



April 30, 2011

Tara Cook
Interpreter Services Manager
King County District Court
516 Third Avenue
Seattle WA 98104

Dear Ms. Cook:

We were disappointed to read your letter of April 26, 2011, in which you announced that rates for certified interpreters in King County District Court would drop by 10% to \$45 per hour.

As you may know, when the rate went to \$50 per hour in 2009, this was the first raise in rates interpreters in your court had received in several years. We were delighted to finally get a raise in rates after so long.

We all know that the economy is terrible. This has affected interpreters much more drastically than most other sectors. This deep cut in our rates will hurt many hardworking interpreters. Most of us are independent contractors that do not enjoy what King County District Court employees take for granted, such as health insurance, paid vacation, sick leave and other benefits. Interpreters live from one assignment to the next and have little or no job security.

You cite “aligning your policy with other courts in our state” as one of the reasons for this reduction. It is true that King County Superior Court instituted a similar drastic reduction in rates last year. However, virtually all other courts in the tri-county area are still paying \$50 per hour. This move places King County District Court alongside King County Superior Court as the two lowest-paying courts in the area.

You also mention the AOC partial reimbursement program, in which King County District Court is not currently participating. There is a good reason why your court is not participating in this program: it never applied. We would encourage you to apply the next time applications are open. In the meantime, the fact that you do not receive funds that you never requested does not appear to constitute a good basis for a drastic cut in our rates.

We do appreciate that the two-hour minimum remains in place. This is key for us, because a responsible interpreter can generally only take two assignments a day—one in

the morning, and one in the afternoon. This is due to the unpredictability of the courts and the way that assignments are scheduled, where most encounters start sometime between 8 and 9 in the morning or 1 and 2 in the afternoon.

However, as expressed above, this cut in rates will hurt many of our colleagues who are already suffering the ravages of a bad economy. We urge you to reconsider and to go back to the rate that was in effect before May 1.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kenneth Barger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Kenneth Barger
Advocacy Chair, Washington State Court Interpreters and Translators Society

Copy: Presiding Judge Barbara Linde
WITS President Barbara Robinson
WITS Board of Directors