



Office of Language Access

2009 Annual Report to the Governor and State Legislature

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report covers the activities and accomplishments of the Office of Language Access (OLA) for the period from December 2008 to November 2009.

The OLA is in its third year of operations. During the year, it undertook activities and projects designed to achieve its identified goals. To promote public awareness of and outreach to the community on language access, the OLA participated in various community events and sponsored the second Hawai'i Conference on Language Access on September 28, 2009, and continued to publish its quarterly electronic newsletter.

In order to assist state agencies as they work to provide language access, the OLA provided: technical assistance to state and state-funded agencies by meeting bimonthly with state language access coordinators; scheduling language access webinars; and making various presentations. In addition, the OLA sponsored 2-day trainings on working with interpreters and the role of bilingual staff.

In terms of compliance, the OLA conducted annual monitoring visits to 16 out of 17 agencies receiving federal funds in late 2008. The statutory deadline for the submission of revised language access plans by agencies receiving federal funds was July 1, 2009, and 12 out of the 17 agencies have so far submitted. In addition, the OLA conducted monitoring visits in November 2009 to the remaining eight agencies which are not federally-funded. The OLA also required agencies to submit language access reports on a quarterly basis and, so far, about half of the agencies had been complying.

The OLA has undertaken a feasibility study to determine the need for language access, the cost involved in providing language services, and the possibility of establishing a centralized language access resource center. The study results are out, and it recommends the holding of training for agencies as well as the creation of a language access bank. In addition, the OLA has sponsored training workshops on working with interpreters and the role of volunteer multilingual staff.

Since the last report, the OLA continued to receive calls and visits during the year, however, most were requests for interpreters (including sign language) or translators, and information. Other calls were informal complaints about housing and driver licensing tests. Inquiries were also received about the termination of or changes in the health privileges of the COFA community.

The OLA supported legislative measures that were passed during the Regular Session of 2009. Act 69 designated August as "Language Access Month" in Hawaii. HR157 established a task force to evaluate current language accessibility in the visitor industry, report on current practices and the anticipated needs of the influx of tourists from Korea and China, and study the cost of implementing services related to providing increased Korean and Chinese language access. HCR13/HR17 requested the Executive Office on Aging and the UH Center on Aging to continue their research and analyses into various services, including language access, to assist the elderly and their caregivers.

Issues and challenges that continue to face the OLA include the need for public awareness and outreach, training, compliance, limited resources, and the future of the office. To address these issues, the OLA is recommending an amendment to the law to strengthen the OLA and the Language Access Advisory Council and make it more independent and effective, the holding of language access month activities annually, the continued provision of training and technical assistance to state and state-funded agencies, the establishment and implementation of a student internship program, and continued collaboration with other public and private agencies.

II. INTRODUCTION

The Office of Language Access (OLA) is in its third year of operations. The office is an administratively attached agency within the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations.

Under the Language Access Law, the Legislature envisioned providing equal access to Hawai'i's government and sought to affirmatively address the language access needs of limited English proficient (LEP) persons by requiring State agencies and covered entities (i.e. organizations receiving state funds to provide services to the public) to provide language services to LEP persons. Specifically, the law contemplates that, under certain circumstances, equal access to state services, programs and activities will be provided through oral and written language services to LEP persons to ensure "meaningful access" to state services or state-funded programs.

A. Report Requirement

The law requires the OLA to submit an annual report to the Governor and Legislature twenty (20) days prior to the opening of the legislative session. The report shall detail "compliance, complaints and resolutions, recommendations to enhance compliance, and statutory or administrative changes to further the purposes" of the language access law.

B. Organization of the Report

This report covers the activities and accomplishments of the OLA for the period December 2008 to November 2009.

III. THE OFFICE OF LANGUAGE ACCESS

A. Purpose and Function

The OLA is mandated to provide oversight, central coordination, and technical assistance to state agencies and covered entities in their implementation of language access requirements and in the provision of language services under the law, HRS §§ 371-31 to -37.

