

# State of the City: Delivering Justice

"The law is a majestic edifice sheltering all of us," wrote John Galsworthy, "each stone of which rests on another." The analogy transcends time and jurisdiction—and is particularly relevant in a great city of strivers and strife. New York's judicial system does not begin and end at arbitrary borough lines; state and Federal laws and assistance are very much a part of the city's supporting legal structure.

Principles of fairness to civil litigants and criminal defendants must, of course, remain inviolable—from a small claim in Queens to a felony accusation in the Bronx to a complex commercial decision in Manhattan. But the evolution of business and social behavior from time to time necessitates changes in the statutes and support services to insure that the law remains a shield against injustice and is so perceived. This is one of the times.

The State Legislature in Albany—far more than the City Council in New York—can affect the quality of justice here. In brief, the courts should be unified under a central state administration; the state should assume full responsibility for financing the courts and related services and facilities; the specialized courts should be merged into the State Supreme Court; judges should be appointed by the Governor and Mayor after careful screening, by merit selection instead of elections.

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