

## Harlan Crow Declines Senate Request in Inquiry on Justice Thomas: Key Details Revealed



Texas billionaire and GOP donor, Harlan Crow, has declined a request by Senate Finance Committee Chairman Ron Wyden to provide detailed information regarding luxury gifts he allegedly gave to Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. Crow's attorney, Michael Bopp, has raised concerns about the committee's jurisdiction in conducting tax audits and judicial ethics inquiries. Bopp suggested that the inquiry appeared to be part of a broader campaign against Justice Thomas and Crow rather than a legitimate legislative investigation.

In response to Crow's refusal, Senator Wyden expressed disappointment but was not surprised. He emphasized that the Finance Committee has the authority to investigate matters such as Crow's compliance with gift tax payments related to travel and other gifts provided to Thomas and any business tax exemptions claimed by entities owned by Crow.

Wyden stated that no one can evade Finance Committee oversight regardless of their wealth or connections. He intends to discuss with other lawmakers on the committee the use of all available tools to compel a response from Crow.

This development occurs at a time when Senate Democrats, who hold the majority, are intensifying inquiries into the relationship between Crow, Thomas, and Thomas's wife, conservative activist Ginni Thomas. In April, ProPublica reported that Thomas failed to disclose luxury trips and gifts financed by Crow, as well as Crow's purchase of properties owned by Thomas and two relatives. The news organization also revealed that Crow paid tuition for Thomas's grandnephew at two private schools in the late 2000s.

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Thomas has denied any wrongdoing and claimed that he sought ethics guidance early in his tenure, being informed that he didn't have to report "personal hospitality from close personal friends" who did not have cases before the court. However, he has since committed to complying with recent changes to reporting requirements, which lower the threshold for reporting personal hospitality.

On Monday, Democrats on the Senate Judiciary Committee sent a letter to Crow, requesting information on any gifts or payments made to Thomas or any of the other eight justices. The committee held a hearing last month to examine ethics within the high court despite Chief Justice John Roberts's decision not to testify.

Both the Finance and Judiciary committees have the power to issue subpoenas. Additionally, Wyden's committee can obtain individual tax returns from the IRS as part of its investigations.

Republicans are pushing back against Democrats' efforts, including their call for a high court code of ethics similar to that applicable to other federal judges. Fourteen Senate Republicans, including Mike Lee of Utah and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, sent a letter to Wyden denouncing the inquiry into Crow's gifts as a politically motivated attack on the Supreme Court. They defended Thomas as an honorable and principled jurist, rejecting the notion of an "ethics crisis" at the Supreme Court and accusing Democrats of attempting to undermine public confidence and alter the court's composition.

The situation continues to unfold, with Democrats and Republicans engaged in a contentious battle over the investigation and potential repercussions for Crow, Thomas, and the Supreme Court.