



COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL COMPENSATION

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

Thursday, November 12, 2020
10:00 am via Zoom

1. Convene Meeting
 - The Meeting was convened by Chairman George Jepsen at 10:00 A.M.
2. Remarks by the Chair
 - Frank Riccio will need to testify earlier and will speak after Neil Ayers from the Office of Fiscal Analysis.
 - i. Alan Bowie, Jr. (Crawford Black Bar Association), Patricia Jimenez (Connecticut Hispanic Bar Association), and Dan Brody (Connecticut Asian Pacific American Bar Association) will give written testimony instead and will be taken off of today's agenda.
 - The minutes from the previous meeting, October 29, were approved unanimously.
 - Time frame for speakers should be 5-7 minutes followed by commissioner questions, if any.
3. Office of Fiscal Analysis, Neil Ayers, Director
 - Preliminary General Fund projections:
 - FY 21: \$854,500,000 deficit
 - FY 22: \$2,067,000,000 deficit
 - FY23: \$2,230,410,000 deficit
 - COVID-19 presents a wide range of possible outcomes on budget
 - Some revenue positivity:
 - Sales tax on home improvement supplies and online sales
 - Real estate conveyance
 - Alcohol and cigarettes
 - COVID-19 downturn primarily impacts low wage employment

- Budget Reserve Fund covers General Fund deficits at the close of the fiscal year
 - Leaves over \$2 billion dollars heading into the next biennium

Frank Riccio, Connecticut Criminal Defense Lawyers Association

- Mentioned what criminal judges must deal with.
- Talked about the factor of attracting a qualified attorney.
- There are attorneys who don't become judges because of financial considerations.
- Financial reasons aren't the sole reason to be a judge – public service and giving back to the community are also factors.
- The pandemic has created a backlog of criminal business and the judges are being asked to assist and get business moving.

4. National Center for State Courts, Dr. William Raftery, Senior Knowledge and Information Services Analyst

- 90-95% of all cases in U.S. are heard in the state court system.
- What are state court leaders looking for in judicial compensation?
 - Attraction to the bench
 - Retention on the bench (more and more judges are leaving the bench to go into private practice to make more money)

5. Presentations by Invited Speakers

a. Judicial

Judge Leo Diana, Judges' Association

- Judges have gone without pay raises for the last four to five years
- Reasonable compensation should be commiserate to the job responsibilities.

Charles Tiernan, Judicial Selection Commission

- Recommended that judges salaries should be adjusted.
- Failure to adjust salary weakens the judicial system
- The salary is grossly inadequate.
- Many attorneys refuse to leave private practice to become a superior court judge due to a salary decrease.
- Judges have to make emotionally difficult decisions every day and should be compensated appropriately.

Chief Judge Stefan Underhill, U.S. District Court for Connecticut

- There is a limit on outside income that federal judges can earn.
 - This was drastically restricted to 15% of salary.
 - There is also a restriction on the types of outside income a judge can earn.

- Federal cost of living increase impacts a judge's salary.
- There are other benefits to being a federal judge besides salary

b. Bar and Lawyer Associations

Amy Lin Meyerson, Connecticut Bar Association

- Speaking to support increase judicial compensation.
- The disparity in salary between public service and private practice is well documented.
- Judicial pay is stagnant – there has not been an adjustment since 2015.

Stephanie Roberge, Connecticut Trial Lawyers Association

- CT ranks 44th in the country in salary with regards to cost of living adjustments.
- Access to the courts is important.
- Lawyers are becoming less and less inclined to leave the private sector to go into public service because it would be a salary decrease.

Erika Amarante, Connecticut Defense Lawyers Association

- Increase in compensation will attract more talent and more interest in lawyers to go into public service
- Compensation in Connecticut is lagging behind other New England states.
- Superior court judges work tirelessly and have insufficient resources to do their jobs
- Supports increase of judicial compensation.

6. Discussion of recommendations and drafting of report

- Chairman Jepsen announced that a general discussion will be held until the next meeting when there is more time.
- Next meeting (11/24) each commissioner will be given two minutes or less to give comments.

7. Adjournment

- Chairman Jepsen adjourned the meeting at 11:45 A.M.