

## **State Bar of Georgia Legislative Brief Judicial Salary Stagnation**

- **Former Chief Justice William Rehnquist and current Chief Justice John Roberts have identified the inadequacy of judicial salaries as *the single greatest problem facing the Judicial Branch today*.** “Providing adequate compensation for judges is basic to attracting and retaining experienced, well-qualified and diverse men and women to perform a demanding position in the public service.” [See chart on next page: *Georgia salaries vs. national range*.]
- **In Georgia, except for cost-of-living increases, there have been no general jurisdiction judge salary increases since 1999.** Judicial salaries have barely kept pace with inflation, meaning buying power for judges has stagnated. [See chart on next page: *CPI buying power vs. 2006 salary*.]
- **In 2005, the State Bar of Georgia formed a blue-ribbon Commission on Judicial Service to ensure the state can attract lawyers of the highest caliber to serve as judges.** The Commission, chaired by Lawrence C. Walker, Jr., former House Majority leader, determined that the disparity in salaries between judges, top private-practice attorneys, and senior law professors, discourages potential candidates from seeking appointment to the bench. [See chart on next page: *Senior legal practitioners vs. judges*.]
- **Based on the Commission’s *Final Report and Recommendations*, the State Bar of Georgia supports legislative action to:**
  1. *increase judicial compensation by 20% across-the-board;*
  2. *create an independent commission* to regularly review the adequacy of state judicial pay;
  3. *provide travel reimbursement for appellate judges* who live outside Atlanta.
- **The judiciary currently comprises less than 1 percent of the state budget.** The total budget impact of the Commission’s recommendations would be \$5,068,718.

The State Bar of Georgia believes legislative action on these recommendations will help secure fair, adequate, and attractive judicial compensation in Georgia now and in the future.

## Judicial salary comparisons at a glance

### Georgia salaries vs. national range

Position	2006 Georgia salary	Nat'l range/state judges
Justice, supreme court	\$158,000	\$100,884 to \$198,567
Judge, appeals court	\$157,000	\$101,612 to \$170,694
Judge, superior court	\$113,470*	\$94,093 to \$165,200

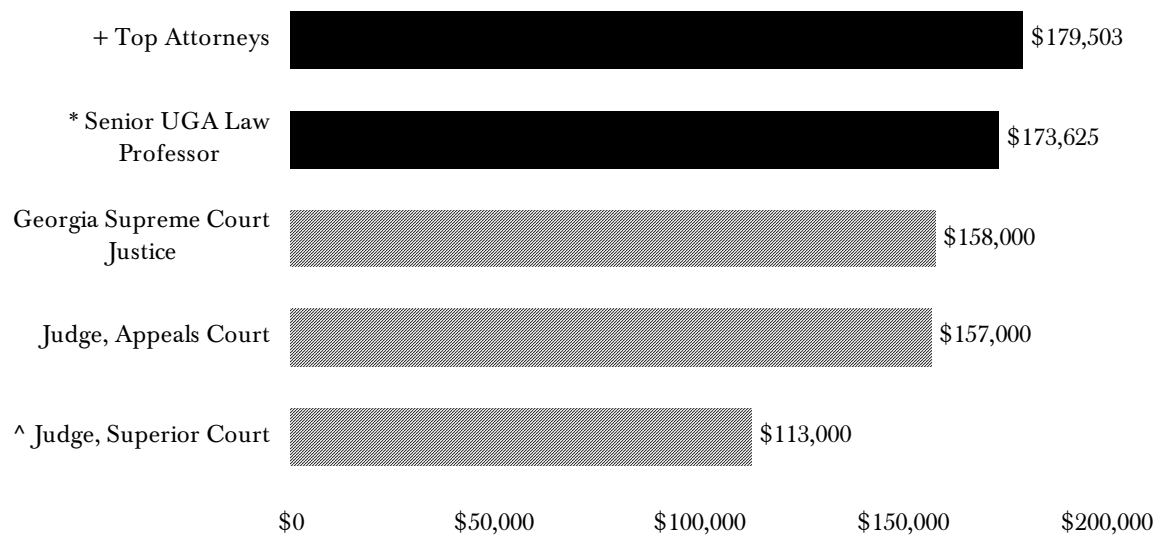
### Inflation calculation

Position	1999 salary	CPI adjustment	2006 salary
Justice, supreme court	\$129,283	\$156,598	\$158,000
Judge, appeals court	\$128,463	\$155,605	\$157,000
Judge, superior court	\$ 99,862*	\$120,968	\$113,470*

Sources: Administrative Office of Courts, National Center for State Courts, U.S. Department of Labor

\* base salary, before supplements

### Senior legal practitioners vs. judges



Note: + statewide average of Attorney III salaries in the 75th percentile

\* average of seven most senior UGA law professors

^ base salary