



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

Senate Minority Introduces Judicial Pay Raise Bill

MALCOLM A. SMITH June 18, 2007

In an effort to end the impasse over judicial pay raises, Senate Democrats today introduced a bill (S.6372) that would provide judges in New York State with a fair salary and their first pay increase in almost nine years.

Senate Democrats were poised to approve judicial pay increases earlier this session. However the original measure, introduced by Senate Republicans, tied judicial salary increases to pay raises for legislators, leading the Democratic Conference to withdraw its support.

"Those who pursue a judgeship commit themselves to a job that epitomizes the height of public service," said State Senate Democratic Leader Malcolm A. Smith (D-Queens). "Our proposition is simple: pay must be equal to the job, so that talented individuals have an incentive to pursue careers in the judiciary where exceptional skills are highly needed."

However, Smith added, "pay raises for state lawmakers are not appropriate until we reach a consensus on such critical issues as campaign finance reform, pay equity and paid family leave. How can we convincingly tell our constituents that elected officials deserve a raise when the process fails to follow through with measures that ensure equal opportunity?"

One of the bill's main sponsors, Senator Eric Schneiderman, said: "Albany's failure to give

New York's judges a much-needed raise has been an embarrassment and a disgrace. Junior associates at my old law firm now make twice as much as our judges."

"We cannot adjourn this year's session without acting on judicial pay," added Schneiderman (D-Manhattan), Ranking Democrat on the Senate Codes Committee.

Senate Democrats called on the Senate Majority to bring judicial pay raise legislation forward for a vote before the end of session. The legislation Democrats introduced today sets the salary for state Supreme Court justices at \$162,100, effective April 1, 2005, and \$165,200, effective April 1, 2006. Salaries for other judgeships would be indexed to the pay set for Supreme Court justices.

State Court of Appeals Chief Judge Judith Kaye has long advocated for judicial pay raises and has criticized the practice of linking judicial pay with legislative pay.

The bill also establishes a 13-member commission on judicial compensation to examine, evaluate and make recommendations on salary and non-salary benefits for judges.

"Legislation like this, which exclusively addresses judicial pay raises, reflects what should be a compromise if Senate Republicans are really serious about providing judges with fair compensation," noted Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson (D-Westchester), Ranking Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee and the bill's other main sponsor.

"I suggest we pass this bill now to do right by the judges and then we can deal with legislative pay at a later date, after we've shown the public that we can accomplish the work it hired us to do," she added.
