

Resolution 16
In Support of National Court Interpreter Legislation

WHEREAS, the growing diversity of the United States' population is reflected in the changing needs of people appearing in the state courts; and

WHEREAS, courts increasingly serve people who lack fluency in the English language; and

WHEREAS, justice for such persons requires the availability of interpreter services that will allow them to understand and participate in the court process; and

WHEREAS, interpreters must have specialized knowledge of the legal language and process as well as general language skills; and

WHEREAS, state courts have taken an active role in developing the instruments needed to train court interpreters; and

WHEREAS, the cost of developing a pool of interpreters is growing as the number of languages and the population requiring this assistance increases; and

WHEREAS, the federal government should assist state courts to provide this critical component of their adjudicatory process; and

WHEREAS, Senator Herbert H. Kohl (D-WI) has shared with the Conference of Chief Justices a draft bill that would create a 'State Court Interpreter Grant Program Act' and would authorize \$15 million a year for four years under this program; and

WHEREAS, Senator Kohl's bill would be patterned after the very successful Court Improvement Program, which gives discretion to state courts in allocating federal funds for child abuse and neglect cases;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Conference of Chief Justices urges Senator Kohl to continue his efforts for enactment of this legislation and calls on Congress to approve it in a timely manner for the benefit of state courts and the people they serve.

Adopted as proposed by the Access to and Fairness in the Courts Committee at the 29th Midyear Meeting on January 18, 2006.