

**CCDLA**  
**"Ready in the Defense of Liberty"**  
**Founded 1988**

**Connecticut Criminal Defense  
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March 6, 2012

Hon. Eric Coleman, Senator  
Hon. Gerald Fox, House Representative  
Chairmen, Judiciary Committee  
Room 2500, Legislative Office Building  
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: **GOVERNOR'S BILL 31**  
**An Act Establishing a Commission on Judicial Compensation**

Dear Chairmen and Coleman , Chairman Fox and Distinguished Committee Members:

The Connecticut Criminal Defense Lawyers Association ("CCDLA") is a statewide organization of approximately 350 lawyers in both the public and private sectors dedicated to defending persons accused of criminal offenses. Founded in 1988, CCDLA works to improve the criminal justice system by insuring that the individual rights guaranteed by the Connecticut and United States Constitutions are applied fairly and equally, and that those rights are not diminished. At the same time, CCDLA strives to improve and suggest changes to the laws and procedures that apply to the criminal justice system.

**CCDLA SUPPORTS GOVERNOR'S BILL 31**  
**AND URGES IT'S PASSING:**

**CCDLA applauds the Governor for proposing this bill. CCDLA supports a strong Judiciary and believes the Judiciary should be fairly compensated.** As background, the last time that the Legislature voted to increase judges' salaries was in 2004 when it passed a three-year plan that increased judges' salaries in 2005, 2006 and 2007. Judges do not receive COLAs, annual increments or other increases in their pay. With no consistent mechanism to adjust salaries and little hope that the Legislature will enact pay increases in the future, highly qualified attorneys have not pursued judgeships .

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The legislation that the Governor proposed would create a Compensation Commission, similar to the Compensation Commission that was recently established in New York. This Commission is appropriate for the following reasons:

- A. Members would be appointed by the Governor, Legislative Leaders and the Chief Justice.
- B. The Commission would meet every 4 years and submit an appropriate report to the Governor, the General Assembly, and the Chief Justice.
- C. The Commission would examine judges' salaries and recommend the salary levels for the next 4-year period.
- D. The recommendations would go into effect unless rejected or modified by the Legislature.
- E. There is no cost to this proposal until FY 14 at the earliest.

It is essential for our state that we have a highly qualified bench with a variety of experiences. While rarely an easy or welcome task, periodic increase of the salaries of public officials is necessary to ensure the effective operation of government. No effective system of government can consistently attract and retain qualified and dedicated public officials if their compensation falls far behind with no reliable method to fairly adjust compensation levels as economic conditions warrant. Protecting the compensation of Connecticut's public officials against inflation and other such factors is essential to prevent genuine hardship over time, hardship that increasingly discourages recruitment and retention of talented individuals.

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Connecticut's judges are underpaid compared with judges elsewhere and continue to fall behind other states.

- o The most recent salary report (July 2011) issued by the National Center for State Courts ranks CT as #45 in the nation when adjusted for cost of living.
- o This represents further erosion -- CT was rated #42 in the January 2011 report.

The last time that judges received an increase in compensation was on January 1, 2007. The last time that the Legislature voted to increase judges' salaries was in 2004 when it passed a three-year plan that increased judges' salaries by 5.5% in 2005, 2006 and 2007. Judges do not receive COLAs, annual increments or other increases in their pay. With no consistent mechanism to adjust salaries and little hope that the Legislature will enact pay increases in the future, highly qualified attorneys have not pursued judgeships.

The new Commission would be effective July 1, 2012. Its report would be due on January 2, 2013. **The first opportunity for a pay raise for judges would be on July 1, 2013, which is the beginning of fiscal year 2014.** Based upon the concession agreement, union employees will receive COLAs and annual increments of about 5.5% in FY 14, FY 15 and FY 16.

**THIS IS A NO-BRAINER. THE JUDGES IN CONNECTICUT ARE UNDERCOMPENSATED. THEIR SALARY STRUCTURE NEEDS TO BE REVIEWED AND THEIR COMPENSATION ADJUSTED UPWARDS.**

Sincerely,



**EDWARD J. GAVIN  
PAST PRESIDENT**

**Connecticut Criminal Defense Lawyers Association**

Leonard Crone, President,

Jennifer Zito, Past President,

Moira Buckley, President-Elect,