



Governor Chris Gregoire
Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Gregoire:

I was pleased to meet you the other day at the KCTS9 studios. Congratulations on another excellent Ask the Governor.

I write to you today in my capacity as Advocacy Chair for the Washington State Court Interpreters and Translators Society (WITS) to urge you to oppose any move to cut the DSHS Language Services program.

We freelance interpreters are as acutely aware as anyone of the current frightful state of the budget and the economy as a whole. The across-the-board cuts you ordered were inevitable given the circumstances. However, we feel that dismantling the entire DSHS Language Services program would be a disastrous move.

As I expressed in my letter to you of December 12, 2009, access to health care is crucial for all, and meaningful health care is impossible without clear and complete communication between the medical professional and the patient. This, in turn, is only possible for limited-English-proficient patients if they have access to a qualified interpreter.

DSHS Language Services are not without problems, as you have no doubt heard after the stakeholder feedback process you had done this year. I was at several of those forums and had occasion to hear about the problems that were aired. However, through the feedback process and with the assistance of professional organizations such as ours, we are sure that it can once again become a leading program and continue to provide such a vital service.

The program was born of litigation, and its complete removal would surely mean an immediate return to litigation, costing the taxpayers more money and likely leading to the reinstatement of the program anyway. This would be an exercise in futility and lead to no savings.

Moreover, even if this were not the case, the federal matching dollars that the program brings to Washington make it a net money-maker for the state's economy. To cut it to seek a temporary savings in the state coffers would mean a net loss for Washington.

For these reasons and many others, we wish to express our firm opposition to the elimination of the DSHS Language Services program.

Sincerely yours,

Kenneth Barger
WITS Advocacy Chair