYNONYMOUS, IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE (1766).

11 DOJ Brief, at 28 (quoting BARCLAY).

12 Id. at 29-30 (quoting TRUSLER).

13 See, e.g., id. at 28 (quoting BARCLAY); id. at 30 (quoting BARCLAY); id. at 31 (paraphrasing BARCLAY); id. at 29-30 (quoting TRUSLER).

14 Id. at 32. See also id. (arguing that “the term ‘Emolument’ . . . should be understood as office-and-employment specific”) id. at 40 (“For over two centuries, the Emoluments Clauses have been interpreted and applied in an office-and-employment specific manner”).

15 Id. at 27-32; see generally id. at 26-48. As Marty Lederman observes, DOJ’s conclusion does not necessarily follow from its premises. Even if one accepts the government’s narrow definition of the term “emolument,” at least some of the conduct alleged by the CREW plaintiffs in their complaint appears to violate the Foreign Emoluments Clause. See Marty Lederman, How the DOJ Brief in CREW v. Trump Reveals that Donald Trump is Violating the Foreign Emoluments Clause, TAKE CARE BLOG (June 12, 2017).

16 Id. at 30.

17 Id. at 28.

18 Id.

19 Id.

20 Id. at 51.
There are significant problems with these arguments and other aspects of the government’s brief, several of which have been identified by other commentators. The core problem I wish to highlight in these remarks concerns the government’s historical definition of “emolument.” Simply put, that definition is inaccurate, unrepresentative, and misleading. Particularly because DOJ might seek to utilize this flawed definition in subsequent court filings, this Article seeks to correct the historical record. It does so on the basis of a comprehensive study of how “emolument” is defined in both English language dictionaries published from 1604 to 1806 and English legal dictionaries published from 1523 to 1792.

In what follows, I first summarize the main findings of this investigation (Part I), followed by some brief remarks about the dictionaries we have good reason to believe the founding generation of Americans actually owned, used, and relied upon (Part II). Next, I consider some of DOJ’s other historical arguments (Part III), before turning to a summary of the sources, methods, and documentation used in this study (Part IV). Finally, I conclude. The bulk of the Article consists of three appendices, which reproduce over one hundred images of English language and legal dictionaries published from 1523 to 1806, along with easy-to-read tables and transcripts of the definitions contained therein. The first appendix also contains some modest statistical and longitudinal analyses of this database of definitions. A second inquiry is currently underway of English dictionaries from 1806 to the present, which seeks to determine how and why definitions of “emolument” may have changed over time. Comparable investigations of case reports, abridgments, treatises, and other historical materials are also in progress.

Collectively, these investigations are designed to accomplish more than simply aiding judges and holding lawyers’ feet to the fire in the emoluments cases now pending in three federal courts. They also provide a basis for educating members of Congress, government officials, journalists, and the wider public about the historical meaning of this important yet obscure constitutional term. Finally, these inquiries also seek to contribute to a growing body of research in historical semantics and legal interpretation, an emerging field that seeks to determine more precisely how lexical shifts have occurred over time and to evaluate their implications for constitutional and statutory interpretation. Among other things, the studies undertaken here illustrate how a more thorough and systematic investigation

21 See, e.g., Jane Chong, Reading the Office of Legal Counsel on Emoluments: Do Super-Rich Presidents Get a Pass? LAWFARE (July 1, 2017); Michael C. Dorf, Trump Emoluments Argument Mirrors His “Just a Hope,” Comey Defense, TAKE CARE BLOG (June 14, 2017); Andy Grewal, Three Reactions to the DOJ’s Brief in CREW v. Trump, NOTICE & COMMENT (June 10, 2017); Lederman, supra note 15; Leah Litman, The Two Sides of Donald Trump, As Reflected in The Government’s Motion to Dismiss the CREW Emoluments Case, TAKE CARE BLOG (June 12, 2017); Richard Primus, Two Thoughts on the Government’s Motion to Dismiss in the CREW Emoluments Case, BALKINIZATION (June 10, 2017); Simon Stern, Presents, Emoluments, and Corruption, BALKINIZATION (June 21, 2017).
of historical dictionaries and other documentary records can be used to assist in these broader endeavors.

I. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

With respect to English language dictionaries, this Article makes at least four specific contributions. First, it demonstrates that one or more elements of the broad definition of “emolument” DOJ rejects in its brief—“profit,” “advantage,” “gain,” or “benefit”—can be found in every known English language dictionary definition of “emolument” published between 1604 (when the first English language dictionary was published)\(^2\) and 1806 (when Noah Webster published his first American dictionary).\(^3\) Second, it demonstrates that over 92% of these dictionaries define “emolument” exclusively in these terms, with no reference to “office” or “employment.”\(^4\) By contrast, DOJ’s preferred definition—“profit arising from an office or employ”—appears in less than 8% of these dictionaries.\(^5\) Third, this research documents that even these outlier dictionaries always include “gain, or advantage” in their definitions, a finding obscured by DOJ’s selective quotation of Barclay in its brief.\(^6\) Finally, this report highlights the fact that Trusler’s volume


\(^3\) Noah Webster, A Compendious Dictionary of the English Language (1806). For discussion of Webster’s contributions to English lexicography, see David Micklethwait, Noah Webster and the American Dictionary (2005). For support of the proposition asserted in the text, see Table 1: Definitions of “Emolument” in English Dictionaries, 1604-1806, infra at A-2 to A-4 (henceforth “Table 1”).

\(^4\) See Table 1: Statistical and Longitudinal Analyses of Lexical Definitions, 1604-1806, infra at A-5 (henceforth “Figure 1”). See also Table 1, infra at A-2 to A-4.

\(^5\) See Table 1, infra at A-2 to A-4; Figure 1, infra at A-5.

\(^6\) Compare DOJ Brief, supra note 1, at 28, 30 (defining “emolument” as “profit arising from profit or employ” and attributing that definition to Barclay) with Appendix A, infra at A-3, A-5 (documenting that Barclay’s full definition of “emolument” is “profit arising from profit or employ; gain or advantage”) (emphasis added). In addition to this definition, Barclay also includes an explanation of how “emolument” differs from synonyms such as “profit” and “lucre” that appears to have been copied from Trusler without attribution. Compare Barclay, infra at A-8 with Trusler, infra at A-122. The only other dictionaries from 1604 to 1806 that lend support to DOJ’s definition of “emolument” also include “gain, or advantage” in their definitions. See Appendix A, infra at A-3 and A-8 (recording definitions in William Rider, A New Universal English Dictionary (1st ed. 1759) and Daniel Fenning, The Royal English Dictionary) (5th ed. 1775)). Except for minor differences in punctuation, the definitions given by Barclay, Rider, and Fenning are identical, suggesting that Rider (1759) was probably the first English lexicographer to use this definition and that Barclay copied his definition directly from either Rider or Fenning.
is not a standard dictionary at all, but rather a thesaurus, which presumes that “gain,” “profit,” “lucr,” and “emolument” are synonyms, albeit words with subtly different connotations. Moreover, Trusler’s account of these words was copied directly from a French thesaurus, Abbe Girard’s *Synonymes François*. His odd volume has long been viewed skeptically by scholars because “this book, including its preface, is for the most part an acknowledged translation” of Girard’s French text and because it “lacked the integrity of a work originally conceived with the problems of the English language in mind.” In short, Trusler’s explanation of “emolument” was not even reliably grounded in an investigation of the English lexicon, let alone its “common usage.”

