



READERS' COMMENTS

Pay Frozen, More New York Judges Leave Bench Back to Article

By WILLIAM GLABERSON

The state's judges, who have not had a raise in 12 years, are resigning in relatively large numbers, not to retire but to return to practicing law.

Comments are no longer being accepted.

214 Readers' Comments

ALL COMMENTS HIGHLIGHTS READERS' RECOMMENDATIONS

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126. Dev New York, NY July 5th, 2011 12:29 pm

Why is the legal system so slow in processing cases? If judges did a better job then maybe they could get more pay and lawyers would earn less pay? Now the judge knows what the little person feels. The average person makes much less than a judge. Speed up the courts!

Recommend Recommended by 3 Readers

127. Tom M Staatsburg, NY July 5th, 2011 12:29 pm

Thank you, New York Times, for ever so subtly pointing out exactly what's wrong with the entire legal system. The article made the point that "the median partners' share of profits at large law firms jumped 141 percent to \$957,500..." Hmmm...so lawyering makes one a millionaire and judges are underpaid at almost \$150k? Why don't we compare those numbers to "the 'median' american"? There's a reason the whole profession has a stink to it and is the butt of many jokes. It seems the profession still clings to the Gordon Gekko philosophy that "greed is good." If salaries should be increased for judges, they should only be increased based on performance. Better performance, more pay. Just like in the real world. Oh, but that's right, then they'd actually have to "perform."

Recommend Recommended by 8 Readers

128. observer ny July 5th, 2011 12:30 pm

The McGuires and Goodmans are the rare exceptions on the NY state trial level bench, and your article is misleading by suggesting that these examples are typical. Far more usual, at least in New York City, are judges who could not make the leap to big-bucks private practice because they are not perceived as having the requisite legal skills and experience for that kind of practice. There is a HUGE difference between the type of lawyers drawn to the federal bench versus the state court bench. The former tend to be the cream of the bar, who have distinguished themselves in high level federal gov't or private law firms before moving to the federal courthouse. Most of the state court judges, unfortunately, are products of the political "clubs" who owe their judgeships less to recognition of their lawyerly achievements and more to paying their dues in the Democratic machinery. Most of these state jurists would give a limb to be able to bolt to a white-shoe law firm in Manhattan. Many of them, if they returned to private practice, would struggle to make as much as they are making now. The problem described in your article may be serious in the context of the

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129. ezrabg
Bronx, New York
July 5th, 2011
12:30 pm

I do not understand some of these comments. We do not get the "best and the brightest" judges in this state. They are hand-picked at political conventions by party bosses and hacks. Those with enough votes in that room wins. We have some of the most incompetent judges in the country, and it is specifically because their qualifications have nothing to do with their selections.

James McGuire was one of the worst choices. He was pushed onto the court by Governor Pataki during the last years of his administration, and had a deal to make him Chief Administrative Judge of the Appellate Division, First Department just before leaving office. The other judges on the Appellate Division revolted - resulted in Judge Gonzalez being named as Chief Administrative Judge just after Spitzer took office. He is now embroiled in his own ethics scandal, and, by the way, was also a very poor choice as Chief Administrative Judge.

I for one am glad Judge McGuire is leaving. He creates his own fiction in his opinions, and states issues are "undisputed" in the record when they are not. He is intellectually dishonest and mean, and does not belong on the bench.

As to the \$144,000.00 salary - it is in fact more than most attorneys make in an average year, and more than Judge McGuire, or any political hack, deserves.

Recommend Recommended by 8 Readers

130. tom
north shore
July 5th, 2011
12:32 pm

Twelve years without a raise is a dysfunctional way to limit overreaching judges who usurp legislative power. It's wrong, but it's been earned.

