

Dear Madam Governor:

I feel like Princess Leia to Obi-Wan Kenobi, "You are our only hope..."

Enclosed is an anonymously written memo that was, hopefully, circulated to the SC Legislature. I did not personally receive a copy but another court reporter provided it to me. It is very well written although poorly proofread but I imagine the writer was trying to get it done and delivered along with keeping up with overly-burdensome job demands. I too cannot provide my name for fear of retribution.

I beg you, please, please read this enclosed document. We certainly need some intervention because a lot of us are at the breaking point. SC State Court Reporters are not being treated like all other state employees. We don't enjoy many of the benefits of being a state employee, the most egregious one being not being able to take vacation and sick leave when we need or want it. Secondly, because over 20+ positions have intentionally been left unfilled for years, it has created a huge supply of money in the coffers of Court Administration but it has burdened court reporters to the point of physical exhaustion, mental fatigue and demoralization. I feel that the proposed ER will be funded by unfilled CR positions, which have been to our detriment, and then to lose jobs because of ER is a double whammy – we will have unwillingly and unknowingly funded the means to replace us.

Just this past week we received notice of an across-the-board raise of \$2K. Some received an additional typing incentive of \$1K (although nobody knew there was an incentive in place or what the parameters were) and some of those received an additional overall performance of \$1K. The last two segments were doled out with prejudice towards others. No mention of the typing incentive and the overall performance in the letter to those that only got the \$2K. For instance, I produced over \$20K in transcript income last year but those that received the typing incentive produced amounts considerably less than that – like, less than half, a third or a quarter of what I produced. I did not get a typing incentive or the merit, although I feel quite sure I am one of the highest producers of the state. Of course, we were issued a mandate in our letters to not discuss salary with anybody which I immediately thought was a big red flag that we were not all being treated equally or fairly. I believe we are still US citizens and afforded the protections of the 1st Amendment.

Some circuits are very busy and have circuit court and family court sessions weekly. Other circuits may only have circuit court several times a year and family court once a month. Some reporters are kept in travel and receive less transcripts but endure an extra 10-20 hours a week in travel time or sometimes have to spend the entire week in a motel. Circuit court reporters generally produce thousands of pages in a year's time while family court reporters produce hundreds. Circuit reporters are routinely placed in family court whenever they should be having an in-chamber's week thereby ensuring no typing time sans evenings, weekends, holidays and annual/sick leave.

I won't belabor anything that has already been covered in the report, but I just beg you to please read this and give us some assistance. For the most part, we are truly a group of hard working, devoted employees and we are not being treated fairly in many regards and it has been going on

for years although lately it has been getting worse and more onerous. We have no one to go to. If we go to our manager we will be treated disrespectfully and dismissed. Most of our emails to her are not even answered. If you do gather the courage to complain about anything, there will be a retaliatory punishment such as a whirlwind tour of the state in the next several months or maybe annual leave denied. Most of us are afraid to approach her for anything because the punishment you will receive is just not worth it.

Please, please help us. Thank you.

FEBRUARY 2015

REPORT ON SOUTH CAROLINA'S OFFICIAL COURT REPORTERS

TO THE SOUTH CAROLINE LEGISLATURE: THE FOLLOWING IS A REPORT ON THE STATUS OF SOUTH CAROLINA'S OFFICIAL COURT REPORTERS AND AN URGENT APPEAL TO OUR LEGISLATORS.

1: BACKLOG OF CASES ON APPEAL: TRANSCRIPTS:

The following is quote taken from "The State" newspaper, dated 11-5-13, made by Chief Justice Toal (CJT) regarding the backlog of appealed cases: "Toal said many factors contribute to the backlog of cases, including the amount of time it takes to get court transcripts - about nine months on average."

It is not true that it takes an average nine months to get a transcript. There are safeguards in place to ensure that transcripts are timely produced. The backlog of cases is not due to reporters.

2: DIGITAL/ELECTRONIC RECORDING:

SC's Reporters have been hearing rumors about electronic recording (ER) for several years. They have heard from CJT that the Legislature has already approved funding to install ER equipment in 15 to 30 courtrooms around the state. However, this is misleading. SC's reporters have learned that the American Association of Electronic Reporters and Transcribers (AAERT) is part of a consulting team working with CJT and South Carolina Court Administration (CA) to install ER equipment in the higher number of 30 courtrooms, and that a representative from AAERT will be coming to SC February 23, 2015, to visit sites and make decisions on where the electronic equipment will be placed. It also to be noted that AAERT is the vendor for the ER equipment. SC's reporters firmly believe CJT's ultimate goal is to replace SC's reporters entirely with ER.

