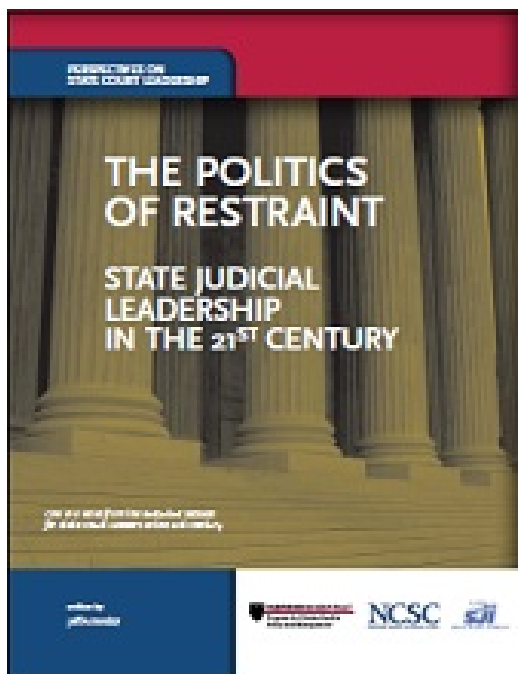


# E-SJI NEWS

## Executive Session for State Court Leaders Releases New Paper on Judicial Leadership

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The paper emphasizes how judicial independence is maintained through carefully crafted messages.

Beginning in 2008, SJI, the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), and the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) collaborated to fund and support the *Executive Session for State Court Leaders in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, hosted by Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. The Executive Session brought together over thirty leaders at all levels of the state courts, academia, media, private counsel, and national court support organizations, to define, discuss, and decipher state court issues and solutions. Their work concluded in late 2011, and has continued on through the authorship of these papers. Each paper has addressed an emerging or existing area of need presented during the Executive Session.

Upcoming papers include: maintaining judicial independence during a funding crisis; and improving court access and ensuring fair treatment to all who access the courts.

The entire series is available on the SJI website, and print copies have been distributed to the members of Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ) and Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA), and to the boards of directors of major court-related organizations. In an effort to reach the widest possible audience of judges, court administrators, and criminal justice professionals, the NCSC serves as a [repository for all published Executive Session products and videos](#).

The recent release of [The Politics of Restraint: State Judicial Leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century](#), authored by Chief Justice (ret.) Jeff Amestoy of the Vermont Supreme Court marks the 11th paper in the Harvard Executive Session series.

The author discusses how judicial leaders should understand their role as extending beyond protecting and enhancing the budgetary and other needs of the state courts. Rather, using a voice that is both restrained and persistent, judicial leaders should articulate the importance of the judiciary in democratic society.

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# New Mexico Finalizes Online Language Access Training Module

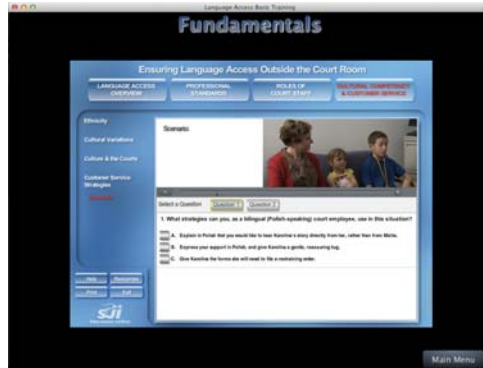
The Language Access Basic Training (LABT) is a downloadable interactive training, which serves as an introduction to language access for all court employees. It is a collaborative project of the New Mexico Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) through the New Mexico Center for Language Access (NMCLA), funded by SJI and supported by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) and the Language Access Advisory Committee of the Council of State Court Administrators (COSCA). The project's Advisory Board consisted of stakeholders from 7 states including: Arizona, Colorado, Nebraska, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oregon and Texas.

The purpose of the training is to ensure that all court employees have a basic understanding of their ethical and legal obligations, as well as current best practices in serving limited English proficient and non-English speaking individuals. Available in language neutral and Spanish, LABT also provides a training module for bilingual court employees as well as an optional skills assessment module. The training will be administered by NCSC. Customization services are available through the NMCLA.

**The training program consists of three modules: 1) Fundamentals; 2) Bilingual Skills Building; and 3) Bilingual Skills Assessment.**

**The Fundamentals Module** is intended to train both monolingual and bilingual staff in state courts. The module is divided into four sections:

- 1) **Overview** describes the legal basis for language access services;
- 2) **Professional Standards** explores best practices in language access;
- 3) **Roles of Court Staff** details the differing roles of interpreters, bilingual staff, and mono-



lingual staff in the provision of language access services; and

- 4) **Cultural Competency and Customer Service** examines the importance of cultural differences in providing good customer service.

The module is designed to be a rich learning experience, using video, graphics, scenarios, and expert commentary to make topics engaging, accessible, and easy to understand.

Expert commentary is provided by professionals in the field with varying perspectives, including judges, language access specialists, court administrators, clerks, and representatives from the NCSC and COSCA.

**The Bilingual Skills Building Module** is specific to *bilingual* court staff. The module is available in language neutral and Spanish and includes three main sections:

- 1) **Terminology Acquisition** covers theory and exercises on how to effectively research legal terminology in both languages;
- 2) **Language Access Facilitation** includes lessons and exercises in consecutive interpreting and sight-translation;
- 3) **Guidelines for Practice** challenges trainees to apply concepts and techniques in an interactive environment.

The self-paced practice module includes lessons, quizzes and exercises as well as self-evaluation tools. This way, trainees can effectively learn, evaluate their performance and keep track of their progress.

**The Bilingual Skills Assessment Module** is also specific to *bilingual* court staff. The module evaluates trainees' comprehension of LABT content and skills in their language pair. Trainees complete the skills assessment module online and submit it for rating or feedback.

Two pilots were conducted to test the technologies and content of the program. The first pilot took place in New Mexico, with a focus group. The second was comprehensive – with a total login count of one hundred and thirty-six (136) trainees from seven states and served as a collaborative effort between the AOC, NCSC, and the advisory board states; feedback collected was overall very positive.

The program will be available this summer online through the NCSC.

## Missouri Nears Completion of Language Access Project



Through a grant from SJI, the Missouri Office of the State Court Administrator (OSCA) has recently completed much of the work necessary to make the *Representing Yourself in Missouri Courts* website more accessible to limited English proficient (LEP) litigants (SJI-13-T-147).

With a diverse population rivaling many urban areas across the country, Missouri

realized a need to enhance services by increasing language access. Through this project, the Judiciary is aligning online resources with the needs of LEP individuals involved in family law matters.

Six emerging languages that the OSCA targeted for this project included: Bosnian, French, Russian, Spanish, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese. While forms still require completion in English, the litigant is able to fully understand the forms and seek further assistance as needed.

Currently, litigants may choose to view the website in English or Spanish. Additional languages will be deployed in the future to complement the forms translation and available court staff assistance. The updated site is live and can be viewed [here](#).

SJI continues to support projects of local, state,



and national scope through its [Priority Investment Areas](#), which emphasize both language access and self-represented litigation.

The next deadline for grant applications is August 1, 2014.

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