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SHOULD CLARENCE THOMAS STEP DOWN?
The Court's Reputation and Future Would Be Helped



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By Robert Weiner and Andrew Beauchamp

Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas's only, and arguably most important, legacy today isn't just his stoic originalist conservatism. Trailing behind him is his history of ethics violations and corruption.

Thomas grew up in Pin Point, near Savannah, Georgia, raised by his maternal grandfather and grandmother, who took responsibility for his care. His grandfather had a lasting impact on Thomas, the Justice stating, "He was the one hero in my life. What I am is what he made me," in his 2007 memoir "My Grandfather's Son."

In an interview, Thomas [said](#) of his father, "Whatever mistakes he made, he admitted them, and he just said, 'follow me.'"

If he truly is his grandfather's son, he should NOW lead by example and step down from the court.

Thomas has received loans he's never repaid, tuition money for his great-grandchild, 38 vacations, 26 private jet flights, VIP sports passes, private resort stays and much more, according to investigations by [ProPublica](#) and [Forbes](#). Thomas never disclosed most of it at the proper time, as he is legally required to do under a [50-year-old statute](#).

The issue here isn't just Thomas, now 77, collecting cash; it's the unseen influence. Charles and David Koch, Thomas Leonard Leo, and others have given Thomas "gifts" and then filed briefs or been involved in SCOTUS activities. This isn't even including the almost [\\$600,000 his wife's, Ginni Thomas', organization Crowdsourcers for Culture and Liberty received from the Capital Research Center](#) as it was filing an environmental brief with SCOTUS. Thomas has rarely recused himself from cases, only 54 times in 33 years.

It seems certain that Thomas' actions are affecting the court's reputation. Currently, the Supreme Court of the United States has a remarkably low 50% approval rating, according to a [Pew Research Center poll](#), a dramatic fall from the high of 76% they reached in 1995, soon after Thomas joined. His personal approval rating has plummeted to 27% overall, according to a [USA Today/Ipsos poll](#) in August of 2024.

Punishment in the Thomas household growing up was "swift and" painful." After one night, when Thomas came home late after drinking, his grandfather kicked him out of the house. Thomas fought in high school, in his studies and in his work to be treated equally. That drive is the one that [motivated him to come out against affirmative action](#). If he truly believes this, he must apply the same ethics code that every other judge in America follows to himself.

Imagine the next hot-button topic the Supreme Court decides on. How can the common person trust the Supreme Court to fairly uphold the Constitution when one of the Justices has just gotten back from [a lavish party with conservative billionaires](#)?

And let's be clear: the other two branches aren't going to be able to solve this problem - the call for responsibility is coming from inside the house.

For Congress, even in the face of massive undisclosed gifts, Secretary of the Judicial Conference Judge Robert Conrad wrote in [a letter](#) that the body decided *against* referring Thomas' case to the Department of Justice, as sought by Democrats. The reason? Partially because Thomas has since amended *most* of the errant disclosures. The Executive won't act, and even the Attorney General remained silent when Senators Sheldon Whitehouse and Ron Wyden jointly called for an investigation of Thomas. Who knows what additional gifts Thomas has or will accept that might influence his rulings?

This is not even a matter of his ideology, since President Trump would pick his likely successor, and the Senate to confirm the person is majority Republican.

Thomas must remember his past in Pin Point and summon the courage it takes to step down. He should live by his grandfather's words: "Any job worth doing, is worth doing right."

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