

STATE OF NEW YORK

5155

2023-2024 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

February 23, 2023

Introduced by Sens. PARKER, SEPULVEDA -- read twice and ordered printed,
and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Judiciary

AN ACT to amend the judiciary law, in relation to enacting the "language
barrier to justice elimination act"

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assem-
bly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "language
2 barrier to justice elimination act".

3 § 2. Section 386 of the judiciary law, as amended by chapter 259 of
4 the laws of 1909 and as renumbered by chapter 649 of the laws of 1945,
5 is amended to read as follows:

6 § 386. Appointment and compensation of court interpreters generally.
7 The county judge and the district attorney of the county may appoint one
8 interpreter, who shall act as and be the court interpreter for such
9 county. Such interpreter shall hold office during the pleasure of the
10 county judge and district attorney and they shall appoint his or her
11 successor in office. Said interpreter shall receive a salary to be
12 fixed by the board of supervisors of said county, which shall be a
13 charge upon the county, to be paid monthly, in the same manner as other
14 county officials are paid. Said interpreter so appointed shall, before
15 entering upon his or her duties, file in the office of the county clerk,
16 the constitutional oath of office, and an affidavit under oath or affir-
17 mation to make a true and impartial interpretation of proceedings in an
18 understandable manner using such interpreter's best skills and judgment
19 in accordance with the standards for professional conduct and ethical
20 behavior found and reinforced in the UCS Court Interpreter Manual and
21 the Court Interpreter Canons of Professional Responsibility. Court
22 interpreters shall participate in training programs provided by the
23 court system for court personnel on ethics, domestic violence and
24 cultural sensitivity. The provisions of this section, however, shall
25 not apply to the counties of New York, Kings and Queens, nor to any

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 other county in which the appointment or compensation of court inter-
2 preters therein is governed by a special or local act or by any special
3 provision of a general act.

4 § 3. Section 387 of the judiciary law, as amended by chapter 15 of the
5 laws of 1975, is amended to read as follows:

6 § 387. Temporary appointment of interpreters. If the services of an
7 interpreter be required in any court and there be no unemployed official
8 interpreter to act therein, the court may appoint an interpreter to act
9 temporarily in such court. Such interpreter shall before entering upon
10 his duties file with the clerk of the court the constitutional oath of
11 office, and an affidavit under oath or affirmation to make a true and
12 impartial interpretation of proceedings in an understandable manner
13 using such interpreter's best skills and judgment in accordance with the
14 standards for professional conduct and ethical behavior found and rein-
15 forced in the UCS Court Interpreter Manual and the Court Interpreter
16 Canons of Professional Responsibility. Court interpreters shall partic-
17 ipate in training programs provided by the court system for court
18 personnel on ethics, domestic violence and cultural sensitivity. The
19 court shall fix the compensation of such interpreter at not more than
20 twenty-five dollars per day for each day's actual attendance by direc-
21 tion of the presiding judge or justice and such compensation shall be
22 paid from the court fund of the county upon the order of the court.

23 § 4. The judiciary law is amended by adding two new sections 381 and
24 382 to read as follows:

25 § 381. Standards and functions of court interpreters. 1. A qualified
26 interpreter is a person who is: (a) able to communicate with non-English
27 speaking persons to orally transfer the meaning of statements to and
28 from English and the language spoken by a non-English speaking person;

29 (b) interpret in a manner that conserves the meaning, tone, level and
30 register of the original statement without substantive additions or
31 omissions; and

32 (c) performs his or her duties in conformance with the standards of
33 professional conduct and ethical behavior found and reinforced in the
34 UCS Court Interpreter Manual and the Court Interpreter Canons of Profes-
35 sional Responsibility.

36 2. Any person serving as a court interpreter pursuant to the
37 provisions of this article shall, in any proceeding before a court,
38 state agency or hearing officer, state or submit such person's quali-
39 fications on the record, unless waived or otherwise stipulated to by the
40 parties or counsel to the parties prior to such proceeding.

41 3. A non-English speaking person shall be entitled to the services of
42 a qualified court interpreter appointed by a court or state agency in a
43 criminal or civil proceeding, and such court or state agency shall,
44 unless waived pursuant to section three hundred eighty-two of this arti-
45 cle, appoint a qualified court interpreter in a civil or criminal
46 proceeding to: (a) interpret the proceedings to a non-English speaking
47 party;

48 (b) interpret the testimony of a non-English speaking party or
49 witness;

50 (c) assist the court, agency or hearing officer in performing duties
51 and responsibilities of the court, agency or hearing officer in any
52 proceeding involving one or more parties who are non-English speaking
53 persons.

54 § 382. Waiver of court interpreter. 1. Waiver of the right to an
55 interpreter by a non-English speaking party to a proceeding shall be
56 effective only when approved by a judge or hearing officer after such

1 non-English speaking party has consulted with counsel, received oral
2 counsel from a judge or hearing officer in open court as to the nature
3 and effect of such waiver, and has demonstrated, to the satisfaction of
4 such judge or hearing officer, comprehension of such nature and effect
5 and that such waiver is knowingly and voluntarily made. Following
6 approval of a waiver, a judge or hearing officer shall ensure that a
7 recitation of the waiver procedure pursuant to this section is made part
8 of the record of such proceeding.

9 2. The failure of a non-English speaking person to request an inter-
10 preter shall not be deemed a waiver of such right. Any non-English
11 speaking person may retract a waiver made pursuant to subdivision one of
12 this section at any time during the proceeding and indicate his or her
13 desire to be assisted by a qualified interpreter.

14 § 5. This act shall take effect immediately.