



National Association of Judiciary Interpreters & Translators
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November 8, 2022

Hon. Michael G. Heavican
Chief Justice
Nebraska Supreme Court
Nebraska State Capitol Room 2214
Lincoln, NE 68509

Dear Chief Justice Heavican:

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 certified contract court interpreters in the Nebraska state courts asking us to support their request for compensation commensurate with the profession's knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs). Your [2019 Language Access Plan](#)—one of the better plans we have seen—makes it clear that the Nebraska Supreme Court is committed to ensuring that LEP individuals can participate meaningfully in Judicial Branch programs and services using qualified interpreters at no personal cost. We hope this signals a commitment to providing appropriate levels of compensation to the professionals upon whom you are so dependent.

We respectfully encourage you to conduct your deliberations being guided in part by the following considerations. First, court interpreting is a highly skilled profession whose competencies are widely underappreciated and undervalued. The fact that statistics on court interpreter certification exams reveal failing rates ranging from 80-95% is an indication of how extensive the knowledge, skills and abilities are and how so few candidates possess a sufficient mastery of those KSAs to pass the test. The low passing rate reflects the sophistication of the profession, not the level of difficulty of the test—which is a valid and reliable measure of one's ability to demonstrate performance of the requisite aspects of the work at the most basic, entry level.

You may find it helpful to consult the following empirical study of court interpreter compensation. The study's data was collected in late 2013. While they may be somewhat dated, these data constitute the only national analysis of court interpreter compensation for staff and/or contract court interpreters. A summary of the findings, "Interpreter Compensation in the Courts," was published in the Winter 2016 issue of [Court Manager](#) (see especially pp.14-15) and a detailed listing of contract interpreter payment practices in the nation's courts (see Tables 21 and 22 in "Listings and Statistics") may be found in Part Two of this [Compensation Database](#).



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Perhaps looking at the salary structures for federal court staff in relation to your staff positions would be helpful. For instance, in the federal courts, the court interpreter job title is compensated as much as the law clerk job title and above the job titles of court reporter and courtroom clerk. This valuation in job-title compensation is consistent with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's [job classifications](#), which lists both interpreters and lawyers as professionals, and court reporters and court clerks as "administrative support workers."

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 community you serve, and the professionals on whom you rely. If there is any further assistance we might provide, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

The NAJIT Board of Directors

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