
Court Officers Benevolent Association Of Nassau County, Inc.

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Billy Imandt
President

Madam Chairperson, Distinguished members of the Senate and the Assembly,

Peter A. Piciulo
1st Vice President

I sat before your committee, at the Hearing on Public Protection, approximately one year ago today and gave you a report on my take as the Union President, of C.O.B.A.N.C., the Court Officer's Benevolent Association of Nassau County about the state of the NYS Courts, downstate and Nassau County in particular.

Michael Riveiro
2nd Vice President

Robert M. Abarno
Treasurer

I told you that 2011 was probably the worst year in my 33-year career as a President, Court Clerk, Court Employee and as a citizen of the great state of New York. Why? Because in 2011 something happened in the Judiciary that we in the court system and the citizens of New York may never recover from.

Rosemarie Hacsí
Secretary

That year we suffered lay-offs, in Nassau county and state-wide, of approximately 20% of our workforce. It is the same year that we were offered 0% compensation during contract negotiations, the first of three consecutive zeros. The seed was also planted to raise Judges salaries, which came to fruition only last year. New discretionary programs were started up carving out a tremendous portion of the budget – and those monies were never replaced. Neither was the personnel.

We are one of the three equal branches of Government and we are being treated like an experimental start-up program. Last year you graciously increased the court budget by 2.4%. That was supposed to go towards bringing back some of the 2,000 workers that were laid off back and towards decent, at least near cost-of-living wage increases to the middle-class court employees.

I'd like you to know how that turned out – a year later. Of the approximate 155 court employees, in Nassau County that were laid off, again, 20% of the Nassau Court workforce, we are actually are down employees from a year ago. Oh, there has been some hiring but with retirements, transfers and promotion to other counties, subtract 2 more employees that we are down from that 20% that we are still down number from the lay-offs of six years ago! Six years of still getting the job done, with 20% less people.

"REPRESENTING NON-JUDICIAL EMPLOYEES IN THE NASSAU COUNTY COURTS"



My members are under-staffed, tired, overworked, underappreciated and woefully underpaid. Again, moral is way down, sickness and absenteeism are up and disciplines are way up, over 200% in my union from just two years ago.

This heartless game that goes on between the Office of Court Administration, OCA, the Legislature and the Governor has got to stop. The Governor mandates a 2% budget increase cap on state agencies and then doesn't even give the Judiciary, again, the ever important third branch of our government, that much. We've averaged 1.3% increases since that edict.

The Court Administrators are fully aware that we need at least a 5% increase this year to properly serve the citizens of New York, but are afraid to ask it of the Legislature – who are afraid to push back at the Governor. And we court workers and the citizens of New York are the ones that suffer.

I know most of you are practicing attorneys and many of you have come to tell me horror stories about the once proud NYS court system. Five years for a misdemeanor jury trial where the maximum penalty for a guilty verdict is one year; eight-year-old foreclosure cases that have cost Long Island over \$300,000,000 in lost property values; matrimonial cases taking over 300% longer to conclude with backlogs due to understaffing; the accused take longer to be arraigned and all civil cases take much longer to conclude.

We are better than that. We have to be. With the billions that the Governor is throwing at all his new projects. There is no excuse not to be. Take care of your foundations before you put on an extension. The Judiciary's foundation is crumbling.

The citizens of New York deserve better than what they are receiving for their tax dollars. You tell us that you can only give the Office of Court Administration what they ask for. Well then, we need you to have meaningful talks with the Office of Court Administration to find out what they really need to operate properly, effectively and efficiently. Again, my numbers say it is at least a 5% increase. Then together we all need to tell the Governor, in no uncertain terms, this is not a request; this is a mandate, our mandate from the citizens of New York State, The NYS Legislature, the Office of Court Administration and all the court workers that I represent.

Sincerely,

Billy Imandt
President
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