

MBA NEWS

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Blue Ribbon Commission to Examine Prosecutor, Defender Pay

Top leaders will address impact of low salaries on state criminal justice system

BOSTON, Mass. — Massachusetts Bar Association President Douglas K. Sheff has appointed a Blue Ribbon Commission on Criminal Justice Compensation to examine the impact of low prosecutor and public defender salaries on the state's criminal justice system.

The Blue Ribbon Commission is comprised of a select group of leaders from law and business, including former elected representatives and judges. Its members are expected to take up the mantle from the MBA's groundbreaking "Callahan Report," which in 1994 found that an inadequate salary structure hindered the criminal justice system's ability to operate fairly and effectively. With little movement in criminal justice salaries nearly 20 years later, the Blue Ribbon Commission anticipates its report, expected in the next few months, will uncover deeper problems, requiring an urgent response from state legislators.

"The lack of proper compensation in our criminal justice system is not simply a court issue; it is a direct affront to the public's constitutional rights to a fair and speedy trial and effective assistance of counsel," said MBA President Douglas K. Sheff. "It is my sincere hope that the Blue Ribbon Commission's forthcoming report, containing the recommendations of some of our most respected and forward-thinking leaders, will spark the appropriate action in the commonwealth that this critical issue deserves."

The commission is chaired by Richard P. Campbell, MBA Past President. Commission members include Denise Squillante, MBA Past President; William D. Delahunt, former Congressman and District Attorney for Norfolk County; Hon. Suzanne V. DelVecchio (ret.) former Chief Justice Superior Court, mediator, Commonwealth Mediation; Gerard T. Leone, partner, Nixon Peabody and former District Attorney, Middlesex County; Hon. Charles Johnson, Chief Justice, Boston Municipal Court; Richard Lord, Chief Executive Officer and President, Associated Industries of Massachusetts; and Martin W. Healy, MBA Chief Legal Counsel and Chief Operating Officer, who serves as commission counsel.

Incorporated in 1911, the Massachusetts Bar Association is a nonprofit organization that serves the legal profession and the public by promoting the administration of justice, legal education, professional excellence and respect for the law. The MBA represents a diverse group of attorneys, judges and legal professionals across the commonwealth.