

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Advocacy Committee

NAJIT opposes lawsuit filed by ProEnglish

October 14, 2004

The Honorable Barry Ted Moskowitz
U.S. District Court
Southern District of California

**RE: PRELIMINARY INJUNCTION AND LAWSUIT
CHALLENGING THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES MANDATORY TRANSLATION AND
INTERPRETATION RULES**

Case Number: 04CV1748

Dear Judge Moskowitz,

The National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT), a professional association of language specialists in the legal field, with extensive expertise in the medical field as well (the two fields are closely interrelated), is strongly opposed to the request for a preliminary injunction in a lawsuit filed by ProEnglish, challenging the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HSS) mandatory translation and interpretation rules due to professional and humanitarian considerations.

Our association was founded in 1979 and currently has over 1,000 members who work daily to bridge the language gap and assist in providing meaningful access to public services for limited English proficient (LEP) or non-English speakers throughout the United States. Our members are in a unique position to see how often access to accurate translation and interpretation in medical situations is compromised for limited English speakers, despite Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of national origin.

According to the 2000 Census, nearly 47,000,000 people, or 18 percent of the population over five years of age, speak a language other than English at home. These numbers are projected to continue to increase in every state in the nation. Catastrophic events take place in the health sector when adequate language access is not provided and are reported with alarming frequency across the nation. The high cost, in terms of lives, human dignity and dollars, has become an issue of national concern.

NAJIT fully supports Executive Order 13166 (E.O. 13166), which has maintained bipartisan support since it was signed by President Clinton and reaffirmed by President Bush. Our organization supports full implementation of the policy guidelines issued by the Department of Health and Human Services in order to ensure equal access to important medical services and programs to all non-English speaking and LEP persons.

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

NAJIT supports bill prohibiting child interpreters

August 18, 2004

The Honorable Dede Alpert
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee

RE: AB 292, Prohibiting the Use of Children as Interpreters

Dear Senator Alpert:

On behalf of the National Association of Judicial Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT), I urge you to support passage of Assembly Bill 292, prohibiting the use of children as interpreters by California state departments and agencies, and by organizations receiving state funding. The bill is presently in your committee on suspense.

It has become all too common for children to be used as interpreters for their parents and families as a matter of convenience for service providers. The effects on children can be devastating, and they should not be used as intermediaries in situations concerning legal matters, domestic violence, health issues or family concerns. This may lead to children missing school and being subjected to issues, terms, and conditions that they do not understand. It may lead to critical misinformation, serious and even life-threatening error.

AB 292 creates policy appropriate for California, reflecting our diversity and our responsibility for our children. Please release this bill so that children are removed from potentially traumatizing, dangerous and inappropriate situations.

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

Education Committee

Student Outreach Program Seeking: T&I program info

We are in the process of collecting information about translation and interpretation programs active in the U.S. at this time. If you know of a local T&I program at a community college or other educational institution, please send the contact information to studentoutreach@najit.org. Thanks for your help!

Vanessa Ieraci, Chair of the Student Outreach Program,
a project of the NAJIT Education Committee