The suggestion that “emolument” was a legal term of art at the founding, with a sharply circumscribed “office-and-employment-specific” meaning, is also inconsistent with the historical record. A large quantity of evidence already

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27 *See infra* at A-122 to A-129.
30 *Id.*
31 *DOJ Brief, supra* note 1, at 28.
32 *Id.* at 32.
33 Although DOJ does not clarify whether it thinks that “emolument” was a legal term of art at the founding, President-Elect Trump’s lawyers at Morgan, Lewis & Bockius did rely on this claim in their white paper on presidential conflicts of interest, which they circulated in connection with his pre-inaugural press conference. Moreover, they made this historical argument in the course of defending the very same “office-and-employment-specific” meaning of “emolument” to which DOJ subscribes in its brief. *See* Sheri Dillon, Fred F. Fielding, Allyson N. Ho, Michael E. Kenneally, William F. Nelson & Judd Stone, *Conflicts of Interest and the President*, Morgan, Lewis & Bockius White Paper, at 4 (January 11, 2017) (“[A]n emolument was widely understood at the framing of the Constitution to mean any compensation or privilege associated with an office—then, as today, an “emolument” in legal usage was a payment or other benefit received as a consequence of discharging the duties of an office’’); *id.* (observing that the Supreme Court “explained that ‘the term emoluments . . . embrac[es] every species of compensation or pecuniary profit derived from a discharge of the duties of [an] office’’ and noting that “[o]ther legal experts early in the Nation’s history used the word the same way”) (quoting Hoyt, *supra* note 5); *id.* at 5 (discussing the “common legal use at the Founding”). Other informed observers have also made similar claims. *See*, e.g., Trevor Burrus, *Sleep Well, President Trump—There are No Emoluments Under the Bad*, The Hill (June 16, 2017) (“Unless we believe that the Framers intended to prohibit any presidential secondary source of income that could, even incidentally, do business with a foreign government or official, then clearly “emolument” is a term of art that covers specific types of payments and gifts”). It is unclear to me whether Professor Natelson assumes that the definition of “emolument” he ultimately endorses (“all compensation with financial value received by reason of public office, including salary and fringe benefits”) was a legal term of art, but his article could be read to imply this. *See* Robert G. Natelson, *The Original Meaning of “Emoluments” in the Constitution*, 52 GA. L. REV. ___ at 57 (forthcoming). Finally, Professor Tillman has submitted an amicus brief with an originalist orientation in CREW et al., v. Trump which also endorses an “office-and-employment-specific” definition. *See* Brief for Scholar Seth Barrett Tillman as Amicus Curiae in Support of Defendant, CREW et al., v Trump, Case 1:17-cv-00458-RA Document 37-1 (Filed 06/16/17) (henceforth “Tillman Amicus Brief”).
available and easily searchable in the public domain suggests that the founders used the word “emolument” in wide variety of contexts, including private commercial transactions. This Article adds to that emerging historical consensus by documenting that none of the most prominent common law dictionaries published from 1523 to 1792 even includes “emolument” in its list of defined terms. In fact, the primary reason for which this term is used in these dictionaries is to define other, less familiar words and concepts. Together with the fact that none of the major abridgments appear to define or explain “emolument” either, and that Blackstone and other influential writers of the period frequently used the word in comparably diverse contexts, including private business settings, these findings reinforce the conclusion that “emolument” was not a legal term of art at the founding, which referred only to specific types of payments or benefits associated with discharging the duties of a government office.

at 5 (“‘To put it in its simplest terms, an ‘emolument’ is the lawfully authorized compensation that flows from holding an office or employment’); id. (“Emoluments should be understood as the compensation which is to be fixed by law by the body that creates the office or position under discussion, or by the body charged with fixing the office’s or position’s regular compensation”).


35 See Table 3: Definitions of “Emolument” in Legal Dictionaries, infra at A-91.

36 See, e.g., THOMAS BLOUNT, NOMO-LEXICON (2d ed. 1691), infra at A-107 (characterizing “Maritima Angliae” as “the Emolument arising to the King from the [seal]”; GILES JACOB, A NEW LAW DICTIONARY (1st ed. 1729), infra at A-111 (same); TIMOTHY CUNNINGHAM, A NEW AND COMPLETE LAW DICTIONARY (1st ed. 1764), infra at 115 (same). See also CUNNINGHAM, infra at A-113 (using “emolument” to define “Apportum”; RICHARD BURN, A NEW LAW DICTIONARY (1st ed. 1792), infra at A-120 (using “emoluments” to explain “Isle of Man”). Giles Jacob’s influential Law Dictionary also includes a “Form of a Release and Conveyance of Lands” in which “A.B.” conveys to “C.D.” a property together with “all . . . Easements, Profits, Commodities, Advantages, Emoluments, and Hereditaments whatsoever.” JACOB, infra at A-110 (emphasis added). See generally Table 3: Other Uses of “Emolument” in Legal Dictionaries, infra at A-92; Transcript of Legal Dictionary Definitions and Uses, 1523-1792, infra at A-93.

37 Although this Article focuses on definitions of “emolument,” this should not be taken to imply that dictionaries are the only or best source for understanding how concepts were understood during the founding era. Other sources, such as case reports, abridgments, treatises, and statutes, may be at least as relevant, if not more so. A preliminary review by Simon Stern suggests that “emolument” does not appear in any of the major abridgments from the sixteenth century onward, such as those by Fitzherbert, Brooke, Rolle, Bacon, and Viner. If this is correct, then it lends further support to the conclusion that lawyers did not think that the term “emolument” required any special explanation. I am indebted to Simon Stern for these observations and findings.

38 See, e.g., John Mikhail, “Emolument” in Blackstone’s Commentaries, BALKINIZATION (May 28, 2017); Jed Shugerman, Mikhail’s Blackstone Breakthrough: Emoluments Meant Private Benefits, TAKE CARE BLOG (May 31, 2017). The evidence to which these blog posts refer is just the tip of the iceberg. There are many other comparable illustrations in the legal, political, and economic literature of the period. See, e.g., infra notes 41-46 and accompanying text.

39 Unlike the legal dictionaries investigated here, modern law dictionaries do often define “emolument” in terms of office- or employment-related compensation. See, e.g., DOJ Brief, supra note 1 at 30, n.26 (quoting the 2014 edition of Black’s Law Dictionary). See also, e.g., BLACK’S LAW DICTIONARY 542 (17th ed. 1999) (Bryan A. Garner, Ed.) (defining “emolument” as “Any advantage, profit, or gain received as a result of one’s employment or one’s holding of office”); BLACK’S LAW DICTIONARY 616 (4th ed. 1951) (Henry Campbell Black, ed.) (defining
Because the fact that “emolument” was frequently used in private business settings is not widely appreciated and has been vigorously denied, this point is worth elaborating at greater length. For present purposes, two illustrations should suffice. With the possible exception of Hugo Grotius, no early modern writer on the law of nations was more influential than Samuel Pufendorf. His most significant work, De Jure Naturae et Gentium (On the Law of Nature and of Nations), was published in Latin in 1672 and soon translated into every major European language. The first English translation was made by Basil Kennet in 1703, with successive editions appearing in 1710, 1717, 1729, and 1749. The founders were intimately familiar with Pufendorf’s masterpiece and often quoted Kennet’s translation; for instance, George Wythe did so in his argument in Bolling v. Bolling; John Adams did so in his Novanglus essays; James Wilson did so in his Law Lectures; and Alexander Hamilton did so in his Pacificus essays. In Kennet’s translation, the word “emolument” occurs twice, once in Book V, Chapter V (“Of Chargeable Contracts in particular; and, First, of Bartering, Buying, and Selling”) and once in Book V, Chapter VII (“Of the Loan of a Consumable Commodity”). Both occasions involve private market transactions:

“What they call Lex Commissoria makes void the Bargain, if the Price be not paid by such a Day. And, in this Case, either the Seller may immediately deliver the Goods, and, in Default of the Payment, claim them again with the Emolument, or else the Goods maybe kept in Possession, till the Payment be actually be made; which last seems to be the safest Way, for generally this Clause is designed in Favour of the Seller, to save him from being put to any Trouble in the quest of his Money…."

“emolument” principally as “The profit arising from office or employment; that which is received as a compensation for services, or which is annexed to the possession of office as salary, fees, and perquisites; advantage; gain, public or private”). As this Article documents, however, the same was not true when the Constitution was framed and ratified.