B. Budget and Staffing

The office initially had six (6) positions: the Executive Director, a Senior Legal Analyst, two Research Analysts, a Legal Clerk, and a Clerk Typist. For FY 2008-2009, the OLA budget was \$440,000 (\$291,764 in personal services and \$148,236 in other current expenses). Due to the State's severe lack of funds, the Executive Director is the only position currently staffed.

The Office will continue to perform its most basic functions through clerical/staff assistance from the Office of the Director, the use of student interns and volunteers, and the enhanced use of technology.

IV. THE LANGUAGE ACCESS ADVISORY COUNCIL

A. Membership

All new members have been appointed and confirmed by the Senate. In addition, two members whose terms expired (Alohalani Boido and Namaka Rawlins) have been reappointed and confirmed by the Senate.

B. Function

The Council serves in an advisory capacity to the OLA's Executive Director by providing input on implementation and compliance; the quality of oral and written language services provided; the adequacy of a state agency's or covered entity's dissemination and training of its employees likely to have contact with LEP persons; policies and

procedures for language services; competency in working effectively with in-person and telephone interpreters; and understanding the dynamics of interpretation between clients, providers, and interpreters.

V. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The OLA's vision is "Language Access for All." Toward that end, the OLA's mission is to promote equal access to and full participation in government services, programs and activities for LEP persons by providing oversight, coordination and assistance to state and state-funded agencies. In seeking to fulfill its mission, the OLA has established the following goals and strategies:

Goal 1 To promote public awareness and ensure that the LEP population is informed of and educated about their rights.

Strategies:

1. Establish and nurture working relationships with partners to develop awareness about language access.
2. Establish and hold a Language Access Month celebration in August of each year.
3. Conduct outreach to LEP communities.
4. Develop multilingual materials and website.
5. Undertake mass media campaigns.

Goal 2 To ensure that all state agencies and covered entities are in compliance with the requirements of the language access law.

Strategies:

1. Develop guidelines and provide training and technical assistance to state agencies and covered entities.
2. Establish a data collection and reporting system for state agencies.
3. Conduct a monitoring process and implement a compliance rating system for state agencies.

Goal 3 To assist in the development of an adequate pool of trained and competent language service providers.

Strategies:

1. Conduct a language access needs, resource, and cost analysis in the State of Hawai'i.
2. Develop a directory of language service providers in the State of Hawai'i.
3. Facilitate training programs for language service providers.
4. Develop statewide standards for interpretation and translation.

Goal 4 To develop OLA staff's expertise and resources.

Strategies:

1. Seek alternative sources of additional funding through federal grants and monies to further the OLA's mission.
2. Provide staff training and development.
3. Develop a resource library.
4. Interface and network with language access practitioners nationwide.

Goal 5 To ensure the timely resolution of complaints about language access.

Strategies:

1. Develop tools, processes and procedures for handling complaints.
2. Provide education and training to agencies on the complaints process.
3. Conduct outreach to LEP communities on the complaints process.
4. Develop responsive methods of resolving conflicts.

Goal 6 To provide statewide leadership in the area of language access.

Strategies:

1. Provide models and educate agencies about best practices.
2. Serve as a clearinghouse for information and resources on language access.
3. Cultivate, maintain and strengthen alliances, partnerships and collaborations.
4. Propose and support needed legislation.
5. Provide leadership in technological solutions to language access problems.

The OLA's work on achieving these goals and objectives is discussed in the following section.

VI. ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A. Public Awareness, Education and Outreach

The OLA is aware of the need for visibility and community education on language access. During the past year, it continued to participate in community events, held a statewide language access conference, published a quarterly newsletter, utilized Olelo TV, and maintained and updated its website (www.hawaii.gov/labor/ola) to provide information about language access and the office's activities to the public:

- *Community Events.* The OLA staff participated in community events and fairs, e.g. the Filipino Fiesta in May 2009 and also brought up language access issues during the annual statewide convention of the Congress of Visayan Organizations in August 2009, the monthly meetings of the Interagency Council on Immigrant Services, and the annual general membership meeting of the Filipino Coalition for Solidarity in October 2009.
- *Language Access Conference.* On September 28, 2009, the OLA hosted the second Annual Hawai'i Statewide Conference on Language Access at the State Capitol Auditorium in Honolulu. The one day event focused on language access plan implementation issues and promising practices. More than 200 individuals from all over Hawai'i attended. Speakers included language access experts from Hawai'i, California, New York, and Washington, DC, with the keynote address given by the Honorable John Trasviña, Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- *Newsletter.* The office continued to publish and distribute its electronic quarterly newsletter (The OLA Quarterly), which will be on its ninth issue by the end of this year.
- *Olelo TV.* The office had its trainings and conference proceedings taped and broadcast by Olelo TV.
- *Website Update.* The OLA website was continually updated as OLA activities were undertaken and new developments and information on language access became available.

