Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 5, 2011

Lamar Smith
Chairman, Judiciary Committee
2138 Rayburn Building
Washington D.C. 20515

John Conyers, Jr.
Ranking Member, Judiciary Committee
2426 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Conyers:

We are deeply concerned about recent reports concerning potential ethics violations by a Member of the United States Supreme Court, Justice Clarence Thomas. We are also concerned by the unwillingness or inability of the Court to address these allegations in a manner that promotes public confidence and trust in the judicial system.

As you know, unlike all other federal judges, Justices of the United States Supreme Court have not adopted and are not subject to a comprehensive code of judicial ethics. In this instance, it is essential that the Congress -- and in particular the House Judiciary Committee -- review these allegations to ensure the integrity of the Court is not compromised in the eyes of the public.

Public records clearly demonstrate that Justice Thomas has failed to accurately disclose information concerning the income and employment status of his wife, as required by law. According to a recent review by Common Cause, a nonpartisan government accountability group, Justice Thomas failed to report at least $1.6 million in income earned by his wife since 1997.

In addition, news reports indicate that Justice Thomas may have also failed to report gifts from wealthy supporters and inappropriately solicited donations for favored non-profit organizations. Meanwhile, the court continues to operate without a binding code of ethics or a transparent process to determine recusal.

We urge you, as the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Committee of Jurisdiction, to investigate and hold hearings on the outstanding ethical questions surrounding the court.

Sincerely,

Jan Schakowsky Louise M. Slaughter

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