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Long overdue pay raises awarded to the state's judges will bring them to \$174,000 a year by 2014

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A recent decision will raise the pay of New York State judges to the same level as that of federal judges.

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New York judges, underpaid for far too long by an irresponsible Legislature, will finally get the paychecks they deserve.

A special commission designed to boost their salaries untainted by the stench of Albany politics deserves kudos.

As a result of a Friday vote, the pay for trial judges in Supreme Court will jump from \$136,700 to \$160,000 in April. The following April will see another \$7,000 hike - and the year after that, another. All of which means pay will soon rise to \$174,000, which is what federal judges get.

That's right and fair and proper after years of gross lowballing. Former City Controller Bill Thompson, chair of the seven-member panel, steered things in the right direction.

The same can't be said of commissioners appointed by Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman - or of Mark Mulholland, picked by state Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos.

These dissenters almost derailed the deal, for they wanted more, more, more, even as the state grapples with historic deficits and workers are laid off.

Mulholland, a partner at Skelos' law firm, wanted an immediate raise to an unbelievable \$220,000, a number he called "sound and correct."

Mulholland said he was "disappointed that the Assembly appointee," Jim Tallon, was voting with Thompson - insisting he should have been "arm and arm with me" for higher pay.

Mulholland said he wanted judges to know "the Senate has your back."

The rest of the panelists rejected this asinine Albanyism.

Judges got what they were due in very tough times. They should count their blessings.

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