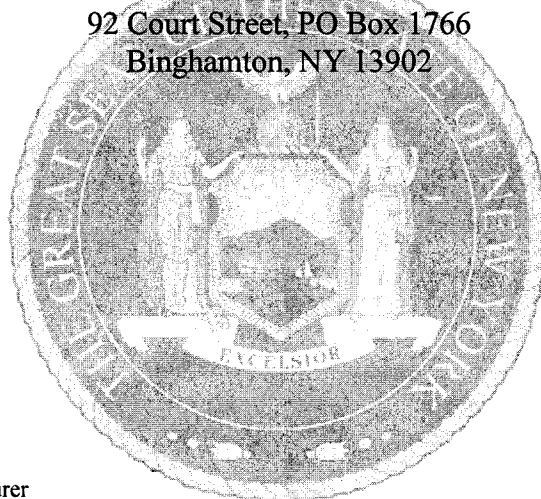


**THE SURROGATES ASSOCIATION
OF THE
STATE OF NEW YORK**

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December 14, 2019

The New York State Commission on Legislative, Judicial, & Executive Compensation
64 Beaver Street, Box 454
New York, NY 10004
(Hand-delivered at the public hearing on November 14, 2019 in Albany, New York)

Commission Members:

Please accept this written version of testimony to be given by me at today's hearing on behalf of the Surrogates Association Of The State Of New York. I am the Vice President of the Surrogates Association of the State of New York and I am honored to provide the Commission with information to assist in the important task of determining and maintaining appropriate judicial salaries for the judges of this state.

The judges of Surrogate's Court in every county of New York State are responsible for the legal and equitable determination of estates of decedents, guardianships of children and disabled individuals, and all manner of sensitive and complex issues which arise when families lose a loved one. In order to do our job competently and fairly, Surrogates must have a great deal of knowledge and experience in these areas of the law. Many of the judges who serve the public in Surrogate's Court spent years concentrating in these areas of the law and gaining expertise before serving on the bench. The public deserves judges with a high level of competency, and one way to attract the best-qualified attorneys to serve on the bench is to maintain adequate judicial salaries.

In the past, there was less diversity on the bench because only those who had personal wealth and who could afford to take a pay cut could leave private practice to become a judge. Thanks to the good work of the previous commissions on judicial salaries, excellent lawyers of all backgrounds may now serve on the bench and still be paid a reasonable amount.

As determined by the previous salary commissions, the appropriate benchmark for New York judges is the compensation level of the Federal Judiciary. The Surrogates Association agrees that compensation parity should be continued between Supreme Court Justices and Federal District Court Judges, and that the pay relationship for county-level judges be maintained at 95% of that amount. Doing so will protect against inflation and allow the judiciary to continue to attract and retain high quality judges.

The Surrogates Association thanks you for your attention to this important task.

Very truly yours,

Hon. Stacy L. Pettit