

NAJIT NEWS

Committee News Advocacy Committee

January 3, 2007

Hon. Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor of California
State Capitol, First Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Equal Access to Justice

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

On behalf of the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT), I thank you for recognizing the importance of access to justice for all Californians, and especially the need for civil court interpreters. As you prepare your budget proposal for the coming year, I urge you to provide funds for court interpreters in civil cases. I commend the collective wisdom and foresight of the bipartisan supporters of this issue and its funding.

California's linguistic and cultural diversity is among the state's greatest assets and has helped make California an international leader in business, entertainment, engineering, medicine, tourism, and more. This diversity also poses unique challenges in providing effective delivery of government services, particularly in the courts.

It is essential to assure qualified interpreters in civil as well as criminal cases (where they are already provided by law) in order to provide meaningful access to California's nearly seven million limited English proficient residents. In the many child custody and domestic violence cases that are tried in California's Civil Courts, use of qualified interpreters is essential to protecting the civil rights of the victims.

The use of qualified interpreters is also essential to eliminating wasteful expenditures. NAJIT is cognizant of budget limitations, and therefore, emphasizes that cost savings to state government can be achieved through the use of qualified interpreters. Language assistance in civil cases would improve the operation of the judicial system by reducing the amount of courtroom time for hearings, ensuring that non-English-speaking litigants appear more consistently at subsequent hearings, substantially reducing delays and the backlog in some areas.

The lack of civil interpreters negatively impacts the efficient administration of justice, therefore costing the state unnecessarily. The lack of language assistance can result in severe and costly consequences affecting safety, health, families, property, and finances. Inadequate resources to assist litigants with limited English proficiency affects the court's ability to function properly, causing inefficient and costly delays in proceedings for all court users, inappropriate defaults, and faulty interpretation that can ultimately subvert justice. Our failure to provide interpreters also increases the demands placed on our judges.

California's economic and social well-being depends on a healthy civil justice system. Please support funding for interpreters in civil courts.

Sincerely,
Alexander Rainof, Ph.D.
Chair, Board of Directors
National Association of Judiciary
Interpreters and Translators

cc. Chris Kahn, Legislative Affairs Secretary
Mike Genest, Director, Department of Finance

October 24, 2006

The Honorable Ronald George, Chief Justice
Supreme Court of California
350 McAllister St.
San Francisco, CA 94102-4783

Dear Chief Justice George:

With this letter, I enclose the statement issued by the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators in response to Governor Schwarzenegger's veto of AB 2303 providing funding for court interpreters in civil matters.

Also enclosed please find a copy of our newsletter, *Proteus*. We would be very pleased to provide you with a complimentary subscription to this publication if it is of interest. Mr. William Vickery of the Judicial Council has been kind enough to say that he values the information that it provides. This issue contains the text of the eight position papers that we have published to date on key aspects of professionalism in judiciary interpreting.

The members of our association very much appreciate your call for "improving access and fairness in our court system" in your speech of October 7 at Monterey, and your statement that "interpreter services continue to be a critical component of access to justice for many Californians." Thank you for all that you are doing to further the work of justice in the California judicial system.

Sincerely yours,
Alexander Rainof, Ph.D.
Chair, Board of Directors

Colleagues:

After more than three years of effort, as the current two year legislative session was about to expire, the Pennsylvania state legislature passed SB 669, the court interpreting bill today. The bill will finally move Pennsylvania into the modern age and create a certification system for court interpreters. It will mandate that interpreters be provided in certain court proceedings and almost all state administrative hearings. Although far from perfect, it is a huge step forward.

> continues on next page