B. Technical Assistance and Training

The OLA continued to provide technical assistance to state and state-funded agencies to assist them in implementing their language access plans, including the following:

- *Bimonthly meetings* with state language access coordinators to discuss plan implementation problems and issues. The meetings included presentations about Micronesian culture and practices, and the Bank of Hawaii's International Banking Division's language access policies.
- *Documents & Webinars.* The office also provided state agencies with copies of language access documents and materials from other states. The OLA likewise invited agencies to participate in several webinars on language access conducted by the Vera Institute of Justice (February 24, 2009), viaLanguage (March 5, 2009) and the Migration Policy Institute (July 24 and November 19, 2009).
- *Presentations.* The OLA staff made a number of presentations about the language access law and OLA at various agencies such as the Interagency Council on Immigrant Affairs, the Filipino Coalition for Solidarity, the Domestic Violence Clearinghouse, and the Judiciary. The executive director also made presentations at the

Hawaii Anti-Fraud Conference, the 2nd Annual Hawaii Conference on Language Access, and the 5th Nakem International Conference.

In addition, as part of OLA's role in providing technical assistance, two training workshops were provided by OLA on May 13 and 15, 2009 at the State Capitol. More than 230 Hawaii State and county employees – front line workers, supervisors, managers, language access coordinators, and bilingual staff – attended. The workshops were conducted by Dr. Suzanne Zeng of the UH Center for Interpretation and Translation Studies (CITS) and L. Dew Kaneshiro, a private consultant.

The morning sessions, "Serving LEP Individuals Through Interpreters", addressed topics such as: *The Do's and Don'ts of Working with Interpreters, How You Can Tell If Your Client Needs an Interpreter, and What Makes an Interpreter Competent?* The afternoon sessions, "The Role of Bilingual Staff", covered relevant material including: *Cultural Competency, Ethics of Interpretation, How to Self-Assess Your Own Language Abilities, and The Proper Role of an Interpreter.* The workshops were designed to address the growing requests for education and training as agencies implement their language access plans and to raise awareness on how to better serve limited English proficient customers.

The OLA also collaborated with the Judiciary's Office of Equality and Access to the Courts in conducting a series of 12 workshops on language access from January 20, 2009 to January 30, 2009. The workshops provided agency-wide training on Oahu pertaining to the Judiciary's language access plan for two groups: administrators and managers, and line supervisors and frontline staff. The training covered the legal bases for, and requirements of, the language access law, how the OLA's surveys (public contact positions survey and the vital documents survey) tie into the law, an overview of the Judiciary's court interpreter certification program, and the OLA's data collection tool.

In addition, the Second Hawai'i Conference on Language Access held on September 28, 2009 provided further training on language access plan implementation and promising practices. Presenters from the OLA, the City of San Francisco, Hawaii's Department of Human Services, and the Kokua Kalihi Valley Comprehensive Health Center discussed challenges and issues faced in implementing language access plans, while speakers from the Migration Policy Institute (Washington D.C.), Ayuda (Washington D.C.) and the Vera Institute of Justice (New York) presented promising practices in the areas of language access plan evaluation, the use of language access banks in legal interpretation, and law enforcement.

C. Compliance

1. Monitoring

Prior to the actual monitoring visits, the OLA staff conducted unannounced ocular visits to selected state agencies in the fall of 2008. The purpose of these visits was to get a glimpse of how the front offices of state agencies had incorporated language access into their operations. Results of these visits showed some of the following: absence of multilingual posters, important notices posted were not translated into various languages, documents on display were not translated into various languages, and front line staff was not aware of their agency's language access plans.

