

Statement by Dick Dadey, Executive Director, Citizens Union  
On Recommendation of NYS Commission on Legislative and Executive  
Compensation  
November 15, 2016

# COMMISSION FAILED IN NOT INCREASING STATE LAWMAKERS COMPENSATION

## MEASURES ARE NEEDED TO PREVENT CORRUPTION BUT SALARY SHOULD NOT BE PART OF A QUID PRO QUO NEGOTIATION

Citizens Union values the public service of our state lawmakers. We believe they deserve a significant pay raise to reflect their service and the length of time that has passed since they last received a raise. It was wrong of the commission not to raise their pay today, especially since lawmakers have not received an increase in eighteen years. To continue not to raise their pay since 1999 and in the same year New York State raised the minimum wage is disrespectful and unwarranted.

While we strongly urge enactment of ethics legislation that prevents public corruption in Albany with strict limits on the earning of outside income, it is not good government to tie the two issues together because it unnecessarily continues the bad practice of linking legislative pay raises to another issue. It was a mistake in 1999 when a legislative pay increase was negotiated in return for the legislature's approval to establish charter schools in New York State. Elected official pay decisions should not be subject to a quid pro quo negotiation. It appears that political interference played more of a role in this decision than the law provided for.

The pay commission should not have offered zero increase even though the legislature has failed to enact a limit on outside earned income. The pay commission should have offered a modest salary increase given the length of time that lawmakers have not received a raise. Had the legislature returned later this year to address the issue of limiting outside compensation, which would directly impact the earnings of many legislators, the commission should then have increased it even further at a specially called session before year's end. New Yorkers are also the losers since we will get what we pay for as fewer people choose to run for state office making our races less competitive and our politics more insider-like.