

Dear Senator/Representative X

I have recently learned that the Senate budget bill contains a provision (Section I, Item 69) that reduces the number of Court Reporters serving the court system by 50% (52 positions). I find this proposal very distressing as it fails to recognize the critical role these positions play in the delivery of justice, the well-established short-comings of proposed alternatives such as contract reporting and audio technology and the harm that will come to the individuals and businesses using our court system if implemented.

Please note the following points:

1. Over the course of the national budget crises, other states have been naively drawn to electronic/digital recording equipment as a cheaper alternative to stenographic reporting. **Several of the states that replaced court reporters with alternative technologies have now switched back.** States such as New Mexico, New Jersey and Texas all found that the recording systems left much to be desired. Hidden costs and problems with inaudible testimony, blank tapes, equipment failures and, in some instances, resulting re-trials caused these states to return to court reporters. Also, a side-by-side comparison of court reporting and digital recording in Los Angeles Superior Court conducted by Justice Served also showed that the overall cost of capturing the record, and producing a transcript for a one-week trial was only **\$5,729 using a Court Reporter and \$7,247.50 for digital recording.**
2. **Court Reporters employ state-of-the-art technology that is far superior in functionality and offers other advantages.** Real-time Court Reporter stenographic notes are translated instantly, displayed on a computer screen and digitally archived to a computer. In fact, real-time is the only voice-to-text technology that meets the rigorous demand for accuracy that exists in a legal environment. On the other hand, electronic and digitally recorded transcripts generally take up to two times as long to be compiled, edited and returned as a final document.
3. **What approach to creating the transcript would you want to have available if your own life, liberty, home, or family were at stake.** Would you want a piece of equipment where important testimony was not recorded because someone coughed, a chair squeaked, they spoke too softly or just could not be understood? I personally would want to place my trust in a live person who is specially trained, certified, and could stop the proceedings to have information repeated and understood should any of these incidents occur.
4. **Privatization through the use of contract reporters causes more problems than it solves.** The availability and quality of court reporters willing to work for the contract rate has already proven problematic. The stability and reliability of contractors become concerns and, more importantly, the Court loses control of the official record.

Please take whatever action is necessary to eliminate this misguided provision from the final budget bill.

Sincerely,