



# **COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL COMPENSATION**

***REPORT TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY***

*January 2025*

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Commission on Judicial Compensation (Commission or CJC) convened on October 9, 2024. In the course of the Commission's work, presentations were provided by Chief Justice Raheem Mullins, Dr. William Rafferty of the National Center for State Courts, and Robert Wysock of the Office of Fiscal Analysis. In addition, the Commission invited a number of organizations from the bench and the bar to address the Commission and its charge, which included Judge Rupal Shah of the Judges Association, Chief Family Support Magistrate Michael Ferguson, O'Donovan Murphy of Judicial Marshal Services, the Connecticut Bar Association, Judicial Selection Commission; George W. Crawford Black Bar Association, Connecticut Defense Lawyers Association and the Connecticut Trial Lawyers Association. In accordance with Connecticut General Statutes, Section 51-47c and Section 11-4a, the CJC hereby submits its final report to the Governor, the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, the General Assembly, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and the Chief Court Administrator.

## **2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Commission is established for the purpose of examining and making recommendations on the adequacy and need for adjustments to judicial compensation in each of the following four fiscal years, comprising the four-year cycle. The Commission's recommendations cover FY 26 through FY 29. In the conduct of that examination, "the Commission shall take into account all appropriate factors, including, *but not limited to*" seven statutory factors that generally include Connecticut's overall economic climate, inflation, salaries of the judges of the other states and federal judiciary; attorney salaries in the public, private and non-profit sectors; interest in attracting highly qualified and experienced attorneys; state employee increases and the state's ability to pay. CGS §51-47c(c).

The Commission held informational sessions that included the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the Office of Fiscal Analysis, and the National Center for State Courts, among others.

Each of the seven statutory factors is discussed in separate sections in detail below and the recommendations made by the Commission consider all appropriate factors, the specific statutory factors and consider the adequacy and need for the adjustment of judicial compensation.

## **Factor 1. Overall Economic Climate in the State**

The Commission has reviewed the presentation of the Office of Fiscal Analysis (OFA) and other financial sources including the State Comptroller's letter of December 2, 2024 December 2024 Monthly Letter to the Governor » Office of the State Comptroller » State of Connecticut and further, the December 20, 2024 letter from the Secretary of OPM to the State Comptroller fy-25\_december\_2025\_comptroller\_-letter.pdf. The state of the Connecticut economy can be described as strong, and the short-term outlook as stable.

The interim Director of OFA, Robert Wysock, presented information to the Commission based on the most recent legislative update from mid-November 2024. OFA is currently projecting the current FY 25 budget will end the fiscal year in a surplus of \$122.7 million. The December 20, 2024 letter to the Comptroller projects a higher fiscal year end surplus of \$178.8 million which is inclusive of increased deficiency projections. Based on the consensus revenue forecast, reflecting the consensus of the legislature's fiscal office and the Office of Policy and Management (OPM), the executive branch budget office, revenues are projected to exceed expenditures in each of the next three fiscal years FY26-FY28. The budget balance is projected to rise from the current fiscal year of \$122.7 million to a projected \$1.2947 billion taking into account increased fixed cost growth.<sup>1</sup>

State Comptroller Sean Scanlon, noted in his December 2, 2024 letter, the following points that support the Committee's view:

- The November consensus forecast increased General Fund revenues by a net \$108.5 million from the previous month's estimate.
- Growth in the overall US economy continues with the real gross domestic product (GDP) growing at a 2.8 percent annual rate according to revised estimates from the most recent quarter.
- The State's unemployment rate remains low with October 2024 at 3.0 percent - the lowest it has been in more than 23 years.
- Connecticut's wages have outpaced the national average, having grown 4.4 percent year-over-year.
- The Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose 2.6 percent year-over-year in October.

The Comptroller's letter also reflects certain sectors, such as the housing market and the national jobs growth, as factors that may indicate softening, as well as a new incoming federal administration.

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<sup>1</sup> OFA noted that these numbers do not include any wage increases based on soon to be open collective bargaining agreements; however, it also does not reflect any other changes that could both negatively or positively impact revenues during the out years.

The State's Budget Reserve Fund is projected to be twenty-five percent (25%) of the total state budget, which is approximately \$23.4 billion.

