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# Tom Girardi gave \$1 mln to California bar investigator, report says

By David Thomas

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(Reuters) - Disbarred and indicted California lawyer Tom Girardi built "an extensive network of connections" at the state bar that was supposed to act as an attorney watchdog, including directing more than \$1 million in cash and gifts to a former investigator, [a new](#)

[report](#)  said Friday.

A law firm hired to probe the State Bar of California's handling of disciplinary complaints against Girardi found it was "more likely than not" affected by the connections he developed with state bar employees.



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The California bar [commissioned the report](#) after Girardi, a prominent national plaintiffs' lawyer, was accused in December 2020 of using settlement funds meant for the families of victims of a 2018 airplane crash in Indonesia to bankroll a luxurious Hollywood lifestyle.

Since then, Girardi has been disbarred and forced into bankruptcy alongside his now-defunct law firm, Girardi Keese. Last month, prosecutors in Chicago and Los Angeles [leveled criminal charges](#) against the 83-year-old Girardi, accusing him of stealing more than \$18 million from his firm's clients.

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Girardi's legal team says he is stricken with Alzheimer's disease. The courts [have entered](#) not guilty pleas on his behalf as they assess his competence to stand trial. Girardi's brother Robert, who handles his legal and financial affairs as his conservator, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Girardi saga has been an embarrassing chapter for the California bar, which is charged with regulating lawyers across the state.

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"While none of the individuals named in [Friday's] report are still at the State Bar, the magnitude and duration of the transgressions reveal persistent institutional failure and a shocking past culture of unethical and unacceptable behavior," Ruben Duran, chair of the organization's board of trustees, said in a statement.

The report by law firm Halpern May Ybarra Gelberg found at least nine former state bar employees had connections with or received gifts from Girardi.

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One former bar investigator, Tom Layton, and his wife received more than \$1 million, including at least \$600,000 in payments from Girardi's law firm, as well as free meals, private jet flights and tickets to sporting events, the report said.

Layton did not immediately respond to a request for comment; the report said Layton testified he did not work on or influence any case involving Girardi.


The report said it could not "establish that Layton's connections to Girardi directly influenced the outcome of any Girardi case."

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**David Thomas**  
Thomson Reuters

David Thomas reports on the business of law, including law firm strategy, hiring, mergers and litigation. He is based out of Chicago. He can be reached at [d.thomas@thomsonreuters.com](mailto:d.thomas@thomsonreuters.com) and on Twitter [@DaveThomas5150](#).

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