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New York's Judges Fed Up With Crappy Pay, Return To Law Firms



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If you felt left behind by all your CEO buddies who were getting raises, don't sweat it, you're in good

company: judges in New York haven't received a raise in 12 years, and their pay is ranked 46th in the nation. But before you ready your tiny violins for a class of people that make over \$100K a year, consider that the exodus of judges just means MORE LAWYERS.

The Times profiles several of these under-appreciated justices, like James McGuire, who left a Manhattan appeals court salary of \$144K to be a partner at Dechert LLP, where the average salary is \$1.4 million. "I love the work," McGuire says, but because he has two small children, "The only responsible thing for my family is to go." Another judge who had to sell her house in the Hamptons and can barely make rent on her two-bedroom apartment says "Here I am, in a position where I'm working to achieve justice for other people, and I don't feel that I'm experiencing justice." This may be a tad strong considering that the controversial amendment to the Constitution giving "A Hampton Bungalow For All" died a swift death in 1789.

Though some have argued that judicial salaries mean little with regard to job performance, and that "lots of capable people are eager to take the jobs at the current salary," the pay for judges has been eclipsed by jobs at law schools or top firms, and Chief Justice John Roberts has stressed that "the pay gap could undermine the strength of the federal courts." New York's state legislature is expected to take up the issue of judges' salary in the fall, but if you were planning on becoming a judge, but the real judicial money is found in judging American Idol.

Contact the author of this article or email tips@gothamist.com with further questions, comments or tips.

By [Christopher Robbins](#) in [News](#) on July 5, 2011 2:28 PM [1](#)

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