40 See, e.g., Tillman Amicus Brief, supra note 33, at 2 (“Financial gain arising from private business transactions are not emoluments”). See also Seth Barrett Tillman, Business Transactions and President Trump’s “Emoluments” Problem, 40 HARV. J. L. & PUB. POL. 759 (2017).


42 OF THE LAW OF NATURE AND NATIONS 259-260 (3d. ed. 1717) (Translated by Basil Kennet) (original emphases deleted, spelling modernized, and emphasis on “emolument” added).
“A Man was Guilty of Usury properly so called, not only when he received back a Consumable Commodity with Increase, but if by reason of such a Loan, he lived in another’s House Gratis till he was paid; or gave less Rent for it, than otherwise he would have done; or if he received any Emolument from a Pawn left with him upon Account of the Debt.”

Likewise, many of the founders were well-acquainted with Adam Smith and his economic theories. For example, Benjamin Franklin requested a copy of An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations shortly after it was published in 1776; James Madison included Smith’s book in his 1783 Report on Books for Congress; Robert Morris reportedly gave out copies of The Wealth of Nations to members of Congress in the 1780s; and James Wilson quoted Smith in defense of the Bank of North America in 1785.

In The Wealth of Nations, “emolument” also occurs twice, once in Book I, Chapter VII (“Of the Natural and Market Price of Commodities”) and once in Book IV, Chapter III (“Of the Extraordinary Restraints upon the Importation of Goods of Almost All Kinds from Those Countries with which the Balance is Supposed to be Disadvantageous”). Once again, both occasions involve private market transactions:

A monopoly granted either to an individual or to a trading company has the same effect as a secret in trade or manufactures. The monopolists, by keeping the market constantly under-stocked, by never fully supplying the effectual demand, sell their commodities much above the natural price, and raise their emoluments, whether they consist in wages or profit, greatly above their natural rate.

The city of Amsterdam derives a considerable revenue from the bank…The bank is supposed, too, to make a considerable profit by the sale of the foreign coin or bullion which sometimes falls to it by the expiring of receipts, and which is always kept till it can be sold with advantage. It makes a profit likewise by

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43 Id. at 271.
selling bank money at five per cent agio, and buying it in at four. These different
emoluments amount to a good deal more than what is necessary for paying the
salaries of officers, and defraying the expense of management.46

In the face of illustrations like these, which occur frequently in eighteenth-century
literature and reinforce what is apparent from a cursory review of the founders’ own
writings, it seems difficult to understand why some respected scholars continue to
insist that the original meaning of “emolument” did not encompass financial gains
arising from private business transactions.

II. THE FOUNDERS’ DICTIONARIES

Even if one sets aside the foregoing problems, the government’s dictionary-
based argument in its motion to dismiss is flawed in another, more fundamental
respect. Little or no evidence indicates that the two historical dictionaries—Barclay
(1774) and Trusler (1766)—on which DOJ relies in its brief to defend its “office-
and-employment-specific” definition of “emolument” were owned, possessed, or
used by the founders, let alone had any impact on them or on the American people
who debated and ratified the Constitution. For example, neither of these
dictionaries is mentioned in the more than 178,000 searchable documents in the
Founders Online database, which makes publicly available the papers of the six
most prominent founders. Nor do these volumes appear in other pertinent
databases, such as Journals of the Continental Congress,47 Letters of Delegates to
Congress,48 Farrand’s Records,49 Elliot’s Debates,50 or the Documentary History
of the Ratification of the Constitution.51 Finally, their role in constitutional
adjudication appears to be negligible.52

46 Id.
47 See JOURNALS OF THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS, 1774-1789 (34 volumes, Washington, D.C.,
1904-37) (Worthington C. Ford et al., Eds.).
48 See LETTERS OF DELEGATES TO CONGRESS, 1774-1789. (25 volumes, Washington, D.C.:
49 See MAX FARRAND, THE RECORDS OF THE FEDERAL CONVENTION OF 1787 (3 volumes,
1911).
50 See THE DEBATES IN THE SEVERAL STATE CONVENTIONS ON THE ADOPTION OF THE
FEDERAL CONSTITUTION IN 1787 (5 volumes, 1836) (Jonathan Elliot, Ed.).
51 See THE DOCUMENTARY HISTORY OF THE RATIFICATION OF THE CONSTITUTION (28
volumes, Madison, Wisconsin, 1976-____) (Merrill Jensen et al., Eds.).
52 See Gregory E. Maggs, A Concise Guide to Using Dictionaries from the Founding Era to
Determine the Original Meaning of the Constitution, 82 GEO. WASH. L. REV. 358, 384 n. 143
(2014) (indicating that Barclay has been cited once by the Supreme Court, in a dissenting opinion
by Justice Thomas). Note that the generalizations in the text also apply to William Rider’s New
Universal English Dictionary (1759) and Daniel Fenning’s Royal English Dictionary (1761), the
only other founding-era dictionaries which even weakly support DOJ’s arguments. Little or no
mention of either of these volumes can be found in any of the foregoing databases. One possible
exception concerns an 1820 letter from Edmund Kelly to James Madison. In that letter, however,
Kelly apparently refers to Fenning’s “Spelling Book” rather than his dictionary. See “To James
The contrast with the historical dictionaries DOJ ignores or dismisses in its brief could not be sharper. Significantly, many of the founders actually owned and used these dictionaries. Moreover, the US Supreme Court has often relied on these dictionaries to interpret the original public meaning of constitutional terms. Here are five noteworthy illustrations:

a. Johnson

Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary of the English Language* was probably the most famous and important eighteenth century dictionary. Many of the founders owned copies of it or referred to it in their correspondence and other papers. Writing as “A Friend to America,” Alexander Hamilton used Johnson’s Dictionary to take verbal swipes at Samuel Seabury in *A Full Vindication* and *The Farmer Refuted*. Benjamin Franklin eagerly ordered several copies of Johnson’s Dictionary when it became available in 1755. James Madison included Johnson’s Dictionary in his *Report on Books for Congress* in 1783, and Thomas Jefferson did likewise in his *List of Books for the Library of Congress* in 1802. The Supreme Court has cited Johnson’s Dictionary on numerous occasions, including *Morrison v. Olson*, *District of Columbia v. Heller*, and *Citizens United*.

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53 *SAMUEL JOHNSON, A DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE* (1755).

54 See, e.g., *JOHN ALEGO, THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE* 158 (2009) (“The publication of Johnson’s Dictionary was certainly the most important linguistic event of the eighteenth century.”


In the first edition of his *Dictionary* and every subsequent edition thus far consulted, Johnson defines “emolument” as “Profit; advantage.”

b. Bailey

Another lexicographer well-known to the founders was Nathan Bailey. One scholar characterizes Bailey’s commercial success as “staggering,” and another describes his *New Universal Etymological Dictionary* as “the supreme popular dictionary of the 18th century, holding a position analogous to that of Webster in the 19th century.” Benjamin Franklin advertised Bailey’s *New Dictionary* for sale on multiple occasions. John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and other founders also owned copies. When Franklin and his associates founded the Library Company of Philadelphia in 1731, their first book purchase included Bailey’s *Dictionary Britannicum*. The Supreme Court has cited Bailey in cases such as *US v. Lopez*, *INS v. St. Cyr*, *Bond v. United States*, and *Arizona State Legislature v. Arizona Redistricting Commission*. In his *New Universal Etymological Dictionary*, Bailey defines “emolument” as “Advantage, Profit.” In his *Dictionary Britannicum*, he defines “emolument” as...

