

MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT



Office of Public Information

contact: Marcia McBrien | (517) 373-0129

follow the Office of Public Information on Twitter @CourtInfo

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Michigan Supreme Court names nine-member panel to ensure court interpreters are qualified to assist non-English speakers

Foreign Language Board of Review to help implement new rule requiring all Michigan state courts to provide interpreters; consistent, meaningful access is goal

LANSING, MI, December 4, 2013 – Looking to make sure people with limited ability to speak English have consistent, meaningful access to Michigan courts, the state Supreme Court today named nine members to the new Foreign Language Board of Review.

The panel was created under the Court’s [interpreter rule](#) issued in September, which calls for all Michigan courts to provide foreign language interpreters to people with limited English proficiency. All terms will begin January 1, 2014. Panel members, appointed to staggered terms, are:

- Kent County Circuit Court Judge Christopher P. Yates (one-year term ending December 31, 2014)
- Attorney Rafael C. Villarruel, Federal Defender Office, Detroit (one-year term ending December 31, 2014)
- Attorney Mary F. Rubio, Wayne County Prosecutor’s Office (one-year ending December 31, 2014)
- Gratiot County Probate Court Judge Kristin M. Bakker (two-year term ending December 31, 2015)
- Advocate Susan E. Reed, Michigan Immigrant Rights Center (two-year term ending December 31, 2015)
- Attorney Ashley E. Lowe, Thomas M. Cooley Law School Family Law Assistance Project (two-year term ending December 31, 2015)
- Kentwood District Court Judge William G. Kelly (three-year term ending December 31, 2016)
- Waterford District Court Administrator Jennifer E. Thom (three-year term ending December 31, 2016)
- Grand Rapids-area certified interpreter Donna F. Bos (three-year term ending December 31, 2016)

“Every Michigan court should provide consistent, meaningful access to the legal system for everyone, as provided in the new interpreter rule,” said Michigan Supreme Court Justice Bridget M. McCormack, the Court’s liaison justice on access to justice issues. “Interpreters must have the skill to reliably provide accurate interpretation of all proceedings. The Foreign Language Board of Review will ensure that court interpreter services are of consistent quality across the state.”

Members of the Foreign Language Board of Review may be reappointed for a full three-year term, but the total length of their board service can't exceed six years. Members must include three judges, a court administrator, a certified interpreter, an advocate for people with limited English proficiency, and three attorneys who work with court interpreters, according to the court interpreter rule.

Courts across the state are working on plans to implement the new interpreter rule based on local needs. In addition, the Michigan Supreme Court will soon launch an unprecedented effort to reach potential interpreters in every corner of the state, to ensure a ready pool of qualified interpreters.

Interpreter candidates must pass a written English exam to be eligible to take an oral proficiency exam. Individuals who pass both the written and oral test receive a certification card and their names are added to the certified interpreters list, which is sent to all judges and court administrators. While certification is not required, courts are encouraged to select certified interpreters when available.

For more information, visit the Language Access webpage at <http://courts.mi.gov/administration/scao/officesprograms/fli/pages/language-access-plan.aspx>.

-- MSC --