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Holding the hearing at 11 a.m. on a weekday certainly wasn't ideal for maximizing attendance, but participation still was significantly less than what can be expected at a typical Albany hearing. | Getty

## Few seize chance to weigh in on politicians' pay

By **BILL MAHONEY** | 11/28/2018 03:43 PM EST

ALBANY — Members of the public had a chance to offer their opinions about the salaries of state officials at a hearing on Wednesday, but few showed up to address a commission tasked with determining those salaries.

“I guess I was a little disappointed we didn't have more people showing up,” said Comptroller Tom DiNapoli, one of four current and former state and city comptrollers who

will make a decision on pay that will have the force of law.

Holding the hearing at 11 a.m. on a weekday certainly wasn't ideal for maximizing attendance, but participation still was significantly less than what can be expected at a typical Albany hearing. Only four people chose to speak on an issue so contentious that it has been the subject of at least four editorials this week alone.

The New York Public Interest Research Group's Blair Horner argued that the public would be less skeptical of pay raises for legislators if they're linked to reforms in areas like outside income. Mark Dunlea, who ran against DiNapoli on the Green Party line earlier this month, countered arguments that state lawmakers should make more than their current \$79,500 annual salary, which hasn't changed in nearly 20 years, simply because members of the New York City Council make \$148,500. "There's no reason for lawmakers from Troy, Utica, Watertown to get the same salary as" politicians from parts of the state with higher costs of living, Dunlea said.

Dunlea also said "there are real legal questions" about the Legislature's decision to delegate the pay issue to a commission, a view shared by Queensbury activist Bob Schulz. Schulz, who has argued that income taxes are optional and was one of the first people to promote the conspiracy theory that Barack Obama's birth certificate was fake, has been active in countless longshot legal battles over the years. And shortly before Wednesday's hearing, he filed a new lawsuit alleging that state government has been remiss in its duties because of the creation of the pay raise commission, the decision to provide tax credits to Amazon, and its failure "to uphold laws pertaining to proper civic education in New York schools."

"I call it the scheme," he said when speaking before the commission. "The pay raise scheme violates the letter and spirit of certain provisions of the New York state constitution, including ... the mandate that compensation of members of the Legislature be fixed by law."

The final speaker was Matt Rettig, who unsuccessfully sought an Orange County Assembly seat as a Democrat earlier this year. He said he was neutral on the question of a pay raise, but urged the commission to ignore requests that it seek to prohibit legislators from earning outside income.

"You will by its very definition have created a Legislature of nothing but professional politicians," Rettig said. "The concept of the citizen legislator will be lost forever. It'll go from being an already rare creature to a completely extinct one."

The commission will hold a second opportunity for public comment in Manhattan on Friday. That's expected to draw at least one prominent name: Assembly Speaker Carl

Heastie, who has long been the loudest proponent of paying legislators more.

Wednesday's meeting was the commission's second gathering, following a meeting in New York City on Nov. 23. It will hold a fourth on Dec. 6, which will be the last one before it is due to complete its work on Dec. 10.

The truncated timeline isn't necessarily a bad thing, said New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer.

"This issue has been kicking around for 20 years," Stringer said. "Part of what we want to be able to do is attract a new generation of elected officials, give them reasonable compensation, look at opportunities for reform and not get bogged down in the petty politics that has basically aligned what you vote for to what your pay rate is ... We're on a good time line, we're all experienced, we've done our research and we don't have to prolong something for the sake of prolonging it."

