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SUPERIOR COURT OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY UNVEILS DATA DASHBOARD HIGHLIGHTING WORSENING COURT REPORTER SHORTAGE AND ITS IMPACT ON LITIGANTS

Available at LACourt.org/CourtReporterCrisis, Dashboard Includes Recruitment and Retention Data Since January 2023 and Spotlights Hundreds of Thousands of Proceedings That Have Occurred Without a Verbatim Record Due to the Shortage and Restrictions on Electronic Recording

The Court today unveiled a Court Reporter Crisis Dashboard (Dashboard), available at www.LACourt.org/CourtReporterCrisis, which highlights the staggering number of court proceedings in Los Angeles County that have taken place without any verbatim record because of the [well-documented court reporter shortage](#) and continued statutory restrictions on electronic recording, as well as outcome data relating to the Court's extraordinary efforts to recruit and retain court reporters to fill its over 125 vacancies, Presiding Judge Samantha P. Jessner and Executive Officer/Clerk of Court David W. Slayton announced.

"The Dashboard makes it crystal clear – the worsening court reporter shortage combined with statutory restrictions on electronic recording has created a constitutional crisis, with thousands of litigants in family law, probate and unlimited civil proceedings leaving court each day without any official verbatim transcript of what transpired in their case, effectively eliminating their ability to appeal," said Presiding Judge Jessner.

"Without collective action, this crisis will only continue to grow. We are hopeful that by providing transparency relating to the outcomes of the Court's recruitment and retention efforts, as well as statistics on the number of proceedings in which litigants leave court with no verbatim record of what happened, we can effectively sound the alarm on the need for an urgent solution to address this crisis immediately."

Court reporters traditionally provide verbatim records of court proceedings. Court reporters are mandated by California law in felony criminal and all juvenile proceedings. California law limits the use of electronic recording, an accurate means of providing verbatim records by recording court proceedings and the certification of the transcript via a transcriptionist, to criminal misdemeanor, limited civil (including eviction) and infraction cases. Electronic recording currently is widely and successfully used with no significant

issues. In fact, the Appellate Division of the Court considers approximately 500 appeals per year in which the record is created with electronic recording with no problem or issues hearing the speakers.

In the case types where electronic recording is not permitted by law and where court reporters are not mandated and cannot be provided due to the shortage, which include family law, probate and unlimited civil cases, thousands of litigants are unable to access a verbatim record of their proceedings. As the Dashboard indicates, because of the severe court reporter shortage and statutory restrictions on electronic recording, over 525,000 family law, probate and unlimited civil proceedings in LA County alone occurred without a verbatim record between January 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024. Many of the impacted litigants are self-represented and cannot afford the \$3,000 - \$5,000 cost per day to hire a private court reporter, leaving them with no verbatim record and making an appeal of their proceedings, during which significant, life-altering legal issues such as child custody disputes, divorce, restraining orders and conservatorships were addressed, essentially impossible.

Despite the Court spending millions of dollars provided by the Legislature and the Governor to recruit and retain court reporters, the Court lost 11 court reporters since offering the incentives at the beginning of 2023. In fact, as the Dashboard highlights, the Court has recorded a net loss of 117 court reporters since 2018.

“The objective data does not lie – this is a critical and worsening crisis that is severely impacting the Court’s mission of providing fair and equal access to justice,” Executive Officer/Clerk of Court David Slayton said. “I implore those with the ability to address this crisis to act now before hundreds of thousands more litigants leave court empty-handed and with no ability to seek meaningful review.”

The Superior Court of Los Angeles County is not alone in its struggle to provide equal access to verbatim records of proceedings to all litigants. A [recent report released by the Legislative Analyst’s Office](#) (LAO) notes that 44 California trial courts spent \$20.3 million on recruitment and retention efforts in 2022-23 with “limited impact on bringing new hires to the courts in the short run.” The LAO report also states that despite these expenditures, “the reported number of court reporter employees departing has continued to outpace the number being hired,” with court reporter vacancies growing statewide from 152 positions in July 2020 (about a 10% vacancy rate) to 400 positions as of July 2023 (a 25% vacancy rate).

The Court is committed to exploring innovative solutions to address the crisis, [announcing in April](#) a first-of-its-kind court reporter training program exclusively for court staff. Trainees receive a full scholarship covering all tuition, fees and equipment costs. Trainees will be provided with approximately three to six hours of dedicated training time per week during their regular workday. Trainees who successfully complete the training program and obtain their valid California certifications will be provided guaranteed employment with the Court. Trainees who accept jobs as court reporters will be expected to stay with the Court for at least three years.

The Dashboard will be updated quarterly to reflect updated trends and statistics. For more information on the crisis and to view the Dashboard, visit www.LACourt.org/CourtReporterCrisis.