

Clarence Thomas Assailed For Alleged Ethical Lapses By More House Dems

Written by Forward Times Staff
Tuesday, 22 November 2011 00:00



WASHINGTON -- Rep. Louise Slaughter (D-N.Y.) is turning up the heat on Justice Clarence Thomas based on new information that builds upon previous reports of his alleged ethical lapses.

In late September, Slaughter had sent a letter to the Judicial Conference of the United States to request official action on Thomas' multiyear failure to disclose his wife's income from various conservative think tanks and activist organizations. The Judicial Conference is the principal policy-making and administrative body for the federal court system.

At issue is the fact that Thomas repeatedly checked a box titled "none" on annual financial disclosure forms in response to a question about the sources of spousal income. Yet during those years, his wife, Virginia Thomas, worked for the conservative think tank Heritage Foundation and for the Tea Party lobbying group Liberty Central, which she helped found.

The first letter asserted that Thomas' nondisclosures persisted "[t]hroughout his entire tenure of the Supreme Court," which began in 1991. It was fair to infer from his "high level of legal training and experience," Slaughter wrote, that the justice's failure presented the type of "willful" behavior that federal law requires the Judicial Conference to refer to the Department of Justice for investigation.

Friday's letter, however, states that Thomas actually did report the sources of his wife's income until 1997, therefore heightening the inference that the justice had not "misunderstood the reporting instructions," as he asserted in January when he filed seven pages of addenda

Clarence Thomas Assailed For Alleged Ethical Lapses By More House Dems

Written by Forward Times Staff
Tuesday, 22 November 2011 00:00

correcting his omissions over a six-year period. Citing information obtained by the left-leaning watchdog groups, Common Cause and Alliance for Justice, Slaughter wrote that “Justice Thomas accurately filed his financial disclosure forms, including his wife’s employment, for as many as 10 years beginning in 1987 when he was Chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.”

Noting in the new letter that the accurate filing continued through Thomas’ tenure as a federal appeals court judge and his first five years as a Supreme Court justice. Slaughter wrote that “it is very difficult for Justice Thomas to make a credible argument that he understood the filing instructions for ten years but then misunderstood them for the next thirteen years.”

Indeed, this new information appears to strengthen her argument to her colleagues that Thomas’ actions -- or, rather, inactions -- were willful, therefore warranting a Justice Department inquiry. Only 19 other members of Congress joined her September letter; Friday’s letter had the support of another 51 members.

Still, that is only 12 percent of the House, and all are Democrats. And with Justices Stephen Breyer and Antonin Scalia, as well as retired Justice John Paul Stevens, already waving away questions about their colleague’s ethics, it is not likely that the chief justice or the Judicial Conference will accede to Slaughter’s request.{jcomments on}