## **Factor 2. Rate of Inflation**

The Commission concurs with the assessment of the previous Commission on Judicial Compensation, which concluded in its 2021 report that the appropriate inflationary measure to utilize for the analysis of Factor 2 is the Consumer Price Index for all Urban Consumers referred to as the CPI-U and the reasons set forth by the 2021 Commission.<sup>2</sup>

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics provides an annual rate of inflation when it issues its report on December 31<sup>st</sup> of each year. The CPI-U also contains adjustments by region based on variances in cost of living. The 2024 CPI-U for the Northeast Region is 3.5% as of November 2024 for the prior twelve-month period.<sup>3</sup>

During the most recent four-year period prior to the convening of this Commission the rate of inflation for CPI-U Northeast region was 18.1% in total from December 2021 through November 2024. In contrast, the salaries of Connecticut judges increased by 15.5% during approximately the same period from July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2025.

The Congressional Budget Office projects the rate of inflation for the CPI-U to be over 2% in each of the next 3 years. In 2025, it is projecting 2.3%, in 2026 it is projecting 2.4%, and in 2027 it is projecting 2.3% for the rates of inflation. CBO's Current View of the Economy From 2025 to 2027 | Congressional Budget Office

Judicial salaries and increases provided in the period from 2021-2024 fell below the rate of inflation consistently during this period.

## **Factor 3. Levels of Compensation Received by Judges of Other States and Of the Federal Government.**

Our report compares the compensation in terms of salary of Connecticut judges with the compensation of judges in other states and in the federal government based upon the limited information available to the Commission. In addition, the information presented does not consider pension benefits or other benefits like health care.

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<sup>2</sup> January 2021 Report of the Commission on Judicial Compensation, page 9. Chief Justice Mullins also noted his support for the CPI-U as the appropriate index in his November 12, 2024 presentation.

<sup>3</sup> The December Consumer Price Index for the Northeast Region is scheduled to be released on January 15, 2025 which will occur after the statutory deadline for filing the CJC report.

**a. State Judicial Compensation**

When the last Commission report was provided to the General Assembly in January of 2021, Connecticut's trial court judges' compensation ranked 40<sup>th</sup>, as adjusted for the cost of living, as compared to the rest of the States. Based on information from the National Center for State Courts as of July 2024, Connecticut trial court judges now rank 37<sup>th</sup>, as adjusted based upon the cost of living. This translates into an adjusted cost of living salary of \$159,289 for Connecticut trial court judges. Salaries for state Appellate Court judges ranked 19<sup>th</sup> and salaries for the Supreme Court ranked 21<sup>st</sup>, each on an *unadjusted* basis relative to the cost of living.

**b. Federal Judicial Compensation**

The Commission did not receive any information regarding compensation of lawyers within Federal government generally. The information below relates only to the compensation of Federal judges<sup>4</sup>. The table below sets forth Federal judicial compensation for the last four years. Compensation for the Federal judiciary is higher than that of our state court judges.

	District Judges	Circuit Judges	Associate Justices	Chief Justice
2024	\$243,300	\$257,900	\$298,500	\$312,200
2023	\$232,600	\$246,600	\$285,400	\$298,500
2022	\$223,400	\$236,900	\$274,200	\$286,700
2021	\$218,600	\$231,800	\$268,300	\$280,500

The increase in the salaries of the District Judges<sup>5</sup> between 2023 and 2024 reflects an approximate 4.6% increase in salary. The increase between 2022 and 2023 was similarly a 4.1% increase. By contrast, Superior Court judges in Connecticut, in the same period, experienced a 3.0% increase in salary in each of those years.

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<sup>4</sup> United States Courts, Judicial Compensation

<sup>5</sup> Each level of the federal judiciary received approximately 4.6% increase. It appears that salaries are rounded down to the nearest whole dollar amount in hundreds.

