

MEMORANDUM

For: Fritz Schwarz, Jill Bright, Paul Quintero
Cc: Jeffrey Friedlander
From: R. Kyle Alagood
Date: October 8, 2015
Re: Select Reports on Quadrennial Advisory Commissions

SELECT REPORTS ON QUADRENNIAL ADVISORY COMMISSIONS

New York City newspapers have often written about Quadrennial Advisory Commissions and issues relating to compensation — both in news reports and editorials. This initial overview of writings on Quadrennial Advisory Commissions and compensation of elected officials is not comprehensive, but the reports provide some important points with regard to compensation of New York City elected officials. Some also say things about pay elsewhere that are relevant to follow up in our research.

Newspapers follow in alphabetical order. Also included are materials from *Gotham Gazette*, an “online watchdog publication” of the Citizens Union Foundation.¹

[A] *New York Daily News*

Frank Lombardi, *Public Ignores City Pay-Raise Panel*, N.Y. DAILY NEWS, Apr. 20, 1999.

High-Priced Scoundrels, Editorial, N.Y. DAILY NEWS, Mar. 20, 2011.

A Law Unto Ourselves, Editorial, N.Y. DAILY NEWS, Mar. 15, 2015.

Heroes and Villains, Editorial, N.Y. DAILY NEWS, Aug. 2, 2015.

[B] *New York Post*

Less for More, Editorial, N.Y. POST, Oct. 29, 2006.

Stephanie Gaskell, *Mike Lashes Pols’ ‘Lulus’*, N.Y. POST, Nov. 17, 2006.

Mike & The Clown Club, Editorial, N.Y. POST, Nov. 18, 2006.

Rich Calder, *Bill de Blasio Moves to Give Himself a Raise*, N.Y. POST (Sept. 19, 2015), <http://nypost.com/2015/09/19/de-blasio-moves-to-give-himself-and-others-at-city-hall-a-raise/>.

¹ *About Gotham Gazette*, <http://www.gothamgazette.com/index.php/about> (last visited Oct. 8, 2015).

Yoav Gonen, *Some Elected City Officials Say They Don't Need a Raise*, N.Y. POST (Oct. 6, 2015), <http://nypost.com/2015/10/06/some-elected-city-officials-say-they-dont-need-a-raise/>.

[C] *New York Times*

Raises - for Some - at City Hall, Editorial, N.Y. TIMES, Apr. 14, 1987.

Steven Lee Myers, *Panel Urges Pay Increases for Officials*, N.Y. TIMES, Oct. 19, 1995.

The Least Popular Budget Item, Editorial, N.Y. TIMES, Oct. 20, 1995.

Dan Barry, *It's That Time Again: Pay Raise Debated for City Officials*, N.Y. TIMES, June 8, 1999.

Fairer Pay for the City Council, Editorial, N.Y. TIMES, Nov. 4, 2006.

Paul Vitello, *My Pay and I: For Public Officials, a Pocketbook Issue*, N.Y. TIMES, Nov. 26, 2006.

[D] *Gotham Gazette*

Salaries for Elected Officials, GOTHAM GAZETTE [2006], <http://www.gothamgazette.com/index.php/archives/3273-salaries-for-elected-officials>.

Meg O'Connor, *Do New York Elected Officials Deserve a Raise?*, GOTHAM GAZETTE (Oct. 1, 2015), <http://www.gothamgazette.com/index.php/government/5915-do-new-york-elected-officials-deserve-a-raise>.

A



News

PUBLIC IGNORES CITY PAY-RAISE PANEL

FRANK LOMBARDI

413 words

20 April 1999

New York Daily News

NYDN

English

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They sat and waited, but nobody came to support or thwart their plans to recommend pay raises for Mayor Giuliani and other elected city officials.

Not one good-government group. Not one citizen. Not even a crank, a rare breed in these days of tight security around City Hall.

After about an hour of idle chatter among themselves, the three members of the Quadrennial Advisory Commission for the Review of Compensation Levels for Elected Officials departed City Hall as quietly as they had come.

The meeting the first public step toward giving elected officials their first pay raise in four years went just as predicted.

Nobody showed up four years ago, either, said Gene Russianoff, senior attorney for the New York Public Interest Research Group, a government watchdog.

"The whole process is pre-ordained," he said. "Death, taxes and a pay-raise recommendation from the quadrennial commission are certain."

The panel expects to make its recommendation by the end of the month. The mayor then will review the suggestion and can opt to go along, change it or kill it entirely as then-Mayor David Dinkins did in 1991, when the city was fiscally strapped. The city now has a \$1 billion budget surplus.

If Giuliani approves, the pay hike goes to the City Council, which has the final say. Council members say they are eagerly anticipating a pay boost.

The base Council salary now is \$70,500. Giuliani makes \$165,000.

A decade ago, the city's elected officials decided to take the sting out of giving themselves raises by creating the commission and requiring it to review salaries every four years.

Russianoff described the commission as a bureaucratic fig leaf to hide the naked fact that the elected officials are "raising their own salaries."

Conn Nugent, executive director of the Citizens Union, said he generally approves of the panel's mission.

"We have never begrudged public servants making a decent living," he said.

He and others anticipate that the commission will recommend hikes of about 20% which would give Giuliani a \$33,000 raise and again put him ahead of Gov. Pataki, whose salary was raised this year to \$179,000.

Currently, Giuliani trails the \$170,000 salary of Chicago Mayor Richard Daley.

Among other big-city chief executives, Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan is entitled to a salary of \$143,795. But Riordan, who is independently wealthy, accepts \$1 of that.

Document nydn000020010828dv4k006iz



EDITORIAL
HIGH-PRICED SCOUNDRELS

Anonymous
529 words
20 March 2011
New York Daily News
NYDN
SPORTS FINAL
38
English

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It just so happened that the Daily News was digging into unsavory doings on the City Council just as Mayor Bloomberg was supposed to be reviewing whether to support raises for the city's elected officials. The first installment of The News' investigative report appears in today's paper with the revelation that, with remarkable brass and ingenuity, more than a dozen Council members have enjoyed both writing laws and skirting them.

Today the special focus is on Councilman Ruben Wills. Elected last fall to represent southeast Queens, Wills is the subject of two misdemeanor bench warrants and listed by state tax authorities as a \$27,493 deadbeat dad.

More shmutz, and perhaps handcuffs, to come.

Meantime, we happily note that a Council-passed law required Bloomberg in January to name a three-person commission to recommend whether pay hikes were in order. Its report was due on the mayor's desk by March 15. Didn't happen.

Actually, nothing happened. This being another foolish Council fiat, he ignored it. From the perspective of the public good, he was right. From the perspective of his legal obligations, he fell short by declining even to appoint a commission.

The Daily News Editorial Board picked up the mayoral slack. On March 17, we headed to City Hall to establish our own Quadrennial Advisory Commission for the Review of Compensation Levels of Elected Officials.

The law stipulates that panel members "shall be private citizens generally recognized for their knowledge and experience in management and compensation matters." No problem. We asked the first three New Yorkers we saw.

Musician Lewis Jordan of Harlem solemnly accepted the chairmanship. Betty Crawford and Imam Abdullah Bajaha, both of the Bronx, promised to fulfill all required duties.

Provided with the last commission report as well as Section 3- 601 of the New York City Administrative Code, the panel convened at 1:55 p.m. in City Hall's plaza. All mandates of the open meetings law were met.

Council members get \$112,500, plus a bonus, for part-time work. The mayor's salary is \$225,000, although Bloomberg accepts only \$1. Pay for the public advocate, controller, borough presidents and district attorneys falls between those figures.

Chairman Jordan offered a preliminary thought on raises: "No, not anytime."

Commissioner Crawford concurred: "No, especially now, when they are cutting everything."

Commissioner Bajaha made it unanimous: "Save the money for the children."

The panel then took up Council bonuses, called lulus. These are doled out by Speaker Christine Quinn, supposedly for the work entailed in committee assignment. They range from \$4,000 to \$28,500 annually.

Commissioner Crawford expressed the consensus opinion: "No bonuses should be given. All of the bonuses should be cut."

Chairman Jordan summed up by saying, "Let the voters decide."

The meeting adjourned at 2 p.m. and the commission, having spent no tax dollars, used no city staff, driven no city cars and put no relatives on the payroll, herewith publishes its final report:

Get lost.

Can you imagine what the commission would have said had the panelists seen today's Daily News before voting? We shudder to think.

Document NYDN000020110322e73k0006d



EDITORIAL

A law unto ourselves

319 words

15 March 2015

New York Daily News

NYDN

SPORTS FINAL REPLATE

34

English

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News to you: In our fair city, there is such a thing as the quadrennial advisory commission for the review of compensation levels of elected officials, which recommends salary hikes for the mayor, City Council and other local electeds. Also news to you: Mayor de Blasio was required during the first 15 days of January to appoint three members to said commission. Just like Mayor Bloomberg before him in 2011, he didn't do it. With Council pay at \$112,500 and the mayor getting \$225,000 (and a free house), there's no urgency for higher salaries. But the law is the law. We called the mayor's office on Jan. 15 to ask why. An aide replied, "The mayor doesn't think this is the appropriate time to call a quadrennial commission." Since we're into this kind of thing, the Daily News took it upon ourselves to appoint the panel, just like we did four years ago.

