



**CITIZENS UNION OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK**  
**Testimony to the Special Commission on Judicial Compensation**  
**on the Salary of State Judges**  
**July 19, 2011**

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Citizens Union is pleased to provide comments to the Special Commission on Judicial Compensation in support of a significant increase in judicial salaries.

Citizens Union has long advocated for decoupling the setting of judicial salaries from negotiations in the settlement of other contentious issues. We supported in 2006 the creation of a similar compensation commission that would have set salaries for all state elected officials, so we are pleased to see this commission convened to address the issue of judicial salaries. We urge that you end the egregiously low awarding of compensation to New York's valued judges by enacting a pay increase.

While Citizens Union does not have a position on the exact level of compensation, we believe that at a minimum, the Commission should raise salaries to a level that reflects an increase that is at least equal to the cost of living over the 12 years in which there were no salary increases and, if possible, enact an increase that is modestly higher than a simple cost of living adjustment.

It is critical that salaries be set at a level that encourages qualified and civic-minded attorneys with an interest in public service to seek and stay in judicial service. Citizens Union has been increasingly concerned about the level of pay in New York compared to other states. While we do not doubt the quality of service on the bench in New York State, we believe that the stagnation of judicial salaries undermined the judicial system and provided unnecessary and harmful impediments for the recruitment and retention of high quality judges. While we recognize that budget constraints must be considered, whatever salary is decided should reflect, and not endanger, New York's long tradition of judicial excellence.

Citizens Union urges that the Commission be expeditious in its work in order to provide needed closure to this longstanding issue. We support the Commission's work in this area, and are available to discuss this issue in greater detail if we can be of assistance.