



SF 271 – Interpreters in Legal Proceedings (LSB1141SV)
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Fiscal Note Version – New

Description

Senate File 271 requires the Courts to provide interpreters for persons who are limited English proficient (LEP), deaf, deaf-blind, or hard-of-hearing in court proceedings and the court-ordered programs of mediation and Children in the Middle class.

Background

Current law requires costs for court interpreters to be paid for by nonindigent parties. Indigent parties are required to reimburse the State of Iowa for interpreter costs at the end of the case. In actuality, approximately 10.0% of the current cost of interpreter services is collected from indigent parties. The U.S. Department of Justice considers charging interpreter costs to LEP individuals a violation of the Civil Rights Act and has issued a statement that it may terminate federal funding for violation of its guidance on interpreter services.

Senate File 271 also streamlines the payment of interpreters. Currently they are paid by four different agencies depending on the case type. The State Public Defender, local public defenders, counties, and the State Court Administrator all pay for different interpreters. This bill directs the State Court Administrator to pay for all oral language court interpreters from the Jury and Witness Fund. The Jury and Witness Fund receives an annual appropriation from the General Fund (\$3.1 million in FY 2015).

Assumptions

Expenditures. The Courts estimate the following needs:

- 1.0 FTE position at a cost of \$60,000 to manage court interpreter compensation.
- \$222,000 in new funding for payments to interpreters assisting in court-ordered mediation and Children in the Middle classes.

Fiscal Impact

The net impact of this Bill is estimated to be \$326,000 including increased costs to the Jury and Witness Fund of \$282,000 annually. There will also be a minimal reduction in revenues (\$44,000) to reflect elimination of repayments by indigent parties. If the Fund balance is not sufficient to absorb the increased cost, an increased General Fund appropriation may be necessary.

Source

State Court Administration

/s/ Holly M. Lyons

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