



**For Immediate Release**  
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### **LDF Repeats Calls for Stronger Ethical Standards for Supreme Court Justices**

Today, in advance of a Senate Judiciary Committee (SJC) hearing regarding ethical standards in the U.S. Supreme Court, the Legal Defense Fund (LDF) [sent a letter](#) requesting that Congress swiftly pass legislation creating a binding code of ethics for Supreme Court justices, including strong conflict-of-interest rules and screenings similar to those required of other federal judges. As the letter outlines, recent [news reports](#) regarding undisclosed gifts to an associate justice underscore the urgency of establishing enforceable ethical standards for the Court – particularly with public confidence in the institution at a historic low.

“As the ultimate arbiter of rights and freedoms for hundreds of millions of Americans, the Supreme Court must uphold the highest standards of ethics and maintain an unimpeachable position of independence and impartiality,” said LDF President and Director-Counsel Janai S. Nelson. “Access to Supreme Court justices should not appear to be based on one’s wealth, power, status, or any other factors that can reasonably lead people to question the objectivity of the justices. It is imperative that we take seriously the credibility of the Supreme Court and the public’s confidence in it. Without building faith in the legal process, we risk undermining one of our most important democratic institutions and the rule of law. While ethics reform alone may not fully address these concerns, it is a critical first step. The American public is watching.”

The letter and hearing follow recent [reporting by ProPublica](#) that for nearly 20 years, Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas received undisclosed gifts from the real estate magnate Harlan Crow. Mr. Crow’s company also [purchased properties totaling more than \\$130,000](#) from Justice Thomas and his family. The Ethics in Government Act of 1978 requires government officials to disclose most real estate transactions and gifts they receive, including travel on private jets. However, according to [the New York Times](#), Justice Thomas stopped reporting his gifts from Mr. Crow after a number of gifts were publicized by the press in 2004. The property sale was never disclosed.

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*Founded in 1940, the Legal Defense Fund (LDF) is the nation’s first civil rights law organization. LDF’s Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the Legal Defense Fund or LDF. Please note that LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights.*