#### **Factor 4. Levels of Compensation Received by Attorneys Employed by Academic Institutions, Government Organizations and Private and Nonprofit Organizations.**

##### **a. Salaries for Lawyers Employed at Academic Institutions**

The Chief Justice provided the Commission with information regarding the levels of compensation for attorneys working in numerous sectors in Connecticut including law professors, private practice and the public sector. According to the submission, the combined average salary of a Professor from Yale (not just law professors) in 2020/2021, the last year of available data from this institution, and the University of Connecticut Professors of Law is \$232,248. When adding the average salary of a full-time professor at Quinnipiac University (not just law professors), which is \$103,000, the average salary for a professor at all 3 academic institutions is \$189,265.33.

##### **b. Salaries for Lawyers in Private Practice**

Data was presented by the Chief Justice based on the NALP's *2023 Associate Salary Survey* report to which 450 firms across the nation responded. The report indicated that the overall median first-year associate base salary as of January 1, 2023 was \$200,000, which was up 21.1% from 2021 when the survey was last administered. In his oral presentation to the Commission, the Chief Justice highlighted the report's calculation of the median salary for associates with eight years of experience working in any size firm as \$307,500, which is 35% more than the salary of a current Superior Court judge. The Chief Justice highlighted the salary of a private practice attorney with eight years of experience as appropriate for comparison with judicial salaries. The Commission observes that the NALP data reflects, however, salaries reported by firms across the nation that are comprised of between 100 or fewer attorneys and 1001+ attorneys. Notably, the median salary for eight-year associates for firms with 100 or fewer attorneys is \$213,950, which is 6.4% more than the current salary of Connecticut Superior Court judges.

The Connecticut Trial Lawyers Association and the Connecticut Defense Lawyers Associations do not collect data regarding salaries for attorneys at Connecticut law firms; therefore, such information could not be specifically considered by the Commission. The Commission further recognizes that the salaries of attorneys in the private sector are often used to fund 401k retirement plans and health insurance, which is not the same for employees of the State of Connecticut.

**c. Public Sector Lawyers' Salary<sup>6</sup>**

In their review of all the data, the Commission was most impressed with the disparity between the salaries of lawyers from the public sector compared to those of Superior Court judges. In particular, the current salaries of the Chief State's Attorneys (\$237,863) and Chief Public Defenders (\$221,126)<sup>7</sup> were \$36,840 and \$20,103 higher, respectively, than the current salary of a Superior Court judge.<sup>8</sup> The Commission observed that if the legislature were to maintain judicial salaries at the current level, this would result in having state-employed lawyers making 6.8% and 10% more than the judges before whom they routinely appear.

Additionally, attorneys employed in senior ranks in the Governor's Office, the Office of Policy and Management, the Attorney General's Office and the General Counsels for Connecticut's public higher education institutions range in salary from approximately \$206,000 to \$353,000.

**Factor 5. The State's Interest in Attracting Highly Qualified and Experienced Attorneys to Serve in Judicial Capacities.**

The Commission believes that it is in the State's best interest to attract highly qualified and experienced attorneys to serve in judicial capacities. In order to ensure the public's trust and confidence in the rule of law, judicial candidates must reflect the diversity of the population the judiciary serves. Diversity includes professional and personal backgrounds. The issue is whether that goal is adversely affected by the current compensation. As such, it is essential that judicial salaries are at an appropriate level to attract and retain a judiciary that is comprised of a diverse group of individuals with varied backgrounds and experiences.

Because of the unique process by which lawyers become judges in Connecticut, a traditional labor market analysis cannot be performed. Candidates for the judiciary are self-selecting. They must complete a lengthy questionnaire and submit a formal application to the Judicial Selection Commission. The Judicial Selection Commission then decides whether the candidate is qualified. If qualified, the candidate is placed on a list. The Governor appoints and the legislature confirms judges from that list.

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<sup>6</sup> Source of the salary information for this section was obtained through Open Payroll on the website of the State Comptroller.

<sup>7</sup> The current Deputy Chief Public Defender's current salary (per Open Payroll) for calendar year 2024 is \$241,725 (projected)

<sup>8</sup> The Chief State's Attorney, Deputy Chief State's Attorneys, Chief Public Defender and the Deputy Chief Public Defender are in a pay plan classified as VR 99 which is a variable rate without a defined salary range.



According to the Judicial Selection Commission<sup>9</sup>, there are currently 309 lawyers whose applications have been approved as candidates for judicial office.

