

JOINT STATEMENT
OF
THE ASSOCIATION OF JUDGES OF HISPANIC HERITAGE
AND
THE JUDICIAL FRIENDS ASSOCIATION
TO
THE SPECIAL COMMISSION FOR JUDICIAL COMPENSATION
AT ITS PUBLIC HEARING HELD ON
WEDNESDAY, JULY 20, 2011

Dear Commission Members:

This joint statement is submitted by the Association of Judges of Hispanic Heritage and the Judicial Friends Association which represent hundreds of the local, state and federal Judges of the State of New York.

The Judicial Friends Association, founded in 1976, is an unincorporated association of local, state and federal Judges of Color in the State of New York. Our mission includes: (1) providing our members and other members of the bar with the collegiality, experience and knowledge of the law, and sharing with both judicial and non-judicial colleagues the varied judicial experiences of The Judicial Friend's members; (2) acting as mentors to law students who participate in programs through the various law schools and bar associations, and providing for the training of law interns assigned from accredited law schools to the membership; (3) providing training to new Judges of the courts in New York, and assisting law students and members of the bar seeking gainful employment and positions as clerks with the Judiciary; (4) promoting educational activities in the law for the purpose of improving the understanding of the law through seminars, published materials, lectures and the circulation of newsletters; (5) presenting meritorious awards to members of the judiciary and non-judiciary for outstanding contributions to the community through law and outstanding judicial achievements; (6) sponsoring an annual Reception for minority law students, participating in an Annual Law Day sermon at a religious institution, and providing opportunities for the community to interact with Judges and non-judicial personnel; (7) participating in the activities of the National Bar Association and the American Bar Association throughout the United States and in the activities of other bar associations and other legal related groups to develop internship programs and scholarships for interns and students; and (8) achieving social and racial justice, and service to the community, through law.

The Association of Judges of Hispanic Heritage, founded in 1985, is an incorporated association of local, state and federal Latino judges in New York State. Our purpose is to: (1) encourage judicial service among Latinos; (2) cultivate collegiality among Latino judges; (3) uphold the integrity and independence of the judiciary; (4) foster the improvement of the law, the legal system and the administration of justice; (5) reach out and work with court administrators, judicial organizations, bar associations, community groups, agencies and commissions concerned with diversity, educational institutions and law schools on matters concerning diversity within the judiciary, the effectiveness of our legal system and its impact on the public and members of Latino communities;

(6) promote excellence and professionalism among Latino judges; and (7) advance the inclusion of Latino judges at all levels of our court and administrative tribunal systems.

The concerns of our two associations are no different than those expressed by the Office of Court Administration and other judicial associations and members of the Judiciary:

- the increase of judicial compensation is absolutely necessary to ensure the effective operation of the Courts;
- New York judges received only two raises in 19 years prior to 1987;
- it is now common for New York's Judges to serve most of their careers without receiving a single pay raise — a condition that no other class of employee, public or private, is asked to accept;
- it is not uncommon for staff to earn higher salaries than the Judges to whom they report;
- since the 1999 salary adjustment, the cost of living in New York State jumped by about 30%, resulting in significant wage erosion for the Judiciary;
- this prolonged period of stagnation in judicial compensation is the longest experienced by any judiciary in our Nation, dropping the Empire State from its former 1st place standing to its current 50th place position;
- no effective system of judicial compensation can forever attract and retain qualified and diligent judges where judicial compensation lags so far behind and no reliable method exists to fairly adjust compensation levels as economic conditions warrant;
- new case filings continue to rise and today New York Judges handle one of the largest caseloads in the nation;
- annual cost-of-living adjustments for judges are necessary to prevent this type of judicial compensation drought in the future.

We support the recommendations of the Office of Court Administration for increased judicial compensation. We urge the Special Commission to include a retroactive increase to compensate for our lost earnings for more than a decade.

Respectfully submitted,

Honorable Lizbeth González, President
The Association of Judges of Hispanic Heritage

Honorable Antonio I. Brandveen, President
The Judicial Friends Association