Recommend Recommended by 2 Readers

131. Doubtom
California
July 5th, 2011
12:32 pm

No surprise here, lawyers are always about money first and spouting legalese second. This pampered class of self-appointed experts needs to die off, so that the nation can have some measure of peace and tranquility where ordinary people can interpret the English language without their help. Lawyers (judges) and priests are all the same, that is parasites sucking the life's blood from societies. They produce exactly NOTHING but words! They're expendable! Put a uniform on them and send them to war; they make excellent cannon fodder.

Recommend Recommended by 4 Readers

132. MrPitchfork
America
July 5th, 2011
12:32 pm

When the Federal Reserve inflates the money supply, it causes the cost of living to go up with everyone. That would be ok if when they did that, they spread out the inflation equally to everyone to compensate for it but we know it doesn't work that way. That inflated money goes straight to the top of the food chain where THEY decide where the money goes. Its all one big ponzi schemed geared to suck the wealth out of each and every person BELOW the top of the food chain. I don't know why noone will do anything about it...

Recommend Recommended by 2 Readers

133. Erin
New York City,
USA
July 5th, 2011
12:32 pm

People who don't live in NYC (or at least San Francisco or L.A., maybe Chicago) really have no right to comment on whether \$140,000 is "a good salary" or not. How much did your house cost in Eugene, OR (#34) or La Jolla, CA (#33)? What is it, a two bedroom, three bedroom - maybe \$175,000 at best? Guess what... I can't buy a studio apartment in Queens, let alone Manhattan, for that. And for those of you who suggest that a judge should move to another city, you have to live in New York to be elected in New York.

Sometimes I really wonder about the reporting at the Times. I mean, this is a problem for so many reasons, but could you provide a little more context and a little less sensationalism? How does this compare to average salaries of practicing attorneys in New York City? What's the cost of living compared to other cities, and what are the salaries of judges in those cities? How does it compare to other public-sector salaries - other branches of state government, city officials and administrators, federal court judges, administrative law judges at OATH or TLC, etc.?

The commenters here really seem to miss the point. When was the last time you stayed at a job for 12 years without a raise? We all know if you pay teachers crap, you mostly attract crap; the quality individuals you get, you can't keep. Therefore, you end up with mostly crap. Legal aid attorneys, same thing. Judges...

Recommend Recommended by 8 Readers

134. Old Mister
Mountain View CA
July 5th, 2011
12:32 pm

This is a good thing. Old judges are the bane of the legal system, and they should all be under term limits.

Recommend Recommended by 3 Readers

135. HIGHLIGHT (What's this?)

I've been a member of the NY bar for 19 years. I've met and worked with and against hundreds of lawyers, only about ten of whom make over a million annually. And just about all of the lawyers with whom I've worked, etc., have worked their butts off, sacrificing family time and down time available to most other professions. The many public service lawyers that I know likewise sacrifice significant time and energy to their professions. Many are still paying their students loans (I was up until last year). Yeah, it's true, we're not all legacy babies handed keys to a Caddy and a tuition account at high school graduation. We believed in something, we worked our tails off through law school, we took a ridiculously difficult exam. Sorry if our salaries -- even the salaries of public service lawyers (who are mostly non-union) offend.

Yes, many judges are the product of the political process. But most of the judges I've encountered are devoted to their work, they and their clerks work hard, and after 12 years without a raise, they deserve to be disgruntled over the lack of a raise. What were most of you making 12 years ago?

Recommend Recommended by 25 Readers

136. Roland Berger
St. Thomas,
Ontario, Canada
July 5th, 2011
12:33 pm

America is a country of justice, yet judges are very well paid.

Recommend Recommended by 0 Readers

137. Melissa
New York
July 5th, 2011
12:33 pm

Maybe it's not that judges get paid to little, but that private attorneys get paid much too much and the cost of living in NYC is madness.

Recommend Recommended by 4 Readers

138. smi2le
San Francisco
July 5th, 2011
12:33 pm

There are literally hundreds of law professors who love to be a judge and would gladly do so for the present salary.

Recommend Recommended by 6 Readers

139. gdtom
Amarillo Tx
July 5th, 2011
12:33 pm

The judges may be underpaid in New York, but this really is just another example of how outrageous lawyers fees are. It is a shame to have to pay such exorbitant fees to one of the least respected and least trusted professions.