Though considerably late, a survey entitled "SC Digital Recording Project Survey" was emailed to judges, court reporters, court clerks, judicial assistants, and attorneys on February 12, 2015, with response due by February 17. That representatives from AAERT are scheduled to appear in SC February 23, that leaves just three working days after survey responses

are due, hardly enough time for a discussion on the subject. It appears CJT will push through her desire to install ER equipment in SC's courts, despite what the survey will reveal.

Installing ER would be a serious and costly mistake for South Carolina Courts for a number of reasons:

(a) Preservation, transcription, and certification of court proceedings is vital to due process and is a matter of justice and protecting the rights of the citizens of SC. Each judge, attorney, defendant, litigant, state court, court of appeal, and supreme court, and the public has an absolute right to the assurance from the SCJD that each and every court proceeding is preserved and produced with the utmost care, under the supervision of highly skilled, certified court reporters. ER cannot do that.

Reporters have been told that ER would only be used for what could be termed less important court proceedings. What is a less important proceeding? SC courts should not adopt a your-case-is-not-as-important-as-mine type of court system. That a live reporter will be used for more important or high-profile cases TO ASSURE THE INTEGRITY OF THE RECORD, in and of itself, underscores the need for live reporters in the courtroom for ALL proceedings.

(b) ERs cannot produce or certify transcripts. To produce a transcript, someone has to sit down at a computer and physically input. Clerk typists, untrained in the art of transcribing proceedings that contain case cites, Latin, legal, and medical terms, will most likely be given the task of transcribing ERs, which will result in poorly transcribed proceedings, spelling errors, and serious and critical mistranslates. THESE TYPIST WILL NOT BE QUALIFIED. NOR WILL THEY BE CERTIFIED. Reporters work and train years to perfect their skills, and go through rigorous testing to obtain their certifications. Producing and certifying a transcript involves far more than just typing. It is not a job for a clerk typist.

No one, not a clerk typist, or even a highly skilled reporter, can

certify that a transcript produced from ER is true and accurate, because ER does not record each and every utterance that must be recorded in order to certify a transcript as true and accurate. How could attorneys and judges possibly depend upon transcripts that are not certified? Transcripts produced from ERs will be replete with "inaudible" or "unintelligible," because persons transcribing ERs will not be able to understand and/or discern each and every word spoken, WHICH IS CRUCIAL, particularly with low-speaking witnesses, attorneys who may turn their backs, three or four people talking at once, doors slamming, people coughing. An ER cannot interrupt to say, I'm sorry, would you repeat that. And because of these situations, the length of time to transcribe an ER is at least twice or even three times the norm, because the transcriptionist must listen to the ER many times over to pull from the recording as much as they possibly can. Installing ER will delay, not expedite, transcript production.

(c) ERs cannot ask for a clarification when a witness has answered a question with uh-uh or huh-uh, rather than yes or no. ER cannot read back testimony.

(d) ERs cannot mark exhibits, keep them in order, keep a log of exhibits; notify a judge or an attorney that an exhibit was not admitted as evidence, when it was clear that that exhibit was to be admitted. ER cannot take possession and assure the safety of exhibits throughout a proceeding or at the end of the day.

One only has to visit a courtroom to know that reporters are the busiest person in the room. Jurors notice and comment on it; judges and attorneys depend upon them. SC's judges and attorneys by and large are strongly in favor of keeping reporters in the courtroom.

(e) In addition to a massive initial cost of ER equipment itself, there will be costs for personnel to operate ER equipment and training; costs for upkeep and maintenance; costs for frequent updates to the equipment; and replacement costs when the equipment is no longer functional.

(f) And perhaps most importantly, electronic recorders do not have a voice. Electronic recorders cannot speak in order to notify anyone that it

is, in fact, not recording the proceeding because it has malfunctioned -- EVEN WHEN THE DIGITAL LIGHTS INDICATE THAT THE ER EQUIPMENT IS RECORDING -- AND EVEN WHEN IT IS BEING MONITORED BY WHAT IS CALLED A MONITOR.

Other states have encountered serious problems with ER, including judges forced to halt proceedings, massive delays, having to repeat proceedings, and charges being dismissed or cases having to be re-tried because of ER equipments failure. All these situations are bad enough, but consider also that victims' families would be put through the horror of having to re-live proceedings all over again when, not if, ER equipment fails.

