



PRESS RELEASE

**New York State
Unified Court System**

**Hon. Lawrence K. Marks
Chief Administrative Judge**

**Contact:
Lucian Chalfen, Public Information Director
Arlene Hackel, Deputy Director
(212) 428-2500**

www.nycourts.gov/press

Date: November 17, 2017

Judicial Task Force on the NYS Constitution to Reconvene with A Focus on Court System Reforms That May Be Achieved Via the Legislative Process

New York – Following last week’s decision by New York voters against holding a convention to amend the State Constitution, Chief Judge Janet DiFiore, as part of her Excellence Initiative, today announced that a distinguished panel of judges, attorneys and academics formed last year to study the potential benefits to the courts of holding a constitutional convention will reconvene, shifting its efforts on reforms – that may be advanced legislatively – to make the courts more efficient.

In New York, the State Constitution may be amended in either of two ways: (1) by a proposal of a revision by act of the Legislature; or (2) via a convention, a gathering of elected delegates who propose changes to the State Constitution. Each process for amending the State Constitution is subject to voter approval.

In July 2016 – in anticipation of this year’s vote on whether to hold a constitutional convention – Chief Judge DiFiore created the Judicial Task Force on the New York State Constitution to ensure that the New York Judiciary was fully prepared to address the complex issues that would impact the courts were New Yorkers to elect to proceed with a constitutional convention.

Led by Ninth Judicial District Administrative Judge Alan D. Scheinkman and Dennis E. Glazer, a retired partner of Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP, the Task Force conducted a thorough review of the Judiciary Article of the State Constitution, which sets the structure, organization and jurisdiction of the New York Courts.

Going forward, the Task Force members will work to identify reforms, for consideration by the Legislature, toward streamlining the court system's byzantine structure (comprising multiple levels of trial courts) and otherwise enhancing the New York Courts' efficiency and accessibility.

"Constitutional reforms should be considered where necessary to remove roadblocks to improving the work of the courts and to make court operations more efficient and less costly to the taxpayers and the litigants. The members of the Judicial Task Force on the New York State Constitution, with their deep understanding of New York State government, are uniquely positioned to contribute to this reform initiative. Thus, I have asked the Task Force to resume its work, this time identifying practical constitutional reforms that may be achievable through the legislative process. I am grateful to the Task Force for its thoughtful insights to date and look forward to its renewed efforts in support of the fair, timely administration of justice in New York," said Chief Judge DiFiore.

"I am honored to resume my role as co-chair of this distinguished panel, and eager to work with the Task Force members as we seek legislative solutions in addressing constitutional barriers to effective, less costly court and case management," said Judge Scheinkman.

"The work of the Chief Judge's Task Force survives the referendum vote. We now have an opportunity to focus on specific changes to the Judiciary Article that will streamline our court system and improve the quality of justice for the people of the State," said Task Force member Richard Brodsky, a New York University senior fellow and retired New York State Assembly member.

The Task Force is expected to reconvene before year's end.

A full membership roster is attached.

#

The Judicial Task Force on the New York State Constitution

Co-Chairs

Hon. Alan D. Scheinkman
Administrative Judge, Ninth Judicial District

Dennis Glazer, Esq.
Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP (retired)

Members

Hon. Ariel E. Belen, Mediator and Arbitrator, Judicial Arbitration and Mediation Services, Inc. (JAMS); retired Appellate Division, Second Dept., Justice

Professor Gerald Benjamin, Associate Vice President for Regional Engagement, SUNY New Paltz

Christopher Bopst, Esq., co-author of treatise on the New York State Constitution

Hon. Richard Brodsky, Senior Fellow at NYU's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service; retired member of the New York State Assembly

John P. Cahill, Esq., Counsel, Chadbourne & Parke LLP

Hon. Craig Doran, Administrative Judge, Seventh Judicial District

Carey R. Dunne, Esq., General Counsel, Office of the New York County District Attorney

Peter J. Galie, Professor of Political Science, Canisius College, co-author of treatise on the New York State Constitution

Henry M. Greenberg, Esq., Greenberg Traurig LLP

Roberta A. Kaplan, Esq., Partner, Kaplan and Co. LLP

Hon. Howard A. Levine, Senior Counsel, Whiteman Osterman & Hanna LLP; retired New York State Court of Appeals Judge

Hon. Milton Tingling, New York County Clerk

Counsel

Marc Bloustein, Esq., First Deputy Counsel, Office of Court Administration

William D. Marsillo, Esq., Boies, Schiller & Flexner LLP

#