

DEPOSITION REPORTERS ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA

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STEPHANIE LESLIE, CSR 12893, RPR, CRR, CCRR PRESIDENT OF REGAL COURT REPORTING

Hello again, Steno Family:

Happy New Year to all of our loyal members! Can you believe that it's been 25 years since Y2K, five years since the dreaded 2020 COVID year, and almost two years since I was sworn in as your president? I hope everyone had a lovely holiday with family and friends, and I especially hope you didn't have to experience any loss during the recent devastating fires.

As we step into 2025, I reflect on the goals I had for last year as well as all the hard work of our board and so many volunteers that went into accomplishing them. We had some big wins legislatively, which you are no doubt familiar with from our prior communications. We also dedicated many hours and resources to spreading the word about the profession of court reporting and supporting our beloved students who are currently in school. Those efforts have yielded tremendous immediate results as well as what I believe will be continuous positive outcomes for years to come. We remain passionate about supporting both methods of licensed reporting (machine and voice) and about keeping our membership abreast of the various changes that affect our profession. I am pleased with what we achieved last year and look forward to another year of growth, advocacy, and unwavering support for our profession.

The new year brings with it new opportunities, and with our collective efforts I am confident that we will continue to elevate the visibility and importance of court reporting across the state. We must remain united, focused on the pillars that are vital to the success and longevity of our industry: Promoting court reporting, supporting court reporting students, and advancing legislative protections. As a collective, we can ensure that the significance of court reporting remains strong and impactful, but we are always in need of more help from our members. We know there is immense talent and zeal among our ranks and would welcome any time, great or small, or other resources you can devote to bettering this profession, whether it be reaching out to your local schools' career fairs to share court reporting with students, providing social media content for us to share, or providing an extra hand at our upcoming convention. (continued on page 2)



THE NATION'S LARGEST TRADE ASSOCIATION DEDICATED TO THE FREELANCE DEPOSITION REPORTER

Speaking of convention, are you excited?!? We have a fantastic lineup of excellent speakers and topics that we know you'll love! Please make plans to join us the weekend of May 2nd - 4th at the beautiful Ventura Beach Marriott. Not only is it a gorgeous venue in walking distance of the beach, but we are confident that by coming you will learn ways to improve your skills, increase your efficiency, find work-life balance, as well as obtain any CEUs you may need and get to network with peers.

As we move forward into 2025, let's remember that each step we take—whether it's advocating for the future of our profession, empowering students, or fighting for legislative protections—will help build a stronger, more resilient court reporting community. We encourage you to stay involved in whatever way you can. Together, we can ensure that court reporting remains a respected and vital profession for generations to come. Thank you for your continued support, and we look forward to seeing you all in Ventura on May 2nd!



New Members

Gina Agelopoulos **Sharon Hyatt** Windy Nguyen Samantha Ascate Yvonne Perez Jack Janowicz Jessica Baca **Alexis Jones** Kristi Perry

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Erica Buesa Michelle Kasper Anne Pothier

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Emily Chase Smith Christina Kuse Jannean Sapp Diana Chavez Shigeyo Leon Rodriguez Janae Shields

Amy Chidthai Kiley L'Heureux Ingrid Skorobohaty

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CAL_DRA

CALDRA

CalDRA's So Cal Student Picnic



On Saturday, October 12th, CalDRA held our annual Student Picnic for court reporting students of all stages in school, from theory students to those qualified to take the CSR. It was filled with fun, networking, and even some learning in our trivia game to test the students' knowledge of potential CSR test questions. Thanks to countless donors and volunteers, a pizza lunch was provided as well as bountiful raffle prizes. One of the highlights of the afternoon was steno "speed dating" where students got to ask honest questions of working reporters and firm owners. To say this year's event was a success would be an understatement. For the first time in DRA history, we sold out by hitting our maximum of 100 attendees. We look forward to expanding our capacity next year to be able to accommodate as many students as possible. Thank you to all our professional members, agencies, and schools and teachers who generously donated and volunteered their time to make our event possible. For those working reporters who want to continue supporting students, please consider joining this Facebook page to give our students the apprenticeship hours they need to finish school. Click here Facebook











