

Language Access Committee Report (1/21/23)

Here is the latest fantastic news from the LASC. While there is still work to be done, we have satisfactorily resolved the MOA from the Department of Justice. This has been through a great deal of hard work over the past (nearly) 3 years.

Rolling up our sleeves for more!

Peace

Denise Crochet, CI, CT

The following is from Brian Wiggins:

Language Access Stakeholder Committee Members and Advisors:

Please see the following language access updates:

1. End of the Memorandum of Agreement: I'm excited to announce, due to your hard work and efforts, as well as the hard work of our court administrators and judges, the Department of Justice has closed the Memorandum of Agreement with the Louisiana Supreme Court. (See attached DOJ Closing Letter.) I would personally like to thank each and every one of you for your input, recommendations, and active participation in this very important endeavor. I would also like to thank the LSBA's Access to Justice Committee, including its very wonderful staff and knowledgeable committee chair and members. The ATJ community has been working on this issue for many years! Finally, I want to reiterate that the Supreme Court and JAO remains committed to sustaining these improvements and further increasing accessibility for LEP individuals as well as our Deaf/deaf/hard of hearing community. See the DOJ press release [here](#). A LASC press release is forthcoming.

2. Approval of Language Access Court Rules: After a 30-day comment period, the Justices have approved a comprehensive language access and court interpreter rule. (Order attached.) The rule is now incorporated into [Part G, Section 13](#) of the General Administrative Rules for all Louisiana Courts. Part G, Section 13 applies to all courts under the jurisdiction of the Louisiana Supreme Court.

3. Training Modules Complete: At long last, the language access online training modules are complete and available on the Supreme

Court's [website](#). As you may recall, the modules were professionally produced by the National Center for State Courts and funded by a State Justice Institute grant. Per the suggestion of Michele Collins, I am working with our IT staff so that a certificate may be generated upon completion of the modules. This will be extremely helpful in coordinating staff and judicial training. The modules may also be used by clerks of court, law enforcement, attorneys, and other justice system partners. Please share widely!

4. **Law Institute Meeting:** In response to [HCR 71 by Rep. White](#), the Louisiana State Law Institute (LSLI) invited me to address the Civil Procedure Committee regarding possible changes to the Code of Evidence. The Committee was very receptive to updating C.E. Art. 604 to reflect current interpreter qualification practices. They were also interested in studying the issue of challenging interpretations. The LSLI Committee will make a full recommendation and then report back to the Stakeholder Committee for further deliberation. (Therefore, you will have the opportunity to give additional input.) While they will not be able to recommend legislation in the next Regular Session (beginning 4/10/23), the LSLI's involvement in this issue is quite important, in my opinion, given the complexity as well as the difficulty in passing legislation.

5. **Staffing Changes:** As some of you have heard, I will no longer be serving as the Statewide Language Access Coordinator. I am now the Chief Deputy Judicial Administrator and will be assisting the Judicial Administrator, Sandra, with managing the day-to-day affairs of the JAO. This is very bittersweet as I have come to appreciate the importance of this issue as well as other accessibility issues; however, I will stay involved with the Stakeholder Committee and in the very least will continue to serve as the Language Access Coordinator until a replacement is found.

6. **Next Meeting:** With all these changes, I just want to reiterate that the work of the Stakeholder Committee must continue and, in that regard, I really hope you all stay involved. Upcoming projects include (1) finding a solution to the ongoing problem of protective orders, (2) revising and amending the statewide Language Access Plan, and (3) attracting additional qualified and competent interpreters to practice in Louisiana courts. Unless there is an objection, **I would like to push back our Winter meeting to after Mardi Gras – Friday, March 17th at 2:00**

p.m. Please save this date. I will circulate an agenda a few weeks before the meeting.

Thank you so much and I hope you have a wonderful weekend. As always, please let me know if you have questions or concerns.

Brian

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