



**Interpreter Commission Meeting**  
**February 10th, 2023**  
Zoom Videoconference  
8:30 AM – 12:00 Noon PM

**Meeting Minutes**

**Members:**

Jeanne Englert  
Judge Okoloko,  
Judge Oaks  
Naoko Shatz  
Ashley Callan  
Kristi Cruz  
Justice Whitener  
Florence Adeyemi  
Diana Noman  
Laura Friend  
Chela Fisk  
Judge Diaz  
Iratxe Cardwell  
Kelly Vomacka  
Anita Ahumada  
Michelle Hunsinger de Enciso

**Liasons:**

Vanna Sing  
Tony Griego

Berle Ross

**AOC Staff:**

James Wells  
Avery Miller  
Robert Lichtenberg  
Kelley Amburgey-Richardson  
Tae Yoon

**Guests:**

Miriam Currey  
Soccoro Villeda  
James Christianson  
Karen Atwood  
Kristina Howard  
Maria Elena Montes de Oca Ricks  
Lesey Jandoc  
Jovi Lee  
Christina Zubelli

**CALL TO ORDER**

**The meeting was called to order at 8:30 AM.**

**Approval of Previous Meetings Minutes—** Jeanne Englert moves to approve minutes as written. Kelly Vomacka seconds the motion. Minutes are approved unanimously.

**Welcome New Members—** The Commission welcomes the new translator representative Laura Friend, the president of Northwest Translator and Interpreters Society (NOTIS). She is excited to learn more about the courts and the particular challenges that come with court-related translations of documents.

- There is some discussion among the Commission of issues regarding translation of documents, especially with issues in Family Law final orders. Some members have been hearing about these concerns and members are involved in efforts to train judges and court staff to provide guidelines, best practices and make standards known to judges.

The Commission is still recruiting for a Deaf Community Representative that are interested in serving. Recruitment may expand to national to include a certified deaf interpreter representative. There's a suggestion that it should be someone from a non-unified court system to align with Washington's system.

## CHAIR'S REPORT

### **Bylaws Adoption— Judge Lloyd Oaks**

Judge Oaks presents the final draft of the Bylaws for approval by the Commission. There were a few final changes made regarding efficient transition among members and staggering onboarding to ensure there isn't a large wave of turnover at once. With legislature in session there was a need for flexibility and communicating via email to comment on the bylaws.

- Judge Oaks moves to adopt the bylaws as written. Iratxe Cardwell seconds. All Commission Members are in favor and the bylaws are adopted.

### **Strategic Priorities Finalization and Adoption— Judge Diaz**

Judge Diaz presents the final version of the strategic plan for the Commission. Several members provide updates on various aspects of their priorities and timelines.

- Kelley Amburgey-Richardson updates on the Administrative Office of the Courts plans for improving data collection. There will also be an upcoming study done on Interpreter Compensation issues, to look at how we can improve retention of interpreters.
- Naoko Shatz discussed the issues of translation of pattern forms and ensuring such translations are accurate and usable.
- Florence Adeyemi discussed the intersections with the action plan from the Racial Justice Consortium and especially the issues of Legal Financial Obligations.
  - There is a definite need for ILAC representation on these issues, as there needs to be outreach to communities who are LEP, and legal assistance to them must include plans to provide language access services.
  - Justice Whitener suggests partnering with Minority and Justice Commission on outreach, especially for things like Trish Kinlow's Unified Payment Programs.
  - Kelly Vomacka discusses the high costs of felony convictions for her clients and that even though there are new laws in effect, the relief efforts may not be reaching immigrant communities.

- If there are language barriers, there may be other barriers to understanding the legal system, how to get a suspended driver's license back and other areas of legal information.
- ILAC can offer support to the people doing the outreach and working in these areas to ensure that there is equal access and collaborate with our partners.
- Kelly Vomacka moves to adopt the strategic priorities plan. Kristi Cruz seconds. The plan passes with none opposed. ‘

### **Update on Legislation—Judge Diaz**

On Senate Bill 5051, Judge Oaks extended gratitude to the Issues Committee for tackling the legislation. A letter in opposition was sent, in according to some concerns regarding a lack of knowledge of the extent of the problem and efficacy in resolving it. The bill was intended to address issues of people signing away rights to assets or child custody without understanding the language of the documents. This may be an issue the new translation committee can take up. If the courts are able to capture data and verify the extent of the issue, they will be able to tailor a better solution.

