

Commentary of the Governor on the Judiciary

In accordance with Article VII, Section 1 of the New York State Constitution, I transmit herewith the appropriations requested by the Judiciary for fiscal year 2016-17. As required by the Constitution, I present the Judiciary budget as it has been submitted by the Chief Judge.

The Judiciary has requested appropriations of \$2.13 billion for court operations, exclusive of the cost of employee benefits. As submitted, disbursements for court operations from the General Fund are projected to grow by \$44.4 million or 2.4 percent. For the past five years, my Administration and the Legislature have kept spending growth below 2 percent, and Executive agency spending flat. Further, Executive agency spending will remain flat for the sixth straight year, during which time the Judiciary spending has grown by over 7 percent.

We collectively have a fiscally responsible goal of controlling excessive spending for all of New York State government to the benefit of its taxpayers. By requesting an increase in excess of 2 percent, the Judiciary is seeking a larger percentage increase than it received last year.

Furthermore, acknowledging the need to evaluate judicial salaries, the recommendations of the New York State Commission on Legislative, Judicial, and Executive Compensation to provide for judicial salary increases on par with federal judges does not abrogate the Judiciary's responsibility to partner with us to maintain overall spending at 2 percent. I applaud the Judiciary for absorbing the first year of recommended Commission on Judicial Compensation salary increases in 2012-13, and I expect that they will again absorb the first year of recommended judicial salary increases within an overall spending level of 2 percent in the 2016-17 budget. Indeed, for the past 3 years, Executive agencies have absorbed the cost of salary increases through productivity improvements and efficiency measures. I strongly urge the Legislature and Judiciary to work together to reduce the Judiciary's budget commensurate with the State's spending growth level of 2 percent.