

## Groups won't support Paula Jones

### Women's organizations ignore harassment claims against Clinton

WASHINGTON (AP) — Judith Lichtman, president of the Women's Legal Defense Fund, didn't hesitate when Anita Hill accused conservative Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas of sexual harassment.

"We all believe her story," Lichtman said then, speaking for a handful of prominent women's groups.

The Fund for a Feminist Majority stood with Hill, too, demanding an immediate Senate hearing. So did the National Commission for Working Women, the National Women's Political Caucus and the head of the National Abortion Rights Action League.

Five years later, none of these prominent, politically active women's groups offer a supportive word for Paula Jones. Their collective silence is an intriguing political subplot to her charges that President Clinton sexually harassed her in a Little Rock, Ark. hotel room in 1991.

A few months after that, Hill's accusations about Thomas rocked Washington and stirred a remarkable national debate about sexual conduct.

"It's the height of hypocrisy on the part of the women's groups," Joseph Cammarata, a Jones lawyer, said Sunday on ABC's "This Week."

"They rallied to the cause of Anita Hill, but in our case, never a whimper."

Today, the Supreme Court will hear

arguments about whether Clinton should have to answer Jones' allegations at a civil trial. The court will not consider the merits of her assertions that Clinton propositioned and fondled her.

The issue before the justices is whether presidents should be immune from civil lawsuits while in office. Jones' lawyers want the case to proceed immediately, or, in the alternative, for the justices to order pretrial depositions and other activity so the trial can open soon after Clinton's term ends in 2001.

The Supreme Court arguments revive a case that has received little attention since Jones made her allegations in 1994. It also is a reminder, after weeks of media focus on the ethical problems of Republican House Speaker Newt Gingrich, of the many legal and ethical questions hanging over the Democratic president.

At a minimum, the hearing guarantees a highly embarrassing spectacle for Clinton as the White House tries to engineer a week of favorable publicity leading up to the Jan. 20 inaugural festivities.

And if Clinton's lawyers lose before the high court - a decision is likely to come in four or five months - the president could be required to answer questions under oath about alleged indiscretions during his tenure as Arkansas governor.

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Jones' lawyer

"One result of this case already is that it has exposed the galloping hypocrisy of the left in America," said Craig Shirley, a Republican activist and an organizer of the conservative conference where Jones first publicly detailed her allegations in 1994.

"I don't think these groups would be missing in action if some woman had made the same allegation about a Republican president," Shirley said.

Speaking privately, activists in several liberal women's groups that joined in the anti-Thomas effort acknowledge internal anguish over how to respond to Jones' allegations. Several said her appearance at the 1994 Conservative Political Action Committee gives them cover — enough evidence to raise the question of whether her allegations were motivated by politics.

Some Clinton allies also point to the political aspirations of a Jones attorney, Gil Davis, who in addition to arguing her case before the Supreme Court is a GOP candidate for Virginia attorney general.

"In hindsight, maybe it would have been better if she had chosen a different forum," Shirley said. "But no one seemed to have a problem with Anita Hill being supported by all these liberal groups. In any case, it was not entirely unsuccessful — Paula Jones is getting her day in court."

"It's not going to cause me any difficulties because I'm going to do my job," Clinton said Friday to a question about the case's ramifications.

Clinton aides bristle at questions about Jones and grumble about the timing. At a time of endless inaugural planning meetings, among those visiting the White House this week was Robert Bennett, a \$475-an-hour lawyer representing Clinton.

"The, quote-unquote, 'legitimacy' of that story will depend, of course, on what happens in a court of law," White House press secretary Mike McCurry said last week.

Clinton and McCurry had little choice but to answer questions asked at public forums. In striking contrast has been the silence of women's groups that rushed to Hill's defense

and predicted that public debate over the Thomas nomination would embolden more women to come forward with complaints of sexual harassment.

There has been a heightened sensitivity and consciousness about the sexual harassment problem and the way in which women are viewed in society, Kate Michelman, president of the National Abortion Rights Action League, said after Hill came forward.

But Michelman, Lichtman and several other women's group leaders involved in the high-profile effort to block Thomas' confirmation did not respond this week to requests for interviews about the Jones case. Nor have any of them objected as male Clinton supporters portrayed Jones as money hungry "trailer park trash."

## Two female cadets leave Citadel

CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP) — Two female Citadel cadets who said they endured freshman hazing that included having their clothes set afire won't return to the military college.

"The school's promises to me and my family that knob life would be rough but safe were critical to me," Jeanie Mentavlos of Charlotte, N.C., said in a statement released by her attorney. "Because The Citadel broke its promise, I cannot return."

While a federal judge had offered to take steps to assure the women's safety "it is apparent to me ... that while I might be physically safe on campus, I would not be welcome," Kim Messer of Clover said in a similar statement.

The FBI and state police were investigating allegations that, among other things, male cadets set the clothes of the women on fire, sexually harassed them and put cleanser in their mouths. Authorities were also looking into whether death threats were made against one woman.

Mentavlos' brother, Michael, a senior cadet who helped bring the allegations to the attention of authorities, also announced Sunday he will complete his degree requirements elsewhere.

Two other female cadets who enrolled last summer, and who have not made any hazing allegations, returned to campus.

The women were among the first

four admitted to the college after the school dropped its all-male admissions policy, following a U.S. Supreme Court ruling that a similar all-male policy at Virginia Military Institute was unconstitutional.

Citadel spokesman Terry Leedom said the school would have no comment on the departure of the women until Monday.

A federal judge met privately with the families of the two female cadets Thursday and said he was prepared to provide "reasonable measures" to protect the women's safety.

He did not say what those measures were, but the U.S. Justice Department had asked the judge to send U.S. marshals to campus.

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