

## Speech to the Commission on Judicial Compensation Public Hearing

- Good Morning. My name is Martin Solomon. I served as a New York State Senator for 17 years before resigning to become a judge in 1996.
- I'd like to start with a number: 1,238. That is the cost of the monthly maintenance for the co-op apartment that I live in. When I purchased it in late 1999, the maintenance was \$803.
- This constitutes an increase of over 50%, yet my salary has remained the same during this entire period of time. Ironically, a large part of the maintenance increase has been to cover increased employee salaries, in addition to higher taxes, and water charges.
- But this is not just an issue of numbers. My morale over this period of time and especially over the last 7 years has decreased considerably.
- Some staff members earn more than a large number of judges. How are we supposed to feel when the law clerks and law secretaries who work for us are valued more highly by this state than we are?
- I take my position very seriously and my workload and output as a trial judge have continued to increase to meet increased demand—however, the stark reality of 12 years without a pay raise is taking its toll.
- My most recent pension statement from the comptroller indicated that if I work for 4 more years my pension will only go up another \$400 per year, yet my “life insurance component” goes down by 4% per year starting this year.
- I understand that that the commission will consider the state’s current economic condition as part of its decision. This is understandably important, and I urge you to consider some recent numbers:
  - The Rockefeller institute recently released a report that the personal Income tax withholding in NY is up 7.4% in the first quarter of 2011.
  - The sales tax revenue was up 7.2% in the first 6 months of 2011 from 11.4 billion to \$12.2 billion, 800 million more in sales tax alone.
  - New York State Tax revenue was 43 billion, 887 million dollars from July 2009 through March 2010.
  - The most recent period from July 2010 to March 2011 saw revenue increase to 48 billion 968 million dollars—an increase of \$5 billion dollars. Our economy is definitely on the mend.

- Additionally, a recent report by our comptroller indicated that the pension fund has now recovered with an additional 14% gain in the fiscal year ended in March 2011 and is at 146.5 billion-- its highest level since the global economic crisis of 2008-2009.
- Must I say what the numbers already communicate? New York State can afford a very substantial and reasonable pay raise for its judges.
- In addition to these promising numbers, 12 years worth of cost-of-living adjustment savings have allowed the state to save the money it would have expended for past increases.
- This constitutes a rainy day fund of money that should have gone to the judiciary, yet has not.
- It is time for that money to go towards a cost of living adjustment, one that has been 12 years in the making.
- Thank you.