



## National Association of Judiciary Interpreters & Translators

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April 25, 2013

Senator Jackie Winters  
Representative Jennifer Williamson  
Co-chairs, Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee for Public Safety  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

[Sen.JackieWinters@state.or.us](mailto:Sen.JackieWinters@state.or.us)

[Rep.JenniferWilliamson@state.or.us](mailto:Rep.JenniferWilliamson@state.or.us)

Via USPS and email

Re: Court Interpreter Compensation

Dear Senator Winters and Representative Williamson:

I write as chair of the Advocacy Committee of NAJIT, the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators. NAJIT's mission is to promote quality services in the field of legal interpreting and translating. Our members play a critical role in ensuring due process, equal protection, and equal access for non-English or limited English proficient (LEP) individuals who interact with the judicial system.

NAJIT is the largest American organization of judiciary interpreters and translators. Our aims include: the promotion of professional standards of performance and integrity for court and legal interpreters and translators; wider recognition for the profession of judiciary interpreting and translating; and the enunciation of positions on matters affecting the advancement and interest of the profession of court and legal interpreting as a whole. NAJIT's advocacy committee is charged with monitoring developments relating to legal interpreting and translating and advocating for appropriate standards and procedures.

We believe that court interpreters should be held to high standards of performance, and should be able to demonstrate their competence through certification programs such as are administered by the State of Oregon and other member states of the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts. In order for interpreters to be able to afford to practice at the high levels expected of them, they must be justly compensated. Therefore it is important that Oregon bring standard interpreter pay up to a level that reflects both the expertise required and the increased cost of living. We urge you to consider and support the following suggestions:

- The current pay rate for certified spoken-language interpreters is woefully inadequate at \$32.50 per hour. This rate was set in 1995, when it was equivalent to \$46.49 in today's dollars. The pay rate should be \$50.00 per hour.
- The current pay rate for registered (not certified) interpreters is now \$25.00 per hour; it should be \$38.00.
- Rates for Sign Language interpreters were set in 2011, and are appropriate at \$55.00 per hour.
- Bearing in mind that registered interpreters may not be certified only because no certification examination exists for their language pair, and that scarcity of interpreters may be a factor in any language, pay rates should be negotiable upward for all interpreters.
- Pay rates should be indexed for inflation, so as to avoid having pay rates becoming as out of line with economic conditions as they seem to be at present.

One cause of unnecessary expense to the courts and to the administration of justice in general is the fact that LEP (Limited English Proficient) persons are frequently sent court correspondence in English. Not understanding this correspondence, which may be, for example, a notice to appear or an order to comply with some requirement, the LEP person fails to comply; the court then issues a warrant, police agencies arrest the LEP person, yet another court appearance is docketed, etc. This extra activity and expense might be avoided if court correspondence were intelligible to the LEP person. Therefore:

- We suggest that commonly used documents be translated for transmission to LEP persons. A side-by-side two-column approach may be workable; alternatively, the English document could be printed on the front of each sheet while the reverse side bears the translation.

Thank you for allowing us to be heard on this important legislative matter. If there is anything that we can clarify for you, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John M. Estill". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

John M. Estill  
Chair, NAJIT Advocacy Committee