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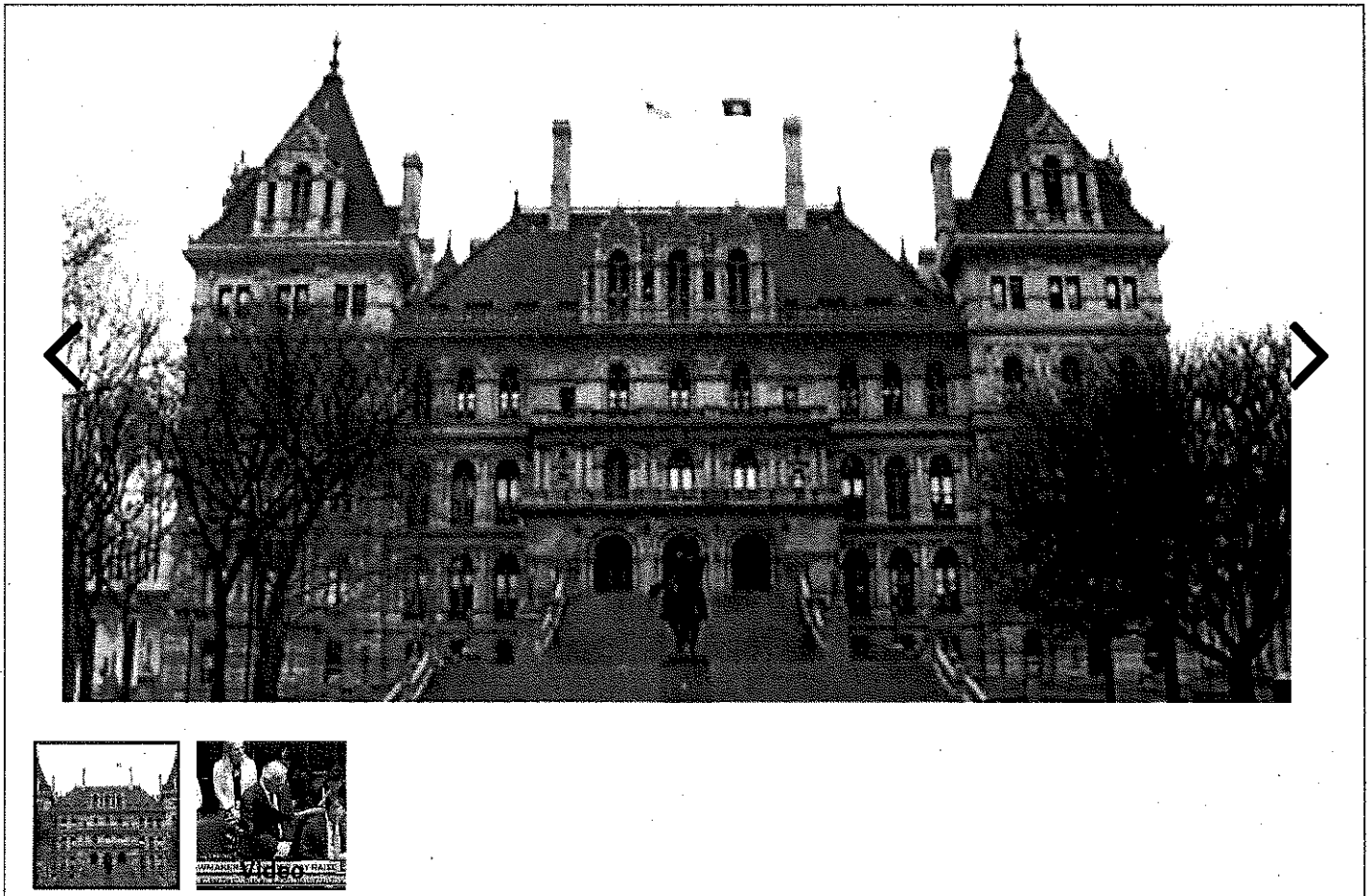
# NY lawmakers consider pay raise

By:

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Updated: Nov 28, 2018 07:52 PM EST



ALBANY, N.Y. (NEWS10) - New York lawmakers are once again considering giving themselves a pay raise. If approved, it would be the first since the turn of the millennia.

“We are so deeply sympathetic to anyone who hasn’t received a raise in nearly two decades,” NYPIRG Dir. Blair Horner said.

If lawmakers kept pace with inflation, they would be making closer to \$120,000 a year. But the same goes for the salaries of the average New Yorker, and Horner asked the commission what example they wanted to set for the public.

“Given Albany’s unending political scandals, how will it sit with the public who has to pay for it?” he asked. “How will the public feel about a pay raise for Albany when the Governor and the legislators are

not tackling the biggest scandals.”

Another issue raised was that lawmakers are only working part-time.

“If you’re going to be paid a higher salary, you should stay and do work for the entire year,” Former Green Party Candidate for State Comptroller Mark Dunlea said.

Lawmakers currently make \$80,000 for part-time work, but New York State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli, who is also part of the pay commission, stated that a lawmaker’s work rarely ends when they go home.

“Constituents expect to meet with you, to advocate, need help on local issues, on personal concerns,” he said. “It’s a full-time job.”

The pay commission said many people are opposed to lawmakers receiving a salary increase without some sort of stipulation. Whether it be a full-time legislature or cutting off outside income for lawmakers, the comptroller said that he doesn’t know if the pay commission can do this, but does think Albany needs to catch up with the times.

“Outside income has been the source of some of what has resulted in criminal charges, so I think there is an appropriate concern on limiting that if not outright banning it,” DiNapoli said.

The commission will hold one more public hearing in New York City later this week, which will include testimony from the Speaker of the Assembly, who is in favor of a pay raise.

The commission’s recommendation must be on Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s desk by December 10.

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**timesunion** | <https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/A-handful-of-voices-weigh-in-on-legisaltive-13428333.php>

## Handful of voices weigh in on public officials' salaries

Compensation committee considering first boost in two decades



IMAGE 1 OF 8

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NYS Compensation Committee members, from left, Tom DiNapoli, H. Carl McCall, Scott Stringer and William Thompson, Jr. during a public hearing Wednesday Nov. 28, 2018 in Albany, NY. The committee is tasked with ... more

ALBANY — If state legislators and executive branch officials want pay raises, they didn't make their feelings known on Wednesday, when the committee tasked with considering their compensation took input from the public in Albany.

Only four people spoke to the four-member panel, which was tasked by last spring's state budget deal with weighing whether to give state lawmakers their first wage increase in two decades. The committee has until Dec. 10 to issue recommendations, which would carry the weight of law.

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State legislators make a base salary of \$79,500, but three-quarters of them earn stipends of at least \$9,000.

None of the speakers explicitly endorsed a salary hike, but focused on the committee's process and making supplementary recommendations.

Committee Chair Carl McCall said he wasn't disappointed by the lack of speakers, saying he anticipated more voices at their second hearing on Friday in New York City, where Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie is expected to testify in favor of an increase.

McCall also noted that the committee has received input through its website, and argued it has been "accessible." The committee didn't launch a website until late October.

When considering future salaries for legislators, elected statewide officials and executive appointees, the enacting legislation ordered the committee to consider the "timely" completion of official duties and the "performance" of state government.

While New York Public Interest Research Group Executive Director Blair Horner noted in his testimony that it's easy to judge whether the budget was passed by the March 31 deadline each year, the overall performance of state government is up for debate.

Horner recommended tying compensation increases to the adoption of anti-corruption measures, including independent oversight of agency contracting, independent review of ethics, restrictions on outside income for officials, and additional campaign finance disclosures and reforms.

Committee member Scott Stringer didn't provide his own definition of "performance" when asked by reporters.

Mark Dunlea, who recently ran as the Green Party candidate for state comptroller, told the committee that pay raises for state legislators should be based on the same principles applied to the recent minimum wage increase, which came with regional differences based on cost of living.

McCall, however, opposed regional salaries for state legislators.

Dunlea also reiterated calls to limit outside income for lawmakers if a salary hike is approved, and made the case for extending the legislative calendar.

"If they're going to get paid a higher salary, they should stay and do work for the entire year, and not get a six-month vacation after six months of part-time work," he said.

