



CARL E. HEASTIE
Speaker

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November 29, 2018

SUNY Global Center
116 East 55th Street
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Attn: Hearing Registration Officer
Members, New York State Compensation Committee 2018:
H. Carl McCall, Chair, State University of New York Board of Trustees
William C. Thompson, Jr., Chair, City University of New York Board of Trustees
Thomas P. DiNapoli, Comptroller, State of New York
Scott M. Stringer, Comptroller, City of New York

Dear Sirs:

Please accept this correspondence on behalf of the Members of the New York State Assembly Majority as you begin to discharge your duties with respect to Part HHH of Chapter 59 of the Laws of 2018. It is my hope that your deliberations yield a just remedy to a longstanding inequity with regard to legislative compensation.

For the purpose of reference and for your convenience, attached herein is my testimony dated October 5, 2016, which was first provided to the compensation commission that preceded your current authority. Each of the observations made at the time of its writing are just as stark today, only exacerbated by the passage of time.

This year marks the 20th year since an increase in compensation was authorized for members of the New York State Legislature and, under any objective measure, our static compensation structure has failed to keep pace with economic realities. In 20 years' time the cost of living, as represented by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), has risen by well over 50 percent, stressing members' ability to provide for everyday expenses. Also in 20 years' time, the medical component of the CPI has expanded by over 80 percent, making it difficult for some members to provide for the necessary care of dependent children and elderly loved ones. In this time, childcare and nursery school costs have doubled, while the cost of college tuition and fees have increased by over 150 percent. The CPI for housing has increased by over 65 percent over the last 20 years, and interest rates for borrowing are now on the rise. The real purchasing power of legislators' base salary has been diminished to \$51,401 in 20 years' time; at the same time state median household income has grown by 67 percent.

It remains my strong belief that compensation for elected members of the legislative branch must be adjusted and indexed annually at a minimum to meet the rate of inflation. This action would establish a rational compensation structure that simply keeps pace with the rising costs in every region of the State.

An adjustment in compensation to meet the current cost of living would serve to attract and retain the best and brightest to public service and would promote democracy by encouraging a true citizen legislature. Individuals from all walks of life would be more likely to seek public office and deliver the benefits of diverse and effective representation to communities throughout the state.

My colleagues and I are ever mindful that there is a hard-working constituent behind every state tax dollar, as well as an expectation that these funds be wisely spent. A cost of living adjustment that is based on inflation would not compromise critical investments in the health, safety or prosperity of our state, as it would require an investment that would comprise only about .0001 percent of State Operating Funds spending.

Allow me to extend my heartfelt thanks for your participation in this process. Throughout your collective tenure, you have exemplified the best in public service, and for that alone, the State and the City of New York owe you each a debt of gratitude.

On behalf of each of my colleagues, who provide selfless service to the people of New York each and every day, I respectfully request your favorable consideration of this request. I look forward to discussing this matter in greater detail at your upcoming public hearing in New York City on November 30, 2018.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carl E. Heastie". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Carl E. Heastie
Speaker