



## COUNTY JUDGES ASSOCIATION OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

New York State Commission On  
Legislative, Judicial, & Executive Compensation  
64 Beaver Street  
Box 45  
New York, New York 10004

October 16, 2023

Dear Judge Fahey:

I am honored to make this submission on behalf of the County Court Judges Association and thank you for volunteering your time to consider this very important issue.

The County Court judges of this state are highly educated, dedicated and knowledgeable professionals that work hard to serve their communities every day. While County Courts have both civil and criminal jurisdiction, the bulk of the traditional caseload is criminal which is intense and emotionally draining.

We routinely handle cases involving unspeakable violence and volatile individuals. We are tasked with ensuring that criminal defendants receive the full benefits of their rights as guaranteed by the United States and New York State Constitutions, while balancing the needs of the victims and society. It is not uncommon for County Court judges to

**HON. SUSAN M. EAGAN**  
**President**

Erie County Court  
25 Delaware Avenue  
Buffalo, New York 14202  
(716) 845-2502

**HON. CAROLINE WOJTASZEK**  
**Vice President**

Niagara County Court  
175 Hawley Street  
Lockport, New York 14094  
(716) 280-6403

**HON. DANIEL R. KING**  
**Treasurer**

Lewis County Court  
7660 North State Street  
Lowville, New York 13367  
(315) 376-5347

**HON. MICHAEL L. DOLLINGER**  
**Secretary**

Monroe County Court  
99 Exchange Blvd.  
Rochester, New York 14614  
(585) 371-3688

**DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVES:**

**HON. WILLIAM T. LITTLE**  
Third Judicial District

**HON. ROBERT A. SMITH**  
Second and Fourth Judicial Districts

**HON. KAREN M. BRANDT  
BROWN**  
Fifth Judicial District

**HON. MICHAEL ST. LEGER**  
Sixth Judicial District

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Eighth Judicial District

**HON. EDWARD T. McLOUGHLIN**  
Ninth Judicial District

**HON. PHILIP GOGLAS**  
Tenth Judicial District - S

**HON. ROBERT G. BOGLE**  
Tenth Judicial District - N

preside over lengthy and contentious trials, consuming all our time and impeding our ability to meaningfully address the other demands of our caseloads.

Many of us have also been designated Youth Part judges. These cases require significantly more time and attention, involving new and different hearings and fact-finding determinations at the inception of the case.

In short, our caseloads are heavy.

This is stressful, time-consuming work often involving difficult decisions about people's lives. The burden of this work is something we often carry home with us as well, as the requirement that we be on call during off hours for emergency applications such as search warrants, arraignments, and Temporary Extreme Risk Protection Orders.

Recent legislative changes have added to the load of the criminal bench requiring us to respond to discovery disputes, bail hearings, parole recognizance hearings, not to mention pistol permit applications. Our judges have worked hard to understand the new legislation and apply it in the manner in which it was intended. We have adapted our schedules to accommodate the additional and short notice appearances required for bail applications and recognizance hearings.

Under the new requirements for pistol permit applications our judges must personally interview each applicant. There are tens of thousands of applications pending currently across the state. This is an executive branch function that has been placed on the judiciary, and we are doing our best to respond to the crushing volume of these applications.

In addition to this traditional caseload, the vast majority of County Court judges are multi-hat judges hearing Family Court, Surrogates Court, and Supreme Court cases. Many of them are

the only superior court judge in their counties. They are required to be conversant in virtually every area of law that comes before the NYS courts.

Quite frankly, County Court judges are used to fill the gaps in our judicial system. These, in my opinion, are the hardest working judges in the court system. The work they perform is critically important to the individuals appearing before them but also to the functioning of a civil society.

Yet, our work is scrutinized and criticized like no other court in our system. Topics such as law and order and crime rates are easy fodder for politicians and the media. Articles are written vilifying judges for being too incarcerative and others for not setting high enough bail. While some might say that this comes with the territory, we as judges are constrained to silence. We have traded our first amendment rights and, in some cases, our personal safety for the common good.

The Judiciary is a co-equal branch of government, and the institution of the Judiciary should receive the respect that it is due. While the County Court Judges Association greatly appreciates the work of this esteemed commission, many believe that it is disgraceful and degrading that we need a commission such as this. New York State, a leader in this nation in so many ways, should have a better system to compensate judges equitably and consistently, one that does not require us to cyclically beg for just compensation.

We are not asking for a raise. We are merely asking for a cost-of-living adjustment. As this panel is aware, cost of living adjustments to salaries are made to ensure the purchasing power of a salary by adjusting the salary at the same rate as inflation. Judges in this state have not received a cost-of-living adjustment since 2019. The inflation rate since 2019 is 19.58%.

This should not be a political issue. Cost of living adjustments should be given automatically, every year, based on established and reliable economic factors.

When our County Court salary of \$200,400 is adjusted for inflation since 2019 relative to the Consumer Price Index it becomes \$167,589.01. That is a 16% loss. When it is adjusted relative to housing costs it becomes \$143,601.55. That is a 28% loss. When it is adjusted relative to the S&P 500 it becomes \$132,063.10, a 24% loss. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the 2023 equivalent buying power of \$200,400 in 2019 is \$245,045.59 today, a difference of almost \$45,000.

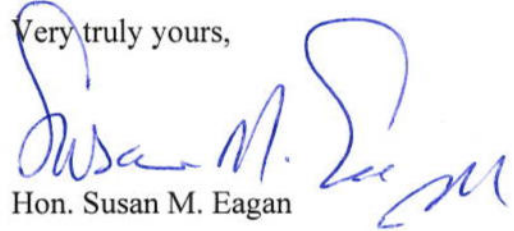
County Court judges across the state are feeling the impact of inflation since 2019. They are not able to maintain their standard of living. They have the same rising costs as everyone else: food, housing, energy, medical expenses, taxes, childcare, college tuition, and care for elderly parents.

We all made a choice to become public servants and with that choice accepted that we would be limiting our earning potential. However, we made that choice based on a certain salary, one that is now discounted by 19.58%, effectively amounting to a pay cut. We are people with children, grandchildren, parents, and partners that depend on us. We deserve a salary that keeps pace with inflation.

We are not asking for an additional \$45,000 a year. We are asking this commission to give us pay parity with federal judges with guaranteed cost of living adjustments every year. In addition, given the volume and breadth of work performed by the County Court bench, we are asking that County Court Judges receive the same compensation as Supreme Court Justices.

We have a new Chief Judge, and he has assembled his administrative team. We have heard Judge Wilson's vision for the courts and witnessed his leadership style. It is a new day in the New York State Courts. There is a decidedly different feel, one of optimism and support from administration. Morale is on the rise. The County Court Judges Association is hopeful that this commission will choose to support the momentum that Judge Wilson has created.

Very truly yours,



Hon. Susan M. Eagan

President