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November 29, 2010

Honorable John Sampson
Conference Leader, New York State Senate
Legislative Office Building
Room 409
Albany, New York 12247

Honorable Sheldon Silver
Speaker, New York State Assembly
Legislative Office Building
Room 932
Albany, New York 12248

STRONG SUPPORT FOR A COMMISSION TO EVALUATE AND ADJUST JUDICIAL COMPENSATION

Dear Leader Sampson and Speaker Silver:

I write to strongly support Governor Paterson's proposal creating a commission to evaluate and adjust judicial compensation. This commission should be comprised of members appointed by all three branches of government who would use objective economic data to recommend fair and appropriate judicial compensation every four years.

The independence and effectiveness of the judiciary depend on making sure that the best and the brightest are appointed to the bench and given the incentive to stay. As you are aware, our judges have not received a salary increase in 11 years, which continues to place a financial strain on them. Recently, one First Department Appellate Judge announced that he was stepping down because of his financial concerns in raising his family. Countless others are no doubt dissuaded from seeking the bench because of the gravity of the problem. For more than a decade this has been a political problem which continues to punted down the road; this cries out for the non-political solution of a quadrennial commission.

In light of the importance of this issue to all of our communities and to the administration of the criminal justice system, it is not surprising that the vast majority of candidates for Senate and Assembly who responded to a recent survey by the Committee for Modern Courts support the establishment of a commission. The Committee surveyed more than 300 candidates seeking election in 2010 on a number of topics, including judicial raises. Of those who responded, nearly 90% indicated that they would support a judicial salary increase and the establishment of a quadrennial

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commission. Clearly, members and their opponents understand the significance of this issue.

Establishing a commission to examine present compensation levels and make recommendations for the future is a vital first step in addressing this important issue.

Sincerely,



Derek P. Champagne
Franklin County District Attorney

cc: Peter Kiernan
Counsel to the Governor