My name is Diana Chavez. I am a voice student, currently in qualifiers at Downey Adult School. I became a new member after receiving an invitation from my school's director, Jocelyn Epperson, who has given us tremendous support in school and has promoted all the fantastic resources like CalDRA. And let me tell you, the membership price is nothing compared to what you receive from this tremendous association. It is truly an investment. After becoming a member and attending the student picnic, I can't quite put into words how much CalDRA has given me and impacted my student journey. To begin with, just sharing a space where we all sympathize with our journey and know the frustrations and excitements we go through is a breather. Secondly, all the wisdom shared by veteran reporters and new reporters is so valuable. Particularly, being able to sit with a working reporter and having the privilege of asking all sorts of questions is invaluable as an eager student. In my personal experience, as I spoke to the working reporters, I connected with various agency owners who so kindly allowed me to complete my apprenticeship hours with their reporters. And as that wasn't enough, I came home with a beautiful backpack perfect for carrying all my equipment into in-person depositions. As many attendees know, the CalDRA student picnic is the gift that keeps on giving. I not only came home with great motivation, insightful information, and a beautiful backpack, but I also came home with the grand prize: free entry to CalDRA's Annual Convention! I want to express my sincere appreciation to everyone who made this possible: the committee, the working reporters, and all the generous donors.



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE - Two New Laws Take Effect On 1/1/2025

Mary E. Pierce, CalDRA Legislative Co-Chair

SB 3252 - Stating Your Credentials At Outset Of Proceedings -

Explanation and Compliance Tips.

As part of last year's CRB sunset bill (SB 3252), new language was added to Business & Professions Code section 8016, which governs California CSRs, that requires every CSR to state their credentials for the record at the start of any proceeding they are reporting. This law went into effect January 1, 2025.

Basically, this law requires that at the commencement of any proceeding, be it deposition or court work, a licensee is to state their name as it appears on their license and their CSR number.

Doing this at depositions is pretty straightforward. When everyone is ready to go on the record, you take them there by stating your credentials and writing them into the record. I do this prior to swearing in the witness.

However, there are a few guidelines for following this new law in court. If you are doing just one hearing in a particular courtroom on a given day, again, you state these credentials at the commencement thereof. If you are doing multiple hearings in the same courtroom on the same day, you have two options. At the start of the first hearing you are reporting, you may either state your credentials on the record or you may provide them to the clerk. You are then not required to state them again for other hearings that follow in that same courtroom on that same day. If you are reporting a trial as a pro tem official, you need only state your credentials for the record on the first day you report said trial.

And while you are required to state only your name as it appears on your license and your CSR number, that does not preclude you from being more expansive. Here is the language that I typically state for depositions that I am reporting:

Good morning. My name is Mary Pierce. I am a Certified Shorthand Reporter in the State of California, License No. 6143, a code-compliant reporter. I will be producing a transcript of these proceedings that is automatically admissible in court.

The two additional elements both serve an important purpose, in my opinion. Although I haven't had anyone recently ask or try to propose a stipulation to relieve me of my duty to maintain custody of the original transcript through the conclusion of the review period, I make it clear in my read-on that I follow the code when it comes to the original transcript. If anyone does try to offer a stipulation otherwise, I would simply remind them that I am a code-compliant reporter. By stating that on the record and writing myself into the record, I have likely shielded myself from any consequences should someone later file a complaint and claim otherwise.

The second statement is to make sure that attorneys know that in California, transcripts certified by an individual possessing a valid and current CSR license are automatically admissible in court. If they aren't already aware of that, its inclusion in your read-on will, hopefully, cause them to ponder the question as to what sort of transcript might not hold that status and how can they tell the difference? If you don't know the answer to that question, please email me. I can make sure you understand the essential elements and give you talking points to aid you in any discussion on the subject should you have the opportunity to educate someone on the difference in the future.

SB 988 - Freelance Worker Protection Act (FWPA)

The second bill I will address also went into effect on January 1, 2025, and it affects most non-officials, but not in a manner that is particularly alarming. At least not to me. This bill is SB 988 and is known as the Freelance Worker Protection Act (FWPA) and is now part of Business & Professions Code section 18100, et seq.

The FWPA basically applies to "contracts" between a hiring party and a freelance worker. So if you're either an agency owner or a CSR that takes assignments for an agency or agencies, chances are this bill applies to how you conduct your business and some basic contractual terms, in whatever form, to which you are entitled. This also applies if the agency is a registered firm under the CRB but not headquartered in California.

