

22 November 2021

Dear State Bar Association Leaders,

I'm writing in my capacity as the Executive Director of the Speech to Text Institute (STTI), which is a non-profit organization formed by leaders from across the court reporting industry. STTI members are united in the belief that uncompromising quality should be the requirement for all professionals engaged in converting the spoken word to text within the legal environment. I previously served as Executive Director of the National Court Reporters Association (NCRA), and the STTI Board of Directors includes two past presidents of NCRA.

You may have recently received a letter from Debbie Dibble, current President of NCRA – an organization representing only stenographic reporters – in which she encourages state bar associations to take steps to ensure that depositions are taken, and transcripts are certified, in accordance with the rules within the prevailing jurisdiction (state, federal, or otherwise). With the changes taking place in the court reporting industry – most notably a systemic and exacerbating shortage of stenographers – it is indeed important that your members and others who make use of court reporting services are crystal clear on the rules and restrictions within prevailing jurisdictions. **We therefore are supplying you with a state-by-state list of rules and restrictions related to court reporting.** Feel free to circulate this list to your members and/or to post it on your website.

Where permissible, attorneys *should* stipulate to whatever method of court reporting they prefer or is available. Please note what Ms. Dibble's letter does NOT specify: It does not identify any harm from the stipulation practice; it does not cite any examples of error-filled transcripts; and it does not reference any examples of unprofessional reporting. In fact, it does not identify any harm at all. She notes that fewer stenographers are being used in depositions, which is almost entirely because stenographers are in shorter supply, a reality that some individuals and organizations pushing an impractical, steno-only agenda conveniently disregard without consideration of the consequences.

The court reporting industry is in a period of significant transition. As we move forward, it is certain that court reporting firms and courts will need to rely on a more diverse workforce that includes stenographers, digital reporters, and voice writers to meet marketplace demand. For each of these available verbatim court reporting methods, a national professional organization provides testing and certification confirmation so that high industry standards of competence are corroborated. As this transition takes further hold, the expected standards of professionalism, accuracy, and quality will not vary by the technology used to capture the record. That is why STTI has developed a corresponding library of resources and information to bring clarity to the situation, including analysis on the stenographer shortage, fact sheets about the various court reporting technologies, and other pertinent information, which you can find [here](#) on our website.

Should your organization be interested in content about the changes taking place in court reporting—a blog, a by-lined article, a webinar, a podcast—we are eager to collaborate with you in a way that benefits your members and answers questions as the industry evolves in reflection of marketplace realities.

Thank you, and I wish you a happy Thanksgiving holiday,

Jim Cudahy
Executive Director
Speech to Text Institute