

## STATE ROUND-UP: HAWAII

March 11, 2005

Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair  
House Committee on Judiciary  
Honolulu, Hawaii

Re: **SUPPORT**, SB 979/HB 1191, Relating to Court Interpreters

Dear Representative Luke:

The National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT), founded in 1978, is the only nationwide organization of court interpreters. Current membership stands above 1,100.

We include among our stated purposes: a) to advocate training and certification of interpreters through competent and reliable methodologies, b) to promote professional standards of performance and integrity, and c) to advance the highest quality services.

Certification is an objective, science-based method of testing to ensure that court interpreters meet *minimum standards* of competence. It is essential to assure the provision of competent, cost-effective court interpreter services. These services are fundamental to equal access to the courts and linguistic due process for the deaf and Limited English Proficient (LEP).

We agree with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) Consortium for State Court Interpreter Certification publication, *"Court Interpretation: Model Guides for Policy and Practice in the State Courts,"* NCSC, 1995, pages 12+ and 89: "To address the causes of problems with court interpreting, comprehensive, state-wide mechanisms and procedures need to be formalized by statute..." "Formalized testing of language and interpreting proficiency (certification testing) is the best way to assess interpreter qualifications." (Available from MACROBUTTON HtmlResAnchor [www.ncsconline.org/D\\_Research/CourtInterp.htm](http://www.ncsconline.org/D_Research/CourtInterp.htm)).

The Judiciary began studying court interpreter issues in 1994 and joined the Consortium in 1997. After eleven years, the Judiciary needs this legislation to finally implement a certification program. SB 979 (HB 1191) is a good bill, largely based on the Model Act in the NCSC report cited above. It is the minimum needed. For the first time, it will put Hawaii on track to improve the quality of court interpreter services. With SB 617 (HB 498), Hawaii will be able to create a meaningful, effective, cost-conscious and legally defensible court interpreting program.

Hawaii's membership in the Consortium provides access to training expertise and tests. We urge Hawaii to use the resources for which the State has been paying since 1997, first with a membership fee of \$25,000, and since 2004 with an annual fee of \$2,500. Hawaii's taxpayers have the right to expect results for their money, and Hawaii's LEP population has the right to expect justice now.

NAJIT understands that Hawaii has a core group of people who are prepared to take and pass a court interpreter examination. The Center for Interpretation and Translation Studies at UH-Manoa graduated people from its conference interpreter program in Japanese, Mandarin, and Spanish in the early 1990s. In 1991, Spanish interpreters formed a study group. Interpreters in Korean and Vietnamese have purchased study materials and are preparing themselves. These conscientious people deserve a chance to take an exam without any further delay.

Now is the time for action. Please pass SB 979 (HB 1191) and SB 617 (HB 498) when they crossover from the Senate.

Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Alexander Raïnof, Ph.D.  
Chair, NAJIT Board of Directors



## New Translation Program in Los Angeles



California State University, Northridge is proud to offer a new program in translation starting in fall 2005. Learn how to use your bilingual skills for financial success and upward mobility – and a college degree is not required.

**Join us for a free orientation on  
August 20th, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.**  
Registration is required, and a \$4 parking charge will apply.

**For information and reservations, please contact The Roland Tseng College of Extended Learning at (800) 328-9900.**

The Roland Tseng College of Extended Learning | California State University  
**Northridge**