



LETTER OF THE DEANS OF THE NEW YORK STATE LAW SCHOOLS

June 14, 2007

Dear Governor Spitzer, Senator Bruno, and Speaker Silver,

We, the Deans of New York's Law Schools, are compelled to speak out on the crisis in our state's Judiciary caused by the continuing failure, now in its ninth year, to provide adequate compensation for judges.

The merits are not at issue. The need for a significant salary adjustment for judges in New York has been fully acknowledged by the executive and legislative branches. Across the state, editorial boards, business leaders and good government groups have voiced their support for increased judicial salaries. Yet nothing is done and judicial compensation remains frozen.

We are deeply concerned that inadequate judicial salaries will have a lasting impact on both the independence and the quality of New York's bench. As legal educators, we seek to imbue our students with deep respect for the legal system; we want young lawyers to strive to become judges. Yet the harsh reality is that few will be able to afford the luxury of what should be the pinnacle of public service.

As citizens, we are also aware that a system of judicial compensation that allows for just two increases in 19 years threatens the core of our democracy the independence of the Judiciary. Alexander Hamilton's warning of the fragility of judicial independence cannot be ignored: "The

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independence of the judges once destroyed, the constitution is gone, it is a dead letter.”

We urgently call for an adjustment to judicial salaries to reflect the current cost of living and the establishment of an ongoing commission, so that the issue of salaries is taken out of the political arena.

Sincerely Yours,

Thomas F. Guernsey, Dean, Albany Law School

Joan G. Wexler, Dean, Brooklyn Law School

R. Nils Olsen, Jr., Dean, State University of New York at Buffalo School of Law

Michelle J. Anderson, Dean, City University of New York School of Law at Queens College

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Schools are listed only to identify affiliation, not to reflect the school's official position.