In the Judicial Selection Commission's submitted testimony to the Commission, it expressed concern that the current judicial compensation in Connecticut may be impeding the goal of attracting diverse qualified candidates to serve in judicial positions.<sup>10</sup> Submitted testimony by the George W. Crawford Black Bar Association identified judicial salary as a deterrent for attorneys from underrepresented communities.<sup>11</sup>

The Judicial Selection Commission also expressed concern about the possible impact of current compensation on the retention of judges.<sup>12</sup> The Connecticut Judges Association echoed this concern observing that some experienced judges are leaving the bench to enter private practice and earn higher salaries.<sup>13</sup> Other speakers also noted this occurrence<sup>14</sup> as well as the importance of retaining experienced judges<sup>15</sup> in their testimony.

From January 2020 to December 31, 2023, 74 judges separated from the Judicial Branch.<sup>16</sup> For historical context, 43 judges separated from the Judicial Branch from January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2019.<sup>17</sup> Only 20 judges separated from the Judicial Branch from January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2015.<sup>18</sup>

## **Factor 6. Compensation Adjustments Applicable to Employees of the State During Applicable Fiscal Years.**

The Commission shall consider all appropriate factors including compensation adjustments applicable to state employees during the applicable fiscal years. This factor requires that the Commission review the historical and current data related to the compensation of other state employees so that it has adequate perspective regarding the current compensation, and any future adjustments, afforded to judicial officers.

The Judicial Compensation Commission's 2021 *Report to the General Assembly* provides relevant historical information and data. The 2021 Commission's Report explained that

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<sup>9</sup> 2023 Annual Report of the Judicial Selection Commission.

<sup>10</sup> Leander Dolphin, Chairperson, Judicial Selection Commission Submitted Testimony, December 2, 2024.

<sup>11</sup> Mallori Thompson, President, George W. Crawford Black Bar Association Submitted Testimony, December 2, 2024.

<sup>12</sup> Leander Dolphin, Chairperson, Judicial Selection Commission Submitted Testimony, December 2, 2024.

<sup>13</sup> Rupal Shah, President, Connecticut Judges Association Submitted Testimony, December 2, 2024.

<sup>14</sup> See James Shearin, President, Connecticut Bar Association Testimony, December 2, 2024; Alinor Sterling, President, Connecticut Trial Lawyers Association Testimony, December 2, 2024.

<sup>15</sup> See Shah, *supra* note 5; Glenn Coffin, President, Connecticut Defense Lawyers Association Testimony, December 2, 2024.

<sup>16</sup> Chief Justice Raheem Mullins, Submission to the Connecticut Commission on Judicial Compensation, November 12, 2024.

<sup>17</sup> Judicial Branch, Judicial Compensation Commission Answers Provided by the Judicial Branch to Questions Regarding Chief Justice Mullins' Report, December 3, 2024.

<sup>18</sup> *Id.*

“[j]udges received raises in 3 of the 11 years from FY 2003 through FY 2012,’ with the last occurring in 2007.” *Report to General Assembly*, Judicial Compensation Commission, January 2021, p. 15. During that same period, the state’s unionized employees received nine increases and non-union employees received eight increases. *Id.*, at p. 15. The average annual increase for judges was 1.65%, while in comparison the average state employee annual increase was 3.52%. *Id.* Almost all state union and non-union employees were expected to receive 3% cost of living adjustments (COLA) in FYs 14, 15, and 16 under State Employees Bargaining Agent Coalition (SEBAC) 2011, as well as merit increases estimated between 1.1 and 2.9%. *Id.*

It was noted that the 2013 Commission sought to remedy the inequities between judges and other state workers and, therefore, recommended 5.3% annual increases for judges for FYs 14 through 17. *Id.* However, the General Assembly approved the recommended increase for only FYs 14 and 15. *Id.* In June 2015, it approved annual increases of 3% for judges for FYs 16 and 17. Subsequently, in May 2016, the General Assembly delayed the FY 17 increase until FY 18. The General Assembly implemented the FY 18 increase on July 1, 2017, but PA 17-2, June Sp. Session, subsequently rescinded it effective November 1, 2017, and reinstituted it effective July 1, 2019. No further increases were contemplated or scheduled. *Id.*, pp. 15-16.