The law states: "The members of the commission shall be private citizens generally recognized for their knowledge and experience in management and compensation matters." We deputized three New Yorkers at the South Ferry subway station Friday afternoon. Meet Eduardo Ernandes of Brooklyn, Cassandra Mzobe of Staten Island and Melinda Sanchez of Brooklyn. All agreed to serve without compensation on our Pay Raise Commission. They had no budget and chose not to hire any staff. As public hearings are not mandatory, there were none. The proceedings were fast since they had trains to catch. The panel was unanimous in deciding that increases were not warranted. In fact, let the official record show that the mere mention of the matter was met with snickers and laughter. Said Commissioner Sanchez, "They can get a raise after I get a raise." Thus concluded the work of the commission. All in time for today's March 15 legal deadline.

Document NYDN000020150316eb3f0005I



EDITORIAL
Heroes and villains

343 words
2 August 2015
New York Daily News
NYDN
SPORTS FINAL REPLATE
32
English

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Summer brings the Daily News' semi-annual ritual of shaming hypocrites on the City Council and of noting those who are true to their word. Twice a year, the speaker doles out bonuses to members as rewards for obeisance. The Council justifies the payments, known as lulus, by calling them compensation for added committee duties that supplements the standard annual salary of \$112,500.

Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito decides who gets how much, placing her in the position of, in effect, legally buying votes. The practice is unknown in federal, state and local legislatures across the country - although it's a way of life and graft in Albany. Eleven of the 51 members refuse the money on the principle that all lawmakers should be paid the same, as is the case in Congress for everyone from the least to the most senior. Here are the local heroes: Jimmy Van Bramer of Queens, who turns back \$20,000 yearly; Brad Lander from Brooklyn and Dan Garodnick of Manhattan, who say no to \$15,000 each; and Rory Lancman of Queens, Alan Maisel, Carlos Menchaca and Mark Treyger of Brooklyn, Andy Cohen of the Bronx, Ben Kallos, Mark Levine and Helen Rosenthal of Manhattan, all of whom relinquish \$8,000. Despite having told this Editorial Board or the good-government group Citizens Union that lulus should be limited only to the top leadership, six members pocket the money: Corey Johnson and Ydanis Rodriguez of Manhattan, Daneek Miller, Danny Dromm and Paul Vallone of Queens and Vinny Gentile of Brooklyn. Seventeen supposed reformers take the money and claim without proof to donate it to charity: From Brooklyn, Robert Cornegy, David Greenfield, Antonio Reynoso, Darlene Mealy, Mathieu Eugene, Rafael Espinal, Chaim Deutsch and Inez Barron. From Queens, Costa Constantinides, Julissa Ferreras, Peter Koo, Karen Koslowitz and Eric Ulrich. From the Bronx, Fernando Cabrera and Ritchie Torres. From Staten Island, Debi Rose. From Manhattan, Inez Dickens. The rest of the Council makes no bones about grabbing the cash even as they cheapen their offices.

Document NYDN000020150803eb8200007

B

NEW YORK POST

Editorial
LESS FOR MORE

493 words
29 October 2006
New York Post
NYPO
English
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A mayoral panel is recommending raises for city officials - as much as 25 percent, in the case of City Council members.

New Yorkers should back that wholeheartedly. In fact, a hike of twice that amount would be a bargain.

But only if the councilmembers agree to . . . go away.

If they did, the city could save a fortune - well more than the extra \$1.1 or \$2.2 mil needed for the raise.

It's not true when folks say the council does little. In fact, it does plenty - at the city's expense.

If only it would do less.

Just look at what the Council, under Speaker Christine Quinn, is focused on these days: It's worried sick that "hundreds of millions of dollars in federal funding" for food stamps is going unspent, as its Web site says.

Councilmembers are racing to mobilize the troops, to get more folks signed up for the program - lest taxpayers soon be in line for a refund. (Can't have that, now, can we?)

And it wasn't long ago that then-Speaker Giff Miller's members passed a bill to fund the Miller-for-Mayor campaign with tax bucks. They jacked up the rate for public matching campaign funds to six times the amount of private donations. Miller still lost big, but it cost taxpayers tens of millions.

Again, if only they'd just do nothing.

Alas, they won't. Which is why their salaries must not be raised.

The commission recommends a hike from \$90,000 to \$112,500. That would make New York's council the second-highest paid in the country (after Los Angeles). And this is supposed to be part-time work. (If only . . .)

Plus, panel chairmen get bonuses - "lulus." These posts, and the lulus that go with them, are doled out by the speaker, as a way to get members to back his or her ideas for spending your cash. But given that they share more blame for those outlays, shouldn't chairmen be penalized rather than paid more?

By the way, the mayor's panel also said that any salary raise should be tied to elimination of the lulus. The council has conveniently ignored that.

Now, no one begrudges the mayor or comptroller a pay hike (billionaire Mayor Mike takes only \$1 a year). They work full-time, year-round and have real responsibilities. Their jobs, in fact, are based partly on how much they can save taxpayers. (The public advocate, an entirely worthless position, is another matter.)

But 25 percent hikes for councilmembers make no sense. Again, this is a part-time legislative body devoted to finding yet new ways to lighten taxpayer wallets.

Mayor Bloomberg links raises for city unions to productivity gains. He should also push to tie hikes to productivity at the council - only in this case, the less productivity, the bigger the raise.

What an investment that would be.

Christine Quinn

Document NYPO000020061101e2at0000r



News

MIKE LASHES POLS' 'LULUS'

Stephanie Gaskell

173 words

17 November 2006

New York Post

NYPO

English

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Although he said he would sign legislation giving City Council members a 25 percent raise, Mayor Bloomberg said yesterday he doesn't think they deserve to get additional stipends for serving on panels.

An independent panel recommended the raises - the first since 1999 - but suggested the council do away with the stipends and make the job full-time, instead of part-time.

"I was disappointed that the City Council didn't do that," said Bloomberg, a billionaire who only takes \$1 a year in salary as mayor. "But the City Council is an independently elected body and under the City Charter, they're the ones that can decide those things."

Of the council's 51 members, 46 receive an additional stipend, or "lulu," ranging from \$4,000 to \$28,500 for serving in leadership posts or on committees.

Also, since the job is considered part-time, several council members hold other jobs. Some make more than \$100,000 a year on top of their council salaries.

Document NYPO000020061117e2bh0000c



Editorial

MIKE & THE CLOWN CLUB

486 words

18 November 2006

New York Post

NYPO

English

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Mayor Bloomberg has a choice.

He can support his own commission's recommendation of pay raises for City Council members paired with the elimination of extra stipends, or "lulus," and restrictions on outside income.

Or he can just go along with the council, which just voted to approve the raises - a 25 percent hike from \$90,000 to \$112,000 - while keeping the lulus (anywhere from \$4,000 to \$28,500 in added income, distributed at the discretion of the speaker).

All for part-time work.

There's definite legitimacy to the other offices for which the commission recommended raises - mayor, comptroller, borough presidents, district attorneys.

These are full-time jobs.

That can't be said about the council.

Besides, as The New York Times reported Friday, councilmembers also earn outside income anywhere from a few thousand a year as adjunct professors to substantially more than \$100,000 from law practices.

Still, the mayor announced that he would sign the pay-raise legislation.

He said Thursday: "I was disappointed the City Council didn't [eliminate the lulus], but the City Council is an independently elected body and under the City Charter they're the ones that can decide those things. . . . I do agree with the recommendations that if we got rid of those, it would probably be better."

He added on his radio show yesterday: "All legislative bodies at the federal, state and city levels have a similar situation [with lulus]. It is the ways that the head of the legislative body . . . [controls] the members, pulling them all together, getting them to vote as a bloc so you don't have chaos."

Chaos?

The hard-working taxpayers of New York should be so lucky as to get such "chaos" from the council - instead of such stupidity as debates over whether elementary schools should get rid of their aluminum bats.

Besides, the council has 51 members - 48 of them Democrats. Any speaker who'd have trouble getting them to "vote as a bloc" without waving a de facto bribe in front of them has no business in the job in the first place.

The mayor was undoubtedly being a little puckish in sharing his disappointment that the council didn't fully follow the commission. He's a smart man: He undoubtedly knew what the outcome would be.

Yet, though the City Charter says that the council "decides" these things, the mayor has a definite role, too.

If Mayor Mike is serious about supporting his own commission's recommendations, he can prove it.

He can veto the bill.

He can then tell councilmembers that they won't get any raise until the lulus are dropped and some common-sense restrictions are placed on outside income.

If the council overrides his veto, so be it.