The OLA conducted official monitoring visits of federally-funded state agencies in late 2008 and early 2009. The purpose of these visits was to assess the extent to which state agencies have complied with what they set out to do in their language access plans, identify where the problems are, and assist them in improving and in implementing their plans. Of the 17 federally-funded state agencies, 16 participated in the monitoring process.

The monitoring process consisted of a written questionnaire that was sent to the agency ahead of the scheduled visit to be completed by the agency. The questionnaire contained 26 items focusing on compliance with the language access plan. The agency was asked to respond as to whether it was (1) in compliance, (2) in partial compliance, or (3) in non-compliance. This was followed by a scheduled site visit which involved an in-person meeting between the monitor and the language access coordinator or a senior staff of the agency to go over the questionnaire. The final rating is agreed upon by the monitor and the agency during this meeting.

The OLA assigned weights to the agency responses: in compliance had a weight of 2 points, in partial compliance had 1 point, and non-compliance had 0. The result could then range from completely compliant (52 points) to completely non-compliant (0 point), with a passing score of 26 points (partial compliance). The actual scores ranged from a low of 15 points to a high of 47 points, with 12 agencies scoring 26 points or more. Based on these, most agencies were in partial compliance. The table below shows the monitoring scores of agencies:

Federally-Funded State Agencies*	Score
Department of Land and Natural Resources	15
Department of Accounting and General Services	18
Department of Defense	25
Department of the Attorney General	25
Office of Hawaiian Affairs	26
Department of Public Safety	28
Department of Transportation	33
Department of Education	34
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations	34
State Public Library System	35
Judiciary	35
University of Hawaii System	36
Department of Agriculture	41
Department of Health	41
Department of Human Services	46
Department of Hawaiian Homelands	47

Based on the monitoring results, the common shortfalls that agencies faced were in the following areas: lack of familiarity with the plan and plan dissemination; lack of interpretation and translation resources; non-identification and/or non-translation of vital documents; lack of training for bilingual staff; lack of outreach and lack of familiarity with target population and languages; data collection and reporting problems; non-identification of public contact positions; and lack of notices in target languages. These results mirrored the initial findings of the unannounced ocular visits.

In March 2009, the reports on the results of the monitoring visits were sent to agencies with recommendations for corrective actions. The monitoring results were also to be used by agencies as a basis for the revision of their language access plans.

In November 2009, monitoring visits to the eight non-federally funded state agencies were conducted. These agencies are: Office of the Governor, Office of the Lieutenant Governor, the State House of Representatives, the State Senate, Department of Budget and Finance, Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs, Department of Human Resource Development, and Department of Taxation.

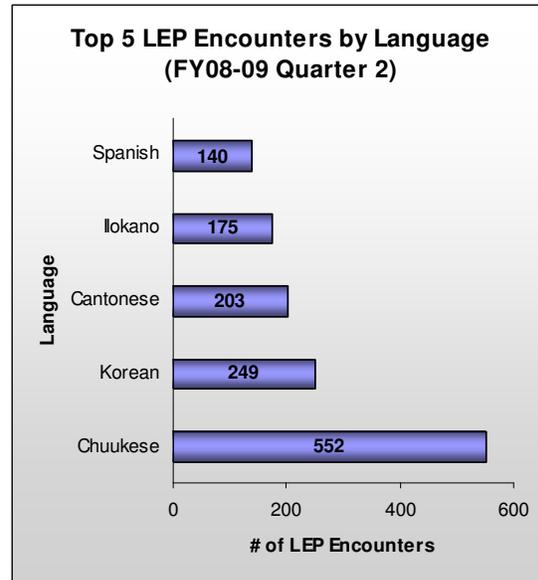
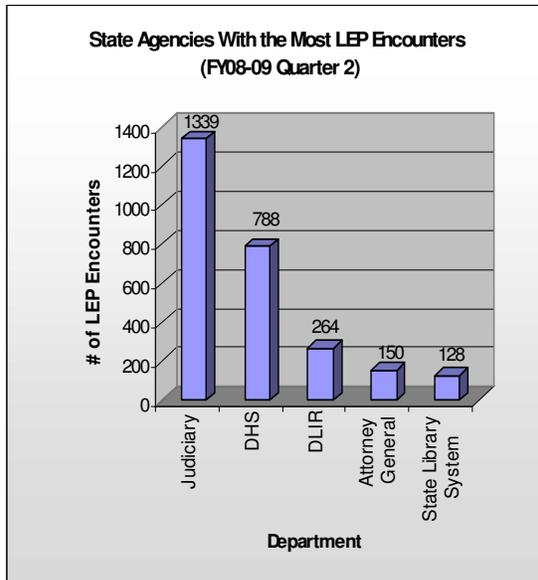
2. Submission of Revised Language Access Plans

