



Scrutinize

MEMO OF SUPPORT FOR A1100/S3849

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New York's court system is broken. Among the system's biggest problems is that litigating takes too long and is too expensive. Nowhere is this more true than in Manhattan and the Bronx.

Scrutinize's mission is to make state courts more transparent, accountable, and legitimate. We achieve this by analyzing data to reveal judicial decisions and impacts.

The New York State Constitution sets a maximum number of Supreme Court Justices for each judicial district at one per 50,000 individuals counted in the most recent census. However, especially in New York City, the number of lawsuits per individual has increased significantly since the Constitution was adopted in 1939, while the complexity and resources required to dispose of each lawsuit has also increased. In Manhattan and the Bronx, despite having been at the Constitutional maximum number of judges for years, the Supreme Court is notorious for its backlog of cases. This leads to substantial delays in rulings and increased costs for litigants. Worse, judges in other districts are often assigned to do the work of overtaxed districts, reducing both expertise and judicial capacity elsewhere in the state.

A1100/S3849 would simply strike the Constitutional cap on the number of Supreme Court. The concurrent resolution does not itself increase the number of judges in any judicial district. Rather, it gives the legislature the flexibility to set numbers of Justices in each judicial district appropriate to the amount of work that needs to be done, just as they do for every other trial court in the state. This will allow the legislature to ensure speedy justice in New York's Supreme Court, saving litigants both time and money.

Scrutinize strongly supports concurrent resolution A1100/S3849. While other reforms are also necessary, this amendment is vital – and long overdue. For the sake of New York's courts and the litigants that appear in them, we urge the legislature to pass it immediately.