Then the responsibility is on the members - and Bloomberg won't have been a party to this farce.

Document NYPO000020061120e2bi0000r

Bill de Blasio moves to give himself a raise

By Rich Calder

September 19, 2015 | 2:30am



Bill de Blasio

Photo: Getty Images

Mayor de Blasio is paving the way for hefty raises for himself and other elected officials.

Hizzoner on Friday announced the formation of three-member advisory commission that will determine whether all city elected officials merit getting pay hikes for the first time in more than eight years. The commission will report its recommendations in November.

When asked whether de Blasio – who earns \$225,000 as mayor – believes raises are justified, his spokeswoman Amy Spitalnick said he would “decline” accepting any pay hike “for the duration” of his current term. However, the mayor is leaving the door open to accepting a raise if he gets re-elected in 2017.

“This is an independent commission led by some of the best experts out there, and they will make their independent recommendations based on that expertise and knowledge. Period,” she said.

Joseph Puleo, president of Local 983 of District Council 37 — the city’s largest blue-collar municipal-workers union — ripped de Blasio for “pushing” a possible raise for himself when half of the union’s 3,000 members are working without a contract and haven’t gotten a raise since 2010.

“It would be nice if the mayor moved with the same diligence on our raises that he’s doing with his own,” Puleo said.

Dick Dadey, executive director of the government watchdog group Citizens Union, said he supports elected officials — which also include council members and borough presidents — getting raises because “eight years is a long time to go without one.”

“The real question isn’t whether they get raises, it’s the size of the raises and whether the commission will look at limiting [elected officials’] outside income and banning ‘lulus,’” Dadey said.

IT WOULD BE NICE IF THE MAYOR MOVED WITH THE SAME DILIGENCE ON OUR RAISES THAT HE’S DOING WITH HIS OWN

- Joseph Puleo, president of municipal-workers union


In addition to their \$112,500 salaries, most council members also earn anywhere from \$5,000 to \$20,000 in stipend money for heading committees and subcommittees. These stipends, called “lulus” have long been opposed by the Citizens Union and other good government groups because of the back-room politics involved in securing them.

Under the city code, a Quadrennial Advisory Commission is supposed to be appointed every four years. With the city already facing major budget cuts, former Mayor Bloomberg waited three extra years before appointing a panel in 2006.

It recommended a series of fat raises, including 25 percent for council members and bumping the mayor’s salary by 15.4 percent, from \$195,000 to \$225,000. Bloomberg, a billionaire, only accepted a \$1 as mayor and wasn’t affected.

Prior to that, elected officials last got raises in 1999 during the Giuliani administration, which included 28 percent for the council and 18 percent for the mayor.

The new commission will be headed by Frederick A.O. “Fritz” Schwarz Jr., a great-grandson of the founder of the iconic toy store. He previously worked as corporation counsel during the Koch administration and is currently chief counsel for Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law.



Eking out a living

Current salaries of city's elected officials:

- Mayor de Blasio — **\$225,000**
- Comptroller Scott Stringer (left) — **\$185,000**
- Public Advocate Letitia James — **\$165,000**
- Borough presidents — **\$160,000**
- City Council members — **\$112,500** (plus bonuses of up to **\$20,000** for committee chairs)
- District attorneys — **\$190,000**

The other members are Jill Bright, chief administrative officer for Conde Nast, and Paul Quintero, chief executive officer of the community development nonprofit ACCION EAST.

“Fritz, Jill, and Paul represent some of the best and the brightest when it comes to management and compensation,” said de Blasio in a statement.

If raises are recommended by the commission, the City Council would review them to determine whether they should be approved or modified before de Blasio could sign them into law.

Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito said she’s “happy” de Blasio formed the commission, adding “We look forward to a robust conversation and reviewing the report when it is completed.”

Schwarz said, “The issues before the Commission are important ones facing New York City. I look forward to learning by listening.”

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METRO

Some elected city officials say they don't need a raise

By [Yoav Gonen](#)

October 6, 2015 | 12:13am



Bill de Blasio -- who earns \$225,000 annually -- has said he would not accept a raise during his first term even if one is recommended.

Photo: Reuters

Some elected city officials say they're satisfied with their paychecks and aren't looking for raises — even as [a mayoral commission studies whether to boost their salaries](#) for the first time in nine years.

“I’m perfectly happy with my salary,” said City Councilman Alan Maisel (D-Brooklyn), who like other legislators earns \$112,500 a year in base pay, plus bonuses for serving as committee chairs. “I’m not pining for a raise. I’m doing OK.”

Mayor de Blasio, who earns \$225,000 annually, has said he would not accept a raise during his first term even if one is recommended.

Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer echoed that stance Monday, but said it was not clear what the advisory panel would decide.

“The commission should go through the process to see what comes out of it,” she told The Post. “Maybe they won’t agree there needs to be raises.”

If there are pay increases, they would go to all elected city officials — including the mayor, public advocate, comptroller, borough presidents, district attorneys and council members.

Commission Chairman Frederick A.O. Schwarz said the panel would post its research topics online to give the public a chance to chime in.

The panel’s recommendations are due by the end of November.

FILED UNDER **BILL DE BLASIO** , **CITY HALL** , **POLITICIANS** , **SALARIES**

City won't tie museum f...

PROMOTED STORIES

C

Raises -- for Some -- at City Hall

New York Times (1923-Current file); Apr 14, 1987;

ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times with Index

pg. A30

Raises — for Some — at City Hall

A blue-ribbon mayoral commission rightly concludes that most of New York City's elected officials deserve a pay raise. It wrongly puts members of the City Council on the list.

The commission, headed by Richard Shinn, an executive of the New York Stock Exchange, would raise Mayor Koch's salary by \$20,000, to \$130,000. New York being New York, that would justifiably make him the highest paid Mayor in the nation. Moreover, the Mayor's salary acts as a lid on municipal pay down the line; raising it will allow the city to offer competitive salaries for key managerial and technical jobs.

The City Council President and Comptroller also deserve a raise to \$105,000, from \$90,000. That would bring them more into line with top Transit Authority and Port Authority jobs. Whether the five borough presidents merit the proposed \$15,000 increase, to \$95,000, is a closer question, but the raise would keep their pay in line with that of city commissioners. Supplementing the state-mandated pay

of a city District Attorney, to increase it from \$82,000 to \$97,000, also seems justified considering how much good lawyers earn in private practice.

The panel has no strong argument, however, for recommending that a City Council member's pay be increased by \$7,500. The basic salary of \$47,500 is wholly reasonable for what is only a part-time job. And the true pay amounts to thousands more. All but five of the Council's 35 members receive extra stipends — from \$2,500 up to \$30,000 — based on committee and other leadership duties.

A Council pay increase might be justified in the context of ending this system of back-door compensation and strict limits on outside income. In any case, Council salaries ought to remain frozen until the present Charter Revision Commission decides whether to assign the Council new powers and duties that might justify higher pay.

The Council members can show they're ready for more responsibility by promptly approving the wage package — and excepting themselves.

Panel Urges Pay Increases For Officials

In Face of Budget Cuts, Giuliani in a Quandary

By STEVEN LEE MYERS

A mayoral commission recommended yesterday that the annual salaries of New York City's elected officials, including the Mayor and the 51 members of the City Council, be raised by as much as 28 percent — despite the city's nagging fiscal difficulties and the risks of populist voter outrage.

The commission, appointed by law every four years as a way to distance elected officials from the sensitive matter of setting their own pay, immediately created a political thicket for Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani and the Council.

The Mayor, who has for almost two years cut the city's spending in the name of fiscal austerity, now has 30 days to decide whether to accept the commission's recommendations and submit them for a vote of the Council. If he does nothing, the recommendations die.

The Council's Speaker, Peter F. Vallone, endorsed the proposed raises even though he called the recommendations "surprisingly low." And Mr. Giuliani seemed inclined to support them — primarily, he said, to benefit senior managers whose salaries by law are set below the Mayor's — although he declined to endorse them officially.

"Do I think the job deserves a raise?" the Mayor said at a news conference at City Hall, apparently searching for just the right way to put it. "I don't know if I deserve a raise. I think the job deserves a raise. I'm not sure I deserve a raise. It's a pretty tough job."

Salaries for the Mayor, who makes \$130,000 a year, and most of the other elected officials have not been raised since 1987. Still, the commission's recommendations served as the starter's gun for that quadrennial event known as the dash for the high moral ground. Right away, the

Continued on Page B2

Panel Is Urging Raises for Elected Officials

Continued From Page B1

possibility of pay increases provoked outrage among some advocates who, for contrast, pointed to deep cuts in the city's social services and the imminent increase in the subway and bus fare.

"I cannot in good conscience accept a large salary increase when the city is slashing essential services for the poorest New Yorkers and I've had to lay off staff in my office," said the Public Advocate, Mark J. Green, whose annual salary would climb by \$20,000, to \$125,000, a 19 percent increase.

