



Court reporters shortage: do courts need to be concerned?

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Court reporting is a highly specialized skill that requires intense training and discipline to achieve the level of quality that is demanded. In a courtroom or other locations for legal proceedings like depositions, the court reporters, [traditionally](#), transcribe speech using a stenotype machine. Any misunderstandings or mistakes in interpretation can compromise an entire case. Many reports are citing a court reporter shortage.

California was projected to have the highest demand for court reporters in 2018, followed by Texas, New York, Florida, and Pennsylvania, according to a 2014 [Ducker Report](#). On average, courts throughout California have 19% vacancies for court reporters as noted in the January 2022 [Court Reporter Shortage](#) study from the California Trial Court Consortium. This report addresses court reporting in the U.S. but specifically focuses on California's decline of court reporters. By 2028, court reporter vacancies will outnumber the court reporter population according to the study. In a new program to attract official court reporters, the Los Angeles Superior Court will offer [incentives](#) as outlined by the Executive Officer, David Slayton. Iowa courts are experiencing a critical [shortage of court reporters](#); not enough people are pursuing a career or graduating at a pace to fill the gap.

The [Ducker Report](#), a study that assesses the court reporting industry and education, estimated that nearly 5,500 court reporting positions would go unfilled by 2018. That is largely due to reduced enrollment rates for court reporters and the high rate of retirements among existing court reporters. Some states are more impacted than others and the shortage has been described as [spinning out of control](#). The Speech to Text Institute (STTI) [acknowledges](#) that "the court reporting industry is in a period of significant transition...firms and courts will need to rely on a more diverse workforce." An STTI executive director in his [letter](#) to the State Bar Association Leaders went on to say that a [study](#) predicted a gap of more than 11,000 by 2023. In light of this combination of trends, courts in the U.S. are facing a problem.

In Judge Scott Schlegel's [eCourts 2022](#) presentation, Modernizing the Justice System, he stated, "you need to be able to go back and create a proper [court reporting] record because a good record is essential to the justice system."

Heather Pugh's 2021 ICM Fellows paper, [When the Music Stops: California Courts, Court Reporters, and the Jameson Decision](#), tells how a litigant did not have the financial ability to hire a private court reporter during his civil lawsuit in 2002. Therefore, under appeals, judgments were withheld due to the lack of a reporter's transcript in the record.

Are we at the tipping point of a court reporter shortage and is your court offering incentives to retain court reporters? Share your experiences with us. For more information, contact Knowledge@ncsc.org or call 800-616-6164. Follow the National Center for State Courts on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Vimeo](#).