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Pay Frozen, More New York Judges Leave Bench [Back to Article](#)

By WILLIAM GLABERSON

The state's judges, who have not had a raise in 12 years, are resigning in relatively large numbers, not to retire but to return to practicing law.

Comments are no longer being accepted.

214 Readers' Comments

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201. tonyscarp
Lockport, NY
July 5th, 2011
6:45 pm

This story says more about the over-compensation of lawyers than the under-payment of judges. The corrupt system of contingency payments for lawyers makes them rich and those who have legitimate claims either lose 1/3 of their awards or the courts give them excessive awards to compensate for this. How about reducing the maximum contingency award to 10-percent as a good start. Remember, we are producing more lawyers than we need in the US...so there should be plenty of replacements for judges who leave. Perhaps universities could close their law schools and increase the sizes of their post-graduate studies in medicine, engineering, hard sciences and other areas where we actually have too few graduates.

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202. emm305
SC
July 5th, 2011
7:41 pm

There is a "devaluing" of what judges do across the country...and it's richly deserved in many cases.

Way too many, even in states with appointed judges, are just the basest and most politicized of political hacks; out and out owned by the legislator who recommends their appointment. Are we supposed to be so stupid we don't realize it?

Plus, when we have a US Supreme Court like we have today - I can still hear GHW Bush telling us that Clarence Thomas was the best qualified - do you think that contempt for the system doesn't trickle down to the lowest magistrate?

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203. rdonal
tx
July 5th, 2011
7:42 pm

There are so many lucrative jobs in our country.....the first one that comes to mind is pharmaceutical sales. Drugs or equipment, these folks can live like kings on their earnings. Do they share the same responsibilities to our society as a judge? NO.

Why don't people complain about the salaries of pharma reps, investment brokers or the guy who sells Mercedes and BMW's...etc? Because any one of us COULD conceivably be one of them and would certainly LOVE to earn every dime those professions reap.

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Forget the value of ethics, responsibility and all the hoopla about being a "public servant".... when it comes to being fairly compensated, logic does not prevail.

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204. TC4Sanity
Tucson, AZ
July 5th, 2011
7:42 pm

\$144,000 a year? Not bad, considering the healthcare and retirement pension that gets added to that. Boo freaking hoo. When did this country turn into a bunch of 15 year old, greedy, self centered, pop star athlete papparazzi wannabes? I would gladly give back the pre-baby boomer narcissistic days and go back to making what you earn rather than what your friends can appoint you to, or you can buy over the water cooler or affair. Rich lawyers are no better than honest, hard working, ethical lawyers who actually live by the belief our country was founded on - that justice was for EVERY man, and not just those who could afford daddy's little rich kid to defend or represent them. Common people CAN'T afford justice any more, unless, of course, they are ready to hire another lawyer to file chapter 7 for them when they get the attorney's bill.

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205. Carson Lee
midwest
July 5th, 2011
7:50 pm

45. I read your comment which begins, "That's a great way to keep only the worst -- just lower the salaries."
That sentence makes logical sense, I see why you believe it & maybe some days I believe it, too; on the other hand, in this economy (and even before the trends of past 10 or 15 years) it's true (maybe not logical, but true) that there are many people who do an excellent job at their work, and are not paid a lot of money. If you look at all the people who are paid low amounts of money, they are not, in all cases, "the worst."

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206. Ponderer
St. Louis
July 5th, 2011
8:25 pm

Too many lawyers are judges. That's why the time from crime to penalty drags out longer and longer, to keep the lawyers happy. They will say, after a 4 year delay to sentencing, "Justice has been done", but justice stopped years before.

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207. kodainvegas
las vegas
July 5th, 2011
9:00 pm

Must be rough living on 12,000 a month. We see what these crooks are all about. It's nothing to do with public service. And don't forget to add in the pay-ola.

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208. Harvey
sacramento
July 5th, 2011
9:04 pm

I think the judges deserve a raise, and not just because I live in California and won't have to pay for it. But the constant comparisons to salaries in the big law firms simply highlights the vast differences in what lawyers earn in this country. Those differences are based differing levels of ability. Under our adversarial system, which assumes equal abilities and resources, that assures that justice will favor the wealthy.

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209. LMC
NYC
July 5th, 2011

To those who criticize those who can't sympathize with the profiled judges: it's not about jealousy. It's about someone in *public service* claiming

9:15 pm

poverty when they are in top echelons of salary ranges and wanting to aspire to a more than upper middle class lifestyle. A life of public service is not for someone wanting to have a house in the Hamptons and an apartment in the middle of Manhattan. You could always God-forbid-live in Queens.

I agree that it's unfair that they haven't had a raise - at least a cost of living adjustment- for 12 years. But to use the word "poor" to describe a six-figure salary is at best insulting to the poor - those who have to choose between eating and paying rent. That's poor.

That it's a dangerous pattern to see mass exodus of these judges indeed is worrisome. But there have to be better ideas to address this. And all thanks to a recession and the low-tax cult of the far-right-wing. You can't have privately compensated judges work for the public. You can't outsource this to India.

And wait... someone will probably propose that we do!

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[210.](#) Ismail Kakembo
Newport
July 5th, 2011
9:32 pm

US forces die everyday defending this country. They are not paid that much. Should judges get paid more than US forces defending the country and the laws judges go by? Where is the justice? Should judges be paid more than troops in Iraq or Afghanistan? The entire system should be redesigned so that justice can show case. It is unbelievable to quit a job paying 144,000 when one knows that there are lots of people living on less than 16000. Is this the justice they present in court? How many homeless people live on New York streets?

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[211.](#) Gerry
New York City
July 5th, 2011
11:07 pm

Well, la-de-friggin'-da. She had to give up her summer home in the Hamptons, and the fees on her two-bedroom apartment in Manhattan are going up. Welcome to the world the rest of us live in! And you're not even near there yet!!

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[212.](#) jeanmane
edmonds
washington
July 5th, 2011
11:07 pm

Really ? New york's administrative judges earn no more than \$40.00 an hour, and have no benefits?

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[213.](#) agm
columbia county.ny
July 5th, 2011
11:07 pm

If we can freeze judges salaries why not the rest of New York's state, county, town and school salaries that are bleeding the state dry and destroying property values as New Yorkers continue to leave for states showing a little more respect for the savings people have invested in their unsaleable overtaxed real property?

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[214.](#) GREGORYABUTLER
New York
July 6th, 2011
12:10 am

In the construction industry, the compensation of tradespeople working on publicly funded construction jobs is based on the "prevailing wage" - that is, the average wage paid to that type of worker in the market area where the construction site is.

The same principle can be applied to judicial salaries.

We need to know, what is the prevailing salary for attorneys in New York City. That is, not what the superstar partners in the white shoe Wall Street firms are receiving, but the AVERAGE salary.

So, we'd have to average the salaries of those few dozen million dollar a year Wall Street lawyers with the far more modest earnings of tax attorneys in Throggs Neck, real estate lawyers in Astoria, immigration lawyers in Harlem and criminal defense attorneys on the south shore of Staten Island.

Once we know those figures, we'll know if \$ 139,000 a year judges are underpaid, overpaid or earn the appropriate salary.

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