The commission, whose three members were appointed by Mr. Giuliani, proposed raising the salaries of all 64 of the city's elected officials, including the Mayor, the Comptroller, the Public Advocate, the Council members, the five borough presidents and the five district attorneys.

Only the district attorneys have received pay raises in the last eight years. In its previous incarnation four years ago, the commission said the elected officials deserved raises, but it also recommended against giving them because of the city's budget woes of that time. Both Mayor David N. Dinkins and Mr. Vallone opposed raises then.

Under the new recommendations, the Mayor's annual salary would climb almost 27 percent, to \$165,000. Of all the nation's mayors, that would make Mr. Giuliani's salary second only to that of Mayor Richard M. Daley of Chicago, who now makes

A CLOSER LOOK

What City Officials Would Get

The Quadrennial Advisory Commission for the Review of Compensation Levels of Elected Officials has proposed these salary increases. The commission is appointed by the Mayor every four years as a way to distance elected officials from setting their own pay.

ELECTED OFFICIAL	PRESENT SALARY	PROPOSED SALARY	PERCENT INCREASE
Mayor	\$130,000	\$165,000	26.9%
Public Advocate	105,000	125,000	19.0%
Comptroller	105,000	133,000	26.6%
Borough Presidents	95,000	114,000	20.0%
Council Member	55,000	70,500	28.1%
District Attorneys	115,000	125,000	8.6%

\$170,000.

The commission proposed the largest increases for Council members, whose salaries would rise \$15,500, or 28 percent, to \$70,500 a year, for a job defined as part time. And it recommended raises of almost 20 percent for the Public Advocate and the borough presidents — even though their duties shrank significantly after the revision of the City Charter in 1990.

It is a measure of the political sensitivity of the issue that decisions on salaries have been left since 1967 to a panel with three private citizens and the rococo title of the Quadrennial Advisory Commission for the Review of Compensation Levels of Elected Officials.

"Although increases in the level of compensation for elected officials are never popular," said the commission's president, Richard L. Gelb, chairman emeritus of the Bristol-Myers-Squibb Company, "the magnitude of the duties, responsibilities and accountabilities associated with positions responsible for governing the largest city in the United States must be recognized."

In making its recommendations, the commission noted that there had been no raises in eight years, while the city's consumer price index rose 41.5 percent and union wages rose 26 percent.

And finally, it noted that salaries "pale in comparison" to those of others whom the elected officials must deal with day to day. For example, Stanley Hill, the executive director of the city's largest union, District Council 37 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, makes \$245,000 a year.

"This is one for the voters to judge," said Gene Russianoff, senior attorney for the New York Public Interest Research Group. "People will be ticked off if the price of their subway token is going up, and so is the salary of their elected officials."

Asked if he would accept a raise, or reject it as Mr. Green said he would, the Mayor ridiculed the notion. "If there is going to be a raise," he said, "then you should have the courage to take it."

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microfilm.

School Bus Overturned in Aftermath of Brooklyn Slaying

Two armed men killed a passenger in a gypsy cab yesterday, then fled, resulting in an accident in Bedford-Stuyvesant that overturned a school bus, the police said. In the confusion as the men fled, a

car rammed a bus carrying 4-year-olds from the Kingsley School, overturning it. Five children and the bus driver were taken to Woodhull Hospital, where they were treated and released.

The Least Popular Budget Item

New York Times (1923-Current file); Oct 20, 1995;
ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times with Index
pg. A34

The Least Popular Budget Item

Every four years, a group of citizens is asked to form a commission to examine the salaries of New York City's mayor, City Council and other local elected officials. Every four years they recommend raises. Every four years, average New Yorkers rise in outrage and say they would rather see their tax dollars shredded and used as mattress stuffing.

"Increases in the level of compensation for elected officials are never popular," said Richard Gelb, the latest chairman of the Quadrennial Advisory Commission for the Review of Compensation Levels of Elected Officials, and a director of The New York Times Company. His report, issued this week, recommends across-the-board raises ranging from \$10,000 to \$35,000.

The proposals are for the most part sensible. Ideally, we should pay our public servants salaries that indicate how seriously we take their jobs. It seems wrong that the mayor of New York City, with a \$130,000 salary, makes less than the mayor of San Francisco, or even an unsuccessful shortstop. The commission's recommendation that he be paid \$165,000 is modest for a position of such responsibility. If the commission had decided to apply a strict cost-of-living test to the mayor's salary, the figure would have topped \$180,000.

The raises are also needed for broader payroll reasons. The mayor's pay serves as a legal cap for

the salaries of the city's top administrators. By custom, the people working for the comptroller and district attorneys cannot make more than their bosses, either. The salaries at the top must be raised to make the pay of the people working below fairer and more competitive.

That reasoning got the district attorneys a special increase to \$115,000 in 1991, and it still makes sense. The Gelb commission proposed increasing the D.A.'s to \$125,000 a year and the comptroller to \$133,000. Those suggestions should be carried out.

The City Council members also deserve the proposed raise from the current \$55,000 a year to \$70,000. True, the Council is legally only a part-time body, and most members already get extra "leadership" bonuses that can, in some cases, reach up to \$35,000. But dedicated members who put in well over 40 hours a week may suffer financial losses from their time in government. More important, the Council has been given added responsibility under the revised City Charter. Its pay scales should reflect its importance.

Raises for the public advocate and borough presidents are merited as well, even though their responsibilities were diminished under the revised Charter. In government, as in most endeavors, you tend to get the quality you are willing to pay for.

It's That Time Again: Pay Raise Debated for City Officials

By DAN BARRY

New York Times (1923-Current file); Jun 8, 1999;

ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times with Index
pg. B4

C I T Y

It's That Time Again: Pay Raise Debated for City Officials

By DAN BARRY

Every four years, the world stages a Summer Olympics. Every four years, the United States elects a President. And every four years, a mayoral commission in New York City recommends pay increases for the city's elected officials.

That quadrennial moment for the city came yesterday, when a salary-review commission appointed by Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani released several recommendations, including proposals that the Mayor receive an 18 percent pay increase of \$30,000, to \$195,000 a year, and that the members of the City Council receive a 27.6 increase of \$19,500, to \$90,000 a year, for what is considered to be a part-time job.

"Although New York City is by far the largest and most complex U.S. city to manage," the commission said in its report, "its elected officials currently are not compensated at a level commensurate with their responsibilities" in comparison with their counterparts in other cities across the country.

Mayor Giuliani, who was on a political trip to the Buffalo region, released a statement saying that he would issue "recommendations for approval, disapproval or modification" within 30 days to the Council, which has the final vote on the matter. But the Council is not likely to reject any formal recommendation of pay raises for its members.

"Obviously, the commission recognized that officials have not gotten

raises in four years, and they don't get cost-of-living increases," Michael Clendenin, a spokesman for the Council, said. He added: "There has to be some incentive for people to want to seek office."

More than 30 years ago, in recognition of how pay raises for elected officials tend to inflame public passion, the city established a panel through which three private citizens would make recommendations. Just saying the panel's complete name could be counted as civic duty: Quadrennial Advisory Commission for the Review of Compensation Levels of Elected Officials.

Yesterday's recommendation marked the third time in this decade that the commission has released its report. And each time, the reaction it received reflected the city's position on the economic roller coaster that often affects its budget.

In 1991, for example, the commission said that elected officials deserved pay increases, but advised against giving them because of the city's budget crisis at the time. Both Mayor David N. Dinkins and Peter F. Vallone, the Council Speaker, agreed.

In 1995, the commission recommended across-the-board pay increases for 64 of the city's elected officials, including the Mayor, the Comptroller, the Public Advocate, the 51 Council members, the five borough presidents and the five district attorneys. The recommendations came at a time when Mayor Giuliani was slashing spending during the tail end of the city's budget problems.

Everyone accepted the approved

raises except Public Advocate Mark Green, who said at the time that he could not "in good conscience accept a large salary increase" when services to the poor were being cut and he was being forced to lay off members of his staff. Although the job's annual salary rose by \$20,000, to \$125,000, he did not accept the additional money.

Yesterday, however, Mr. Green indicated that the economy was good enough at this point to allow him to

A report says New York City leaders are underpaid.

accept a \$25,000 pay increase, to \$150,000.

"The Public Advocate refused an earlier pay increase for three years because the city and his office faced a fiscal crisis," Richard Schrader, a spokesman, said. "Without such a budget problem now, he wouldn't refuse this legislative increase."

Richard Gelb, chairman emeritus of the Bristol-Myers-Squibb Company, returned as chairman of the commission. His report said that even with the proposed raise, the Mayor of New York would still earn less than the Mayor of Chicago, a much smaller city that presents nowhere near the same complexities (although Chicago's Mayor is not provided with the residential equivalent to Gracie Mansion).

The report also pointed out that the Mayor's salary is less than that of several other public executives, including Schools Chancellor Rudy Crew and Robert E. Boyle, executive director of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. The overall arguments raised by the commission were so similar to previous reports, in fact, that some of the language was copied verbatim from the 1995 recommendations.