The following is a list of Internet cites to articles on problems other states have encountered with ER:

In the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit (see [stenosearch.com](http://stenosearch.com)), in a trial that was recorded by ER, where there was no reporter present, and then later transcribed by a transcription service, attorneys filed a motion to correct the record, stating that: "The trial record in this matter is incomplete due to the inordinate number of indiscernible and/or inaccurate portions of the trial and sidebar transcripts." The motion states there were approximately 10,000 such errors.

Please Google article "Judicial Officials Say No to Replacing Court Reporters." (North Carolina)

Please Google article "Utah Supreme Court Justice Supplied with Incorrect Information as Effect of Removing Official Court Reporters from District Courts."

Please Google "Judge Declares Mistrial in Case of Murder Defendant Patrick Ragland," Lexington, Kentucky. Quote: "A malfunction in courtroom recording equipment prompted a judge Wednesday to declare a mistrial in the case of murder defendant Patrick Deon Ragland."

After spending large sums of money installing ER, and finding that there is no substitute for a live reporter, many states have returned reporters to their courtrooms. Please Google "Why Texas State District Courts Switched Back to Using Live Reporters." The article references audio

difficulties bringing courts to a "screeching halt;" failed audio and recordings requiring hearing repeats; court records disappearing or rendered useless because they are inaudible, resulting in charges being dismissed because of ER failure.

Please contact the National Court Reporters Association for a comprehensive list of ER pitfalls and states that have experienced serious difficulties with ER, and North Carolina officials for more information on problems with producing transcripts from ER.

Another article, "Fourteenth Judicial Circuit, Integrated Courtroom Technology, Florida Courts," touts the benefits of ER. But if you read to the bottom of the article, you will see a disclaimer: "However, the Court does not guarantee the reliability of the equipment." In addition to the courts that have installed ER issuing a disclaimer for its performance, neither will you see companies who promote and sell ER guaranteeing their equipment's performance or offering to compensate litigants or the SCJD when their equipment fails.

It would be wonderful if the time to produce a transcript could be reduced from 30 days to three, but not so wonderful if the transcript is unusable. And not so wonderful when attorneys begin filing motions for re-hearings or re-trials of cases. And not so wonderful for the public when criminal cases are dismissed because of inaudible or missing audio or inaccurate transcripts.

A site called "Off the Record," [webmaster@stenosearch.com](mailto:webmaster@stenosearch.com), is compiling a list of the consequences of ER equipment failure in court systems across the country from New Jersey to Washington state. You can see that it matters not whether the charge is petty theft or murder, charges are being dismissed because of ER failure.

Installing ER in SC's courtrooms jeopardizes the integrity of the record. In brief, ER cannot do what is vital to our court system -- produce a true, accurate, certified, official transcript of proceedings that judges, attorneys, defendants, litigants, the SC Court of Appeals and Supreme Court, and the U.S. Courts can depend upon.

Please Google "Report on Use and Compensation of Court Reporters in North Carolina," at page 18, where the NC Bar Association, NC Association of Defense Attorneys, NC Superior Court judges state their support for official reporters and opposition to ER.

At the Conference of NC Superior Court Judges, 2013, the judges adopted a resolution that: "Neither audio/visual systems nor privatization can serve as an acceptable substitute or satisfactory method to assure that same high degree of integrity of recordation presently provided by Official Court Reporters; and that elimination of our Official Court Reporters will surely result in a distinct drop-off of quality of recordation, and that accountability regarding the integrity of the record will be obliterated; and that under present practice, disputes seldom arise about the accuracy of a transcript recorded and transcribed by an Official Court Reporter...BE IT THEREFOR RESOLVED that the NC Superior Court Judges...declare their unqualified support for the Official Court Reporters of the State of NC, our unrelenting opposition to elimination of their positions, and our solemn call for the preservation of all Official Court Reporter positions."

The answer to providing true, accurate, timely, certified transcripts, improving transcript turnaround and the court process as a whole, and making SC Courts the standard all other courts will follow does not lie in ER, but in providing support so that SC's reporters can afford to acquire realtime equipment, the process by which words are immediately translated onto a computer screen by reporters for immediate viewing by judges and attorneys.

