



August 18, 2016

Hon. Sheila L. Birnbaum  
Chair, New York State Commission on  
Legislative, Judicial, & Executive Compensation  
64 Beaver Street  
New York, NY 10004

Chair Birnbaum:

As a candidate to represent the New York State Senate's 31st District, stretching from the Upper West Side, to Harlem, Washington Heights, Inwood and Marble Hill, I strongly object to the proposed 47% increase in legislators' salaries and urge you to reject any pay raise until critical good-government reforms are achieved.

For the low-income families in my district struggling to pay the rent and provide for their children, this massive increase will erode the public's trust in state government's commitment to working people, and undermine our ability to bring change. The indirect process designed to allow lawmakers to avoid voting on a salary increase during an election year is an unacceptable end-run around accountability to the voters.

I believe that before any pay raise can be discussed, we must enact tough new reforms, including:

- Prohibiting outside income entirely, to ensure we have a full-time legislature committed to serving the people year-round, and free of ethical conflicts.
- Ending the practice of leadership stipends, or "lulus" designed to restrict members' independence within their respective conferences.
- Eliminating other shameful practices, including "double-dipping," where lawmakers collect a salary and pension simultaneously, and the various abuses of the per-diem system that have plagued the legislature.

If these long-stalled reforms are adopted, the legislature should hold an open and publicized vote on this issue. However under no circumstances should the Senate

and Assembly be allowed to receive an increase via a commission empowered to raise salaries without legislative action. And if the commission's final recommendation is to raise salaries, I will call on the current membership to override any increase before the conclusion of their two-year term.

As lifelong community activist who is running for office to make the Senate a more accessible institution for tenants, low-income families, seniors, immigrants and other vulnerable members of our community, I urge you not to reward this insider deal.

Sincerely,

Marisol Alcantara