



March 27, 2008

Dear Legislator:

On behalf of the New York City Bar Association, I write to urge you to enact a judicial salary increase with a corresponding mechanism that provides for future periodic increases for New York State's judges.

The economic difficulties inherent in this budget year are well understood, yet we cannot overlook the fact that we are nearing a decade that our state's judges have gone without a salary increase. The cost of living has increased in the past decade by approximately 26%, thereby eroding New York judges' salaries to the point where they earn \$30,000 less than their federal counterparts and their salaries compare poorly with those of other states.

While we cannot expect judges to be paid the top dollars they could earn in the private sector, we must provide enough compensation to attract outstanding lawyers and retain them as judges, and to make clear the respect we hold for this co-equal branch of government. By contrast, our current approach does not even provide salary increases that match inflation.

The talented and hardworking judiciary that we currently have in New York State is the cornerstone of a strong justice system -- a justice system that our citizens call upon on a daily basis to address pivotal moments in their lives. Whether enduring business disputes, divorce or facing eviction, New Yorkers take heart in knowing that there will be a competent and just arbiter at the helm of their case.

As judges have waited for a pay raise they have answered the public's call by maintaining excellence in New York's courts, even as caseloads have grown steadily more burdensome and legal issues ever more complex. We now call on our elected officials to enact this long overdue salary increase and demonstrate their commitment to our superb court system and a belief that justice is no less a priority in New York than in our neighboring states and federal government.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barry Kamins".

Barry Kamins  
President  
The New York City Bar Association