

NAJIT Supports California Interpreter Bill 1856

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At NAJIT's annual meeting held in Miami Beach on May 19, 1996, the California Federation of Interpreters or CFI (formerly known as GLAC) stated its case on Senate Bill 1856 before an international array of judiciary interpreters.

As a CFI representative, I recounted the events that led up to SB 1856 and reviewed GLAC's collective bargaining history spanning from 1976 to 1991, during which period GLAC had routinely negotiated memorandums of understanding with the courts of Los Angeles.

In 1991, the courts refused to negotiate a new memorandum establishing pay rates, a productivity bonus, a grievance procedure and working conditions. Subsequently, compensation for mileage, parking, overtime and continuing education activities was eliminated. Los Angeles interpreters then voted to file a writ of mandamus in the Court of Appeals for settlement of our status, and we lost the battle. The Appellate Court, recognizing that court interpreters should be entitled to negotiate, directed GLAC to seek legislative relief; hence, the creation of SB 1856, which requires the county courts to negotiate with interpreters.

In addition to bringing the NAJIT Board of Directors and membership up to date on the history behind the bill, I announced CFI's first victory in getting SB 1856 passed by the Senate Judiciary Committee. At the time

of the NAJIT conference, the bill was held up in the Senate Appropriations Committee, pending passage of a state budget; since then, the bill has been passed and is currently awaiting approval by the State Assembly.

After we succeeded in garnering support from a thousand signatories, including interpreters and court personnel, individual judges and judicial associations, community organizations such as MALDEF, professional associations such as the California Court Reporters Association and the Translators and Interpreters Guild, as well as from multicultural bar associations (Mexican-American, Korean, Chinese, Cuban-American), it was gratifying to hear NAJIT's official letter of support being read to the membership by outgoing NAJIT President Mirta Vidal. At that moment, I remembered the support NAJIT gave to the Chicago interpreters during their legislative struggles, and I felt proud to belong to NAJIT, an organization that stands behind local court interpreter associations in their efforts to seek just treatment and compensation. I firmly believe that we educate our state institutions when we politicize and organize for equity. Thank you, NAJIT, for your proven commitment to us as association members and professionals. We of CFI commend you.

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