On Senate Bill 5304, Bob updated the committee on the concerns raised about allowing third party testing of DSHS certified interpreters.

- There's concern about the existence or appearance of a conflict of interest by having third party agencies who employ interpreters develop the tests to be used to certify them. Several members expressed concern regarding this bill.

### **Online Member Orientation— Robert Lichtenberg**

- AOC staff are working on putting together an online orientation for new members of the Commission to be onboarded regarding past practices, best practices, the history of the Commission and it's role under the Supreme Court rules and statutes, as well as the policy and legal frameworks.
- These will be virtual trainings and announcement of dates will be coming soon.

### **Disability Justice Workgroup Funding Request Proposal— Judge David Whedbee**

Judge Whedbee presents to the Commission on the Disability Justice Taskforce's request for full funding to establish a two-year study comprising a needs assessment of issues on disability access in the courts. He requests a letter of support from the Commission for the funding request. Judge Okoloko moves to approve the letter of support. Iratxe Cardwell seconds. The motion passes unanimously. AOC staff will work with Judge Diaz to draft a letter of support.

## **In-person/ Hybrid Commission Meeting and Community Forum— Robert Lichtenberg**

AOC offices at SeaTac will likely reopen at some point in 2023, but there is no definite date yet. Bob is working to lead the discussion regarding a Community Forum, to invite members of the public who want to engage with the commission.

- AOC staff are looking to ensure there is a focus of the forum and that we are able to do outreach to affected LEP communities and organizations working with them.
- Members are partnering with liaisons from the Access to Justice Board to discuss how to best engage the community.

## **Interpreter Program Report— James Wells**

James updates on the recent Interpreter exam results and issues of tiering. Certain languages may need additional categories of proficiency beyond certified/ credentialed. There is potential to do outreach and additional training for the near-passers who take the interpreter exam.

The issue is referred to the Issues Committee for further consideration.

## **COMMITTEE AND PARTNER REPORTS**

### **Issues Committee— Judge Lloyd Oaks**

In addition to the legislative updates, bylaws and strategic priorities plan described above, the Issues Committee has been examining additional issues arising from language access in the courts.

- The Committee examined the recruiting and credentialing of interpreters to face the shortfall of qualified interpreters in a few critical languages.
- There was also discussion of new modes and practices for interpretation in the courts post-covid, and how remote interpreting including potentially out of state could help compensate for local interpreter shortfalls.
  - In addressing this, the committee discussed amending the reciprocity process to allow out of state interpreters to be qualified more easily in WA courts.
  - In particular the committee discussed how the lack of national ASL testing for interpreters presented a challenge to adequately provide services to meet the needs of the deaf community.

### **Education Committee— Ashley Callan**

- Ashley Callan reports on the activities of the Education Committee after Judicial College wrapped up. There is a request for ILAC funding for the Fall Judicial Conference for approximately \$2,000.

- There is also a request from the WSBA for a training on language access and interpreters. Kristi Cruz, Naoko Shatz and Judge Gipe are on the faculty for that.
- The education committee is working on preparing a training for court staff and administrators on best practices for booking interpreters, as the public-facing desks are often the first interaction LEP individuals have with the courts and can impact how they are able to access the courtroom at all.

**Disciplinary Committee— Justice Whitener**

The Disciplinary Manual is still in the process of undergoing development and a final draft will be ready to be presented to the full Commission soon.

- The meeting packet contains information regarding a settled Complaint Action out of Yakima Municipal Court.

**Language Access and Interpreter Reimbursement Report— Tae Yoon**

AOC Staff Tae Yoon provides an update on the Language Access and Interpreter Reimbursement Program.

- There has been a large expansion of the program and there are now 108 courts participating. Nearly \$600,000 of reimbursement claims have been approved, with less than 10% denied.
- Staff are working on increasing communication and support between AOC and the courts and assisting new courts with technical development and information.

**The next meeting will be via Zoom on May 12, 2023 at 8:30 AM.**

**The meeting was adjourned at 12 PM.**