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NEWS IN BRIEF

Court Rejects Bid to Halt Pay Increases for Judges

A judge last week denied a request from a long-time critic of the Judiciary to block a pay raise for about 1,300 state judges. Bronx Supreme Court Justice Mary Ann Brigantti-Hughes otherwise reserved decision on March 30 on the challenge to the pay increase filed by Elena Sassower and ordered state defendants to appear on April 16 to defend the legality of the raises. Meanwhile, the judges will begin seeing the raises recommended by a special commission on judicial pay in their April 11 checks. They are slated to receive a 17 percent raise in the fiscal year that began April 1 and 27 percent over three years.

The complaint by Sassower, head of the Westchester County-based Center for Judicial Accountability, contends that the 2010 law establishing the commission is “unconstitutional, statutorily violative and fraudulent.” In particular, Sassower argues in *Center for Judicial Accountability v. Cuomo*, 302951/2012, that the judges cannot lawfully receive a raise because no agency is effectively combatting what she insists is widespread corruption in the Judiciary.

Sassower has been a fixture for years at hearings involving the Judiciary, where she has decried the dishonesty of judges and performance of the state Commission on Judicial Conduct. “Ms. Sassower’s track record speaks for itself,” said court system spokesman David Bookstaver. “This litigation is frivolous, at best.” Sassower is appearing pro se.

—Joel Stashenko