

THE SENATE
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April 14, 2016

Hon. Andrew Cuomo, Governor
State of New York
Executive Chamber, State Capitol
Albany, New York 12224

RE: Allocation of State Funds To Cover Increases in District Attorneys' Salaries

Dear Governor Cuomo,

I write to you to request your assistance in securing state funding to assist 56 of the state's counties in absorbing the budgetary cost brought about by the salary increase for district attorneys as prescribed for by the New York State Commission on Legislative, Judicial, and Executive Compensation.

As you are aware, the Final Report on Judicial Compensation, as accepted by the New York State Commission on Legislative, Judicial, and Executive Compensation on December 24, 2015, determined that New York State judges' salaries should be increased in 2016 to \$193,000, and in 2018 to \$203,000. The recommendations established parity between New York State Supreme Court Justices and their counterparts on the Federal District Court. The recommendations also placed County Court Judges at 95% of a Supreme Court Justice's salary.

The Commission's recommendations became law effective on April 1, 2016.

As you are aware, State Judicial Law Section 183-a links judicial salaries with local county district attorney (DA) salaries, excluding those located in the City of New York, requiring that DA salaries be equal to, or higher than either the County Court Judge or Supreme Court Judge in a county, depending on full or part-time status.

During the recently completed budget hearings and negotiations, this issue was raised by the Senate, because of the potential fiscal impact on our local municipalities. Regrettably, a specific funding allocation was not included in the enacted state budget.

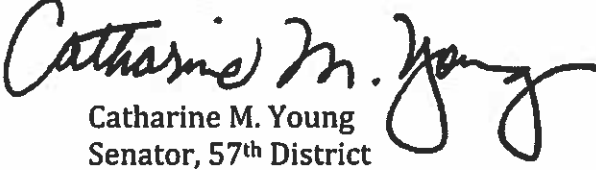
The lack of state funding to cover the increased cost of the DA salaries disproportionately impacts county budgets in many parts of the state where cost-of-living and median income are significantly lower, such as the rural Western New York counties that I represent.

Therefore, I am writing today to urge your consideration of a chapter amendment to the SFY 2016-17 Enacted Budget, allocating \$1.57 million to reimburse each county for the salary increase. This cost, amounting to \$30,798 in most counties, totals approximately .001 percent of the total enacted state budget.

Providing this fiscal relief for our counties would result in substantial property tax relief to the hardworking taxpayers of New York State. Therefore, I urge you to meet with the Legislature to determine the best way for the state to absorb this cost, without passing on the financial burden to our local county governments.

Thank you for your consideration and attention to this request.

Sincerely,


Catharine M. Young
Senator, 57th District