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NEWS RELEASE

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Judicial Council Seeks Comment on New Study on Court Interpreter Test

Public Comment Welcome through December 17, 2007

San Francisco – The Judicial Council today announced that it is seeking public comment on a comprehensive new study of California’s court interpreter certification and registration testing.

More than 1,700 registered and certified court interpreters are now working to improve access to justice in the criminal courts by interpreting legal proceedings for court participants whose skills in spoken English are limited.

The first major review of its kind since 1994, the study was initiated to ensure that the current court interpreter test reflects recent developments in professional practice. State law charges the Judicial Council with responsibility for adopting programs and standards to ensure that qualified interpreters are provided in the courts.

After a thorough review of California's program for certifying and registering court interpreters, the study found that while certain areas could be improved, “California's current testing program is credentialing court interpreters whose knowledge, skills and abilities are well aligned with those needed to perform the job at a high level of competence.”

The study also found that the “the size and scope of California's testing program, along with its years of experience, make California a recognized leader in the field.”

Following a competitive bidding process, ALTA Language Services, Inc., was selected to conduct the study. A national firm, ALTA has more than 25 years experience in language services, with more than 10 years in language testing. It is an approved testing organization of the U.S. government.

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In the course of the study, ALTA analyzed the core knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) needed to perform the work of a court interpreter, in order to develop recommendations about testing instruments that measure the KSAs. ALTA also examined test administration processes and made recommendations pertaining to the overall administration of examinations. In addition, ALTA developed recommendations on the recruitment and training of future test candidates.

The Judicial Council will consider the recommendations made in the ALTA study with the advice of its Court Interpreters Advisory Panel. Based on the council's direction, the Administrative Office of the Courts will address any needed development of revised testing instruments and procedures.

Current tests and testing procedures will remain in use until any new tests or procedures are developed.

The final report of the "Study of California's Court Interpreter Certification and Registration Testing" appears on the California Courts Web site at http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/courtinterpreters/documents/alta_study_2007.pdf.

Comments and questions from the public are invited until the close of business on December 17, 2007 and may be submitted by email to courtinterpreters@jud.ca.gov or in writing to the Administrative Office of the Courts, Court Interpreters Program, 455 Golden Gate Avenue, San Francisco, California 94102-3688.

State law (Gov. Code, §§ 68560–68566) charges the Judicial Council with responsibility for adopting programs and standards to ensure that qualified interpreters are provided in the criminal courts. This responsibility includes the adoption of standards for testing and certifying or registering court interpreters.

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The Judicial Council is the policymaking body of the California courts, the largest court system in the nation. Under the leadership of the Chief Justice and in accordance with the California Constitution, the council is responsible for ensuring the consistent, independent, impartial, and accessible administration of justice. The Administrative Office of the Courts carries out the official actions of the council and promotes leadership and excellence in court administration.