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# COVID Response Puts Language Pros on Front Lines and on Camera

***Translators and Interpreters Educate Federal Lawmakers that 75 Percent of Profession Are Independent Contractors, Earn Relief in Bill***

**Is YOUR State Lawmaker Holding Tele-Town Hall? Sign Up and Tell Your Story About How You Serve Your Community and Face Harm from AB 5**



Contact:  
CoalitionPTIC@gmail.com  
ph: 805-689-4822

Call it a sign of the times.

There we are, reliably 6 feet apart from elected officials and public-health experts. Mostly women, like our profession. Many at the pinnacle of our careers, reflecting years of training, with stellar credentials to show for it, and often decades of carefully honed skills in the nuances of the language pairings we have mastered.

And just like the breadth of our profession, at least **75 percent of interpreters in the public eye now in the fight to slow COVID-19 and save lives are independent contractors, in fact and by choice.** It's another teachable moment for Americans about our work and for lawmakers at all levels.



CoPTIC advocates Katharine Allen and Barry Slaughter Olsen along with Odilia Romero, an expert interpreter of indigenous languages active in the advocacy group CIELO, drove home the point about independence on an international Web-based conference on Thursday, March 26. Interpreters spoke about their pivotal role in public health for vulnerable communities, including Americans with limited English proficiency and people with disabilities; their guidance to major retailers seeking fluent service

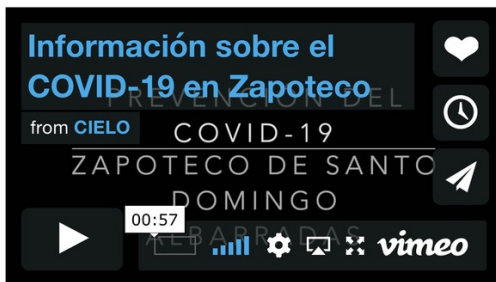
for fast, convenient public coronavirus testing; and leading the public and private sectors onto online communication platforms amid a health crisis, a shift some call the **Great Adaptation**.

Several hundred Californians and more than a thousand language professionals on 5 continents took part in the webinar hosted by **InterpretAmerica**. In our state and worldwide, **independence or self-employment is the rule**. Employee status is the exception, as low as 6 percent of the profession. But that long-standing reality hasn't stopped some lawmakers from seeking to impose an artificial and harmful definition of "employee" onto interpreters and translators, who guide millions of Californians and anywhere from 10 to 100 distinct clients across the language divide in the course of a year.



≡ MENU

## COVID-19 Videos in Indigenous languages



Our crucial sector of California's economy contributes about \$2 billion annually. Highly trained professional linguists are the backbone of that economy.

But **since January 1 a new state law, AB 5, has thrown our profession and capacity to operate into grave doubt**. The law fails to include linguists among its exemptions for occupations or traditionally independent professionals, **even though the official labor code recognizes translators and interpreters as "professionals and kindred occupations."**

A new [large-scale survey of language professionals](#) by CSA Research shows how **mistaken and dangerous** the failure to respect linguists by AB 5 is. A wave of [cancelations of work throughout our state](#) unleashed by the law is **endangering translators and interpreters who are truly independent contractors, most of them women or immigrants, or both.**

The **Coalition of Practicing Translators and Interpreters of California (CoPTIC)** continues to organize throughout the state. CoPTIC has united more than 1,000 linguists, including transcribers, voice-over professionals, and language trainers. **To learn more about why independence works for linguists and the 75 percent finding, please click here:**

<http://coalitionptic.org/2020/03/23/overwhelming-majority-of-interpreters-and-translators-are-independent-in-fact-by-choice/>

# CoPTIC Advocates Tell Senate and Congress: Don't Cut Off Independent Professionals. Capitol Hill Listens.



The \$2.2 trillion relief measure passed by the Senate Wednesday and [by the House Friday](#) includes independent professionals in various forms of relief measures, some for the first time. CoPTIC advocates throughout California educated federal lawmakers and staff about the fact that we are predominantly self-employed and NOT employees, so relief policies intended for ALL working Americans must not cut us off. We got heard. Relief components include:

- \* Displaced independent professionals NEWLY INCLUDED in [eligibility for state unemployment insurance](#), including a [new \\$600 weekly supplement through July 31 with an additional 13 weeks of benefits](#) added.
- \* Stimulus payments to individuals of up to \$1,200 include self-employed people.