The 2021 Commission Report also explained that in the SEBAC 2017 agreement almost all state union and non-union employees received a wage freeze for FYs 17 and 18. In FY 19, SEBAC 2017 authorized the greater of \$2,000 or top-step lump sum payments plus \$1000. For FYs 20 and 21, union employees received a 3.5 % annual increase along with any applicable merit increase.<sup>19</sup> The General Assembly extended these wage increases to non-partisan, non-union legislative employees. *Id.*, p. 16.

The 2021 Commission observed that the wage adjustments for judges had only marginally kept pace with the COLA increases afforded to other employees. In the prior eight years, judges received an annualized wage increase of 2.075%. Unionized employees received an average increase of 2% but this did not include the annual merit increase for union employees that was authorized under SEBAC 2011 and 2017. *Id.* The Commission concluded in its 2021 Report that judges’ salaries continued to fail to keep pace with other state employees since the Commission’s prior recommendation and that the disparity has been exacerbated. *Id.*

In his presentation to this Commission, Chief Justice Mullins explained the salaries of Connecticut judges have continued to not keep pace with the pace of increases to salaries of state employees. For FYs 22, 23, 24 and 25, the rate of salary increases for state employees has been 4.5%, 4.5%, 4.5% and 4.5%, respectively.<sup>20</sup> In comparison, the rate of salary increases for judges during the same period was 4.5%, 5.0%, 3.0% and 3.0%. In other words, the average

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<sup>19</sup> The applicable merit increase or step increase is on average the equivalent of a 2% wage increase.

<sup>20</sup> The figures of 4.5% for state employees consists of a 2.5% general wage increase (COLA) plus a 2.0% step increase.

increase in compensation for state employees was 4.5% while the average increase for judges was 3.88%. *Submission to the Connecticut Commission on Judicial Compensation*, Chief Justice Raheem L. Mullins, November 12, 2024, p. 8. He further explained that if Superior Court judges received the same percentage increase as all employees, they would be earning \$205,903 instead of their current salary of \$201,023. *Id.*

## **Factor 7. The State's Ability to Fund Increases in Compensation.**

In order to evaluate the State's ability to afford judicial compensation increases, the Commission sought and received information from the legislature's nonpartisan Office of Fiscal Analysis (OFA), as well as from the Judicial Branch's External Affairs Division concerning its budgeting process for judicial salaries. We are grateful for their valuable assistance.

The Chief Justice has recommended that Superior Court judges' annual salary should increase 10.35% in FY 2026 from the current \$201,023 to \$221,839, and that salaries should increase by an additional percentage amount equal to CPI-U plus 2% in each of Fiscal Years 2027, 2028 and 2029.<sup>21</sup> Were the current CPI-U of 2.6% to remain consistent during those years, the additional increase for Fiscal Years 2027, 2028 and 2029 would be 4.6%. The same percentage increases are recommended in each fiscal year for the other judicial offices subject to our review.

Assuming the number of approved judicial positions (201) were to remain the same, it is estimated that the cost to implement the Commission's recommendation for Fiscal Year 2026 would be \$5,003,582.<sup>22</sup> Applying a 4.6% increase in Fiscal Year 2027 would result in an additional incremental cost of \$2,456,967 for a total additional cost over present costs of \$7,460,561. The total estimated costs over the four-year period covered by these recommendations is included as Attachment 1 appended to this report.<sup>23</sup>

Judicial salaries are funded via a single personal services line item in the Connecticut General Assembly's General Fund appropriation. This personal services appropriation funds all full-time, part-time, and temporary employees, as well as all judge's salaries. Thus, the State's ability to afford judicial salary increases depends on the condition of the State's budget – and, more precisely, the State General Fund's capacity to absorb the proposed increases.

Based on information presently available to the Commission, it appears that the present fiscal condition of the State is sufficiently strong to accommodate the Commission's proposed increases and likely to remain so in each of the next four fiscal years. OFA's current estimates anticipate escalating General Fund surpluses in the coming years. OFA estimates those surpluses

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<sup>21</sup> It should be noted that as a result of Public Act 11-1 of the June Special Session, longevity payments for judges who already qualified for longevity continued but only at the level at which they qualified as of 2011. Judges who did not qualify at that time do not receive longevity payments and are not anticipated to do so. Accordingly, the Commission does not consider longevity payments as a significant factor in incentivizing retention of judges

<sup>22</sup> As of January 1, 2025 there will be twenty-two judicial vacancies.

