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Levy proposes lowering raises for supervisors

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Santa Cruz County supervisors may reduce the amount of their own annual salary raise by 55 percent under a proposal by Supervisor Robley Levy.

The supervisors currently receive the same dollar amount of whatever annual raise the state grants Superior Court judges. The raise is written into a county ordinance as automatic, meaning the supervisors have never had to take a public vote on the matter since 1986, when they approved the ordinance.

Levy has proposed in a March 16 letter to her board colleagues that the automatic raise be reduced from now on to 45 percent of the dollar amount the judges get.

Supervisors currently earn \$42,072 a year, plus health benefits.

Their last raise, which kicked in Jan. 1, 1987, amounted to \$3,260. While that dollar amount constituted a 4 percent raise for the judges, who make almost twice what the supervisors do, it was an 8.4 percent raise for the supervisors.

Levy proposes that the reduced raise would go into effect for the first pay period of the new fiscal year, which begins July 1. It is assumed that by that time the state will have given Superior Court judges a raise, so the supervisors will be able to measure off their portion.

In her letter Levy said her

proposal would "ensure fair and equitable compensation for board members."

Levy appears to be borrowing an idea from new Supervisor Jan Beutz in proposing the reduction. Beutz campaigned strongly on the notion that the

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supervisors were lapping too greedily at the public trough through their automatic pay increases.

In recent months, supervisors in other counties have met with strong public protest when attempting to give themselves raises.

Alameda County supervisors voted late last year to raise their \$37,000 annual salaries by 71 percent to \$63,000, but reversed their vote about a month later after public outcry.

San Mateo County supervisors currently make \$50,584 a year and wanted to raise their own salaries to \$61,917 a year, but, like the U.S. Congress, backed down in the face of public protest.