



National Association of Judiciary Interpreters & Translators
2002 Summit Blvd., Suite 300
Atlanta, GA 30319
ph: 404-566-4705

November 8, 2022

Hon. Roslynn R. Maukopf
Director
Administrative Office of the United States Courts
One Columbus Circle, NE
Washington, D.C. 20544

Dear Director. Maukopf:

The National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators promotes professional standards in court interpreting and legal translation. Our members include interpreters and translators, judicial officers and administrators, language service providers, academics, and interpreting and translation students.

We are in receipt of correspondence from federally certified contract court interpreters asking us to support their request for compensation commensurate with the profession's knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs). Federal courts throughout the nation rely significantly on contract interpreters to enable your courts' services to be meaningfully accessible for your limited-English-proficient (LEP) constituencies as mandated by federal laws. We trust that this also means you are committed to providing appropriate levels of compensation to the professionals upon whom you are so dependent.

The policy as set by the Judicial Conference in the salary grade of staff, court-interpreter positions is JSP-14 [https://www.uscourts.gov/sites/default/files/reports_of_the_proceedings_1989-09_0.pdf]. The valuation is consistent with a court interpreter compensation report [<https://najit.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Compensation-of-Court-Interpreters-in-the-State-of-New-York.pdf>], which reveals a level of KSAs that require 8 years of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) to reach native-like fluency and at least 4 years of college. The 12 years of education for interpreters comes close to the education needed for medical doctors.

When it comes to federal court contractors there are two jobs that require an analogous set of KSAs as those required for law clerks and staff interpreters: the jobs of CJA (Criminal Justice Act) attorneys and freelance interpreters. You have the authority to prescribe and periodically update a schedule of reasonable fees for services rendered by interpreters in proceedings instituted by the United States under 28 U.S.C. § 1827(b)(3) of the Court Interpreters Act. As such, we respectfully encourage you to conduct your deliberations being guided in part by the committee research and recommendations taken into account by the Judicial Conference, vis-à-vis the staff interpreter JSP-



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14 pay grade, and the mentioned court interpreter compensation report. Perhaps you would consider it appropriate to establish a separate pay scale for freelance interpreters in capital cases, since court interpreters will need to prepare for the specialized terminology they will encounter from law enforcement, expert witnesses as well as regional and dialectal variations in languages. Lastly, we certainly hope that you periodically update a schedule of reasonable fees for services rendered by interpreters. 2015 is the last time federal contract interpreters received a raise.

The Federal Courts have served as the lodestar for court interpreting practices since 1980 through the development of the FCICE and the commensurate increases in compensation that federally certified court interpreters—both staff and contract—began to receive as a result. Many jurisdictions look up to the AOUSC and consider many of its policies and practices models worthy of emulation. The FCICE as a testing model was adapted by states working with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) when they developed their test model in 1995 and ensuing years. As to compensation of contract interpreters, when New Jersey created its contract interpreter policy in 1995 its rates were anchored to the rates promulgated by the AOUSC. We hope you never lose sight of how important your leadership role is in this misunderstood and undercompensated field.

Thank you very much for considering our input. We wish you the very best as you seek the course of action that will best benefit your courts, the LEP communities you serve, and the professionals on whom you rely. If there is any assistance we might provide, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

The NAJIT Board of Directors

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