The report did not take into account the perks — known as "lulus" — that Council members routinely receive for heading various committees. These annual perks can range from a low of \$3,000, for those out of favor with the leadership, to \$35,000, the amount that the Speaker collects.

The report also compared the current Council salary of \$70,500 a year to that in other cities. In Los Angeles, for example, full-time Council members receive \$110,612, while part-time Council members in Washington collect \$92,520.

"I don't begrudge city elected officials a raise after four years, but these seem on the high side," said Gene Russianoff, senior attorney for the New York Public Interest Research Group, a nonprofit watchdog agency. "And we think in exchange for the raise, Council members should agree to full-time service — which means as a practical matter restricting the outside outcome they can earn."

But even Mr. Russianoff doubted that the Council would take up his suggestion at the public hearing it will hold on the proposals later this month.

Fairer Pay for the City Council

New York Times (1923-Current file); Nov 4, 2006;

ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times with Index
pg. A18

Fairer Pay for the City Council

Imagine that you have held a demanding job for seven years without a raise. That might seem outrageous. And that is what the New York City Council would have you believe, just as it is about to accept a salary raise of 25 percent — to \$112,500, the second-highest in the nation.

We would have more sympathy if the Council also moved to overhaul rules that allow members to collect politically linked bonuses and earn — in several cases — hundreds of thousands of dollars in outside income.

Council members are the only elected officials in the city who can vote themselves a raise, and unlike many legislative bodies, they don't defer the increase to future Council members as they should. It is also the only part-time elected position in the city.

Those who do treat it as full-time work — often giving up lucrative private-sector positions for a job that is limited to two terms of four years — can reasonably argue that their current base salary of \$90,000 is too low. But others insist on keeping their

day jobs, and a handful earn so much outside income it's a wonder they have time to serve. Dominic Recchia Jr. of Brooklyn, Oliver Koppell of the Bronx and David Weprin of Queens each collected more than \$200,000 in outside income in 2004, according to a study by the nonpartisan good government group the Citizens Union.

Keep those eyebrows up. Most Council members receive bonuses, from \$4,000 to \$28,500, for heading committees or holding leadership positions. These little goodies, known as lulus, have traditionally been doled out or withheld by the Council speaker as rewards for toeing the line, or punishment for showing too much independence. The mayor-appointed commission that recommended the pay raise also called this practice "ripe for reform."

Because of the city's financial crisis, Mayor Michael Bloomberg skipped a Council pay review in 2003. The city is in better shape now. But that is still not a good reason to rush a big payday without also reforming the Council's compensation rules.

My Pay and I

For Public Officials, a Pocketbook Issue



Marilynn K. Yee/The New York Times

Hard Sell The speaker of the New York City Council, Christine C. Quinn, has defended raises for her colleagues, while in Washington, D.C., Councilman Vincent B. Orange Sr., below, withdrew a plan for a 51 percent pay raise.

By PAUL VITELLO

ANYONE who has gone without a raise for a while might understand the feeling members of the New York City Council had when — after seven years without a raise — they asked for a 25 percent pay increase this month.

But very few of us ever will ever have a boss who is so sublimely empathetic, so on the same page, as it were. Their boss, of course, was themselves. And the boss said yes. If Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg goes along, as expected, their annual salaries will jump to \$112,500 next year, from \$80,000, with no restrictions on their outside earnings.

As it happens, the City Council's raise was part of an economic boomlet this year for public officials and administrators around the country, which, for obvious reasons, came with very little fanfare.

In January, the Los Angeles City Council voted itself a 13.5 percent raise (retaining its title as the highest-paid legislature in the country, at \$170,000 per head, which is more than members of Congress get). The Boston City Council gave itself a 16.6 percent raise in May. In Fresno, Calif., council members awarded themselves a 48 percent raise; in Austin, Tex., they took 28 percent.

In Washington, D.C., a bill introduced this month by council members to give themselves a 51 percent raise, to \$140,000 from \$92,530, was withdrawn after some public grousing and replaced with a more modest, \$30,000 proposal, or 32 percent raise, which is now being considered.

In a similar spirit of public largess, the board of the New York City public library gave the library's chief executive, Paul LeClerc, \$800,000 in compensation last year, representing a 38 percent raise over his previous year's package.

These are princely slices of pie in any economic environment. They are majestic in a time when wages and benefits for most Americans, excluding Wall Street traders, C.E.O.'s and celebrity divorce lawyers, have been going down. The Labor Department says the median hourly wage has declined 2 percent since 2003, adjusted for inflation.

So what gives — or to use a less freighted term, what seems to be happening here?

Elected officials and top administrators

argue that their public jobs are demanding, full time and, while fulfilling in the broadest social sense, nowhere near as well-compensated as jobs of comparable responsibility in the private world. Speaker Christine C. Quinn said, "I have never seen a legislative body which works harder than the New York City Council."

And if legislators have the power of their own purses, that power can cut both ways. In suburban Nassau County, one of the highest-taxed places in America, lawmakers who oversee a \$2.5 billion county budget have trembled and retreated every time one of their members has proposed raising their \$39,500 annual salary. As a result, lawmakers have not seen a raise in 16 years.

Public watchdog types, on the other hand,

Across the country, officeholders are putting more heft in their envelopes.

are less impressed with the they-work-hard-for-the-money argument.

"One of the things I see happening is the commercialization of public office-holding," said Gary Ruskin, director of the Congressional Accountability Project, a Washington-based nonpartisan group. "We live in a time of hysteria about money. It's bound to affect the way people think about public service. At a certain point, pay raises are linked to the decline of democracy. Good people don't work just for the money. They do it for the mission of public service."

There are of course risks involved for public officeholders that do not apply to, say, the average C.E.O. of a Standard & Poor's 500 company who received \$13.5 million in total compensation last year, representing a 16 percent raise over the year before, according to Executive Paywatch, a Web site operated by the A.F.L.-C.I.O.

"Voters don't like it, and pay raises for elected officials have historically been a very sore spot," said Craig Holman, a lobbyist for Public Citizen, a watchdog and consumer advocacy group. In 1816, two-thirds of the members of Congress were voted out of office after they

replaced their \$6 per diem pay with an annual salary of \$1,500 (among other insults to the public's sensibility during that term was the British sack of Washington).

It was perhaps that primal memory in their DNA that led the Congress to enact a law in 1989 that grants members automatic cost-of-living raises each year, Mr. Holman said. No vote is necessary. They vote only if they want to forgo the raise, which has happened five times in the last 16 years.

Automatic pay increases, meanwhile — including one accepted in June — have increased the base salary of Congress members to \$168,500.

"Considering the fact that after 5 or 10 years the vast majority of congressmen will go



on to make millions as lobbyists, it is unseemly that these people give themselves raises every year," said Chris Edwards, an economist with the Cato Institute, a libertarian group based in Washington. "Maybe if they tied it to some measure of performance. In the private sector, people don't get raises every year."

As unappealing as self-administered pay raises like those of the city councils in New York, Boston, Los Angeles and Washington might be, public advocates agree that they are far less troubling than the automatic kind enjoyed by Congress and by a small but growing number of local legislatures, like the one in King County, Wash., which includes Seattle, where legislators who receive \$110,000 annually recently adopted measures to guarantee themselves automatic 3 percent annual raises.

Apparently the "invisible hand" theory, coined by Adam Smith to describe the process whereby entrepreneurs acting in their own interest inadvertently, or invisibly, serve the common good, does not apply here.

"Transparency is very important to the process," said Mr. Holman of Public Citizen. "The less of it there is, and the more money there is involved, the more it suggests that we are being represented by people who are not like us."

D

Salaries For Elected Officials

inShare

What job pays at least \$90,000 a year and still leaves enough free time to earn hundreds of thousands of dollars in additional income?

It is the job of a New York City Council member - or at least it is for one. Brooklyn Councilmember Dominic Recchia, who makes \$90,000 a year in council salary and an additional \$10,000 for chairing the council's cultural affairs committee also earns about a quarter million dollars or more in outside income, according to [city documents](#).

What city government job pays \$150,000 a year and provides a car and driver, but has no real power over city policy?

There are at least six such jobs: public advocate and the five borough presidents, who were [stripped](#) of most of their authority years ago, but whose positions remain nonetheless.

This summer, there is a debate over whether or not these elected officials deserve a pay raise.

Michael Bloomberg recently appointed a [commission](#) to consider the compensation for the office of mayor, comptroller, public advocate, borough president, district attorneys, and members of the City Council.

The commission will consider factors like:

- . The cost of living in New York
- . What similar positions in the private sector pay
- . Additional stipends for council members
- . If it is a full-time or part-time job
- . The amount of time since the last raise

And then they will make a recommendation to the mayor in July.

Proponents of a salary increase argue it has been seven years since local officials got their last increase.

"I think its time for the council to get a raise, yes," City Council Speaker Christine Quinn [recently told](#) the New York Post editorial board.

But critics question the rationale and the process.

