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Justice Thomas's Wife Sets Up a Conservative Lobbying Shop

By **ERIC LICHTBLAU**

WASHINGTON — The wife of Justice **Clarence Thomas**, who has raised her political profile in the last year through her outspoken conservative activism, is rebranding herself as a lobbyist and self-appointed “ambassador to the **Tea Party movement**.”

Virginia Thomas, the justice's wife, said on libertyinc.co, a Web site for her new political consulting business, that she saw herself as an advocate for “liberty-loving citizens” who favored limited government, free enterprise and other core conservative issues. She promised to use her “experience and connections” to help clients raise money and increase their political impact.

Ms. Thomas's effort to take a more operational role on conservative issues could intensify questions about her husband's ability to remain independent on issues like campaign finance and health care, legal ethicists said.

Justice Thomas “should not be sitting on a case or reviewing a statute that his wife has lobbied for,” said Monroe H. Freedman, a Hofstra Law School professor specializing in legal ethics. “If the judge's impartiality might reasonably be questioned, that creates a perception problem.”

Ms. Thomas's founding of her own political consulting shop, Liberty Consulting, was first reported Thursday by [Politico](#), which said she had begun reaching out to freshmen Republicans in Congress.

The move comes a few months after she gave up the top spot at Liberty Central, a conservative Web site that she founded in 2009 and that has strong links to the Tea Party movement.

An anonymous \$500,000 donation to start up Liberty Central came from Harlan Crow, a Dallas real estate investor and Republican financier, [Politico](#) reported.

Mr. Crow, reached by phone Friday, would not say whether he was the source of the money. "I disclose what I'm required by law to disclose," he said, "and I don't disclose what I'm not required to disclose."

Ms. Thomas did not respond to telephone and e-mail requests for an interview on Friday. The Daily Caller reported in December that she had said in an interview that she was looking forward to a new role involving "lobbying on Capitol Hill" and a variety of other hands-on operational duties.

Arn Pearson, a vice president at [Common Cause](#), a liberal group that has been critical of potential conflicts at the [Supreme Court](#) caused by Ms. Thomas's work, said her new position, combined with Justice [Antonin Scalia](#)'s recent address before a closed-door seminar of the Tea Party Caucus, provided further evidence of "the politicization of the court."

"The level of bias we're seeing is really troubling," Mr. Pearson said.