

# Bring Interpreter Issues to the Forefront of Congress...Send a Letter Today



Below is a sample letter to Congress to address concerns related to the national interpreter shortage. If you would like to send this letter to your Member of Congress, please reproduce it on your own letterhead and forward to your representative. To find your representative, go to [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) and in the upper left corner of the Web site, type in your zip code. The search will return with your representative's name and address. If you would like an electronic copy of this letter for easier reproduction, please email [tschultz@rid.org](mailto:tschultz@rid.org).

Dear Congressman/Congresswoman \_\_\_\_\_:

*Right now, deaf individuals are going without interpreter services because there are not enough skilled, qualified interpreters to meet the growing need. Individuals are going to doctors' appointments, business meetings and partaking in everyday communication events without a necessary element in communication – an interpreter. These individuals are not being protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) because of the national shortage of American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters. There seems to be a great differential between the numbers of available qualified interpreters versus the increasing demand for interpreter skills. This is not a new phenomenon as the shortage has been steadily growing over the years. However, due to new technological advances with video relay service (VRS) and video remote interpreting (VRI), the shortage is reaching a very critical point.*

*The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services of the Department of Education launched a new initiative in 2004 (Federal Register on November 2, 2004, 69 FR 64240) for the development of regional as well as a national center dedicated to interpreter education initiatives. "The purpose of this priority is to support a National Interpreter Education Center (national center) to coordinate the activities of the Regional Interpreter Education Center or Centers, to ensure the effectiveness of the educational opportunities offered by the Regional Interpreter Education Center or Centers, to ensure the effectiveness of the program as a whole by evaluating and reporting outcomes, to provide technical assistance to the field on effective practices in interpreter education, and to provide educational opportunities for interpreter educators. In conducting its activities, the National Center must ensure the provision of quality educational opportunities with substantial consumer involvement throughout the process and with a specific focus on interpreting for consumers of VR services."*

*This program is a step in the right direction to ensure quality interpreter services for the Deaf and hard of hearing community. However, more needs to be done to guarantee that a deaf individual never has to go without interpreter services due to lack of available, skilled interpreters in the field.*

*I believe that the Federal government can address the ASL interpreter workforce shortage and provide the Deaf and hard of hearing community protection as provided in the Americans with Disabilities Act by focusing on the following:*

- *Renew emphasis on creating incentives for experienced interpreters to become teachers and assistant professors and professors of ASL.*
- *Fund programs of ASL as a second language in American's secondary schools.*
- *Create a grants program to market interpreting as a career option in both secondary and post-secondary forums.*
- *Support the development of new 4-year ASL programs in public colleges and universities.*

*The interpreter shortage is an issue that must be addressed at the national level to ensure fair and equal communication access for the Deaf and hard of hearing community.*

*As a practicing interpreter in your congressional district who received certification from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), I experience first-hand the demand on this profession. I am extremely passionate about the crucial function my profession serves to both the Deaf and hearing communities. I do not want there to be a break-down in the quality of interpreting or for the practice to become acceptable to fill requests with less-than-qualified interpreters just because they are the only ones available. This would not be acceptable to those of us in the interpreting profession or the Deaf community and it should not be acceptable to you, as our representative.*

*This is an urgent and crucial issue that needs immediate attention. I would appreciate any support and consideration you could provide to ensuring increased and adequate funding for interpreting training programs and interpreter outreach programs to help grow the profession.*

*Thank you for your time and consideration, and I look forward to receiving your response.*

Sincerely,

*Your Name*