For one thing, the City Council gets to vote

TOP COUNCIL EARNERS IN 2004

Domenic M. Recchia

Council Salary:
\$90,000
Stipend: \$10,000
Outside Income: At
Least \$210,000
**TOTAL: At least
\$310,000**



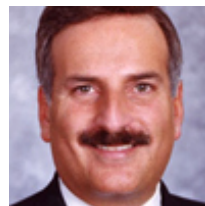
G. Oliver Koppell

Council Salary:
\$90,000
Stipend: \$10,000
Outside Income: At
Least \$141,000
**TOTAL: At least
\$241,000**



David I. Weprin

Council Salary:
\$90,000
Stipend: \$18,000
Outside Income: At
Least \$110,000
**TOTAL: At least
\$218,000**



for its own salary increases. It is also the only elected position that is allowed to be part time. About a quarter of the members also earn outside income - as lawyers, investment bankers, and political consultants, and one is a foot doctor.

The debate raises a difficult question: How much should public service pay?

COST OF LIVING IN NYC

New York City is one of the most expensive cities in the world. [Money Magazine](#) calculates that the cost of living in the city is 138 percent more than the national average. In turn, New York City elected officials are among the highest paid in the nation.

Currently, the salaries for local officials are:

- Mayor \$195,000
- Comptroller \$160,000
- Public Advocate \$150,000
- District Attorney \$150,000
- Borough President \$150,000
- Council Member \$90,000

However, the median income of all workers in New York City is only \$41,509 - which means that the mayor earns five times more and a City Council member earns more than two times more than the average New Yorker.

Some believe this is plenty.

"I'm fine with \$90,000," said Queens Councilmember Tony Avella. "I think that is enough."

But others argue that most elected officials work long hours and make decisions that affect millions of people - and that higher salaries help attract the highest caliber of people, especially in a city where many expect to - and need to - earn high wages.

"The salaries do not compensate for the time and effort and energy needed to serve," said John Zaccone, who works for the Staten Island Borough President and was one of only three people to testify at a June 1 hearing on the issue.

"The salaries must not act as a deterrent to qualified people seeking public office."

PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE SECTOR

Michael Bloomberg accepts just \$1 a year as the mayor of New York City. Because of his personal wealth, he has the luxury of refusing a city paycheck.

But most politicians need to pay the bills while they engage in public service, which invariably sparks a debate when the issue of compensation arises: How much is an elected official worth?

One way to think about the issue is to consider what similar jobs in the private sector pay. By this measure, many elected officials are underpaid.

Michael E. McMahon

Council Salary:
\$90,000
Stipend: \$10,000
Outside Income: At
Least \$100,000
**TOTAL: At least
\$200,000**



Lewis A. Fidler

Council Salary:
\$90,000
Stipend: \$10,000
Outside Income: At
Least \$79,000
**TOTAL: At least
\$179,000**



Kendall Stewart

Council Salary:
\$90,000
Stipend: \$10,000
Outside Income: At
Least \$60,000
**TOTAL: At least
\$160,000**



Click [here](#) for more information about councilmembers' outside income.

At \$195,000 a year, New York City has the highest paid mayor in the nation, but he is the boss of more than 300,000 city employees. CEOs of smaller corporations make many times more; the chairmen of Lehman Brothers, Merrill Lynch, and Goldman Sachs, for example, each earn more than \$30 million a year.

District Attorneys, who currently make \$150,000, only earn about the same as a first year associate at a private law firm. Some good government groups and newspaper editorial boards have urged a pay increase for prosecutors.

"The compensation for the district attorneys should be increased by a greater amount than for other offices given how low the pay is for those who are members of the legal profession in service to the city," Dick Dadey of [Citizens Union](#) (the sister organization of Citizens Union Foundation which publishes Gotham Gazette) [recently testified](#).

However, it is difficult to compare jobs like the public advocate or borough president, which have little powers over city policy or the budget. They spend much of their time advocating for certain causes, serving as government liaisons, or acting as cheerleaders for their communities.

Critics who have argued that these government jobs should be [eliminated](#) are particularly opposed to giving them raises.

"The \$150,000 salary is a gross overpayment for the worthless post of public advocate," the [Daily News editorial board wrote](#).

Still others argue that public service is fundamentally different than working in private industry. People should be motivated by a desire to help others, they say, not by money.

"Public service has never been about becoming rich unless you are corrupt," Blair Horner of the [New York Public Interest Research Group](#) argues. "It's supposed to be about serving the public, by definition, and the gratification is not monetary."

SHOULD COUNCIL STIPENDS BE BANNED?



The City Council Speaker has power to give members stipends - also known as ["lulus"](#) - in addition to the base salary of \$90,000 a year.

Currently, 46 of the 51 City Council members receive stipends. They range from \$4,000 to \$18,000 for serving as chairs of various committees. Some earn additional stipends for leadership positions ranging from \$5,000 up to \$28,500 for Council Speaker Christine Quinn. (Click [here](#) for a full list of salaries and stipends.)

Bronx Councilmember Joel Rivera earns an additional \$23,000 a year for chairing the health committee and for serving as majority leader, a title that carries no real responsibilities other than, as the rules state, "appointing party officers as he deems appropriate." The lulus bring his total annual salary to \$113,000 a year.

There is also Deputy Majority Leader Leroy Comrie (who earns an additional \$20,000), and Assistant Majority

Leaders Bill deBlasio and Lewis Fidler (who each earn an extra \$15,000) and Majority Whip Inez Dickens (who earns an additional \$11,000). And it is not just the Democrats who enjoy the lulus. Two of the three Republicans in the council also have leadership roles. James Oddo earns an additional \$18,000 as the minority leader and Dennis Gallagher earns \$5,000 for being the minority whip.

All told, the council members approved a total of \$479,500 in stipends for themselves this year.

Some critics have called for an end to the practice because it gives the speaker power to dole out money or take it away from those who grow too independent - and it is a way for council members to boost their own salaries without going through the proper process.

"Why not have any salary increases tied to the elimination of stipends, which can be used to punish or reward members?" said Gene Russianoff of the [New York Public Interest Research Group](#).

IS IT A FULL-TIME JOB?

All elected officials are required to work full-time and are not allowed to earn outside income from other jobs, with one exception: members of the New York City Council.

At least 17 of the 51 current City Council members earn outside income from law firms, political consulting jobs, apartment rentals, or pensions, according to records from the [Conflict of Interest Board](#).

Although the financial disclosure forms that the council members are required to fill out only list a range of earned income and not the exact amount, the records show that a half a dozen council members make close to a quarter million dollars a year in income. (Click [here for a complete chart of information on the additional income](#) earned by the current members of the City Council.)

In 2004, Brooklyn Councilmember Bill deBlasio made somewhere between \$5,000 and \$35,000 as a consultant for John Edwards' failed president campaign.

The same year, Brooklyn Councilmember Kendall Stewart made at least \$60,000 working as a podiatrist.

Queens Councilmember David Weprin, who chairs the finance committee, made at least \$110,000 in additional income from his work as a lawyer and investment banker. And Bronx Councilmember Oliver Koppell earned at least \$141,000 in outside income from his law firm and pension payments from his time in the State Assembly.

Brooklyn Councilmember Dominic Recchia is the biggest earner in the council. In 2004, Recchia made somewhere between \$210,000 and \$570,000 in addition to his council salary from his law practice as well as rental and sales income from properties in Stratton, Vermont.

The exception that allows council members to earn outside income dates back to a time when there were fewer members and they had little power. Today, however, each council member represents approximately 157,000 people and votes on legislation, the city's \$50 billion budget, and land use items.

Some believe it should be a full-time position.

"Just ask my wife, this is not a part time job," said Councilmember Joseph Addabbo, who estimates he works 12 to 15 hour days, six or seven days a week and recently introduced a resolution that would designate the council position as a full-time job.

Still, while many council members want to do away with the stigma of it only being part-time, most are reluctant to limit their colleagues' ability to earn outside income.

"I didn't want to jam this law down anybody's throat," said Addabbo.

This year, good government groups [support a modest pay increase](#) for council members, but also called for making the job full-time and eliminating council stipends.

DO THEY NEED A RAISE NOW?

In New York City, the salaries for local elected officials are supposed to be reevaluated every four years through an official process. The mayor appoints a three-member commission with a name as obscure as its task: the [Advisory Commission for the Review of Compensation Levels of Elected Officials](#).

Over the next month, the commission will consider factors like cost of living, trends across the country, and the responsibilities of the officials, and make a recommendation on salary changes to Mayor Bloomberg by July. The mayor can accept, reject, or modify the recommendation. It then goes to the City Council for a vote.

In the past, some politicians, who recognize that the subject of pay raises is touchy, have ignored the commission's suggestions.

In 1995, elected officials were given across the board increases, but Public Advocate Mark Green refused to accept the \$20,000 increase because he was being forced to lay off members of his staff because of cutbacks.

