



SUPREME COURT OF ARKANSAS

Stephanie Harris, Communications Counsel
625 Marshall Street
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201
(501) 371-2004 desk
(501) 920-9167 cell
stephanie.m.harris@arkansas.gov

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FIRST CERTIFIED MARSHALLESE INTERPRETER IN THE COUNTRY TO BE SWORN IN THURSDAY

Supreme Court Chief Justice Jim Hannah will administer the oath to three newly-certified state court interpreters Thursday, February 28, at 9:45 a.m. in the courtroom at the Justice Building. A reception will follow, which will include traditional Marshallese dancers.

Jivette de Jesus Rullan, from Bentonville, and Ines Yahaira Fernandez, from Springdale, will join sixteen other certified Spanish state court interpreters when they are sworn in Thursday. Melisa Laelan, also from Springdale, will be the first person in the country to be sworn in as a certified Marshallese interpreter. Northwest Arkansas has the largest concentration of Marshall Islanders in the continental United States.

To become an interpreter in Arkansas state courts, applicants must complete an extensive certification process, which includes background checks, successful completion of the Candidate Assessment Exam, orientation, and training. It is not enough just to speak another language. Candidates must learn legal language as well as adhere to a strict code of ethics.

In 2012, Court Interpreter Services responded to more than 7500 requests for interpreting in seventeen languages. In January, the AOC adopted a revised Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan to address the growing need for language access in the state courts. The plan provides details on the LEP population of Arkansas, the services available through the AOC, and the requirements for interpreter certification. The LEP Plan can be found on the Judiciary website.

Following oral arguments before the Supreme Court on Thursday, family and guests will join the interpreters and the full court for the swearing-in ceremony, which will be streamed live on the Court's website. After the ceremony, everyone is invited to a reception in the lobby outside the AOC in the Justice Building. A traditional Marshallese dance will be performed by Marshallese Cultural Dancers during the reception.

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For more information about Court Interpreter Services, the LEP Plan, or events on Thursday, please call:

Andrew Walchuk, AOC Policy Analyst, (501) 682-9400

Meghan Sever, AOC Communications Specialist, (501) 682-9400