

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, my name is Brenda Hidalgo. I began my profession and commitment as a freelance Spanish interpreter for the courts in the State of Oregon back in 1996, when I was 23 years old, I will be 40 this year.

Let's discuss the benefits and services the courts in the State of Oregon get from my fellow interpreters and myself in addition to our experience and commitment as professionals in the courtroom. We provide services that you cannot put a price tag on but have the chance to fairly compensate by increasing our hourly rate to \$50. Flexibility is one of those valuable benefits the State of Oregon gets from us.

**Flexibility:** Freelance interpreters go to great lengths to accommodate the unpredictable nature of court business, in which same-day emergency requests are commonplace. Here are the types of last-minute request scenarios we encounter in our work as freelancers collectively on a daily basis and this is the reliable manner in which we are there to support Court Interpreters Services and the State's mission for everyone to have access to our court system.

#### **Scenario #1**

On a day when I am not scheduled to work, Court Interpreter Services might call me in a panic asking, "How soon can you get to the courthouse? Can you get there in 15 minutes, yes, 15 minutes?" My response: Yes, I can, I'm on my way.

#### **Scenario #2**

We are scheduled to start an assignment at 9:00 at one courthouse, and at 8:00 we get a call from Court Interpreter Services to first go take care of another hearing at 8:30 and then go do the 9:00 matter. We are prepared to say, "Yes, I can do that."

#### **Scenario #3**

On a day when we are not scheduled to work at all, at 11:45 a.m. an interpreter who lives in Salem may get an emergency call from Court Interpreter Services to go to Linn County in Albany to do a 1:00 hearing. We are prepared to say, "Yes, I can do that."

#### **Scenario #4**

On a day when we are not scheduled to work at all, we might get a frantic call from Court Interpreter Services at mid-morning asking, "Can you go interpret at a hearing already in progress, we need to reassign the interpreter at that hearing to another location. Response: "Yes, I can do that."

#### **Scenario #5**

Imagine starting a trial at 9:00 and given the fact that this is one of those rare instances in which you are booked until 5:00 without a last-minute cancellation and you expect to be home for dinner with your family that evening only to find yourself 13 hours later having take-out for dinner inside a courtroom at 10 o'clock at night waiting for a jury to come back with a verdict? Yes, we do that.

#### **Scenario #6**

"At a morning assignment when I am only booked for 2-3 ½ hours, at the most, I may all of a sudden find myself being approached by a court clerk who is in a panic asking me to finish my interpreter assignment at my current location as soon as possible because a last minute interpreter request has come in from a courthouse seven miles away for a two-hour hearing. Yes, I am happy to accommodate that. Now, imagine, I get to the courthouse and get to the courtroom, and the first words out of the judge's mouth are "Before we get started, I need to know whether you are available to interpret in this hearing ALL day." Answer: "Yes, your honor, I am available. All I ask is that your assistant inform Court Interpreter Services of my location for the rest of the day." Remember that I was originally only scheduled for a couple of hours for that entire day.

Ladies and Gentlemen: I know my colleagues throughout the State of Oregon have countless of similar stories. Sometimes, we get same day requests to be at locations that are a three-four hour drive and under the worst weather conditions. Why do we fulfill these requests? We do it because we are experienced professionals committed to the State's mission to provide access to everyone who comes into the court system, at the same time, we know the unpredictable nature of court business, and we know to expect the unexpected and we prepare for it.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, can you put a price to our commitment, professionalism and flexibility?

How much would you say for Court Interpreter Services having to call up the judge who anxiously wants to get on with a hearing and telling him that you were unable to produce an interpreter at the last minute? Can you tell a judge to just have the Sheriff's deputy just transport the defendant back to jail seven miles away and have the judge just inform the District Attorney to go out to the hallway and tell the half dozen or more police officers and paid expert witnesses to just go home, everything is canceled and to come back another day when there is an interpreter available? Can you tell the judge to just tell the defense attorney to inform the defendant that this big hearing they had been preparing for for several months will simply not take place? Can the judge have the clerk inform the defendant's family (about 20 of them) to just go home, no interpreter, therefore, no hearing today?

Ladies and Gentlemen: What our courts in the State of Oregon and Court Interpreter Services get in addition to our experience and technical language skills are qualities that are hard to put a price tag on, but please do your best to fairly compensate our professionalism and commitment, accommodation to the unpredictable nature of court business, by increasing our hourly rate to \$50 per hour, and also increasing the time that Court Interpreter Services reserves on our calendars to correspond with the peace of mind our flexibility provides to them and the State of Oregon.

Thank you,

Brenda Hidalgo  
Spanish Interpreter Certified in the State of Oregon  
Salem, OR 97302  
Cell (503) 949-4774  
youruscitizen2009@gmail.com