

Up Date

'Excessive' fee

In November of last year three high-ranking state officials were charged with contempt of a federal court for not making court-ordered changes at the Willowbrook Developmental Center.

The officials, Dr. Lawrence C. Kolb, Thomas A. Coughlin and Dr. Alvin M. Mesnikoff, all of the Department of Mental Hygiene, eventually beat the charges, but to do it they had to hire an attorney from a Wall Street law firm at \$100 an hour.

What was the final fee for attorney Taylor Briggs?

A spokesman for state Controller Arthur Levitt says that Levitt felt the \$100-an-hour fee was "excessive." The contract has been returned to Briggs for negotiation. "There has to be a meeting of the minds on a new fee," the spokesman says.