The 17 state agencies receiving federal funds who submitted plans in July 2007 are required by law to review and resubmit their plans by July 1, 2009. The OLA worked with these agencies to assess and make appropriate modifications to their plans, as necessary. As of this writing, 12 of the 17 agencies had submitted their revised language access plans.

3. Data Reporting

To assist the agencies in identifying their population and in tracking language access services, the OLA developed a reporting tool to be used by agencies in gathering data and submitting the same to the OLA on a quarterly basis.

Less than 50% of agencies submitted their quarterly reports. Among those who submitted, the agencies that reported the most LEP encounters for the 2nd Quarter FY08-09 (October-December 2008) were the Judiciary (1,339), Department of Human Services (788), DLIR (264), Attorney General's Office (150), and the State Library System (128). Oral language services were the most requested service during the quarter, and the top five languages reported were Chuukese, Korean, Cantonese, Ilokano, and Spanish.



D. Language Access Services Development

- Feasibility Study

The final report on the results of an investigation made in response to SCR67 SD1/SR40 SD1 requesting the Office of Language Access to conduct a feasibility study on the establishment of a centralized language access resource center in Hawaii was completed and submitted to the Governor and the Legislature in May 2009. The study conducted an assessment of the need for language access and a survey of costs associated with the provision of language access services, including an analysis of costs and benefits for establishing said center.

The data for this study were collected from an online survey conducted in late 2008, with 61 respondents representing various organizations (mostly state agencies) in Hawaii. The study also included interviews and culled findings from related studies to supplement the survey data, and to provide a cost-benefit analysis of the feasibility of a centralized, statewide language center.

The major findings of the study are:

- Limited English proficient (LEP) persons constitute an average of 5 to 8 percent of total clients served by the respondents' agencies in the last three months preceding the survey. The top LEP groups are: Ilokano, Micronesians (Chuukese, Marshallese, Yapese), Japanese, Chinese, Spanish, Korean, Samoan, Visayan, Vietnamese, and other Pacific Islanders;

- Besides Asians, the demand for language access services by certain Pacific Islander groups (Chuukese, Marshallese, Pohnpeian, Samoan, and Tongan) is high and increasing, based on available state expenditures and other data on LEP persons;
- Data on financial costs indicate that more than half of the organizations surveyed said they relied heavily on free or voluntary services offered by their own bilingual staff, friends or relatives. This reliance has enormous implications on the cost and quality of language services;
- Interpreters and translators, including agencies that provide for language access services, are available in Hawaii. However, many of these interpreters and translators may or may not be qualified, or competent, to provide quality services. In addition, the language service delivery system in Hawaii remains fragmented, limited, and uncoordinated;
- Majority of agencies surveyed favored the establishment of a centralized language access resource center that will serve all state agencies and covered entities; and
- Cost-benefit analysis suggests that a centralized language access resource center in Hawaii is necessary and advantageous to meet existing needs of or demand for language access services by LEP persons. Using a “social-return-to-investment” framework, the expected benefits appear to outweigh the costs involved.

The study has limitations given its small sample size and limited data. Therefore, its results may not be very conclusive and a more comprehensive study may be needed. It is apparent though that training for bilingual staff and interpreters is a major concern and that there is a need to coordinate the delivery of language services in Hawaii. In addition, although preliminary, the study results seem to indicate a need and support for the establishment of a language access resource center. Given these, the following are recommended:

1. training for bilingual staff of state and state-funded agencies, as well as for interpreters and translators, be immediately implemented to ensure the delivery of quality language access services; and
2. a task force be created by the legislature composed of major state agencies, the Office of Language Access, and other stakeholders to look into the structure, functions, and costs of the proposed language access resource center, or any alternatives thereto.