In 1999, five City Council members voted against a 28 percent pay increase for themselves, some calling it "unconscionable" and a "windfall" for politicians (although the measure passed and they still accepted the extra money).

And in 2003, billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg decided that the city's budget woes were so bad that he refused to even appoint a commission as required by city law, and instead postponed it.

But now that the city's fiscal situation has improved - and the next local election isn't until 2009 so voters who are angered by any pay increases are likely to forget by the next election day - most observers believe there will be some kind of pay increase this year.

Under the rules, current council members will vote to increase their own salaries. Congress as well as representatives to the State Legislature are only allowed to vote for increases for those people elected in the next term to prevent such a conflict.

Critics also scoff at the notion that elected officials haven't had a raise in seven years. Because of term limits, most haven't even been in office that long.

Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer took office in January. Of the 51 council members, 34 members have been in office for only four years, and eight have held office for just six months.

"It's a safe bet none of them campaigned in November on a pledge to raise his or her own salary," argued the [Daily News editorial board](#).

Additional reporting by John Pham, Daniel Rivoli, and Shoshana Schwartz

Related Links:

[2006 City Council Member Salaries and Stipends](#)

[Non-City Income for NYC Council Members - 2004](#)

[Advisory Commission for the Review of Compensation Levels of Elected Officials](#)

Do New York Elected Officials Deserve A Raise?

inShare1



Mayor de Blasio along the parade route (photo: @BilldeBlasio)

What should the mayor of New York City be paid each year? How much should City Council members be paid? Do elected officials deserve incremental raises each year?

Or, maybe elected officials are overpaid as it is?

Some, like New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, think higher government salaries would entice “better” people into public service, meaning smarter and more honest officials.

A host of questions have popped up in New York of late as controversy swirls over corruption in Albany and the pay of state legislators - with some, like Schneiderman, calling for pay increases in order to help prevent corruption. Meanwhile, in New York City, these questions are again relevant as Mayor Bill de Blasio, in a move required by law, has called a pay commission to evaluate city elected officials’ salaries.

“Lawmakers need to come up with adequate compensation where you don’t detract people from running for office because salaries are too low, but on the flip side, not too high that the taxpayers who pay those salaries are incensed, Blair Horner, Legislative Director at the New York Public Interest Research Group, told Gotham Gazette.

De Blasio appears to have called the commission reluctantly, as it is always tough public relations for politicians to

move toward giving themselves and their colleagues raises. In the announcement of the three-person panel, de Blasio's only statement is to praise the commissioners. The mayor currently makes \$225,000 per year.

Pay dynamics at the city and state levels are very different in New York, though members of the state Legislature and City Council are all considered part-time and able to earn outside income. There are no term-limits at the state level, while there are in New York City. The mayor is required to call a compensation commission, yet the state is only just moving to such a framework in 2016. Thus, city officials last received a pay raise in 2006, while state officials haven't seen one in over 15 years.

Pay is higher in New York City than at the state level (the governor makes \$179,000 annually), though the cost of living is, of course, higher in the city than any other place in the state. This discrepancy doesn't help state legislators who live in the five boroughs, of course, which is part of the reason we often see state Assembly members seek City Council seats (and earn money from a second job). Members of the state legislature currently earn \$79,500 per year, while a City Council member earns \$112,500 annually.

As always, you'd be hard-pressed to find too many New Yorkers calling for increasing the salaries of elected politicians. With wages stagnant or too low to get by on for so many, elected officials are also reluctant to pursue pay increases, as exemplified by de Blasio's delay in calling the pay commission he recently assembled and the mayor's pledge to not accept any recommended increase until his second term, if he is re-elected.

Not long ago, former Mayor Michael Bloomberg, a billionaire businessman, took \$1 a year to run the city for twelve years. Bloomberg was also reluctant to call a pay commission, which he did leading to the 2006 raises, but refused to do again while in office.

Where do the wages of New York electeds stand now, how do city salaries stack up to those of officials elsewhere, and where may they be heading?

New York City Analysis & Background

The salaries of the mayor, Council members, district attorneys, and other elected officials have not been changed since 2006. Since the cost of living in the city has [increased](#) by about 18 percent since then, the commission is all but certain to recommend increases.

One of the factors the commission will take into consideration is what similar positions in the private sector pay. By that standard, many elected officials may be considered underpaid – for example, the average salary for first-year associates at private law firms in New York City is [\\$160,000](#), while New York City's five district attorneys each make \$190,000.

Elected officials can reject salary increases, and the acceptance or rejection of the commission's recommendations typically takes into account the state of the city's economy and budget at the time. While the city's revenues are quite strong and the budget has been growing rapidly, Mayor de Blasio and many other elected officials have decried income inequality and may be reluctant to exacerbate differences between their salaries and the earnings of lower-income constituents.

In 1991, as [reported](#) by The New York Times, both Mayor David Dinkins and City Council Speaker Peter Vallone Sr. agreed that elected officials should not receive pay increases due to the city's budget crisis.

In 1995, everyone except Public Advocate Mark Green accepted the raises that were approved by the Council and the mayor. Green [said](#) that he could not "in good conscience accept a large salary increase" at a time when he was being forced to fire members of his staff and cut services for those in need.

Former Mayor Mike Bloomberg, a billionaire from his private sector success, accepted just \$1 a year during his time as mayor of New York City, 2002-2013. De Blasio is of much more modest means than Bloomberg, and has two children in college and two mortgages. According to [The New York Post](#), when asked whether Mayor de Blasio

believes raises are justified, a spokesperson said he would “decline” accepting any pay hike “for the duration” of his current term.

Other Cities

At \$225,000 a year, the mayor’s salary is more than four times greater than median household income in New York City, which is \$52,259.

According to the City of Los Angeles salary [database](#), the title of highest-paid mayor in the country belongs to LA Mayor Eric Garcetti, who makes \$239,993 [annually](#). Although Mayor Garcetti makes roughly \$15,000 more per year than Mayor de Blasio, he is responsible for approximately 4.6 million fewer people. (2014 Census estimates put the population of New York City at 8.5 million, and Los Angeles at 3.9 million.)

In New York, City Council members currently make \$112,500, plus stipends, with salaries part of the regular commission review. In Chicago, council members – called aldermen – make approximately \$115,000 annually, and their salaries have been [pegged](#) to changes to the cost of living for the past eight years. Since aldermen can reject taking a salary increase (or decrease, should the cost of living go down), there is an \$11,000 difference between the highest and lowest salaries of Chicago’s 50 aldermen. (Though they are paid similarly, each of those 50 aldermen are responsible for far fewer constituents than New York’s 51 City Council members, given population differences.)

In Los Angeles, the salary for Council members is higher – at \$184,610, Council members make a little over four times the \$49,497 median household income in LA. However, members of LA’s City Council are not allowed to earn income from outside jobs, nor do they receive stipends.

On the state level, meanwhile, at \$79,500 New York state lawmakers have the [third-highest salaries](#) in the country compared to their peers. Lawmakers in California earn the most with a salary of \$90,526 annually, while Pennsylvania’s legislators make \$84,012 per year. Still, state legislators, especially many from New York City, are seeking an increase as the cost of living increases.

De Blasio’s Commission

Albeit a bit late, Mayor Bill de Blasio recently followed the law and [appointed](#) an advisory commission to review the compensation levels of elected officials, including mayor, public advocate, comptroller, borough presidents, City Council members, and district attorneys. The three-person commission will recommend changes to those compensation levels, if warranted, in November.

The salaries of elected officials in New York City have not been reviewed since 2006; former Mayor Mike Bloomberg declined to appoint a commission in 2011. The appointment of an advisory commission in 2006 was itself the result of postponement, since a commission was supposed to be appointed in 2003, but Bloomberg opted to delay appointing a commission since the city was already facing budget cuts.

The 2006 commission’s [recommendations](#) resulted in a salary increase of 25 percent for Council members, bumping their compensation levels from \$90,000 to \$112,500, and increased the mayor’s salary by 15.4 percent, from \$195,000 to \$225,000.

New York City law requires the salaries of elected officials to be reviewed every four years by a trio of private citizens who are generally recognized for their knowledge of management and compensation. This year, the commission includes Fritz Schwarz, Jr., the Chief Counsel at the Brennan Center for Justice, who will chair the Commission; Jill Bright, Chief Administrative Officer at Condé Nast; and Paul Quintero, Chief Executive Office at ACCION EAST, Inc., a nonprofit that works to empower low- to moderate-income business owners with access to capital and financial education.

According to [§3-601](#) of the New York City code, in making its recommendations, the commission will take into consideration: “the duties and responsibilities of each position; the current salary of the position and the length of time since the last change; any change in the cost of living; compression of salary levels for other officers and employees

of the city; and salaries and salary trends for positions with analogous duties and responsibilities both within government and in the private sector.”

Requiring regular commissions and placing the responsibility for recommending salary increases on private citizens are means to quell discontent around the inherently contentious issue of raising the pay of elected officials. Ultimately, the mayor may accept, reject, or amend the findings of the commission, and the City Council votes on any new salaries to approve them into law.