While our erudite lobbyist and attorney, Ed Howard, has long advocated that we have contracts between the agency and the freelancer, this new law does make it a requirement, albeit with some flexibility. While a formal written contract is recommended, the content of "email, text message or other electronic communication" going back and forth between an agency and a freelancer may be viewed as a contract and would, therefore, likely be enforceable.

(Continued on page 7.)

Let's take a look at the basic and most relevant elements of the bill first.

- Contracts for freelance work of \$250 or more must be in writing and contain certain specific information regarding services to be provided and dates for contract completion, among other things.
- Payment for freelance work must be made on time or within thirty days after the completion of the work if no due date is specified in the contract.
- The FWPA prohibits discrimination or adverse action against freelance workers for protesting violations of the FWPA or seeking to enforce it.

The contract shall include, at a minimum, all of the following information:

- (1) The name and mailing address of each party.
- (2) An itemized list of all services to be provided by the freelance worker, including the value of those services and the rate and method of compensation.
- (3) The date on which the hiring party shall pay the contracted compensation or the mechanism by which the date shall be determined.
- (4) The date by which a freelance worker shall submit a list of services rendered under the contract to the hiring party to meet the hiring party's internal processing deadlines for purposes of timely payment of compensation.

So I asked Ed Howard, what happens if you don't have a contract as the law prescribes?

His response was this: Nothing, really, except the law clarifies existing law that not having a formal contract doesn't mean an agency owner can renege.

Why? Because, as now stated in 18103 (c), this section does not limit existing contract law, including, but not limited to, that it does not prevent a freelance worker from enforcing an oral contract or recovering under the doctrine of promissory estoppel.

And while this new law permits a freelancer to sue a firm that doesn't provide or honor a contract, that right is not unfettered. I would encourage you to examine 18100 through 18107 and read the full language for yourself, but here's a shallow dive into the law.

Let's start with what rights and what potential recourse are conveyed to a freelance worker under this new law. Again, I encourage you to read the law for yourself, but here are the basics.

18102. (a) Except as otherwise provided by law, a hiring party shall pay a freelance worker the compensation specified by a contract for professional services:

- (1) On or before the date compensation is due pursuant to the contract.
- (2) If the contract does not specify when the hiring party shall pay, no later than 30 days after the completion of the freelance worker's services under the contract.
- (3) If the hiring party violates any other provision of this part, the freelance worker may be awarded damages equal to the value of the contract or the work performed, whichever is greater.

As for the aforementioned recourse, that is partially covered under section 18106. (a), an aggrieved freelance worker or a public prosecutor may bring a civil action to enforce this part.

Now, the language here doesn't necessarily mean whether you feel aggrieved about just anything. It must go to the contractual relationship and whether elements thereof were not honored. For instance, if you got paid when you were supposed to and in the agreed-upon amount, you aren't aggrieved.

In summation, it's good to have the elements of agreements in some form of writing, and you have the right to be paid for your services within 30 days, unless there is some agreement that states otherwise between you and agencies for whom you accept assignments.

Sailing From the Past

By Andrew T. Ha, CSR 14537

As the storm passes, the labor of rebuilding begins. Telling my dad that I had passed the CSR exam marked the start of a new chapter in my life, and his funeral a couple months later marked the previous chapter's end. I feel stuck in a kind of purgatory wherein each passing day felt both freeing and diminishing. Upon the deck of the newly christened year of 2024, I began in earnest the task of picking up the pieces of my dad's well-worn sloop.

The greatest challenge I faced within my first three months as a working CSR in 2023 was figuring out my rate sheet, which fried my brain to crisps. But that was small potatoes compared to the challenges I faced in 2024, carrying and navigating the ongoing disputes over the flotsam of my dad's business and the emotional baggage with it. To make a long story short, when it came to dealing with my dad's stuff, 2024 was a demoralizing year. But what buoyed me – nay – rescued my of what could have otherwise been a shipwreck of a life was court reporting.

Thanks to court reporting, I was able to save my family's house. I attended no fewer than four court reporting conventions, even one all the way in Louisville, Kentucky. I attended my friend's destination wedding and wasn't afraid of the cost. I bought groceries and wasn't afraid of the cost. I took my family's cats to an emergency vet visit and wasn't afraid of the cost! (In retrospect, I should have been, but I felt so cocky walking in.)