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63 For transcripts and images of the eighth edition of *Johnson’s Dictionary* (1783), see infra at A-2, A-7, A-44.
72 Bond v. United States, 134 S. Ct. 2077, 2104 (2014) (using Bailey to interpret the original meaning of “treaty”).
“Profit gotten by labour and cost.” Finally, Bailey and Scott’s *New Etymological Dictionary* defines “emolument” as “Profit.”

c. *Dyche & Pardon*

Thomas Dyche & William Pardon’s *A New General English Dictionary* was both the first English dictionary to include grammar and the first to be marketed to female as well as male readers. This highly popular book went through eighteen editions by 1794. Benjamin Franklin advertised the book for sale on many occasions, including 1730, 1741, and 1744. Franklin ordered seventy-two copies of Dyche & Pardon from his bookseller in September 1746, followed by a second order in January 1747, implying he may have sold up to one copy per day over this period. John Adams mentioned Dyche & Pardon’s *Dictionary* in a diary entry on board a ship in 1778. The Supreme Court has cited Dyche & Pardon in cases such as *NFIB v. Sebelius*, *Zivotofsky v. Kerry*, and, most recently, *Manuel v. Joliet*.

In their *New English Dictionary*, Dyche & Pardon define “emolument” as “Benefit, advantage, profit.”

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75 NATHAN BAILEY, *DICTIONARIUM BRITANICUM* (1730) (A-28).
78 See 2 THE NEW CAMBRIDGE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE 1968 (George Watson et al. eds., 1971).
86 Zivotofsky v. Kerry, 135 S. Ct. 2076, 2104 (2015) (using Dyche & Pardon to interpret the original meaning of ‘naturalization’).
87 Manuel v. City of Joliet, 137 S. Ct. 911, 927 (2017) (using Dyche & Pardon to interpret the original meaning of ‘seizure’).
d. Ash

The influence of John Ash’s *The New Complete Dictionary of the English Language* on the founders is less clear. Still, his dictionary is often included in lists of founding era dictionaries. Ash is probably best known today for including vulgar words in his dictionary, a decision for which he has been praised. His grammar book was purchased by Alexander Hamilton in 1796, and George Wythe also owned a copy, which he bequeathed to Thomas Jefferson. The Supreme Court has cited Ash’s dictionary in cases such as *NFIB v. Sebelius* and *Burstyn v. Wilson*.

In his *New General English Dictionary*, Ash defines “emolument” as “An advantage, a profit.”

e. Entick

Perhaps because it was pocket-sized, John Entick’s *New Spelling Dictionary* was a primary means by which Americans communicated with one another in code during the founding era. From 1777 to 1779, the Lee brothers used a cipher based on Entick’s dictionary for this purpose. John Jay proposed a cipher based on Entick’s dictionary to Robert Morris in 1780, and John Adams used Entick in a similar fashion in 1781. In a 1781 letter to George Washington, James Lovell describes how British army officers did likewise. Philip Schuyler devised a

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90 *See* Jesse Sheidlower, “Can a Woman “Prong” a Man?” SLATE, (October 2009), http://www.slate.com/articles/life/the_good_word/2009/10/can_a_woman_prong_a_man.html.
94 *NFIB v. Sebelius*, *supra* note 50 (using Ash to interpret the original meaning of “regulate”).
95 *Joseph Burstyn v. Wilson*, 343 U.S. 495, 537 (1952) (using Ash to interpret the historical meaning of “sacrilege” and “blasphemy”).
97 *See* Edmund C. Burnett, Ciphers of the Revolutionary Period, 22 AM. HIST. REV. 329, 330 (1909).
cipher based on Entick’s dictionary and shared it with Rufus King and Alexander Hamilton in 1798. Entick’s New Spelling Dictionary defines “emolument” as “Profit, advantage, benefit.”

Rightly emphasizing that all dictionaries are not created equal, Justice Antonin Scalia and Bryan A. Garner recommend four of these founding era dictionaries—Johnson, Bailey, Dyche & Pardon, and Ash—as “the most useful and authoritative” English dictionaries from 1750-1800. Scalia and Garner do not include Entick in their list, but they arguably should have, in light of the fact that the founders frequently used Entick’s dictionary to communicate with another in cipher. In the present context, however, that issue seems largely beside the point, since DOJ’s research was guided neither by Scalia and Garner’s recommendations nor by Entick. All five of these dictionaries define “emolument” in the broad manner favoring the plaintiffs—“profit,” “gain,” “advantage,” or “benefit.” None of them gives any hint of an “office-and-employment-specific” definition.

III. OTHER HISTORICAL ARGUMENTS

In light the foregoing considerations, it seems clear that the impression DOJ creates in its brief by contrasting four historical definitions of “emolument”—two broad and two narrow—is highly misleading. So, too, is the government’s...
argument that any doubt or ambiguity arising from these competing definitions should be resolved in favor of its preferred definition by means of the doctrine of *noscitur a sociis.* Furthermore, a close examination of the government’s other historical arguments reveals many of them also cannot withstand scrutiny:

- To support its preferred definition of “emolument,” DOJ cites *Hoyt v. United States,* a case in which the Supreme Court wrote that “the term emoluments . . . embrac[es] every species of compensation or pecuniary profit derived from a discharge of the duties of the office.” The Court’s language makes perfect sense in that statutory context, but it has no constitutional implications. It certainly did not purport to circumscribe the scope of “emolument” for constitutional purposes.

- DOJ asserts that because of “common usage in the founding era . . . the term ‘Emolument’ in the Emoluments Clauses should be interpreted to refer to a ‘profit arising from an office or employ.’” The paragraph that supposedly justifies this claim, however, contains only two examples of founding era usage: an 1802 statute and an address by President Washington. Neither is remotely sufficient to prove the point at issue—and they surely do not demonstrate any “common usage.” Like other members of his generation, moreover, Washington frequently used the word “emolument” in private commercial contexts, or to convey a broader meaning.

Barclay and Trusler with two “broader” definitions given by “A New English Dictionary (18th ed. 1754)” and “A Complete Dictionary of the English Language (2d. 1789”).

110 Id. at 30-31.

111 *Hoyt v. United States,* 51 U.S. 109, 135 (1850) (emphasis added by DOJ).

112 2 Stat. at Large, 172, § 3 (April 30, 1802).

113 Jane Chong makes a similar point about *Hoyt* in her insightful commentary on DOJ’s brief. See Chong, *supra* note 21 (observing that *Hoyt* must be read “with an eye to [its] facts: [the case does] not assert that ‘emoluments’ must derive directly from discharge of duty; rather, the kind of emoluments at issue in [Hoyt] was the kind derived for discharge of duty”).

114 Id. at 28 (quoting BARCLAY, *supra* note 9).

115 Id. at 28.

116 At most, the two examples weakly support the claim that “emolument” was often used to refer to government salaries, something no one disputes or denies—since of course such salaries are emoluments on any plausible definition. The point at issue is whether “emolument” was always used in this rigid manner; in other words, whether concepts such as “government salary” or “payment or other benefit received for discharging the duties of an office” were somehow built into the definition or semantic content of “emolument” at the time. Convincing evidence for the latter proposition is noticeably lacking. See Mikhail, *supra* note 34; John Mikhail, *Other Uses of “Emolument” in The Federalist (and the Fallacy of Affirming the Consequent),* BALKINIZATION (January 25, 2017).

- DOJ claims that the prohibition on receiving foreign emoluments in the Articles of Confederation “was prompted by”118 a series of events involving American diplomats Arthur Lee, Silas Deane, and Benjamin Franklin, which occurred in connection with their “successfully negotiating the Franco-American alliance treaty of 1778.”119 This causal claim is at odds with the fact that the prohibition on foreign emoluments in the Articles was initially drafted by John Dickinson at least two years before the events in question.120

118 DOJ Brief at 33.
119 Id. at 34. See generally id. at 32-34.
120 See 5 JOURNALS OF THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS, 1774-1789, at 547 (July 1776). The “Dickinson Draft” of the Articles of Confederation included a prohibition on foreign emoluments...
• DOJ points out that four of the nation’s first five presidents (Washington, Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe) continued to maintain active plantations while in office, and in the course of doing so at least two of them exported agricultural products to other countries. DOJ speculates that these activities might have included commercial transactions with a foreign state, but it provides no direct evidence that any such transactions occurred.

