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News Coverage on Full or Part Time

Silver's Defense Of Moonlighting Lawmakers

[Nick Reisman](#) ^[1] ^[2] ^[2] ^[2] ^[2]

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Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver reiterated today that there's no talk of a pay raise, but gave a lengthy defense of a part-time Legislature that allows state lawmakers to collect an outside salary on top of their \$79,500 base pay.

Silver, who is "of counsel" to the law firm Weitz and Luxenberg, said the part-time Legislature allows people of all walks of life to get elected.

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"... One of the unique things that we do have the founders of state Constitution provided for a citizen Legislature," Silver told our YNN Rochester colleagues. "They envisioned people who come from different walks of life. A Joe Morelle, who comes from the business community, who's out there understanding the needs of small business because of his involvement in that fashion. There are teachers, lawyers, accountants, undertakers — that's who makes up the state Legislature and their expertise in their own fields contributes to the overall expertise. The salary now is not for full-time job, although most of the people do work full time and when those issues are ultimately raised those will be some of the considerations. But, remember: our founding fathers saw fit to have the public involved in the Legislature not professional politicians who have to vote to keep their jobs."

(Assemblyman Gary Finch, for the record, is the state Legislature's [professional undertaker](#) [4]).

Legislative leaders, including Majority Leader Dean Skelos in the Senate, have denied there's talk of boosting lawmakers' pay, which would certainly come after the general election in November in order for it to take effect for the new legislative session in 2013.

But all have said they feel lawmakers deserve their first pay bump in more than a decade, which was then tied to increasing the number of charter schools in New York.

"I think you're premature in determining that, whether there will even be a pay raise. I think the men and women of the Legislature work hard on both sides of the aisle. You see it here in Rochester, but right now there's no discussion of it," Silver said today.

One suggestion in the past has been raising lawmakers' pay by eliminating the so-called part-time Legislature. Lawmakers tend to get themselves in the most trouble when it comes to their outside dealings. Throwing cold water on the idea is likely the state ethics law that past last year come into effect, lawmakers will have divulge more information about their outside income and the work they do in the private sector.

He also argued that the part-time Legislature affords lawmakers some independence, reasoning they can make tough, unpopular votes without the fear of losing their only job.

"It's happened, but it gives people the independence to be able to do what's right rather than always sending out a poll. We could pass laws by computer if it was a measure of you know, leadership is listening, leadership is also leading. Telling people what's right and doing what's right is just as important as working for your constituents," Silver said.

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