Realtime reporting in the courtroom by a live reporter is the direction of the future; not dependance upon ER, though you will not hear even a passing mention from CJT/CA about the valuable benefits of realtime reporting to judges and attorneys, or the fact that realtime reporting expedites transcript production.

### 3: SICK LEAVE/ANNUAL LEAVE:

Reporters have been told by email from Desiree Allen, CA, that "It's okay to take sick leave during your annual leave. Sometimes that's the



only way you can get it in, particularly if you're unable to get appointments during in-chambers weeks."

It should not even be a suggestion that reporters take sick leave during annual leave, because "sometimes that's the only way you can get it."

Although reporters have been told by email from Ms. Allen that "the same leave benefits are available to court reporters as other state employees," reporters are being treated differently and perhaps contrary to law.

Reporters have been told, in an email from Ms. Allen dated January 7, 2014: "I am getting many requests for leave outside of in-chambers weeks. I will have to return them. If you've sent in a request in the last couple of days for weeks that are not in-chambers and you'd like for me to change it, let me know."

Reporters are told over and over again that annual leave requested during chambers weeks will be granted first. More recently, reporters have been told by Ms. Allen that she is "unable to continue approving leave beyond a month in advance."

Another email from Ms. Allen states: "...I am not inclined to approve Mon-Thur and leave Fri off. This is particularly important because we don't want to be left with those pesky days that you may lose at the end of the year. ... If you are asking for four days, you may as well ask for five."

Reporters would not be in danger of losing annual leave if they were not so severely restricted in when they can take it. And reporters should not be forced to take five days leave when only requesting four.

There are many life events that do not coincide with chambers weeks, such as weddings, births, deaths, graduations. Reporters' annual leave should not be restricted to chambers weeks. Chambers weeks are in place to allow judges to catch up on their work. The same should be true for reporters. Reporters also have work that must be done outside the courtroom, and they also get behind.

After having sent in a request for annual leave, a reporter may not hear from CA for a long period of time whether or not approved. This is unfair,

as reporters, too, must make airline, hotel, and other reservations and arrangements well in advance of vacation. Annual leave is sometimes denied by CA, then later approved, after a reporter has canceled vacation plans, flights, hotel rooms, et cetera.

Reporters have been denied sick leave for important medical issues by CA. These are only some of the instances where sick leave has been denied:

- (a) Prenatal visits. (b) Having a tumor removed, when said tumor was thought by the physician to be leukemia. The tumor was benign, and the reporter returned to work the day after surgery, drugged and in pain. That is dedication.
- (c) One reporter, having told CA they had a tumor that had to be removed, the reporter was told to "have it taken care of over the holidays."
- (d) Another reporter was denied leave to be with her mother for a cancer diagnosis.
- (e) A reporter called CA for days to arrange leave to be with her dying sister, with no response. She then asked someone senior in CA, and was thereafter punished by CA denying her annual leave requests, no matter how far in advance requested.
- (f) Denied leave to take sick children to the doctor, including having tubes placed in their child's ears. That reporter was told to call in the day before to see if there was a replacement reporter available. This failure to hire the established quota of reporters is also the reason courts have been canceled or delayed for hours.

These restrictions on reporters' leave and the more recent restriction on leave approval "beyond a month in advance" are due to CA's failure to hire the established quota of reporters. Reporters feel that this failure to hire the established quota of reporters is deliberate and being done in order justify installing ER.

Sick and annual leave are earned by reporters just as any other state employee, and it's grossly unfair to require reporters to use annual leave for sick leave; to deny leave for personal or family medical issues; delay the granting of annual leave; and restrict annual leave to chambers weeks; and be unable to request leave only one month in advance.

4: SCHEDULING: REPORTER REPLACEMENT:

CA provides the scheduling of assignments for reporters each month. Reporters notify CA by email or the hotline if they are unavailable for work because of illness or other instance. However, if a reporter has to schedule an urgent medical appointment that cannot be postponed, reporters have been told that they are not to notify CA until THE DAY BEFORE the appointment, and that they will then notify the reporter if a replacement is available. If CA does not have a replacement available, reporters have been told by CA that they must "alert" the judge themselves THE MORNING OF.

Imagine a judge, with attorneys, parties, clerk's, and a hundred jurors, ready to begin a trial, receiving a call from a reporter advising them that they are ill and unable to work, and that CA has said there is no replacement reporter available; and further, that they are sorry, but that they were not allowed to notify the judge until THE VERY MORNING OF THE TRIAL. Reporters believe this is being done to impart a false notion to judges and attorneys that there is a shortage of qualified reporters. THERE IS NO SHORTAGE OF QUALIFIED REPORTERS.