• DOJ also calls attention to the fact that President George Washington purchased several lots of public land in what became the District of Columbia from the federal government in 1793. DOJ assumes that this transaction was constitutional, and it infers on that basis that the plaintiffs’ broad definition of “emolument” must be mistaken. The government’s inference is highly debatable and arguably invalid. Unlike the Foreign Emoluments Clause, the Domestic Emoluments Clause appears to be concerned only with emoluments that the President receives “for his services” as President. Because any benefits Washington received from

in Article IV, which read in pertinent part:

No Colony or Colonies, without the Consent of the United States in Congress assembled, shall send any Embassy to or receive any Embassy from, or enter into any Treaty, Convention or Conference with the King or Kingdom of Great-Britain, or any foreign Prince or State; nor shall any Colony or Colonies, nor any Servant or Servants of the United States, or of any Colony or Colonies, accept of any Present, Emolument, Office, or Title of any Kind whatever, from the King or Kingdom of Great-Britain, or any foreign Prince or State; nor shall the United States assembled, or any Colony grant any Title of Nobility.

Id. To the best of my knowledge, this passage, written in Dickinson’s handwriting, constitutes the first occurrence of the language that eventually became the Foreign Emoluments Clause of the U.S. Constitution. Note that in Dickinson’s draft, the prohibition on accepting emoluments extended not only to all colonial and federal officials, but also to “any Colony or Colonies” themselves. This fact appears to be yet another indication that the original understanding of “emolument” was not limited to “office-and-employment-specific” payments or benefits. The Dickinson Draft was modified by a committee of the whole on August 20, 1776, whereupon this reference to “any Colony or Colonies” was dropped and language identical to that found in the Articles of Confederation was adopted. See id. at 675.

121 DOJ Brief, supra note 1, at 36-37 (noting that Washington “exported flour and cornmeal to ‘England, Portugal, and the island of Jamaica,’” and that Jefferson “exported his tobacco crop to Great Britain”).

122 Id. at 38-39.

123 See, e.g., Andy S. Grewal, The Foreign Emoluments Clause and the Chief Executive, at 54-55, University of Iowa Legal Studies Research Paper Number 2017-15, available at http://ssrn.com/abstract=2902391 (March 2017); Grewal, supra note 21; Letter of Milton J. Socolar for Comptroller General of the United States to Senator George Mitchell, B-207467 (Comp. Gen.), 1983 WL 27823 (Jan. 18, 1983). See also The Federalist No.73, at 493-494 (Alexander Hamilton) (Jacob E. Cooke, Ed.). If I understand Professor Grewal correctly, he assumes that the Domestic Emoluments Clause (DEC) should be interpreted to include a tacit repetition of the phrase “for his services” as a modification of the second occurrence of the verb “receive,” so that in effect the clause should be read like this:
this purchase of public land were not received for his services as President, the Domestic Emoluments Clause was not violated by this transaction. The precise definition of “emolument” is immaterial to this analysis. On any definition, the constitutional outcome would be the same.

- Perhaps most remarkably, DOJ asserts that “[t]he history and purpose of the [Emoluments Clauses] is devoid of concern about private commercial business arrangements.”124 This assertion is false and inconsistent with the best explanation of the broad sweep of emoluments prohibitions adopted by American governments from 1776 to 1789, many of which were designed specifically to prevent corruption and restrain public officials from placing their private commercial interests over their public duties. Six prominent illustrations are the Virginia Declaration of Rights,125 the Constitution of Pennsylvania,126 the Articles of Confederation,127 the 1784 Consular

The President shall, at stated Times, receive for his Services, a Compensation, which shall neither be increased nor diminished during the Period for which he shall have been elected, and he shall not receive [for his Services] within that Period any other Emolument from the United States, or any of them.

This reading of the DEC seems plausible to me – at least as plausible as one in which the second occurrence of “receive” is held to be entirely unmodified, or is construed very broadly, as if it read: “and he shall not receive [for any reason whatever] within that Period any other Emolument from the United States, or any of them.” If the former and more focused reading is adopted, then the constitutional analysis of a Domestic Emoluments Clause violation in any given case may turn simply on whether the President received the emoluments in question “for his services” as President. In familiar cases such as President Washington’s purchase of land from the federal government, President Kennedy’s receipt of naval retirement pay, President Reagan’s receipt of California retirement benefits, and President Obama’s receipt of interest payments on US Treasury bonds, the answer is invariably no. In all of these cases, therefore, the definition of “emolument” can be as broad or as narrow as one likes, and the constitutional outcome would be the same -- because the payments or benefits at issue were not received by the president “for his services” as president. Note that the foregoing analysis implies that at least some of the specific allegations that have been made against President Trump’s for Domestic Emoluments Clause violations may not be valid legal claims. On the other hand, the analysis appears to explain and justify many of the historical examples that are thought to pose the most difficult challenges to the broad meaning of “emolument” presupposed by plaintiffs’ Foreign Emoluments Clause claims.

124 Id. at 34.
125 See Virginia Declaration of Rights (1776) (“That no man, or set of men, are entitled to exclusive or separate emoluments or privileges from the community, but in consideration of public services...”) (emphasis added).
126 See Constitution of Pennsylvania (1776) (“That government is, or ought to be, instituted for the common benefit, protection and security of the people, nation or community; and not for the particular emolument or advantage of any single man, family, or set of men, who are a part only of that community”) (emphasis added).
127 See Articles of Confederation (1781) (“[N]or shall any person holding any office of profit or trust under the United States, or any of them, accept any present, emolument, office or title of any kind whatever from any King, Prince or foreign State.”) (emphasis added).
Convention with France, the 1788 Consular Convention with France, and the 1789 Act to Establish the Treasury Department. DOJ neglects to discuss any of these landmarks in early American public law, opting instead to focus attention on less significant matters.

In short, DOJ’s fragile dictionary-based argument is symptomatic of a weak grasp of American constitutional history in general. The bulk of the government’s Rule 12(b)(6) motion to dismiss consists of an extended originalist argument that spans over twenty pages. The argument is remarkably flimsy, bearing many of the marks of “law office history” that make historians and sophisticated originalists wince. These deficiencies do not impugn originalism itself, of course, if for no

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128 See Consular Convention between His Most Christian Majesty and the Thirteen United States of North America, in 4 THE DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENCE OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION 198-208, 199-200 (1829) (Jared Sparks, Ed.) (authorizing the consuls and vice consuls of each nation “to establish agents in the different ports and places of their departments” who “may be chosen among the merchants, either national or foreign, and furnished with a commission from one of the said consuls” and declaring that it shall be the business of these agents “to render to their respective merchants, navigators, and vessels, all possible service, and to inform the nearest consul or vice consul of the wants of the said merchants, navigators, and vessels . . . without the power to extract from the said merchants any duty or emolument whatever, under any pretext whatever”) (emphasis added). Benjamin Franklin and Charles Gravier de Vergennes agreed to this provision and signed the convention on behalf of the United States and France on July 29, 1784.

129 See Convention Defining and Establishing the Functions and Privileges of Consuls and Vice Consuls between the United States and France, in 1 THE AMERICAN DIPLOMATIC CODE, EMBRACING A COLLECTION OF TREATIES AND CONVENTIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND FOREIGN POWERS 70-82 (1834 (Jonathan Elliot, Ed.) (declaring that consular agents “shall confine themselves respectively to the rendering to their respective merchants, navigators, and vessels, all possible service . . . without power under any pretext whatever to exact from the said merchants any duty or emolument whatsoever”) (emphasis added). The language of this provision is nearly identical to its 1784 counterpart, from which it clearly was derived. The convention itself, signed at Versailles by Thomas Jefferson and L.C. de Montmorin on November 14, 1788, was one of the first treaties ever submitted to the Senate of the United States.

130 See 1 Stat. 65 (1789-1799) (“That no person appointed to any office instituted by this act, shall directly or indirectly be concerned or interested in carrying on the business of trade or commerce, or be owner in whole or in part of any sea-vessel, or purchase by himself, or another in trust for him, any public lands or other public property, or be concerned in the purchase or disposal of any public securities of any State, or of the United States, or take or apply to his own use, any emolument or gain for negotiating or transacting any business in the said department, other than what shall be allowed by law”) (emphasis added).

