



Via Website

Quadrennial Advisory Commission for the Review of Compensation Levels for Elected Officials
Frederick A.O. Schwarz, Jr., Chair
Jill Bright, Commissioner
Paul Quintero, Commissioner
c/o Brennan Center for Justice
161 Avenue of the Americas
New York, New York 10013

Additional Comments

Dear Commissioners,

Common Cause/NY submits these comments supplementing the testimony which we gave at the November 24, 2015 public hearing. We take this opportunity to again thank the Commission for its dedication to transparency and its follow-through on that principle.

1. Scope of Commission Recommendations

We are sensitive to the Commission's concerns that it not overstep its authority. Nevertheless, we believe that the Commission is in a unique position to make recommendations which relate to, but may not be solely limited to, the specific salary level for a particular office. In particular, we believe that a Commission recommendation regarding ending administrative committee stipends (lulus), particularly if the Council receives a substantial raise, and a suggestion that it is time to re-examine whether NYC Charter Sec. 26(c) has been successful in creating more transparency and accountability regarding lulus would have significant positive impact.

2. Retroactivity of Any Proposed Raises

We believe that the Commission should include a recommendation regarding the retroactivity of any recommended raise, particularly in light of the District Attorneys' request that they receive a substantial raise and that it be retroactive to 2011. Common Cause/NY strongly opposes making any recommended raises for any offices retroactive. Those holding office were aware of the salary level for the offices they sought when they chose to run and were elected. Any recommended raises should be *prospective* only. We believe that the Commission should address retroactivity in its recommendations.

3. Timing for Any Proposed Raise

Common Cause/NY agrees with the recommendation of Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer that any raises recommended should be effective as of January 1, 2018. This recommendation follows the example of the 27th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which we believe is the preferred procedure. We believe that adopting 2018 as the prospective date of adoption for recommended raises is a reasonable position and required by basic fairness. Councilmembers voting on their own immediate raises is an obvious conflict of interest which offends the public. Having this Commission make its recommendations far in advance of the next Municipal General Election and have the raise take place after that election is politically astute and desirable for several reasons. It allows passions to cool a bit and encourages the public to evaluate the raise on a more objective basis, while still allowing voters to hold those up for re-election who supported the raise accountable at the ballot box.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Susan Lerner".

Susan Lerner

Executive Director