<sup>23</sup> The Commission thanks the Office of Fiscal Analysis and the Judicial Branch for their assistance in calculating these costs.

as \$122.7 million in Fiscal Year 2025, \$373.4 million in Fiscal Year 2026, \$791.9 million in Fiscal Year 2027, and \$1.2947 billion in Fiscal Year 2028. While the State Comptroller does not publish General Fund estimates for out years, his latest report to the Governor, dated December 2, 2024, projects a General Fund surplus at the end of Fiscal Year 2025 of \$190.3 million.

The Commission recognizes that, as at any time, uncertainties exist that will impact – either positively or negatively – the future condition of the State budget. Those include the application and potential modification of fiscal guardrails; the extent of future revenues from tax receipts, grants, and other sources; and potential additional funding requirements arising from new policy initiatives, state employee collective bargaining, and other as-yet unknown obligations. However, because our charge is to assess affordability based on information and estimates available to the Commission at the time of this report, we are necessarily constrained to avoid speculating as resolution of those fiscal uncertainties.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the foregoing, the Committee concludes with respect to each of the seven factors that strong support exists for adjusting the compensation of Connecticut judges to attract and retain judges. A brief review of the seven factors demonstrates support for such adjustment and is provided below:

The first factor is the overall fiscal health of the state. Information gathered by the Committee and provided by the Office of Fiscal Analysis indicates the current fiscal year will end with a surplus exceeding \$100 million dollars and robust surpluses are projected in the out years. This demonstrates that funding for recommended increases in compensation is supported by the economic projections.

Factor 2 requires examination of the rate of inflation. Information regarding the rate of inflation relies on projections by economists and estimates of how it will react in the coming month, quarter or year. The projections for the first 3 years covered by these recommendations are projected to remain above 2%. Recent history shows us that the current salaries of judges, even with annual increases, did not keep pace with recent inflation.

The third factor requires a comparative analysis between Connecticut judges and their federal counterparts and the judges of other states. Connecticut superior court judge salaries are approximately 19% below their federal counterparts, i.e. District Court Judge, which is approximately \$41,000 annually. Additionally, while Connecticut improved slightly it still ranks in the bottom half of judicial salaries for all 50 states plus the District of Columbia at 37 for its superior court judges. The increases recommended by the Commission would bring Connecticut's ranking nearer to the 50% mark in its rankings. This information supports adjusting Connecticut's judicial compensation to be more in line with its comparators.

Factors 4 and 5 address the compensation of judges in comparison to attorneys in public and private sector employment and the interest in attracting and retaining highly qualified individuals to serve and continue to serve respectively. The information demonstrates that these sectors of attorney employment have largely outpaced their judicial counterparts. In light of the strong desire to both recruit and retain high quality and experienced attorneys in the judiciary, with respect to Factor 4 of the seven statutory factors, the Commission believes that it is important to increase judicial salaries to match the salaries of other state-employed attorneys such as the States Attorneys and Public Defenders, as well as to reduce the difference between salaries of experienced private practice attorneys and those who serve on the bench. Eliminating and/or reducing the disparity will hopefully make a judicial appointment more attractive to the experienced attorneys who may have in the past hesitated to serve because of the deep pay cut that would be required. Similarly, given the statistics for the period following the last Commission report rather than taking a position at a private law firm, seasoned judges may be more willing to remain on the bench, which will strengthen the depth of the judiciary and provide the guidance needed to younger, less experienced judges.

Factor 6 looks at the compensation increases provided to the judges in comparison to other state employees. The data provided herein demonstrates that the increases in judges salaries fell well below those of other state employees for the same period. FYs 21-24 saw an 18% increase for state employees compared to 15.5% for judges following a period of increases significantly below those of other state employees. The data and trends regarding the compensation adjustments for Connecticut judges and state employees reflect continued disparity and show that the salary increases for judges have not kept pace with the salary increases afforded to other state employees. It is unknown what increases in salaries will come in the next fiscal years at this point as a majority of state employees are unionized and those contracts are currently in negotiations. It is important to note that the state recently took steps to ensure that non-unionized state employees received raises commensurate with their union counterparts.