131 See DOJ Brief, supra note 1 at 26-48.

132 For a series of thought-provoking essays on the vexed relationship between originalism and constitutional history, see Jonathan Gienapp, Constitutional Originalism and History, PROCESS: A BLOG FOR AMERICAN HISTORY (March 20, 2017); Randy Barnett, Challenging the Priesthood of Professional Historians, VOLOKH CONSPIRACY (March 28, 2017) (responding to Gienapp); Jonathan Gienapp, Knowing How vs. Knowing That: Navigating the Past, PROCESS: A BLOG FOR AMERICAN HISTORY (April 4, 2017) (replying to Barnett); Michael Ramsey, Gienapp on Barnett on Gienapp on Originalism, THE ORIGINALISM BLOG (April 5, 2017) (commenting on the exchange between Gienapp and Barnett); Lawrence B. Solum, Some Reflections on Gienapp and Ramsey on Constitutional Originalism, LEGAL THEORY BLOG (April 5, 2017) (commenting on Gienapp and Ramsey). See also, e.g., JACK BALKIN, LIVING ORIGINALISM (2012); ROBERT
other reason than *ab abusu ad usum non valet consequentia* (“a conclusion about the use of a thing from its abuse is invalid”). They do suggest, however, that the government’s historical arguments are inadequate and need more work, particularly if originalism continues to play a central organizing role in its legal briefs.

IV. SOURCES, METHODS AND DOCUMENTATION

This section describes the primary sources, methods, and documentation used in this study, all of which are relatively simple and straightforward. Appendix A ("Emolument’ in English Language Dictionaries, 1604-1806") consists of several documents. The first is a table ("Table 1: Definitions of ‘Emolument’ in English Dictionaries") which lists the core components of every known English dictionary definition of “emolument” published between 1604 and 1806. The list of dictionaries used in compiling this table was generated by drawing upon several authoritative works of dictionary scholarship, including *The English Dictionary from Cawdrey to Johnson, 1604-1755* by De Witt T. Starnes & Gertrude E. Noyes (new edition, with an introduction, chronological list of dictionaries, and select bibliography by Gabrielle Stein); *English Dictionaries from 1604 Through 1900: The Warren N. and Suzanne B. Cordell Collection of Dictionaries* by Robert K. O’Niell; and *Catalog of Dictionaries, Word Books, and Philological Texts, 1440-1900* by David Vancil.

The second document in Appendix A ("Figure 1: Statistical and Longitudinal Analyses of Lexical Definitions") provides tabular and graphic representations of these findings, highlighting both the frequency with which specific words are used to define “emolument” and the fluctuation of these *definiens* over time. For the sake of comprehensiveness, a third document transcribes each component of the definitions excerpted in Table 1, including information on etymology, parts of speech, and other miscellany which were left out of that table, in order to keep it as simple and illuminating as possible. Finally, for the benefit of those readers who


134 *See* Table 1, *supra* note 23.

135 *See* STARNES & NOYES, *supra* note 22.


137 *See* DAVID VANCIL, CATALOG OF DICTIONARIES, WORD BOOKS, AND PHILOLOGICAL TEXTS, 1440-1900 (1993).

138 *See* Figure 1, *supra* note 24

139 *See* Transcript of English Dictionary Definitions, 1604-1806, infra at A-6.
would like to see the originals with their own eyes, Appendix A includes original images of each of these definitions, along with its corresponding title page.140

Appendix B (“‘Emolument’ in Legal Dictionaries, 1523-1792”) also contains multiple documents. The first is a corollary to Table 1 (“Table 2: Legal Dictionary Definitions of ‘Emolument’”), which documents the complete lack of entries for “emolument” in legal dictionaries published between 1523 and 1792.141 The list of dictionaries used in this table was generated on the basis of the Tarlton Law Library’s Law Dictionary Collection, part of the Jamail Center for Legal Research at the University of Texas.142

The second document in Appendix B is another table (“Table 3: Other Uses of ‘Emolument’ in Legal Dictionaries”),143 which records every instance in which “emolument” is used in legal dictionaries as part of the definition or explanation of another term.144 Once again, for the sake of comprehensiveness, a third document transcribes the definitions excerpted in Table 3.145 Finally, for the benefit of readers who might like to see the originals, Appendix B includes a complete set of images for each of these dictionaries, including the pages on which “emolument” would have occurred if it had been defined, the pages where it is used to define other terms, and the corresponding title pages of these volumes.146

Appendix C (“‘Emolument’ in Synonymy Dictionaries, 1748-1813”) is the last and the shortest of the four appendices to this Article. It provides background and context for evaluating the government’s reference to John Trusler on pages 29-30 of its brief. The first document in Appendix C is a table (Table 4: “Explanations of ‘Emolument’ in Synonymy Dictionaries”) which records usages of “emolument” in four synonymy dictionaries published from 1748 to 1813.147 This list was compiled by drawing on Professor Hullen’s scholarship on the history of Roget’s Thesaurus, which includes an extensive discussion of Trusler and other British lexicographers responsible for bringing the thesaurus to Great Britain.148 This table reveals that Trusler’s explanation of “emolument” is entirely derivative of an earlier

140 See Original Images, infra at A-10 to A-89.
141 See Table 2: Legal Dictionary Definitions of “Emolument,” infra at A-91.
142 The Law Dictionary Collection comprises over two hundred legal dictionaries from the Americas, the British Isles, and Western Europe, including many Roman Law, Common Law, and Civil Law volumes. See generally “About the Collection,” Law Dictionary Collection, University of Texas School of Law (tarlton.law.utexas.edu/law-dictionaries)). For the purposes of this study, I focused on the Tarlton Law Library’s catalogue of historical common law dictionaries, leaving an investigation of its Roman Law and Civil Law volumes for another occasion. I am grateful to Emily Kadens for pointing me toward these marvelous resources.
143 See Table 3, infra at A-91.
144 Id.
146 See Original Images, infra at A-95 to A-120.
147 See Table 4: Explanations of ‘Emolument’ in Synonymy Dictionaries, infra at A-122.
volume by the French lexicographer, Abbé Girard, and therefore has little apparent
grounding in English usage. The two other writers identified by Hullen in his
discussion of Girard’s followers in Britain, Hester Lynch Piozzi and William
Taylor, do not offer synonyms for “emolument” in their volumes. The significance
of this absence is unclear; although it could be taken to imply the relative lack of
influence Trusler had for later British lexicographers, more research is necessary
before drawing any firm conclusions concerning this issue.\textsuperscript{149}

The second document in Appendix C juxtaposes images from Trusler’s and
Girard’s accounts of “emolument” side-by-side in order to reveal the formal and
substantive similarities between them.\textsuperscript{150} Finally, the original images of these four
synonymy dictionaries are reproduced.\textsuperscript{151} For the two volumes with an entry on
“emolument” (Girard and Trusler), images of those pages are provided, along with
images of the corresponding title page.\textsuperscript{152} For the two volumes without such an
entry (Piozzi and Taylor), only an image of each volume’s title page is provided.\textsuperscript{153}

For all of the foregoing inquiries, the dictionaries themselves were located using
various online databases, some freely available and others requiring a library or
other subscription. The primary databases used for this purpose were British
History Online (BHO), Early English Books Online (EEBO), Eighteenth Century
Collections Online (ECCO), Google Books, HathiTrust Digital Library, HAMNET
(Folger Shakespeare Library Catalog), Hein Online, JSTOR, The Making of
American Law, the Oxford English Dictionary, and the Washington Research
Library Consortium, a partnership of nine university libraries located in the greater
Washington, D.C. area.