For the first time in my life, I am able to indulge without feeling shame or guilt. I owe it both to court reporting, who pays for it, and my dad, who freighted me all this way on that tired but strong body of his. I could not have had my emotional resilience without him. As if my Theseus, I will take my dad into the New Year as a part of me.

As we reflect back on the past year, I ask you, the reader, to think about your challenges and your fortunes. Then, with bravery, I encourage you to share them with others....especially with me. If you attend any court reporting conventions or social events, I'll be the 6'1" Korean guy. As boating puns go, I'm running out of steam. Don't keel the messenger. Maybe this hull thing was a mistake. Regardless, as I enter into my second year with court reporting filling my sails, I know that I'll be able to weather any storm that comes my way.





Reporter Spotlight - Cindy Vega



CINDY VEGA CSR No. 6640, RDR, CCRR, NV CCR 559, WA CSR 1436 Carlsbad

How long have you been reporting?

40 years. My first job was February 8, 1984.

Where did you grow up?

I was born in East Los Angeles and moved to Escondido when I was 8 years old. I now live in Carlsbad.

Tell us about your family.

I grew up with five sisters. I also have two half sisters, one half brother, and one stepsister. So if you are keeping count, I have eight sisters and one brother. I have two kids, Catherine (25) and Adam (21). I also have eight nieces and four nephews.

How did you first get involved with DRA?

I became a member in 2005 and have been a member off and on over the years. It wasn't until my kids were older that I started volunteering my time with DRA.

What do you like to do when you're not reporting?

I do yoga and take walks along the beach, hang out with my kids and family. And I love to travel. My biggest hobby is going to as many concerts as I can. I've seen U2 over 50 times over the years!

What has been the highlight of your career?

Reporting President Bill Clinton's speech twice in San Diego when he was speaking to different associations. This is after he was President. He is very smart and speaks eloquently without reading from notes. I did get to meet him after one of the events. My exact words, "It was a pleasure reporting for you, Mr. President."

If you could do it all over again, would you choose court reporting as a career?

Absolutely! I still love my career choice even after 40 years.

What is one professional accomplishment you'd still like to achieve?

I still need to obtain my CRR through NCRA.

What's your cocktail order?

A good import beer.

Do you still practice on your machine?

Absolutely never.

What advice would you give to a struggling court reporting student?

Besides the obvious, to practice, I would say to get involved with your state and national associations. The energy and positivity is infectious. It will help boost your confidence tremendously.

If you couldn't be a court reporter anymore, what career would you choose?

Teacher or activist.

If you could only eat one food for the rest of your life, what would it be?

Mexican food, rice and bean burritos specifically.

Why is DRA membership important to you?

Being a member of DRA is a wealth of information and networking possibilities. I meet new people at each event and learn more and more about our profession through these members. DRA is always working behind the scenes for the betterment of court reporting and does what is best for all deposition reporters throughout the state. Being on the board for the past several years, I am in close contact with some of the smartest and brightest reporters out there!

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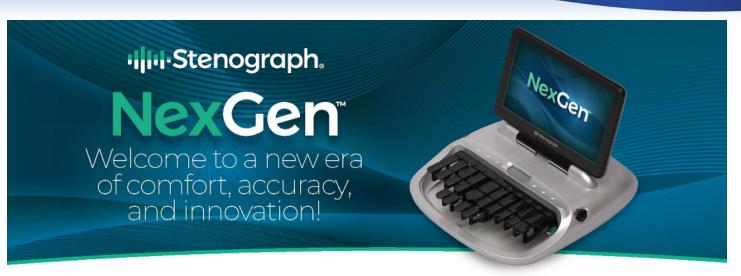
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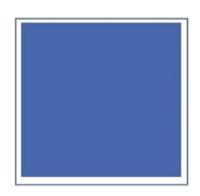
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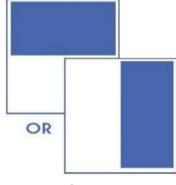
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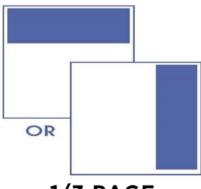
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