Recommend Recommended by 5 Readers

140. HIGHLIGHT (What's this?)

J. Clarence
Washington, DC
July 5th, 2011
12:33 pm

I'm sorry, but working almost paycheck to paycheck I find it hard to sympathize with someone who had to sell a summer house in the Hamptons. I know 156k isn't a lot in New York, but I know a lot more people who have to live in the New York and have to survive on a lot less. If you are making 144k - 156k and you are claiming to be poor, you either don't know what "poor" means or have some kind bizarre fantasy of what you think the average tax payer should fork over for you.

Recommend Recommended by 24 Readers

141. currus
Universal City,
Texas
July 5th, 2011
12:34 pm

It seems to me the height of irresponsibility for a society is to ask men and women learned in the law to accept a less than fair salary. The matters that they handle are serious and important. Do you want a person sitting in judgment to be experienced and seasoned or not?

Courts serve a critical function in society, but it is vital that they be administered by responsible jurists, not hacks. Justice may be an ideal that is hard to attain, but you will not get closer to it by underpaying judges.

Recommend Recommended by 2 Readers

142. BinaryVixen
Sun Diego
July 5th, 2011
12:34 pm

Would you really want to go before a judge who's having trouble paying his or her bills? Think about it.

Recommend Recommended by 4 Readers

143. Andrew
NY
July 5th, 2011
12:34 pm

They work 30 -35 hours a week. They have unlimited sick leave. They have 5 weeks vacations a year. They have off all government holidays. They have a guaranteed very generous pension. We should all be so lucky!!!

Recommend Recommended by 9 Readers

144. mary browning
miami beach, FL
July 5th, 2011
12:34 pm

Some of these persons writing in comments saying that they think that these salaries are adequate are really out of touch with reality. What makes them think that this amount of money is enough to live in an upper middle class neighborhood in New York City, send two children through schooling and university, having paid for their own schooling, university and law school? This is ignorance.

If you end up in court before a judge, do you want the chaff of the law schools or do you want the best, in control of the court and the attorneys

defending you and those attacking and accusing you?

Usually, in this country, you get what you pay for. You cannot expect the judges to be only those with a public service wish, a private income, or no family to support.

Recommend Recommended by 3 Readers

145. July 5th, 2011 12:34 pm

This comment has been removed. Comments are moderated and generally will be posted if they are on-topic and not abusive. For more information, please see our Comments FAQ.

146. eljote new york July 5th, 2011 12:44 pm

Yeah, there's absolutely something UNJUST about not being able to keep a house in the Hamptons and an apartment in Manhattan....poor judge!

Recommend Recommended by 4 Readers

147. Bender Rodriguez Portland, OR July 5th, 2011 12:44 pm

It seems to be the common sentiment in American society that everyone ELSE is overpaid except ONESELF ...

Recommend Recommended by 3 Readers

148. am El Dorado Hills, California July 5th, 2011 12:50 pm

"judge not lest ye be judged" or so the old New England saying goes....to financiers the law is just another commodity to be bought and sold; use of the bench as a source of revenue gathering at the expense of what is fair, just and expedient is an indicator of corroding infrastructure

Recommend Recommended by 1 Reader

149. Brian hermen maine July 5th, 2011 12:50 pm

I don't care about these judges,let them leave if they don't like their job!

Recommend Recommended by 6 Readers

150. a New York July 5th, 2011 12:50 pm

This is the same argument with teachers -- everyone gets all bent out of shape about how they have pensions and benefits, and oh -- \$144,000 is so much money, what are they upset about...what is missed by those who think this is such great compensation is that you get what you pay for. If there is a market for people with legal skills at a certain level, then those at the top will gravitate to the best rewards. So, if we want better teachers and better judges, you have to have some incentive, or at least no disincentive. Otherwise, it is just a race to the bottom.

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