Finally, in order to focus attention on founding era dictionaries and stay within
manageable bounds, the study undertaken here was limited to English dictionaries
published between 1604 and 1806 and legal dictionaries published between 1523
and 1792. As indicated, a follow up study of more recent dictionaries is currently
underway, which seeks to understand how and why meanings of “emolument” may
have changed over time. A key figure in this history appears to be Noah Webster,
who defined “emolument” in the standard fashion in 1806, but whose more influential 1828 dictionary lists two definitions for “emolument,” the first of which involves office- or employment-related compensation.154 Webster thus represents a natural starting point for the next phase of research begun here.

CONCLUSION

In interpreting the Constitution, the Supreme Court is ostensibly “guided by the principle that ‘[t]he Constitution was written to be understood by the voters; its words and phrases were used in their normal and ordinary as distinguished from technical meaning.’ Normal meaning may of course include an idiomatic meaning, but it excludes secret or technical meanings that would not have been known to ordinary citizens in the founding generation.”155 If one applies this principle to the cases at hand, it follows that one should seek to determine how “emolument” was used in its normal or everyday sense by ordinary citizens during the founding era.

Contemporaneous dictionaries are not dispositive of original meaning, of course, but they normally are a reasonably accurate reflection of it. That at least seems to be the premise underlying those parts of the government’s brief to which this Article primarily responds. DOJ’s use of founding era dictionaries in its brief, however, leaves much to be desired. At best, its historical research was shoddy and slapdash. At worst, it may have misled the court by cherry-picking and selectively quoting its preferred definition, ignoring a vast amount of conflicting evidence.

English language dictionaries published between 1604 and 1806 define “emolument” in a remarkably uniform fashion, regularly consisting of one or more of the following terms: “profit,” “gain,” “advantage,” and “benefit.” Every definition published during this period, in fact, falls under this sweeping generalization. By contrast, fewer than 8% of the definitions published in the same time frame use the phrase DOJ seizes upon with such alacrity in its brief—“profit arising from office or employ.” Presumably, the government’s eagerness to adopt this latter definition stems from the fact that it lends itself so easily to DOJ’s “office-and-employment-specific construction” of “emolument,” which, in turn, purportedly enables the President to avoid constitutional jeopardy. Nevertheless, whether this definition actually is a favorable one for the president is far from clear.

154 See NOAH WEBSTER, AMERICAN DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE (1828). Webster’s two-part definition reads:
1. The profit arising from office or employment; that which is received as a compensation for services, or which is annexed to the possession of office, as salary, fees and perquisites.
2. Profit; advantage; gains in general.
Id. (Note: The 1828 edition of Webster’s Dictionary is not paginated).
On either a causal or functional analysis of the Emoluments Clauses, for instance, “profit arising from office or employ” might prove to be an exceedingly difficult test for him. For the moment, however, the more important lesson to take away from this investigation is simply this: the government’s dictionary definition of “emolument” is demonstrably ahistorical and unreliable.

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156 A causal or “but-for” analysis considers “arising from” to be causal language and asks whether the president would have received particular emoluments but for the office he occupies. A functional analysis focuses on the purpose of the Emoluments Clauses—to prevent corruption or undue influence—and asks whether particular emoluments the president receives have the purpose or probable effect of producing corruption or undue influence. For further discussion of these frameworks, see the essays by Chong, Dorf, Lederman, and Litman, supra note 21.
APPENDIX A:

“EMOLUMENT” IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE DICTIONARIES, 1604-1806
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>1st ed.</th>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cawdrey, Robert</td>
<td>A Table Alphabeticall</td>
<td>1604</td>
<td>4th ed. 1617</td>
<td>“Profit or gaine”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullokar, John</td>
<td>The English Expositor</td>
<td>1616</td>
<td>12th ed. 1719</td>
<td>“Profit, gain, Advantage”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cockeram, Henry</td>
<td>The English Dictionarie</td>
<td>1623</td>
<td>1st ed. 1623</td>
<td>“Profit, gaine”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blount, Thomas</td>
<td>Glossographia</td>
<td>1656</td>
<td>2d ed. 1661</td>
<td>“Profit gotten by labor and cost”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philips, Edward</td>
<td>The New World of Words</td>
<td>1658</td>
<td>7th ed. 1720</td>
<td>“Profit got by Labour and Cost; Benefit, Advantage”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coles, Elisha</td>
<td>A Dictionary</td>
<td>1676</td>
<td>2d ed. 1679</td>
<td>“Profit”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kersey, John</td>
<td>A New English Dictionary</td>
<td>1702</td>
<td>2d ed. 1713</td>
<td>“Gain properly by grist, profit got by labour and cost”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocker, Edward</td>
<td>English Dictionary</td>
<td>1704</td>
<td>3d ed. 1724</td>
<td>“Profit, Gain, Advantage”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bailey, Nathan</td>
<td>A Universal Etymological English Dictionary</td>
<td>1721</td>
<td>2d ed. 1724</td>
<td>“Advantage, Profit”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bailey, Nathan</td>
<td>Dictionarium Britannicum</td>
<td>1730</td>
<td>1st. ed. 1730</td>
<td>“Profit gotten by labour and cost”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manlove, James</td>
<td>New Dictionary</td>
<td>1735</td>
<td>2d ed. 1741</td>
<td>“Advantage, Profit”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martin, Benjamin</td>
<td>Lingua Britannica Reformata</td>
<td>1749</td>
<td>1st ed. 1749</td>
<td>“Profit, benefit, or advantage”</td>
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<tr>
<td>[anon]</td>
<td>A Pocket Dictionary</td>
<td>1753</td>
<td>2d ed. 1758</td>
<td>“Benefit, advantage”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wesley, John</td>
<td>The Complete English Dictionary</td>
<td>1753</td>
<td>3d ed. 1777</td>
<td>“Profit, advantage”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson, Samuel</td>
<td>A Dictionary of the English Language</td>
<td>1755</td>
<td>7th ed. 1783</td>
<td>“Profit; advantage”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott, Joseph</td>
<td>A New Etymological Dictionary</td>
<td>1755</td>
<td>1st ed. 1755</td>
<td>“Profit”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Edition</td>
</tr>
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<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Buchanan, James</td>
<td>Lingue Britannicae Vera Pronunciatio</td>
<td>1757</td>
<td>1st ed. 1757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Rider, William</td>
<td>A New Universal English Dictionary</td>
<td>1759</td>
<td>1st ed. 1759</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Bellamy, Daniel</td>
<td>New Complete English Dictionary</td>
<td>1760</td>
<td>2d ed. 1764</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Fenning, Daniel</td>
<td>The Royal English Dictionary</td>
<td>1761</td>
<td>5th ed. 1775</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Donaldson, Alexander</td>
<td>A Universal Dictionary of the English Language</td>
<td>1763</td>
<td>1st ed. 1763</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Allen, Francis</td>
<td>A Complete English Dictionary</td>
<td>1765</td>
<td>1st ed. 1765</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Entick, John</td>
<td>The New Spelling Dictionary</td>
<td>1765</td>
<td>new ed. 1780</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Barlow, Frederick</td>
<td>The Complete English Dictionary</td>
<td>1772</td>
<td>1st ed. 1772</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>Kenrick, William</td>
<td>A New Dictionary of the English Language</td>
<td>1773</td>
<td>1st ed. 1773</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>Barclay, James</td>
<td>A Complete and Universal English Dictionary</td>
<td>1774</td>
<td>1st ed. 1774</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Ash, John</td>
<td>The New and Complete Dictionary of the English Language</td>
<td>1775</td>
<td>1st ed. 1775</td>
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<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Perry, William</td>
<td>The Royal Standard English Dictionary</td>
<td>1775</td>
<td>1st ed. 1775</td>
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<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Walker, John</td>
<td>A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary</td>
<td>1775</td>
<td>1st ed. 1791</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>Sheridan, Thomas</td>
<td>A Complete Dictionary of the English Language</td>
<td>1780</td>
<td>3d ed. 1790</td>
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<td>35</td>
<td>Lemon, George</td>
<td>English Etymology</td>
<td>1783</td>
<td>1st ed. 1783</td>
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<td>36</td>
<td>Scott, William</td>
<td>Spelling, Pronouncing, Explanatory Dictionary</td>
<td>1786</td>
<td>new ed. 1810</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Author</td>
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<td>37</td>
<td>Jones, Stephen</td>
<td>A General Pronouncing and Explanatory Dictionary</td>
<td>1798</td>
<td>new ed. 1812</td>
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<td>38</td>
<td>Browne, Thomas</td>
<td>The Union Dictionary</td>
<td>1800</td>
<td>4th ed. 1822</td>
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<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Fulton, George &amp; Knight, George</td>
<td>A Dictionary of the English Language</td>
<td>1802</td>
<td>3d ed. 1823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Webster, Noah</td>
<td>A Compendious Dictionary of the English Language</td>
<td>1806</td>
<td>1st ed. 1806</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1: Statistical and Longitudinal Analyses of Lexical Definitions, 1604-1806