Earlier steps in state and federal relief policy that respect independent language professionals:

- \* Small businesses throughout California [eligible for disaster grants or loans](#).
- \* Statewide [moratorium on tenant evictions through May 31](#) and [waiver on mortgage penalties and foreclosures](#) through mid-June.
- \* California extended enrollment for health coverage in 2020, amid the COVID-19 threat, for all [eligible Californians in all plans on its exchange of health plans under the Affordable Care Act](#) until June 30.



## Tell YOUR Story with State Lawmakers as Part of Tele-Town Halls



E-mailing your legislators and their staff is a great channel for educating them. So is talking on the phone. **This is how we can fix AB 5.**

Have you already been in touch with your 2 lawmakers or their staff, who also work for you? If you need it, use this **locator** to find and reach YOUR 2 legislators.

[http://www.legislature.ca.gov/legislators\\_and\\_districts/legislators/your\\_legislator.html](http://www.legislature.ca.gov/legislators_and_districts/legislators/your_legislator.html)

Click the “find by address” link here to identify the 2 lawmakers who work for YOU: Assemblymember and Senator.

Then use the easy roster lookup (lower on that same list of links) to get their LOCAL and also their SACRAMENTO office phone #.

**State legislators are practicing social distance but taking the effort hear from constituents online or by phone with an emphasis on COVID-19 precautions and adaptation.**

Example: Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin and Senator Henry Stern (Ventura County and sliver of western L.A. County).

Friday, March 27, 4 to 5:30 pm

If you are a constituent of either lawmaker:

[https://airtable.com/shrCiX58KUJ78DXkl?](https://airtable.com/shrCiX58KUJ78DXkl?fbclid=IwAR14GlwKidViD3xFmWiSugEloW0LnS8AcJ11bJVMDb81uH1s2s6ZanStz3k)

[fbclid=IwAR14GlwKidViD3xFmWiSugEloW0LnS8AcJ11bJVMDb81uH1s2s6ZanStz3k](https://airtable.com/shrCiX58KUJ78DXkl?fbclid=IwAR14GlwKidViD3xFmWiSugEloW0LnS8AcJ11bJVMDb81uH1s2s6ZanStz3k)

Example: Assemblymember Blanca Rubio (eastern L.A. County).

If you are a constituent, send a note to: [Assemblymember.Rubio@iassembly.ca.gov](mailto:Assemblymember.Rubio@iassembly.ca.gov) with subject line COVID-19.

Friday, March 27, 2 to 3:30 pm

Call: [\(404\) 443-2170](tel:(404)443-2170)

[Access code: 7137611](#)

**Some lawmakers have MORE such online meetings planned next week or in April:**

Example: Senator Steve Glazer and Assemblymember Tim Grayson (eastern S.F. Bay Area).

If you are a constituent of either lawmaker:

[https://lcmsubpubcontact.lc.ca.gov/PublicLCMS/SDInfo/einvites/SD7/395\\_Joint\\_Legislative\\_Town\\_Hall.html](https://lcmsubpubcontact.lc.ca.gov/PublicLCMS/SDInfo/einvites/SD7/395_Joint_Legislative_Town_Hall.html)

You can protect yourself and the people you serve AND educate YOUR lawmakers about the work you do and urge their support for legislation to EXEMPT language professionals from AB 5. Get resources from and stay in touch with CoPTIC. **If you need informational handouts to help make your case and send / email to your lawmakers, let us know.**

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[Together We CAN #FixAB5](#)

**How to Get and Stay Connected with CoPTIC**

Web site: <http://coalitionptic.org/>

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/coalitionPTIC](http://www.facebook.com/coalitionPTIC)

Twitter: @CO\_PTIC

Email: [CoalitionPTIC@gmail.com](mailto:CoalitionPTIC@gmail.com)

The **Coalition of Practicing Translators and Interpreters of California (CoPTIC)** is a statewide nonpartisan network of language service professionals and allies advocating for independence of translators and interpreters, whose expertise and integrity are vital to overcoming language barriers for all Californians.

To contribute to CoPTIC, please click [HERE](#) or visit this secure link online:

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/support-the-autonomy-of-interpreters-amp-translators>

*Because we are a 501C4 organization devoted to achieving policies that respect the autonomy of our professions, [donations to CoPTIC](#) are not tax-deductible.*

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