E. Staff Development

The OLA organized and presented a panel discussion titled “Protecting Our Kupuna through Language Access” during the Hawaii Anti-Fraud Conference (Keeping Hawaii Safe for Our Kupuna) on April 25, 2009 at the Hawai‘i Convention Center. The conference was sponsored by the State Executive Office on Aging, SMP-Hawaii, and the Elderly Affairs Division of the City and County of Honolulu. The panel included Gerald Ohta (DOH) as moderator, and Serafin Colmenares Jr. (OLA), Dr. Tin Myaing Thein (Pacific Gateway Center), and Valorie Taylor (CFS Gerontology Program) as panelists. Given the fact that approximately 35% of the 130,761 LEP population in Hawaii are age 60 years and above, the panel looked at various ways by which elderly LEP individuals can be provided with correct information in their native languages, and how to access language services in the State.

The executive director also presented a paper on “Language Access Plan Implementation in Hawaii” during the 2nd Annual Hawaii Conference on Language Access held on September 28, 2009 at the Hawaii State Capitol. In addition, he delivered a paper on “The Visayan Language in Hawaii: Issues of Identity and Cultural Pluralism” during the 5th Nakem International Conference held at the University of Hawaii on November 11-14, 2009 which was sponsored by the UH Department of Languages, Linguistics and Literature. As well, he attended a training/workshop on GIS: Mapping Hawaii Communities at the UH Honolulu Community College on October 28, 2009.

OLA staff also continued participating in webinars on language access. On February 24, 2009, the Vera Institute of Justice and the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Community Oriented Policing (COPS) presented “Bridging the Language Divide: Promising Practices for Law Enforcement.” The webcast featured law enforcement personnel from several states who discussed their respective agency programs created to help overcome language barriers with the communities they serve. On March 5, 2009, staff participated in the viaLanguage webinar, “LEP Communications on Shrinking Budgets: Top 10 Translation Traps.” The presentation uncovered pitfalls that typically drain translation budgets and limit LEP program effectiveness. On July 24, 2009, the Migration Policy

Institute presented a webinar on “Is This Working? Assessment and Evaluation Methods Used to Build and Assess Language Access Services in Social Service Agencies” which looked at promising language access plan implementation evaluation methods. Finally, the Migration Policy Institute also presented, on November 19, 2009, a webinar on “Interpreting the Juvenile Justice System for Limited English Proficient Parents.” This webinar looked at recent research which shows that language barriers faced by parents may potentially lead to deeper court involvement of youth in the juvenile justice system, and featured a multi-agency collaborative effort aimed to provide LEP parents with the information necessary to understand their role in the juvenile justice system.

OLA staff likewise attended several training workshops. Among them were: Franklin Covey’s 7 Habits for Managers, Drug and Alcohol Testing, Improving Services to Immigrant Victims of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Who Are Limited English Proficient, Legislative Tracking, ADA Training, COFA Acculturation, and others.

E. Complaints Resolution

During this reporting year, the OLA received much fewer calls from LEP individuals and agencies (about 300) compared to last year. The decrease in calls may be attributed to the public education and outreach conducted the previous year which informed people about what the office does and where to call. As before, most of the calls were inquiries or requests for interpreters (including sign language) or translators as well as requests for information. There was an inquiry from a legal assistance agency about the legal requirement for sending notices to an LEP group, particularly the Micronesian (COFA) community. There was a couple of informal over-the-phone complaints dealing with housing and driver’s licensing tests which the office referred to the agencies concerned. There were no formal complaints filed, and there was one call about a complaint which the caller (from an attorney’s office) did not follow through. Calls emanating from state agencies were referred to their respective language access coordinators. Individuals and nonprofit agencies requesting for interpreters or translators were referred to the directory of language services in Hawaii. Calls for information were either answered by the OLA or directed to the office or agency concerned.

