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## 2 on Judicial Pay Panel Press for Big Raises

By **WILLIAM GLABERSON**

Two members of the commission reviewing judicial pay in New York State pressed for substantial raises at a public session on Monday, but the seven-member panel has not yet made a decision.

The commission is being carefully watched in a time of budget austerity, because it was clearly formed to raise judicial salaries while trying to minimize political fallout from what could be an unpopular decision. Its members, appointed by leaders of all three branches of state government, are expected to make their decision later this month.

The presentations by the two members, Robert B. Fiske Jr. and Mark S. Mulholland, appeared to be the opening of negotiations that will unfold in the coming weeks. Both had earlier made it clear that they favored a raise for the more than 1,200 state judges, who have not had a pay increase since 1999.

"It's just a question of basic fairness," said Mr. Fiske, a lawyer who was once the United States attorney in Manhattan.

Mr. Fiske proposed that pay for justices on the state's highest-level trial court, the State Supreme Court, be increased to \$195,754 from \$136,700. Mr. Mulholland suggested that the salary be increased to \$220,000.

Some pay-increase proposals have suggested that the salary of State Supreme Court justices increase to at least \$174,000, the salary of federal district judges. But the commission has also heard from critics who have argued that no increase is warranted.

Most other members of the commission gave few clues about their positions during the brief meeting, which was held in a hearing room in Lower Manhattan. The three members appointed by Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo have not indicated whether they were influenced by the state budget director, Robert L. Megna, who told them at a hearing last month that the commission should exercise caution in granting judicial raises because of the state's fragile finances.

If the governor's three appointees work to limit judicial raises, they are likely to meet opposition from three others: Mr. Mulholland, who was appointed by the Senate Republican leader, Dean G. Skelos, and who has been the most vocal member calling for a significant judicial pay increase; and the two appointees by the state's chief judge, Jonathan Lippman: Mr. Fiske and Kathryn S. Wylde, the president of the Partnership for New York City, a network of business leaders.

That would leave the commission's seventh member, James Tallon Jr., a former member of the Assembly who was Democratic majority leader, with a pivotal vote. Mr. Tallon, appointed by the Assembly speaker, Sheldon Silver, a Democrat, has not hinted at his views.

In an interview after the meeting, Mr. Tallon declined to discuss his position. "I don't intend to get into a public bidding on this one," he said, adding that Mr. Silver had given him no instructions.

A raise for the state's judges would increase the pay of trial and appeals judges and the members of the state's top court, the Court of Appeals.

During the meeting, Mr. Cuomo's appointees, including the chairman, William C. Thompson Jr., a former New York City comptroller, did not react to the proposals for a big judicial pay increase. One of the governor's appointees, Richard B. Cotton, suggested in passing that he may be skeptical of testimony from the state budget director implying that it would be inappropriate to pay judges more than some high-level state employees. "We're dealing with a co-equal branch" of government, Mr. Cotton said.

Daniel Turbow, a Family Court judge in Brooklyn who is president of the city Family Court Judges' Association, said after attending the meeting that he had been pleased by the remarks of some of the members. "I have to think it's encouraging," Judge Turbow said.