

Judicial Ethics and Anti-Corruption Act

Senator Elizabeth Warren and Representative Pramila Jayapal

Ethics scandals have plagued our federal courts for decades. Clerks accuse federal judges of sexual misconduct with [little to no recourse](#). Supreme Court Justices accept [lavish international trips](#) and fail to file [basic financial disclosure reports](#). [Judges](#) and [justices](#) alike sit in cases in which they own individual stock in the parties—and in cases that could [directly affect](#) their spouses.

These ethics breaches have real consequences for Americans' faith in the federal judiciary. Last year, public trust in the judicial branch [dropped](#) 13 points. At the same time, America's approval of the Supreme Court has [fallen](#) to all-time lows. Our federal courts—which depend on the public's confidence for their very legitimacy—are in trouble.

The *Judicial Ethics and Anti-Corruption Act* would overhaul our nation's judicial ethics laws to restore public faith in our court system. Americans should be confident that judges are held to the highest ethical standards and are free from conflicts of interest. Specifically, the bill would:

- **Ban federal judges from owning conflicted assets.** To root out financial conflicts of interest, the bill forbids judges from owning individual stocks and securities, commercial real estate, trusts, and private companies, while making exceptions for certain assets such as mutual funds. And the bill establishes accounts for judges to make conflict-free investments that are independently managed by the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board.
- **Strengthen restrictions on judicial gifts and privately funded travel.** The bill clarifies the definition of “gift” under federal law, sets up a new oversight process for judicial attendance at privately funded events, and creates a Judicial Education Fund to pay for the reasonable expenses associated with attending approved events.
- **Require the Supreme Court to adhere to a binding Code of Conduct.** The bill imposes the existing Code of Conduct for U.S. Judges on the Supreme Court, the only court in the country not currently subject to an ethical code.
- **Improve disclosure in the federal judiciary.** The bill provides more information to the public regarding judicial speeches and case assignments, while mandating the livestreaming of court proceedings and new judicial workplace surveys.
- **Overhaul the broken judicial recusal process.** The bill requires Supreme Court Justices to issue written recusal decisions whenever a litigant requests recusal and requires the Judicial Conference to issue advisory opinions with their recusal recommendations. And the bill creates a new recusal process for lower court judges, forbidding judges from making their own recusal decisions and requiring courts to issue written recusal decisions.
- **Create new mechanisms for judicial accountability.** The bill closes the loophole that allows judges to escape accountability by retiring from the bench, strengthens disciplinary authority for the Judicial Conference, sets up expedited impeachment procedures for federal judges, and allows the public to file complaints against Supreme Court Justices—like all other federal judges—through a new Supreme Court Complaints Review Committee.
- **Restrict courts from sealing public health and safety records.** The bill limits the ability of courts to seal records that contain important information for the protection of public health or safety, often concealed at the urging of massive corporations.