



National Court Reporters Association
12355 Sunrise Valley Drive, Suite 610
Reston, VA 20191-3492
Tel: 703-556-6272 • Fax: 703-391-0629
800-272-NCRA (6272) • NCRA.org

Sally A. Holewa
State Court Administrator
600 E Boulevard Ave Dept 180
Bismarck, ND 58505

Petra H. Mandigo Hulm
Clerk of the Supreme Court
North Dakota Supreme Court
600 E Boulevard Ave
Bismarck, ND 58505

December 4, 2024

Re: Proposed amendments to Policy 206 – Fees and Expenses for Preparation of Transcripts of Supreme Court Case Number: 20220232

Dear Administrator Holewa and Clerk Hulm:

I am writing to you on behalf of the National Court Reporters Association (NCRA) regarding a matter of significant concern to both the judiciary and the communities we serve. As you may be considering changes to the court reporting methodologies within your state's judicial system, I urge you to reflect deeply on the implications of moving away from the traditional and highly respected system of employing certified court reporters.

The integrity of judicial proceedings hinges on the accuracy and impartiality of the record. Certified court reporters are trained professionals who adhere to stringent ethical standards and possess the skills necessary to provide a verbatim record of court proceedings. Their role is not merely technical but vital in upholding the sanctity and reliability of legal records, ensuring that justice is served through an accurate and complete transcript of all spoken words.

[As outlined in our NCRA white paper](#), the transition to automated or less qualified recording methods introduces risks that could compromise judicial integrity. Automated systems, while technologically advanced, still lack the nuanced understanding and adaptability of human court reporters. Misinterpretations or failures to capture the full dialogue can lead to disputes over transcripts, potentially affecting the outcome of cases.

As officers of the court, certified reporters are bound by professional ethics to maintain neutrality and confidentiality. They are trained to handle sensitive information with discretion, something not guaranteed by mechanical or digital alternatives which can be based overseas.

In North Dakota, court reporters are not just professionals; they are respected members of their local communities and neighbors. Their presence in courtrooms adds a layer of trust and



National Court Reporters Association
12355 Sunrise Valley Drive, Suite 610
Reston, VA 20191-3492
Tel: 703-556-6272 • Fax: 703-391-0629
800-272-NCRA (6272) • NCRA.org

community connection. Eliminating their role could erode this trust, as the public might perceive a decrease in transparency and accountability in judicial processes.

The NCRA white paper, which I encourage you to review, provides detailed analysis on these points, emphasizing that while technology can assist, it cannot replace the comprehensive skill set of a certified court reporter. This document underscores the potential long-term costs both financially and in terms of judicial quality when opting for less proven alternatives.

Moreover, court reporters often engage in community service, educational outreach, and contribute to local economies. Their removal from the courtroom setting could ripple negatively through the communities they serve, impacting not just the courts but the social fabric of neighborhoods.

We understand the pressures to modernize and economize; however, we must not compromise on the quality and integrity of our judicial processes. Certified court reporters are an investment in judicial excellence and community trust.

We at NCRA stand ready to discuss this matter further, offering our insights and resources to ensure that any decision made will uphold the high standards of judicial integrity and community respect that your state is known for.

Thank you for considering this critical issue. We look forward to your response and hope to work collaboratively to preserve the esteemed tradition of court reporting.

Sincerely,
Keith Lemons

Keith R. Lemons, FAPR, RPR, CRR (Ret.)
President, National Court Reporters Association