Part A: Word Frequency (Bar Graph)

Number of Times a Word is Used to Define "Emolument" 1604-1806

Part B: Word Frequency (Table)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th># of Times Used</th>
<th>Percentage Frequency (n = 40)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Profit</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>92.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantage</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>82.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefit</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employ</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part C: Definitions Over Time

Definitions Over Time

1604
1616
1623
1656
1658
1676
1702
1704
1707
1727
1730
1735
1735
1749
1753
1753
1755
1755
1755
1757
1759
1760
1761
1763
1765
1765
1772
1773
1773
1774
1775
1775
1775
1780
1783
1797
1798
1800
1802
1806

A Dates listed in Part C represent first editions. A diagram showing all published editions would be more pronounced.
Transcripts of English Dictionary Definitions, 1604-1806

1) ROBERT CAWDREY, A TABLE ALPHABETICALL (4th ed. 1617).
   Emolument, profit or gaine.

2) JOHN BULLOKAR, THE ENGLISH EXPOSITOR (12th ed. 1719).
   Emolument, Profit, Gain, Advantage.

   Emolument, Profit, gaine.

4) THOMAS BLOUNT, GLOSSOGRAPHIA (1st ed. 1656).
   Emolument, (emolumentum) profit gotten by labor and cost.

5) EDWARD PHILIPS, THE NEW WORLD OF WORDS (3d. ed. 1720).
   Emolument, Profit got by Labour and Cost; Benefit, Advantage. The word properly signifies Gain arising from the Grist of a Corn-mill.

6) ELISHA COLES, A DICTIONARY, ENGLISH-LATIN, AND LATIN-ENGLISH (2d ed. 1679).
   Emolument, [profit] emolumentum.

7) JOHN KERSEY, A NEW ENGLISH DICTIONARY (2d ed. 1713).
   Emolument, gain properly by grist, profit got by labour and cost.

8) EDWARD COCKER, ENGLISH DICTIONARY (3d ed.1724).
   Emolument, 1. Profit, Gain, Advantage; also Mill-toll.

9) [ANON], GLOSSOGRAPHIA ANGLICANA NOVA (1st ed. 1707).
   Emolument, Advantage, Profit.

10) NATHAN BAILEY, AN UNIVERSAL ETYMOLOGICAL ENGLISH DICTIONARY (21st. ed. 1770).
    Emolument, [Emolumentum, L.] Advantage, Profit. F.
11) NATHAN BAILEY, DICTIONARY BRITANICUM (1st ed. 1735).

**Emolument**, properly gain arising from the grist of a corn-mill, also profit gotten by labour and cost.

12) JAMES MANLOVE, NEW DICTIONARY OF ALL SUCH ENGLISH WORDS (2d ed. 1741).

**Emolument**, Advantage, Profit.

13) B. N. DEFOE, A COMPLEAT ENGLISH DICTIONARY (1st ed. 1735).

**Emolument**, Advantage, Profit.

14) THOMAS DYCHE & WILLIAM PARDON, A NEW GENERAL ENGLISH DICTIONARY (8th ed. 1754).

**Emolument**, (s) benefit, advantage, profit, & c.

15) BENJAMIN MARTIN, LINGUA BRITANNICA REFORMATA: OR, A NEW ENGLISH DICTIONARY (1st ed. 1749).

**Emolument** (of *emolumentum*, 1. of *emole* to grind thoroughly): profit gotten properly by grist; hence, by any labor and cost. 2. benefit, or advantage.

16) [ANON], A POCKET DICTIONARY OR COMPLETE ENGLISH EXPOSITOR (2nd ed. 1753).

**Emolument**, (S.)’ Benefit, advantage. *L*.


**Emolument**, profit, advantage.

18) SAMUEL JOHNSON, A DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE (7th. ed. 1783).

**Emolument.** *f. [emolumentum, Latin.]* Profit; advantage.

19) JOSEPH SCOTT, A NEW ETYMOLOGICAL DICTIONARY (1st ed. 1755)

**Emolument**, Profit.

20) JAMES BUCHANAN, LINGUE BRITANNICAЕ VЕRA PRONUNCIATIO: OR A NEW ENGLISH DICTIONARY (1st ed. 1757).

**Emolument**, (S.) Benefit or advantage.
21) WILLIAM RIDER, A NEW ENGLISH DICTIONARY (1st ed. 1759).

**Emolument**, (S.) (*emolumentum*, Lat.) profit arising from an office or employ, gain, or advantage.

22) DANIEL BELLAMY, ENGLISH DICTIONARY (4th ed. 1764).


**Emolument**, S. [*emolumentum*, Lat.] profit arising from an office or employ; gain, or advantage.

24) ALEXANDER DONALDSON, AN UNIVERSAL DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE (1st ed. 1763).

**Emolument**, n. s. profit; advantage; gain.

25) FRANCIS ALLEN, A COMPLETE ENGLISH DICTIONARY (1st ed. 1765).

**Emolument**, S. profit; gain, or advantage.


**Emol’ument**, f. Profit, advantage, benefit.


**Emolument**, S. [*emolumentum*, Lat.] profit, gain, or advantage.

28) WILLIAM KENRICK, A NEW DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE (1st ed. 1773).

**Emolument**—E-MOL-U-MENT. N. f. [*emolumentum*, Lat.] Profit; advantage.

29) ANNE FISHER, AN ACCURATE NEW SPELLING DICTIONARY (6th ed. 1788).

**Emolument**, n. advantage, profit, benefit.

30) JAMES BARCLAY, A COMPLETE AND UNIVERSAL ENGLISH DICTIONARY ON A NEW PLAN (1st ed. 1774).

**Emolument**, S. [lat.] profit arising from an office or employ; gain or advantage. SYNON. Some persons are so particularly rigid as to condemn all gain arising from play. Many will idly call that *profit* which has accrued by illicit means. It is low and sordid to be ever led by *lucre*. We do not always find the greatest honour in offices where there are the greatest *emoluments*.

   **Emolument** (s. *from the* Lat. emolumentum) an advantage, a profit.


   **E-mol’u-ment**, *f.* advantage, profit.

33) JOHN WALKER, A CRITICAL PRONOUNCING DICTIONARY (1st ed. 1791).

   **Emolument**, *f.* Profit, advantage.

34) THOMAS SHERIDAN, A COMPLETE DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE (3d. ed. 1792).


35) GEORGE LEMON, ENGLISH ETYMOLOGY (1st ed. 1783).

   **Emolument**; *mola*; a mill; mole; to grind; emole; to grind thoroughly; under *emolumentum*; profit gotten properly by grist, or whatever is ground at the mill: hence used to signify any advantage, or gain.

36) WILLIAM SCOTT, SPELLING, PRONOUNCING, EXPLANATORY DICTIONARY (new ed. 1810).

   **Emolument**, Profit, advantage, benefit.


   **Emolument**, Profit, advantage.

38) THOMAS BROWNE, UNION DICTIONARY (4th ed. 1822).

   **Emolument**, profit, advantage.


   **Emolument**, Profit; advantage.

40) NOAH WEBSTER, A COMPREHENSIVE DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE (1st ed. 1806).

   **Emolument**, n. profit, gain, advantage, benefit.