STATE ARMOR

June 30, 2026

The Honorable Chuck Grassley, Chairman
Senate Committee on the Judiciary

The Honorable Mike Lee, Chairman
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

The Honorable Jim Jordan, Chairman
House Judiciary Committee

The Honorable Brett Guthrie, Chairman
House Committee on Energy and Commerce

The Honorable John Moolenaar, Chairman
House Select Committee on the Strategic Competition Between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party

Dear Members of Congress,

I write to bring to your attention a new report from State Armor that examines the activities, partnerships, funding streams, and international entanglements of the Environmental Law Institute (ELI). The report raises substantial questions regarding ELI's relationships with entities affiliated with or closely connected to organs of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), as well as the potential implications of those relationships for the American justice system.

ELI has positioned itself as the vanguard of transnational environmental cooperation, claiming a mission to foster innovative, just, and practical law and policy solutions across borders. The results of ELI's operations and partnerships tell a different story. Across three decades of engagement, ELI's work has uniformly advanced Chinese strategic and national security interests while undermining American national security by constraining domestic energy producers and industrial expansion and simultaneously pushing America toward dependence upon energy sources dominated by the PRC.

Our research documents a lengthy history of cooperation between ELI and Chinese governmental, academic, and legal institutions. ELI's China Project was ostensibly designed to provide information and analysis to Chinese stakeholders, which alone positions them as a major intelligence apparatus for China, but perhaps more troubling is that ELI's reporting on these engagements fails to address how and to what degree their work in the U.S. is informed by engagement with Chinese officials and academics.

Congress has increasingly recognized that the CCP often utilizes ostensibly academic, professional, and nonprofit relationships to advance strategic objectives and cultivate influence within foreign institutions. The report raises legitimate questions about whether ELI's activities may have extended beyond traditional educational exchange and whether Chinese entities exercised meaningful influence over ELI's priorities, programming, or policy initiatives.

For that reason, I respectfully urge your committees to immediately examine the full scope of ELI's cooperation with Chinese entities. Such an inquiry should assess the nature of ELI's partnerships, the extent of information sharing, the role of Chinese government-affiliated organizations in shaping programs and initiatives, and whether any activities warrant additional scrutiny under existing foreign influence statutes. Your committees are uniquely positioned to determine whether ELI's relationships reflect routine international engagement or something more consequential.

The report also raises separate concerns that fall squarely within the jurisdiction of the Senate and House Judiciary Committees. ELI's Climate Judiciary Project has reportedly provided educational programming to more than 2,000 judges across the United States on issues related to climate science and climate litigation. The report argues that these programs relied heavily on theories and expert networks that are also associated with active climate litigation and advocacy efforts.

The question is not whether judges should receive continuing education but rather whether any educational initiative funded, organized, or influenced by organizations with relationships with foreign entities, particularly a foreign adversary, could affect the perception or reality of judicial impartiality. Public confidence in the courts depends on ensuring that judges remain free from improper influence.

I urge the House and Senate Judiciary Committees to examine judicial training efforts facilitated by ELI. Such a review might identify judges who participated in ELI-sponsored programs and review cases over which those judges later presided involving climate litigation or any China-related matter to determine whether patterns exist that warrant further inquiry. Congress should also evaluate the funding, curriculum development, expert selection process, and governance structure of these educational programs to ensure that they are consistent with the principles of judicial independence and transparency.

Our report identifies a series of relationships, activities, and institutional connections that merit careful congressional examination. Given the growing focus on CCP influence operations, foreign transparency requirements, and public confidence in the judiciary, these issues deserve a thorough and bipartisan review.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We would welcome the opportunity to work with your committees as needed.

Respectfully,

Michael Lucci

Chief Executive Officer, State Armor