It is an unavoidable fact of life that employees or their families at some point will have illness. If there is no replacement reporter available, again, the judge is left with no alternative but to shut down court. This should never happen.

It is the responsibility of CA to notify judges that a replacement reporter is not available. This responsibility has been gradually and unfairly shifted to reporters by CA over the past year.

##### 5: UNDERSTAFFING: SALARY: PAGE RATES:

As far as reporters are aware, CA's budget has never been reduced, but increased. However, for many years now, our courts have been understaffed, at times by as much as 25 reporters. As of the end of 2014, our courts are understaffed by approximately 20 reporters. The shortage has been so bad at times that court has been forced shut down, or delayed for hours while a reporter drives two or three hours away to cover court.

For a considerable time, reporters have an advisory committee that is now scheduled to meet twice per year, the members of which are selected by

CA. Meetings were rarely held before, as CA consistently ignored suggestions. In a meeting held October 24, 2014, regarding ER, the minutes state: "the goal is not to do away with live court reporters; court reporters will continue to be hired as they are now." The fallacy is, reporter hiring "as it is now" is, and has been for some time, designed not to bring reporting staff up to established levels. Reporters believe that ER will eventually be installed in every courtroom and that they will be eliminated through attrition.

AGAIN, THERE IS NO SHORTAGE OF QUALIFIED REPORTERS, as CJT would have you believe, only CJT's desire to install ER in SC's courtrooms, regardless of anyone else's opinion. Reporters believe that CJT has instructed CA not to hire the established quota of reporters. In fact, some reporters have seen instances where qualified reporters from right here in SC that they are acquainted with have applied, but have not been hired. They also believe that the funds available to hire the established quota of reporters has been accumulating for years in order to re-route those funds into a fund for the purchase of ER equipment.

Reporters are not given extra pay commensurate with years of experience when hired, as in other states. Circuit reporters starting salary is around \$39,500, well below the \$56,850 yearly mean wage for state reporters, as cited in "Occupational Employment and Wages, May 2013." Family court reporters earn even less. Preliminary research indicates our neighboring states of Georgia and North Carolina exceed SC reporter salaries by at least \$10,000 per year. AGAIN, THERE IS NO SHORTAGE OF QUALIFIED REPORTERS. Poor salaries is the reason qualified reporters from other states and freelance reporters right here in SC are not attracted to official positions with the SCJD.

Transcript page rates are also inadequate, currently \$3.25 per page per original; \$.75 per page per copy.

6: EXTRA REPORTER EXPENSES:

Reporters must pay for continuing education in order to maintain their certification in order to maintain their jobs, and must provide all of

their equipment and the vast majority of supplies, including, but not limited to, stenotype machines, recorders, computers, laptop computers, realtime software, yearly realtime fees, microphones, cell phones. They must pay for Internet services in order to be connected to CA. All of this is a huge expense that other state employees are not required to bear.

Reporters literally carry their office around with them. Their equipment is heavy, and carrying it from place to place is taxing on them physically, and taxing on their equipment to attach, detaching, and re-attach when having to travel from assignment to assignment, sometimes in the same day.

7: AUGUST 2014 ANNUAL JUDICIAL CONFERENCE HANDOUT FROM CJT:

The following are excerpts from the Annual Judicial Conference handout. The full text can be downloaded from CJT's website:

(a) Page 14, "Court Reporter Incentive Project":

There is, apparently, a Court Reporter Incentive Project proposed by CJT. However, reporters have heard nothing about it.

(b) Page 13, "Digital court reporting to decrease time to obtain a transcript," and "decrease the number and length of extensions granted"

These are serious fallacies, for reasons outlined above.

(c) And finally, please see Page 25: "Big point of emphasis in my final budget request to the Legislature will be a salary increase for all judges."

Should not the big point of emphasis in the final budget request to the Legislature be fair and equitable salary increases for all judicial department employees?

Reporters understand that Ms. Allen received a substantial salary increase of \$7,000 in 2014. Judge's administrative assistants also received a salary increase in 2014, in the amount of \$4,000. It is thought that law clerks are next to receive a raise. CJT's handout next lists "Other SCJD Employees," then judges in order of those to receive raises.

