



MEMO OF SUPPORT

S1571 (Gianaris)

Requires online publishing of NYS judges' financial disclosure statements

January 30, 2023

TITLE OF BILL

An act to amend the Judiciary Law, in relation to requiring the Ethics Commission of the Unified Court System to post judges' annual financial disclosures on the Commission's website.

SUMMARY OF PROVISIONS

Section 1 adds a new subsection (b) to subdivision 4 of section 211 of the Judiciary Law to require that financial disclosures and amendments filed by any state-paid judge or justice to be published on the Ethics Commission website within 30 days of receipt of the statement, or 10 days of receipt of an amendment.

Section 2 sets the effective date as immediate.

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

Reinvent Albany supports this legislation because it increases public access to the financial disclosure statements submitted by NYS judges. Currently, statements [are only available upon written request](#) from the Unified Court System's Ethics Commission. Financial disclosure statements of state legislators and statewide elected officials are published [online by the Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government](#), so we see no reason why statements from judges – many of whom are elected – should not also be published online.

Financial disclosure statements allow the public to see potential conflicts of interest among public officials, and whether governmental decisions being made are being improperly influenced.

We urge the Legislature to pass this bill and [further increase transparency of financial disclosure statements](#) by requiring:

- electronic submission of financial disclosure forms and release of open data;
- economic development entities to file financial disclosure statements;
- disclosures from senior agency officials to be published online; and
- simplified “bands” of income along with limits on use of “not ascertainable” to avoid disclosure.