

TRANSCRIPTION COSTS

The Administrative Office of the Courts allocated \$26 million in FY 2006-07¹ to compensate court reporters to produce roughly eight million pages of certified original transcripts for use by courts and an additional 16 million pages of certified copies for party litigants. The majority of cases necessitating production and delivery of those approximately 24 million pages are comprised of one-defendant criminal matters, wherein the court is provided an original transcript and the prosecution and defense are each provided a certified copy. Compensation for court reporter transcription services are set by statute. The statutory per-page rate varies slightly from county to county; the statewide average is \$3.22/page for an original and two copies. The last upward adjustment of this rate occurred twenty years ago.

Several courts that utilize electronic recording have engaged private entities to produce transcripts of recordings, and the rates charged by these vendors vary widely. A statewide survey conducted by the California Court Reporters Association in 2003 and updated in 2008 revealed some courts have been charged as much as \$7.00/page and \$9.00/page, with page rates varying depending upon degree of difficulty due to technical content.

The San Diego Superior Court has engaged a private entity to produce transcripts of electronically recorded misdemeanor proceedings at rates of \$4.00/page for an original and two copies delivered in 2-3 weeks and \$5.50/page for delivery within 5 business days. It should be noted that in criminal matters involving the possibility of capital punishment, “daily copy” (overnight production and delivery of certified transcripts to the court and parties) is mandatory. Again, court reporters are compensated at the \$3.22/page rate in all criminal matters, regardless of content and/or expedited delivery requirements.

The \$26 million that the courts currently spend for reporter transcripts at 20-year-old statutory rates could cost between \$32 million and \$56 million for the same transcripts at electronic recording transcription rates currently being paid by counties throughout the state.

If the courts were to absorb transcription services in-house transcribers, proofreaders, supervisory and delivery personnel would be necessary, as well as equipment for producing, duplicating, and binding official court transcripts.

¹ LAO “Analysis of the 2008-09 Budget Bill: Criminal Justice”