Finally, Factor 7 requires the Commission to consider the ability to fund any recommended increases, or stated another way, the state's ability to pay. The state is currently projecting surpluses in the current year and in the outyears. The Rainy Day fund is at its statutory cap and excess revenues are paying down pension obligations. Succinctly stated, the present fiscal condition of the State is sufficiently strong to accommodate the proposed increases and likely to remain so in each of the four following fiscal years.

It is also important to note the challenges facing the judiciary. Chief Justice Mullins noted in his report and his presentation the increase in violence and threats of violence against the Judiciary on a nationwide level that has also touched Connecticut's judiciary, noting an increase in threats and other actions taken against judges. The head of judicial security also provided information to support the increase in this type of threatening or intimidating activity. The turnover rate or rate of departure from the bench in the most recent 4-year period is more than triple what it was at the end of the four-year period in 2020. Otherwise stated, the demands and stresses of judicial

service have increased in recent years, creating additional strains on attracting and retaining judges.

### **Recommendation of the Commission on Judicial Compensation**

Based on the analysis of all appropriate factors and more specifically the seven statutory factors that impact the adequacy and need for adjustment of judicial salaries, the Commission makes the following recommendations:

In FY 26 the base salaries of the judges of the superior court should be increased to \$221,839, which is a 10.35% increase to the current salary. Further the salaries of the Supreme Court Justices, Appellate Court judges and Family Support Magistrates should have their current salaries adjusted by the same percentage; and

In each of the following fiscal years FY 27, FY 28 and FY 29, increase salaries by the CPI-U plus 2% with the following caveats: the minimum compensation increase for judges in each fiscal year shall not be less than 3% nor more than 4.6% annually.

The Senior Judges, Judge Trial Referees, Family Support Referees and supplements for Chief Administrative and Administrative judges, Chief Court Administrator and Deputy Chief Court Administrator should be adjusted commensurate with the percent increase in compensation in each of the four fiscal years encompassed by these recommendations.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> It should be noted that the increases recommended here could impact the salaries of Connecticut's constitutional officers following the next election in November 2026.

## 2024 COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL COMPENSATION

### **Karen K. Buffkin, Chair**

General Counsel  
Connecticut State Colleges and Universities  
Adjunct Professor  
University of Connecticut School of  
Public Policy  
(Appointee of the Governor)

### **Dan Hitchell**

VP of Finance and Chief Financial Officer  
Trinity College  
(Appointee of the House Majority Leader)

### **James Horwitz**

Managing Partner (Retired 12/31/24)  
Koskoff, Koskoff & Bieder  
(Appointee of the Senate Majority Leader)

### **Jay F. Malcynsky**

Managing Partner  
Gaffney, Bennett, and Associates, Inc.  
(Appointee of the Governor)

### **Dean Eboni S. Nelson**

University of Connecticut School of Law  
(Appointee of the Chief Justice)

### **M. Karen Noble**

Partner  
Gfeller Laurie LLP  
(Appointee of the Chief Justice)

### **Moy N. Ogilvie**

Managing Partner, Hartford Office  
McCarter & English, LLP  
(Appointee of the Governor)

### **Daniel I. Papermaster**

Partner  
Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP  
(Appointee of the Speaker of the House)

### **Perry Z. Rowthorn**

Principal  
Rowthorn Law LLC  
(Appointee of the Governor)

### **Herbert J. Shepardson**

Partner  
Cooney, Scully and Dowling  
(Appointee of the Senate Minority Leader)

### **Herman Woodard, Jr.**

Managing Partner  
Woodard Law Firm LLC  
(Appointee of the House Minority Leader)

## ATTACHMENT 1

% Increase	FY 26	FY 27	FY 28	FY 29
10.35	5,003,582	5,003,582	5,003,582	5,003,582
4.6		2,453,979	2,453,979	2,453,979
4.6			2,566,862	2,566,862
4.6				2,684,938
TOTAL	5,003,582	7,457,561	10,024,423	12,709,360