

March 7, 2013

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

I am Becky Bazzle, and I am here on behalf of the National Verbatim Reporters Association and voice writing court reporters to speak in support of SB90, to add voice writers as an acceptable method of court reporting and defined in the statutes as a certified shorthand reporter in addition to stenographic court reporters, and SB635, to require that the judge shall appoint a certified shorthand reporter for any trial involving a charge of aggravated murder.

In the 1800s court reporters used a pencil and a pad and captured the record using Greg shorthand. In the 1870s Miles Bartholomew decided to take advantage of a person's ability to type faster than they can write, and he built the first steno machine. It was strange and different. Improvements in technology have brought it to where it is today.

In the 1940s Horace Webb, a pen-writer, imagined yet a faster way of capturing the record. He built the first stenomask. It was strange and different. The stenomask reporting was accepted by the Naval Justice Academy as the fastest and best way to train their court reporters. Improvements in technology have brought it to where it is today.

Voice writers have long been available to make the record through the use of a stenomask with a voice silencer and analog tapes. Voice writers not only repeat every word stated by the attorneys, witnesses, judges and other parties to a proceeding without being heard by others, but also verbally identify the speaker. They even punctuate the text, describe activities as they take place, and, in some cases, mark exhibits. Now, new technologies are available to us. Cutting-edge technology, in the form of speech recognition CAT systems, affords the voice writer the opportunity to have the spoken words instantly turned into text on a laptop computer or computer work station. As a result, the voice writer is now able to produce realtime text feeds within the courtroom and download them for distribution immediately following a proceeding. The equipment used by realtime voice writers can also interface with all litigation-support software.

The difference between capturing the record as a voice writer or as a stenographic reporter is only in how the words physically are entered into the computer. The voice writer speaks, and the stenographic reporter types. The words are input into a CAT (computer-aided transcription) program and the process from that point is the same for both. Major vendors of CAT software service voice writers, as well as stenographic reporters. There are many schools that teach voice writing court reporting, both brick and mortar and online schools. National statistics show that there is a 10 - 15 percent graduation rate for steno students and a 90 - 95 graduation rate for voice writers.

It is estimated that the entire education process of a realtime voice writer can be completed within one school year. Voice writers who only want to learn to use the basic equipment instead of the newest technologies can be trained in six to eight months. Most skilled court reporters who currently use the stenotype

method can learn the voice recognition method within a period of six months. For these reporters, learning the process itself would take only a matter of weeks, but becoming proficient in using the voice writing method would take approximately six months.

The National Verbatim Reporters Association (NVRA) is a professional organization of verbatim court reporters, captioners, and providers of Communications Access Realtime Translation (CART) and offers proficiency certifications on a national level through rigorous validated testing at speeds and accuracy requirements higher than most standards for state licensure. NVRA's validated test meets the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (1999) as set forth by the American Educational Research Association, the American Psychological Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education.

NVRA offers the following national certifications:

1. Certified Verbatim Reporter (CVR), comprised of the following five-minute dictations, and each must be passed with 95% accuracy: 180 wpm literary, 200 wpm jury charge, 225 wpm two-voice question-and-answer. In addition, the Written Knowledge Test must be passed with a minimum score of 70.
2. Certificate of Merit (CM), comprised of the following five-minute dictations, and each must be passed with 95% accuracy: 200 wpm literary, 240 wpm jury charge, 260 wpm two-voice question-and-answer. In addition, the Written Knowledge Test must be passed with a minimum score of 90.
3. Realtime Verbatim Reporter (RVR)
4. Registered Broadcast Captioner (RBC)
5. Registered CART Provider (RCP)

In order to retain these certifications, the voice writer must obtain continuing education credits. Credits are given for voice writer education courses, continuing legal education courses or college courses. In this way, the NVRA strives to assure that its reporters will stay ahead of the field in this ever-changing, technologically oriented profession.

Proponents of stenography often point to their technology in an attempt to establish stenography's superiority over voice writing, but such comparisons are improper. The technology of stenography is CAT systems; the technology of voice writers is speech recognition. Every day more and more voice writers are deploying voice realtime systems. Voice writing is more prevalent in the eastern part of the US, but NVRA does have nationally certified voice writer members in the northwest.

Voice writers are practicing their profession on a limited basis in the state of Oregon. They are employed to take depositions, hearings, and work within your state for federal courts and agencies. Voice writers are working in many state court systems, federal courts, military courts, and working as deposition reporters both in the US and internationally.

NVRA is in full support of requiring a live court reporter in the courtrooms of Oregon for aggravated murder cases. The court reporter is the guardian of the

record and is in a position to ensure the capture of a complete and accurate record. We are able to ask for clarification if we don't hear or understand, to identify speakers, to distinguish between what is on the record and extraneous conversations or noises. We are there to protect the record. An aggravated murder case is the most important matter that a court handles. You are dealing with someone's life. A duty is owed to the defendant and to the public to make sure the record is as accurate and complete as it can be.

Thank you.

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President NVRA

