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# NEWS RELEASE

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## **NATION'S LARGEST TRIAL COURT OFFERS SUBSTANTIAL INCENTIVES TO RETAIN AND RECRUIT OFFICIAL COURT REPORTERS AMID STAFFING SHORTAGE**

### **Signing Bonus, Finder's Fees, Student Loan Assistance Among Solutions Made Possible by State Funding**

The Court is prioritizing solutions to recruit, retain and reward official court reporters with the help of nearly \$10 million in state funding to address a critical staffing shortage, Presiding Judge Samantha P. Jessner and Executive Officer/Clerk of Court David W. Slayton announced today.

As a result of a nationwide court reporter shortage, recently the Court was required to shift court reporter coverage from family law, probate and matters assigned to the writs and receiver departments to criminal felony and juvenile proceedings to ensure that court reporters are able to cover these statutorily mandated case types. The additional resources provided by Governor Gavin Newsom and the Legislature will provide much-needed funding to enhance and accelerate recruiting and retention efforts.

"Official court reporters are valued members of the court family and play a unique and critical role in providing meaningful access to justice by preparing the verbatim record of proceedings," Presiding Judge Jessner said. "I want to thank Governor Newsom and lawmakers for providing this funding to increase the availability of official court reporters in family, probate and civil law cases, as well as the court reporters who suggested many of these solutions."

"After collaborative discussions with labor representatives, the Court is pleased to offer new

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substantial incentives in addition to our already extensive efforts over the past few years to address the court reporter shortage in Los Angeles County” Slayton said. “Together we are seeking ways to address an intractable court reporter crisis in California and across the nation that threatens every litigant’s right to a verbatim record of the proceedings.”

“Joint Council has worked with Court Management in coming to an agreement on effectively recruiting and retaining court reporters,” Los Angeles County Court Reporters Association (LACCRA) President Cindy Tachell said. “We are very excited to put legislative funding to use and look forward to welcoming new and returning licensed court reporters to our ranks.”

The Joint Council is made up of Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 721 - Court Reporters Unit and LACCRA.

The Court will offer these incentives and benefits to the SEIU, Local 721 – Court Reporters Union:

### **Increased Signing Bonus for Newly Hired Official Court Reporters**

- \$20,000 total over two years. This incentive is retroactive to all new court reporters with a start date on or after July 1, 2022.

### **Court Reporter School Student Loan Forgiveness**

- Up to \$27,500 total over four years. This incentive is retroactive to all new court reporters with a start date on or after July 1, 2022.

### **Retention Bonus for Current Full-time Court Reporters**

- \$2,500 if a current full-time court reporter is still employed as of May 1, 2023.
- \$5,000 if a current full-time court reporter is still employed as of May 1, 2024.
- \$10,000 if a current full-time court reporter is still employed as of May 1, 2025.

### **Retention Bonus for Court Reporters with 25 Years or More of Service**

- \$2,500 payment at end of every quarter if reporter agrees to stay for at least 12 months.
- Bonus remains available quarterly going forward.

### **Finder’s Fee for Court Employees who Refer Official Court Reporters to the Court**

- \$15,000 total incrementally ending on court reporter’s one-year hiring anniversary.

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In addition, the Court will bolster its advertising and recruitment efforts with a renewed push for high-profile advertising of the court reporting profession and these new incentives and benefits.

The Court also agreed to increase the starting salary for new court reporters from \$108,460 annually + benefits to \$114,502 annually + benefits and ensure existing court reporters are placed on the top salary step (\$117,649 + benefits annually).

The inability to obtain a verbatim record limits the ability for litigants to seek counsel and advice after a decision has been made. Furthermore, it deprives a litigant the ability to meaningfully preserve critical rights on appeal. Finally, it creates even greater challenges in memorializing the court's ruling in a proposed judgment and ensuring that the judgment is enforceable. The Court is concerned about continuing shortages in the number of official court reporters available to cover court hearings, but the Court is hopeful that these efforts will expand its ability to provide court reporters in family, probate and civil law cases.

In LA County, the number of court reporters leaving court service continues to significantly outpace the number of new court reporters entering court service. Despite concerted efforts to recruit court reporters, the Court has struggled to fill vacancies due to a lack of available certified shorthand reporters (CSRs) in California. In 2022, 43 court reporters left court service. During this time, the Court was able to hire only 10 court reporters. The Court currently has 99 CSR vacancies it is seeking to fill.

"We are optimistic that these efforts to offer substantial incentives to attract new court reporters and retain our highly trained and valuable corps of official court reporters will help address the shortage," Slayton said. "At this point, using all means necessary to provide every litigant in California with access to the verbatim record of a proceeding, especially in case types that so significantly impact the lives of the people the justice system serves, must be our focus. It is our intention to do so. These recruitment and retention efforts will go a long way in ensuring litigants have access to a verbatim record and to justice."

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