

Dear Reader,

The U.S. Supreme Court has been making polarizing decisions that are hacking away at the civil rights of millions of Americans—from voting rights and gerrymandering to abortion rights. It is also increasingly using a secretive process known as the “shadow docket” to make consequential decisions—often releasing them with no explanation and in the middle of the night. We desperately need to launch a Supreme Court Desk to investigate what the court is doing, its behind-the-scenes maneuverings, and the far-reaching damages to American democracy. This is where you come in. Our new desk will cost just \$25,000 to launch, but we need to raise it quickly. Twenty-five thousand dollars is a very achievable goal—but only if our readers like you do your part. Please support this urgent cause today.

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LABELED

No Labels Took More Than \$100,000 From Clarence Thomas Buddy Harlan Crow

The “nonpartisan” group also relied on Crow—whom it dubbed one of its “whales”—to reel in nearly two dozen other donors from 2019 to 2021.





CHRIS GOODNEY/BLOOMBERG/GETTY IMAGES

Harlan Crow at his Old Parkland estate in Dallas, Texas, in 2015

Daniel Strauss /
April 19, 2023

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Years before megadonor Harlan Crow was reading ProPublica stories about his close ties with Clarence Thomas, often seen as maybe the most partisan justice on the Supreme Court, he was doling out donations and referring friends to No Labels, the outside group that claims to offer an avowedly nonpartisan approach to politics.

If some might see a contradiction there, it's one that doesn't seem to matter to either Crow or No Labels.

Crow's participation in No Labels fundraisers and work expanding the group's donor network illustrates how even as the group says it is driven only by bipartisanship, in actuality it is eager to associate with donors who like to hang out

with powerful conservatives seemingly OK with skirting federal disclosure laws.

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***The New Republic* obtained a document showing that Crow donated over \$130,000 to No Labels.**

The New Republic obtained a document with figures showing that between 2019 and 2021, Crow donated over \$130,000 to No Labels. Crow was considered a “whale”-level donor by the organization—an august status reserved for only the most generous donors. Crow referred other donors to No Labels, ones who earned the “whale,” “dolphin,” and lesser “minnow” status. By 2021, Crow had steered nearly two dozen other donors to No Labels, the information provided to *The New Republic* shows.

Officially, No Labels’ mission is to create a space for moderates on both the left and the right to come together and find solutions above the partisan fray. But the group has managed to anger Democrats at times by endorsing conservative candidates such as then-Representative Cory Gardner in Colorado, who was running for Senate against moderate Democrat Mark Udall in 2014. No Labels also labeled Donald Trump a “problem solver” in the early days of the 2016 campaign because he signed a piece of paper No Labels circulated supposedly committing to

enacting certain reforms if elected.

This year, No Labels has been looking to set up a launching pad for a third-party presidential ticket with one Republican and one Democrat on it. But the focus of these efforts will more likely help a Republican—the way things are looking, Trump—win a matchup against Joe Biden. No Labels has been torched by Democrats and Democratic-leaning groups, including the moderate Third Way, for mounting an effort that’s almost bound to hurt Biden.

Crow is the Texas billionaire who was the subject of an extensive ProPublica investigation into his ties to Thomas. In secret, Crow had been giving lavish gifts to the high court justice and bought a home that Thomas owned with his mother and brother. Thomas did not disclose those gifts, which is most likely a violation of federal law.

In a statement to *The New Republic*, Crow said he supports No Labels because he believes that both parties have become too extreme. “America is in trouble if we keep going down the path of letting the two extremes dictate our politics,” Crow said in the statement. “I support No Labels because our government should be about what’s best for America, not what’s best for either political party. That’s also why I’ve supported candidates from both sides of the aisle who are willing to engage in civil discussions to move our country forward.”

In fact, a review of his donations through FEC filings suggests otherwise. The large majority of those donations are for Republicans and Republican-affiliated committees—groups like the National Republican Congressional Committee and candidates like Senator Ron Johnson and Dave McCormick, a GOP Senate candidate in Pennsylvania. Crow has donated to Democrats, but they veer toward the moderate: Senator Kyrsten Sinema and Congressman Josh Gottheimer.

In a separate statement to *The New Republic*, in response to questions about whether No Labels felt any sort of pause about Crow given his close ties and gifting to Thomas, spokesperson Maryanne Martini argued that Crow and his relationship

with Thomas was “just noise.” Martini accused *The New Republic* of writing this story because it was peddled by special interest groups.

“Unlike the special interest groups trying to maintain the status quo by peddling false and negative stories to *The New Republic*, the citizen-led No Labels community is focused on making sure every American can cast a presidential vote in 2024 for an administration that will help the nation’s working families and communities thrive,” Martini said in the statement. “Everything else is just noise.”

There’s an important through line between No Labels and Crow, and it’s not a passion for bipartisanship. Rather, it’s indulging conservatives under the flag of bipartisanship. They both argue that the best solutions are ones born out of moderation, with both Democrats and Republicans involved. But Crow’s ardor for Thomas, who has been found to be the most conservative justice on the bench by one academic analysis, doesn’t exactly square with love of bipartisanship, and the actions by No Labels suggest that the group would rather create an opening for conservatives to thrive.

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Daniel Strauss is a staff writer at *The New Republic*.

YOU ARE RIGHT!

We recently surveyed our readers, and you told us the number one issue you are most worried about right now is ... the Supreme Court. And it's no wonder! The shocking revelations about the conflicts of interest surrounding Justice Clarence Thomas and his wife, right-wing activist Ginni Thomas, were just the tip of the iceberg. There are new revelations of financial conflicts involving Justice Neil Gorsuch and Chief Justice John Roberts.

Of course, what's even more outrageous is their activist decisions, including the wildly unpopular overturning of *Roe v. Wade*.

We think the reactionary judges on the Supreme Court are among the gravest dangers facing American democracy today. We need to launch a Supreme Court Desk to investigate their behind-the-scenes maneuverings and arguments, as well as the ramifications of their polarizing decisions.

We need your help. The expanded coverage of the new Supreme Court Desk will cost just \$25,000. If you think that Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito, John Roberts, and Trump-appointed judges Brett Kavanaugh, Neil Gorsuch, and Amy Coney Barrett are a danger to American life, please help us in this important campaign.

Yes, I'll help!

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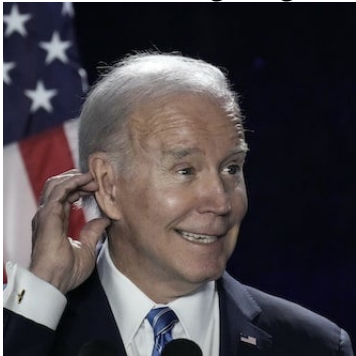
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