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## Behind Judge's Spending and Income

By JO BECKER  
Published: June 5, 2009

When [John G. Roberts Jr.](#) was named to the [Supreme Court](#), he had a net worth of more than \$6 million, accumulated during his lucrative years in private practice. When [Samuel A. Alito Jr.](#) was appointed, he had a net worth of more than \$2 million, even though he had spent his entire professional career either in government or on the bench.

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So how is it that Judge [Sonia Sotomayor](#), nominated by [President Obama](#) to follow those two men onto the nation's highest court, reported a net worth of just \$740,000 this week, with no stocks or bonds and a savings account of \$31,985, just marginally more than she owes her dentist and credit card companies?

To start with, although Judge Sotomayor became a partner during her eight years at the New York law firm Pavia & Harcourt before becoming a federal district judge in 1992, her salary in her final year at the firm was \$151,761, a far cry from the \$776,000 that Justice Roberts reported pulling down in his last full year at the Washington-based law firm Hogan & Hartson.

Between her salary as a circuit court judge and the money she made as a lecturer at [Columbia University](#) Law School, Judge Sotomayor made \$205,330 last year. Still, the judge, divorced and with no children, does live in Greenwich Village, one of the more expensive neighborhoods in perhaps the most expensive city in the country. Just parking a car here — she drives a white Saab convertible — can cost hundreds of dollars a month.

Judge Sotomayor bought her four-room, 980-square-foot apartment in 1998 for \$360,000, records show — a price comparable to others sold in the building around that time.

Today, Judge Sotomayor values the apartment at just under \$1 million, but records show that after refinancing several times, she owes \$381,775 on her mortgage. In addition, the judge helps support her mother and her mother's husband, the White House said. For [estate](#)

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[planning](#) purposes, the White House said, Judge Sotomayor owns one-third of their Florida condominium, a stake she valued at \$20,000 in the questionnaire she submitted to the Senate this week.

Besides living in an expensive area of the country, Judge Sotomayor has a taste for nice things and is an avid traveler.

Her destinations have ranged from the Caribbean to the Galápagos Islands, and she has been known to stop in at a casino on vacation. Last year, she reported hitting an \$8,283 jackpot while visiting a Florida casino with her mother; a White House spokeswoman, [Stephanie Cutter](#), said the judge was not a regular gambler, though she added jokingly, "She is lucky."

Judge Sotomayor has been described in interviews as an interior decorating buff who loves to shop. And she is a frequent patron of Manhattan restaurants, sometimes picking up the tab for dinner with clerks in SoHo or at Chinatown places like Joe's Shanghai.

Her Christmas preparations have become legendary among friends and former clerks. Each year, according to the White House, she buys more than 60 presents for her nieces, nephews, god-children, friends' children and members of the court staff — including custodians and cafeteria workers — and avidly discusses with her clerks what items are popular with younger people.

Matthew Colangelo, who clerked for the judge in 2002-3, recalled her delight in finding the right gift, as well as the annual holiday party she used to give in the hallway near her office before it got too big. "Besides providing the food, and I think a D.J., she insisted that everyone come, not just the judges and the clerks but the deputies, marshals and building maintenance," he said.

Another former clerk, Charu Chandrasekhar, who worked for the judge in 2004-5, said, "It was a shock to me to see that her assets were as small as they were, just given the way that she always was so unstinting with everyone."

Despite her modest savings, Judge Sotomayor has a financial cushion — after 65, as a federal judge, she is entitled to a pension equal to her annual salary.

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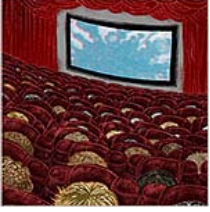


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