State Level Compensation and Corruption

In April, the state Assembly included the creation of a commission on legislative, judicial, and executive compensation in a [budget bill](#). It [calls for](#) a commission to review the compensation levels of the legislative, judicial, and executive branches to be established every four years. The first, though, will be convened in 2016, and pay raise recommendations could be passed that would go into effect for the new class of legislators come 2017.

The commission will consist of seven members: three appointed by the governor; one appointed by the Senate majority leader; one appointed by the speaker of the Assembly; and two appointed by the chief judge of the Court of Appeals.

Previously, a special commission on compensation had to be empanelled when agreed upon.

However, given the overwhelming unpopularity of any mention of potentially increasing the salaries of government officials, especially given the consistent parade of corruption cases coming out of Albany, their salaries often go unchanged for long periods of time. New York state-level officials have not had their salaries increased since 1999 – a duration that would be uncommon in the private sector and in many public-sector jobs.

A 2014 Quinnipiac University [poll](#) found that a vast majority of New York State voters (82 percent) oppose a pay raise for state legislators. Yet, many experts agree a review of the compensation levels of elected officials is much needed, not only because good compensation levels are necessary to attract skilled people to the positions, but also because it may help deter corruption.

“Compensation, of course, affects the recruitment pool,” said Gerald Benjamin, professor of political science and director of the Benjamin Center at SUNY New Paltz. “You want to attract and retain people of ability, and honest people, therefore the whole compensation question is linked to the corruption question. ‘Why are you stealing from your campaign fund?’ ‘Well, I’m not paid enough.’ If we want to have greater probity we also have to consider greater compensation.”

Former state Assemblymember William Scarborough, a Democrat from Queens, was recently [sentenced](#) to thirteen months in prison for submitting at least \$40,000 in fraudulent state travel vouchers for days he had not actually traveled to Albany. In a [statement](#), Scarborough, who was first elected in 1994, apologized for his actions, blamed “severe financial problems,” and pointed out that state legislators had not received a raise in sixteen years.

Members of the Senate and Assembly currently make a base government salary of \$79,500 per year. (The positions are considered part-time, though, and many legislators make outside income.) The governor of New York makes \$179,000, the attorney general and the comptroller each make \$151,500.

In January, then-Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, a Manhattan Democrat who has been in office for several decades, was charged with five counts of fraud and corruption. Federal investigators allege Silver exploited his position to rake in millions in [bribes and kickbacks](#). And in May, then-Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos, a Republican from Long Island, was [indicted](#) on charges of wire fraud, extortion, conspiracy, and bribe solicitation. Both face trial beginning in November.

Aside from major, and even minor, corruption scandals, there is a perpetual flow of questions about campaign donations, pay-to-play dynamics, and legislators earning outside income and how their non-governmental work may

affect their work for the state.

These ongoing questions and the recent spate of corruption in Albany prompted Attorney General Eric Schneiderman to propose a sweeping ethics reform bill, the [End New York Corruption Now Act](#), which seeks to drastically lower and restrict campaign contribution limits, end outside employment income for legislators, expand terms to four years, and increase legislators' salaries to \$174,000 annually.

Yet the [final legislative package](#) at the end of the 2015 session came and went without including any of Schneiderman's reforms.

Some good government organizations, like the New York Public Interest Research Group, don't agree with all of Schneiderman's propositions. Horner told Gotham Gazette, "We have not endorsed the Attorney General's proposal that state legislators should get the same pay as city lawmakers. Our view is, there's a process. Their salaries should be determined by independent people using basic objective measurements as much as possible, making independent determinations on what is an adequate compensation level for elected officials."

City v State

Two major differences between New York City law and state law are that in New York City, both the mayor and the City Council need to approve the recommendations made by the compensation commission in order for any raises to go into effect. This means that the Council and the mayor are effectively voting to increase their own salaries, since the raises can be retroactive to the date of recommendations. Mayor de Blasio, however, has promised not to take a salary increase until the start of his second term, if he is re-elected to one.

Whereas in the state, the pay commission's recommendations for legislative pay raises will automatically become law and go into effect for the next class of lawmakers, on January 1, 2017, unless the Legislature specifically votes against the increases. The commission's recommendations are due November 15, 2016. To be sure, many of the same officials will be in office in January of 2017 as are in office now, but it is still a difference.

While city officials are not supposed to have control of the regular establishment of a compensation commission, they are able to vote in retroactive salary increases, an ability that has raised eyebrows. In its [report](#), the 2006 quadrennial advisory commission suggested "limiting the ability of government officials to raise their own salaries and receive them immediately would improve the integrity of the government and public confidence in it."

Lulus

The compensation levels of New York City Council members in particular has been hotly debated, since Council members can earn an additional \$5,000 to \$25,000 a year in [stipends](#), or "lulus," for leadership positions, including heading committees and subcommittees. What's more, Council members are the only elected city officials among those included in the commission review that are considered part-time and allowed to earn outside income from another job.

The Speaker of the Council controls the amount and distribution of lulus, which can result in lulus being used to "reward allies and enforce discipline," as former Council Member Walter McCaffrey [stated](#) before the 2006 Quadrennial Commission.

In its report, the 2006 Commission [called](#) lulus "ripe for reform," and recommended that either a future Charter Revision Commission or the Council should consider reforming the practice of awarding extra stipends to Council members.

"There's no question that lulus should be done away with. Lulus are a terrible idea.," Susan Lerner, executive director of Common Cause New York, told Gotham Gazette. "People should be paid an appropriate base salary, and there should not be increases or stipends or special favors given out at the discretion of the speaker. It's a politicized situation and it has all too frequently been used in the past as a way of punishment and reward. It has another negative aspect, which is the creation of committees unnecessarily. It interferes with the well thought out committee

structure. We see that in a much worse way in Albany.”

According to [The New York Times](#), the 2006 advisory commission found that “Outside of New York, almost no other city council or state legislature distributes such stipends.” Even in Congress, every representative earns the same pay regardless of responsibility or seniority.

In 2014, \$376,000 in stipends was doled out to Council members. City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito received \$25,000, while Majority Leader Jimmy Van Bramer was awarded \$20,000 (though he turned it down).

Ten council members were offered \$15,000 apiece and thirty-four others \$8,000 [each](#). Eleven council members have refused to accept the money this year (including Van Bramer), according to the [Daily News editorial board](#), which continues its own ongoing crusade against the lulus.

Upon Mayor de Blasio’s recent announcement of a new compensation commission, Dick Dadey, executive director of Citizens Union, [told](#) The New York Post that he supports elected officials getting raises since “eight years is a long time to go without one,” but pointed out that “the real question isn’t whether they get raises, it’s the size of the raises and whether the commission will look at limiting [elected officials’] outside income and banning ‘lulus.’”

The controversy surrounding stipends for elected officials in New York is not specific to the city, as Horner told Gotham Gazette: “At state level, there are a lot of stipends being divied out, many for positions for which there's not obvious work being done. The stipends are increasingly being used as a way to reward loyalty and seniority and are less about the workload. We don’t object to a stipend being offered if somebody has to do real additional work, but we think there should be a limit on it.”

Professor Benjamin told Gotham Gazette, “Regarding additional compensation, lulus in Albany, I think that this process grew up to compensate leaders in part to make salary adjustments. So, in a small body like the Senate you can give every committee chair something more. In the Assembly, you can reward a lot of people, but not all people. There should be some increment of compensation for leadership positions, but I prefer to have salary equity and less in the way of special payments, with periodic salary adjustments, which would be fair and better.”

Next Steps

Blair Horner, of NYPIRG, told Gotham Gazette that pegging salaries to cost-of-living changes could “unnecessarily exacerbate public citizens. They don’t get to choose if their salaries go up and down. And if what they see in their lives is that their salaries are stagnant but elected officials are going up, they’re going to resent that. It’s hard to do that because it’s a politically charged topic. If you’re going to make changes, it needs to be done in a delicate matter. One way to do that is to maximize independence of who makes the call and focus on publicly defensible metrics.”

Professor Benjamin, who is also currently part of a compensation commission in Ulster County, expressed a similar point of view: “I think having a commission is a good idea.” Benjamin believes, though, that it is important that “sometimes the commission says ‘we won’t increase the pay.’ In my current commission in Ulster County, because the positions are part-time, I advocated for the legislature giving up its health insurance coverage for a significant salary increase. And the effect of that was to link the consideration to the total compensation package.”

“Simple constitutionality requires that policy-makers make the decision about things that government spends, and one of the things that government spends is on their salaries,” Benjamin added.

This year’s New York City advisory commission will report back with its recommendations in November. While it’s clear that the compensation levels of elected officials need to be reviewed from time to time, the announcement of a review commission is generally seen as unfavorable – in this case prompting the New York Post to print [a headline](#) declaring, “Bill de Blasio moves to give himself a raise.”

by Meg O'Connor, Gotham Gazette