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August 22, 2016

Ms Sheila Birnbaum, Chairwoman  
New York State Commission on Legislative, Judicial, & Executive Compensation  
64 Deaver Street, Box 454  
New York, NY 10004

Dear Chairwoman Birnbaum:

In the hope that your commission is still taking public comment on the matter of a pay raise for New York State legislators, and that your commission does actually give serious consideration to those comments, I herewith offer my opinion.

In the history of this state, no legislator, no executive, and no judge was ever conscripted into service. All of them have actively sought the positions they enjoy, and all of them seem to want to continue in those positions. The compensation they receive was well known to them before they sought election. If the pay did not seem adequate, they all could have pursued employment in some other field. They still enjoy that option. Not a single elected official is obliged to continue seeking re-election. If they are dissatisfied with the compensation for their elective offices, they should get real jobs and do actual work.

That the legislators have not received a pay increase since the late 1990's only means that they were being paid way too much ever since then. To award them an increase, any increase, over the hefty sum they currently receive is unwarranted. A 47% increase, the amount currently mentioned in the news media, is preposterous, especially in light of there being no increase for Social Security this year and a general lull in the State's and the nation's economies overall.

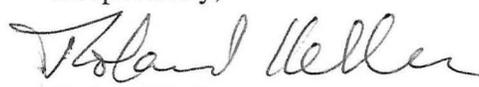
In my opinion, anyone who represents a constituency ought not be compensated more than the average income of the individuals within that constituency. Much of the economic success of any particular constituency is effected by the decisions made by its elected representatives. Improving the circumstances of that constituency would cause the average income within that constituency to increase, thereby resulting in a commensurate increase in the compensation of the representative. Linking legislative pay to the average income of the represented population could be an incentive to the legislators to work for the betterment of their constituents as it would result in greater pay for them. In light of the recent disclosures of corruption and the Legislature's refusal to pass significant ethics reform, money, and not service, seems to be the Legislature's principal motivation. Where I live, firefighters are unpaid. They understand service.

Were it left to me, everyone who holds an elective office in this State would receive no more than the minimum hourly wage and be barred from accessing any additional income. That alone would probably result in two possible outcomes. Either we rid ourselves of the noxious political class of people who make a career of milking the public for personal benefit, or the minimum wage would suddenly rise.

Incidentally, neither the Assembly nor the Senate public information services admitted even knowing of the existence of your commission. It took several phone calls to several sources for me to obtain the US Postal Service address to reach you. Apparently, your commission either lacks a telephone number or it is kept secret. Please note, not everyone can afford nor access internet service. Some of us still use the phone and the mail.

If you have read this far, I thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

  
Roland Keller