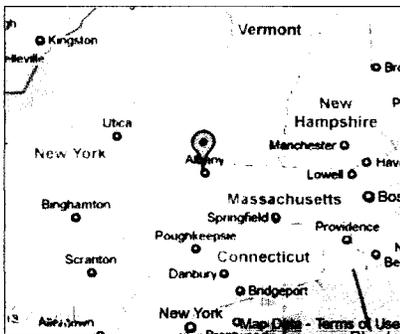


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Lack of pay raise in past 12 years causes many NY judges to quit bench

Because of the state's judicial pay freeze, the longest on record, New York judges had gone down the ranking of judicial compensation to 46th place from number 1 in the 1970s.

Source: (AHN) Reporter: Vittorio Hernandez
Location: Albany, NY, United States Published: July 4, 2011 10:41 pm EDT
Topics: Crime, Law And Justice, Judiciary, Judge, Labor, Wage And Pension, Employee Benefits, Politics, Government, Public Employees



About 10 percent of New York state's judges are leaving the bench yearly because of the lack of a pay raise over the past 12 years.

According to a study by the National Center for State Courts, the judges are returning to private practice because the pay is 10 times higher than what they are currently receiving.

The latest sitting judge to resign is Manhattan Intermediate State Appeals Court Judge James McGuire, who quit the bench last week. McGuire's pay was \$144,000. In

his new job as partner of a law firm, the average partner pay is \$1.4 million.

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However, even judges acknowledge it would be difficult to push for higher wages amid tight state and federal budgets. The chief judge of New York state, for example, earns only \$156,000, while justices in the state's highest-level trial court make only \$136,000.

Average salaries of state trial judges across the U.S. went up the past 10 years in 2005 by 34 percent to \$116,000. However, for the same period, partners' share of profits at large law firms grew 141 percent to \$957,500.

Because of the pay freeze in New York, the salaries of its judges have been eroded 26 percent by inflation since 1999, while their counterparts in other states got pay raises averaging 3.2 percent yearly or a cumulative hike of over 24 percent.

It is not only fellow judges in other states who have outstripped the compensation of New York judges, but even other public employees in New York. District attorneys in New York City earn \$190,000, while the chancellor of the City University of New York earns \$395,000.

The center proposed that judicial pay issues should be insulated from the political process, pay levels set regularly and justified based on accepted, easy to measure, objective benchmarks.

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