F. Legislative Initiatives

The OLA successfully submitted the following legislation during the Regular Session of 2009:

- Act 69

This law designates August as “Language Access Month” in Hawaii. August was the month selected because it was on August 11, 2000, that former President Clinton issued Executive Order No. 13166, directing all federal agencies to publish written policies on how recipients of federal funds can provide access to LEP persons and improve language accessibility to programs. In 2006, Hawaii’s language access law was enacted, mirroring the federal language access law.

The OLA also successfully supported the following resolutions:

- HR157

This House Resolution established a task force consisting of members of the Legislature and representatives of the Hawaii Tourism Authority, Department of Transportation, the OLA, and tourism-related private sector industries such as the hotel industry, car rental industry, and restaurant industry. The task force is responsible for: (1) evaluating current language accessibility in the visitor industry, including airports and private sector tourism-related industries; (2) reporting on current practices and the anticipated needs of the influx of tourists from Korea and China; and (3) studying the cost of implementing services related to providing increased Korean and Chinese language access. A report of its findings and recommendations, including cost estimates and any necessary legislation, is to be submitted to the Legislature before the convening of the Regular Session of 2010.

- HCR13/HR17

This House Concurrent Resolution requests the Executive Office on Aging and the Center on Aging at the University of Hawaii at Manoa to continue their research and analyses and report on developing a cash and counseling model and to apply for related grants; determining how best to compensate caregivers for respite services, accommodate language barriers, and overcome access to long-term care service barriers; determining best practices for state agencies to collaborate and coordinate with area agencies on aging and local community service providers; enhancing funding from all sources for Medicaid and Medicare services; and identifying more funding sources for long-term care services.

VIII. ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

A. Public Awareness and Outreach

Based on the results of monitoring visits, there continues to be a need to inform and educate state agencies and the public about the language access law and the importance of language access in Hawai‘i. Also, based on discussions with community members and evidenced by the minimal numbers of complaints that the OLA receives, it would appear that many members of the community, particularly those who are limited English proficient, are either not aware of their rights or are reluctant to file complaints in cases where they are not provided language services. Consequently, there is a need for more outreach and education to the community.

B. Training

The need for further statewide training of front line and bilingual staff – on working with interpreters, the role of bilingual staff in interpretation, cultural competency, language competency, etc. – remain. This need has been voiced in meetings with agencies as well as in conferences. It is especially needed for bilingual staff upon whom agencies are relying more and more given the budgetary crunch. Agency staff also needs training on their respective language access plans, and there is a need to continually train administrators and agency staff about the language access law and its requirements. In addition, training of language service providers – interpreters and translators – is needed, particularly in the medical area where there is a dearth of interpreters and translators.

C. Compliance

The results of the monitoring visits indicate that there remains much opportunity for state agencies to meet the compliance requirements of Hawaii’s language access law. Areas for improvement include: the basic requirements of posting multilingual notices, the identification and translation of vital documents, the training of staff on their language access plans, the collection of data and identification of their LEP population, and the training of their bilingual staff.

D. Resources

The passage of the Language Access Law has created a demand for language services, but there remains a shortage of available and competent language service providers statewide. In addition, the lack of funding continues to be a problem for state agencies. This is heightened by the current economic slowdown and reductions in staff and budgets. Finally, the language service delivery system in Hawai‘i continues to be very limited, fragmented and uncoordinated.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

To address these issues, the following are being proposed:

1. Reassess the language access law to determine ways to ensure compliance with the law, making the OLA more independent and effective, and strengthening the Language Access Advisory Council by converting it to a Board or Commission with policymaking power and the authority to hire and terminate the Executive Director.
2. Hold language access month activities on an annual basis, including an annual language access conference, for the purpose of public education.
3. Continue to provide statewide training and technical assistance to state and state-funded agencies.
4. Establish and implement a student internship program.
5. Maintain and expand collaboration with public and private agencies.

CONCLUSION

During the past year, the OLA has had much success in the pursuit of its various goals and objectives. The office faces many challenges in these tough economic times, and the provision of language access remains a major task for Hawaii's multilingual society. The OLA, however, will remain diligent in its efforts to fulfill its vision, "Language Access for All".