State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli, who serves on the committee, rejected the idea that a state legislator's job ends when they leave Albany in June, citing the demands from constituents back in their legislative districts. After getting elected to the state Assembly in 1986, DiNapoli said he quickly had to give up outside work because of the time commitment.

Matthew Rettig, an airline pilot who unsuccessfully ran for the Assembly in the Hudson Valley, warned that a strict ban on outside income would limit the state Legislature to a class of "professional politicians," out of touch with the citizens they serve.

A 2015 report from NYPIRG found that more than two-thirds of state legislators made less than \$20,000 from outside income.

Rettig discounted the idea that banning income from other jobs would solve the state's corruption problems.

"I submit that limiting, rather than banning outside income, would help accomplish the same objective while still allowing people from the community to serve," he said. "This committee could recommend a raise in pay combined with a limit on outside income."

DiNapoli said he supported limits on outside income and the creation of a full-time legislature, but questioned whether either of those items were within the committee's purview.

Robert Schulz, a Queensbury resident with a history of suing the state over constitutional issues, told the committee that they lacked the authority to grant a wage increases.

If there is a legal question, McCall said it fell on the governor and Legislature to respond, and anticipated the committee would complete the task it was handed by the Dec. 10 deadline.

The committee is working on a compressed timeline compared to a previous commission that spent months meeting in 2016, before ultimately opting not to approve any salary increases.

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### Schodack man accused of illegally recording ex-partner

Times Union

### Limits on outside income could shake up state Legislature

Times Union

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H E A R S T





# Decision looms on possible New York lawmaker pay raise

by WRGB STAFF  
Wednesday, November 28th 2018

ALBANY, N.Y. (WRGB) - Do New York lawmakers deserve a pay raise?

We should have an answer in just about a week from now. It was revealed Wednesday that on December 6, the Compensation Committee dealing with that issue should be making its decision.

The committee met in Albany Wednesday for a public hearing -- just a handful of speakers addressed the committee. Among them, Blair Horner of NYPIRG, who said that if lawmakers are given a raise, their outside income should be restricted.

New York lawmakers are the third highest paid lawmakers in the country -- a base salary just under \$80,000 and stipends for many starting at an additional \$9,000.

They have not had a raise in 20 years. Horner says if the raise matches the rate of inflation, the new salary would be about \$120,000.

ALBANY, N.Y. (WTEN) -

Politics

## NY lawmakers consider pay raise

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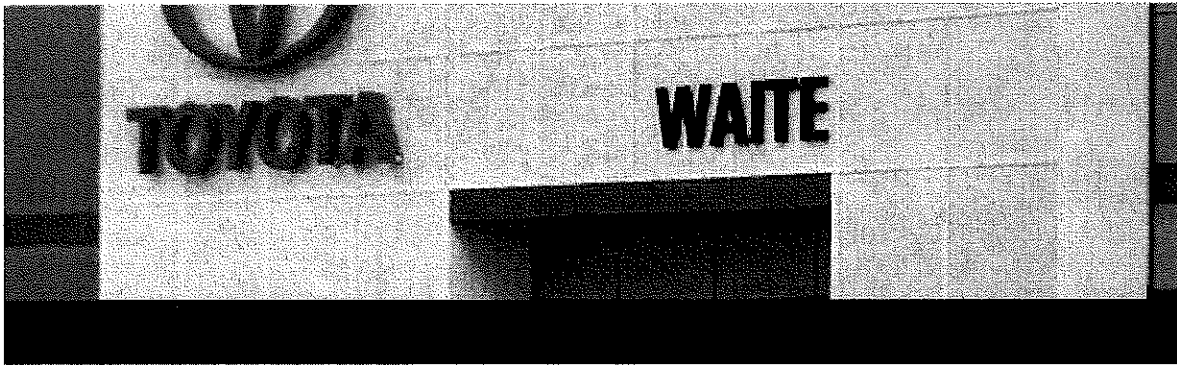


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