In light of the fact that CJT does not specifically mention reporters in her handout, and the fact that reporters have never received an increase in

salary, save cost of living increase received by every state employee, reporters are in hopes that they at least fall into CJT's category of "Other SCJD Employees" and are in line for a salary increase commensurate with our neighboring states of Georgia and North Carolina.

The following should be considered disturbing by not only Legislators, but SC's Judicial system at large:

"We're not concerned about them; we're concerned about us."

These words are not verbatim, but extremely close to what CJT said to judges in response to some of the judges speaking up and asking that reporters receive a raise. This is abhorrent and certainly does not speak well of CJT's attitude toward reporters, particularly from someone whose duty and responsibility is justice.

Because of these remarks and CJT's negative attitude toward reporters, they do not feel that decisions on salary and page rate increases or compensation for additional costs reporters must bear should be left to CJT.

Ms. Allen noted that "studies were being done by group to determine if any changes were warranted by CJT," and that "as it relates to court reporters, information comparing salaries of court reporters to southeastern states has been compiled for review by CJT."

Reporters have not seen this information.

#### 8: TRAVEL:

The attitude toward some reporters from Ms. Allen is demeaning to the point where reporters dread to contact or open emails from her. Reporters are routinely denied requests to switch assignments, when to do so would save the state money and the reporter travel time. If a reporter has made a mistake in some manner or made a complaint, they are "punished" by being made to travel outside their county of residence. A check of CA's records will reveal that CA will require Reporter A to travel to Reporter B's residence county for an assignment, while at the same time, Reporter B is traveling to Reporter A's county for an assignment, costing the state unnecessary expense, including travel, hotel rooms, and meals; adds

unnecessary hours of drive time to reporters' work days; and exposes reporters to unnecessary danger of accident because of additional time spent on the road. Not only is this a poor manner in which to deal with employees, it has fostered an atmosphere of intimidation and fear of retribution among reporters. Every effort should be made to keep reporters in their county of residence.

Travel time is, of course, in addition to time reporters spend in court, and in addition to time reporters spend when they get home working on required reports; answering emails and written correspondence; returning phone calls; archiving the record of proceedings; preparation of transcripts, et cetera. A reporter's day can be as long as ten or eleven hours, not including time spend working on transcripts.

9: Reporters' responsibilities are never ending. Reporters work long hours and very often travel long distances, sometimes spending the entire week away from their families, but they are constantly being forced by CA to give more and more. They are dedicated and hard-working. They are sitting at their computers working many, many nights, weekends, and holidays. Reporters understand when taking the job that it requires putting in extra effort not required in other positions, but CA's failure to hire the established quota of reporters and these other issues are causing unnecessary hardships on them.

Other states give reporters periods of leave when they have a large number of transcripts pending to transcribe or when they have a particularly lengthy transcript pending, like a death penalty trial. SC's reporters are never given time off to work on transcripts, and very often must take their annual leave to work on transcripts.

Reporters are respectfully asking:

(a) For an increase in salary commensurate with reporter salaries of our neighboring states of Georgia and North Carolina; an increase in page rates; and at least some reimbursement for added expenses not incurred by other state employees; that these decisions be placed under the control of the Legislature, not the CJ;

(b) That CA be required to hire the established quota of reporters;

(c) That the purchase of ER equipment be halted and a panel of reporters be formed to provide the Legislature with a report on the many benefits realtime reporting will provide to SC's judges and attorneys;

(d) That CA not place upon reporters CA's responsibility of notifying judges that there is no replacement reporter available when reporters must take a sick day; that reporters' leave be treated in the same manner as other state employees;

(e) That our Legislators appoint a committee to conduct inquiries into these matters; a committee that will then schedule a meeting with SC's reporters to discuss and find solutions to these issues; that such a meeting be limited to the committee and SC's official reporters so that reporters may speak freely. Reporters would also like confirmation whether or not the Legislature has approved funding for ER.

These issues are affecting all official reporters. However, this report obviously does not presume to speak for all reporters. They fear retaliation if anyone's name is connected to this report. Therefore, there are no signatures. They also fear retaliation if they attempt to form a committee or obtain legal advice on how to best deal with these issues. The fear of retaliation, in and of itself, is a serious matter that reporters pray the Legislature will address.

Reporters understand the Legislature has considerable to do, but these situations for SC's official reporters has become urgent. They would be most grateful for your help. Their contact information may be obtained from CA. Apologies that this report has not been done in a more professional manner, but time obviously is of the essence.

Thank you sincerely.