



**National Association of Judiciary Interpreters  
& Translators**

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June 3, 2009

Hon. Rick Perry  
Office of the Governor  
P.O. Box 12428  
Austin, Texas 78711-2428

RE: H.B. No. 4445, Relating to the Licensing and Appointment of Certain Court Interpreters

Dear Governor Perry:

On behalf of the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT), I write to express our concerns with H.B. No. 4445. For over 30 years, our organization has advocated nationally for the highest standards of interpreting and translation services in legal settings in order to ensure due process and equal justice for all.

H.B. No. 4445, which recently passed the Texas Senate and will be appearing on your desk shortly, establishes two classes of licensed interpreters in Texas courts:

- **Basic** interpreters licensed to practice in justice and municipal courts, and
- **Master** interpreters licensed to practice in all Texas courts.

We have been advised that Master and Basic interpreters would take the same qualifying examination that licensed Texas interpreters now take, and that interpreters scoring the current passing score (which represents the minimum acceptable proficiency) would qualify as Master interpreters. Those achieving some lower score would be designated Basic interpreters.

It is also of concern that although Texas is a member of the National Center for State Courts Consortium for State Court Interpreter Testing, this new legislation would lower the standards for the designation “Master Interpreters” as it applied in the other Consortium states, where it is reserved for interpreters who have passed the Consortium exam with a score of 80% or higher. For one state to suddenly re-designate interpreters who have passed the exam with a score of only 70% as a “Master Interpreter” undermines the Consortium efforts to develop a uniform national standard.

NAJIT and its members join our Texas colleagues in opposing this bill. Rather than facilitating the hiring of lesser-qualified individuals, presumably at a lower rate, Texas

should be encouraging the professional development of its cadre of foreign language interpreters.

H.B. 4445 would establish a two-tiered system of justice in Texas for its Limited English Proficient (LEP) defendants, victims, witnesses and litigants. Individuals who must rely on the services of Basic interpreters may receive a lower quality of justice than those enjoying the services of Master interpreters, in violation of some of the most basic and fundamental rights granted by our Constitution. Justice and municipal courts that use Basic interpreters will likely create a record that is more prone to error, and more likely to be subject to reversal on appeal.

We urge you to veto H.B. 4445 when it reaches your desk.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rosemary W. Dann". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Rosemary W. Dann, Esq., Chair  
National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators