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To the Editor:

It is quite true that the dangerously low rates for assigned counsel in Family Court matters must be raised. But contrary to your Feb. 26 editorial, taking this step will hardly constitute "Facing Up to New York's Court Crisis."

Not only does the compensation of appointed counsel in criminal cases have to be increased to forestall the entire system's being judged in violation of the federal Constitution, but the Court of Appeals also needs to act to invalidate the illegal reduction that was imposed on defense attorneys' rates in capital cases.

More generally, truly facing up to New York's court crisis requires replacing the entire byzantine organizational tangle of the system -- which promotes inefficiency, cronyism and injustice -- with the same sort of simple, transparent, functional structure that virtually every other state has managed to achieve.

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Hempstead, N.Y., Feb. 26, 2001

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