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New Yorkers Give Big Thumbs Down To Pay Raises For Lawmakers

Posted by Joseph Spector • February 6, 2012 • 6:32 am View 1 comment

Voters may think New York is headed in the right direction, but they surely don't think state government leaders deserve a raise.

A Siena College poll this morning found that voters are overwhelmingly opposed to raises for elected and appointed state officials.

Sixty-seven percent of New Yorkers said state lawmakers do not deserve a raise; 74 percent opposed giving Gov. Andrew Cuomo a raise; and 78 percent opposed salary increases for commissioners of state agencies.

The state officials haven't had a pay raise since 1999. State legislators get a base pay of \$79,500 a year, but most receive additional stipends for leadership positions.

"While 13 years is a long time to go without a pay hike, voters across the spectrum are strongly opposed to legislators voting a pay raise to themselves or to any other state officials," said Siena College pollster Stephen Greenberg.

Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, D-Manhattan, last month said lawmakers deserve a raise, but the Republican-led Senate said it was not considering the idea.

Cuomo said recently he was not having discussions about pay raises; last year, he reached contract agreement with public-employee unions to freeze salaries for several years.

Cuomo did say that salaries for state commissioners would one day have to be addressed, suggesting it is important to attract top talent to government. Commissioners earn between \$101,000 and \$136,000 a year. Cuomo's pay is \$179,000.

In one of his first acts as governor in January 2011, he cut his pay and the pay of his top aides by 5 percent.

The heads of the state Senate and Assembly receive an additional \$41,500 a year. Ranking members on legislative committees receive at least \$9,000.

Voters were more supportive of other ideas being floated at the Capitol, the Siena poll found.

Seventy-one percent of voters said they support Cuomo's proposal to tie a school aid to teaching performance. Sixty-nine percent said they support Cuomo's push to create a new, less generous pension tier for new state workers.

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former gov pataki agreed to aproved a raise only if the law makers agreed to his charter school bill. and they did. if gov. coumo needs something passed I guess they will get there raise. poitics as usual!

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James Lawrence has, for the past 14 years as Editorial Page editor, been responsible for producing more than 5,100 daily Editorial and Speaking Out pages. He started his journalism career in Cleveland shortly after graduating from Howard University in Washington, D.C. Along the way, he has had career stops in Denver, Orlando, Fla., and White Plains. But unquestionably, he says, some of his most rewarding years as a journalist have been here in Rochester, being a part of positive change. That change has included reforms that followed an aggressive "Challenging Albany" campaign, greater public awareness and pushback against the coarsening of our culture, and strides being made to make this region a destination community.



Jane Sutter became deputy editorial page editor in June 2009. She also has served as managing editor and general manager/custom content at the Democrat and Chronicle. She writes editorials on many topics, with a focus on health and education, helps plan and edit copy on the Editorial and Speaking Out pages, oversees the Board of Contributors and assists Editorial Page editor James Lawrence in managing the department. She has worked