

STATE SENATOR • JOHN J. GLEASON • 27TH DISTRICT

Gleason Press Release

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Governor Granholm Signs Gleason Bill Into Law, Guarantees Equal Treatment for Deaf Community

Certified Sign Language Interpreters Would Close Vital Communication Gap

LANSING -Governor Granholm put her pen to paper today and with a quick signature enacted legislation to require the use of certified sign language interpreters to provide equal communication in important life situations, including educational, financial, legal, and medical interaction. The bill, sponsored by Senator John Gleason (D-Flushing), will also establish universal standards for sign interpreters.

“This is a historic day for Michigan’s deaf and hard of hearing community, one that’s been a long time coming,” said Gleason. “The ability to communicate is a basic civil right that until now has not been properly accommodated for this group of citizens. Now they can take comfort in being to speak and listen through their most comfortable language during some of their most challenging situations.”

The Michigan Division on Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DODHH) has been advising the Legislature since 1994 to develop legislation on sign language interpreter quality and availability. The need for legislation arose because more and more unqualified sign interpreters have been hired to work in schools, banks, doctor’s and lawyer’s offices. Both Gleason’s bill, SB 25, and its House counterpart HB 4208, passed both legislative bodies unanimously. The legislation was signed and enacted by Governor Granholm as Public Act 23.

The act updates outdated legislation from 1982 to provide for and regulate the use of interpreters in administrative and judicial proceedings and in certain other instances; establishes standards and provides compensation for interpreters; and prescribes the powers and duties of certain state departments and agencies as well as penalties for violations of this act.

Gleason has been an advocate for the rights of the deaf and hard of hearing since his days in the Michigan House. He is the founder of the Disability Caucus and was recently honored by the Michigan Deaf Association and Hearing Loss Association of Michigan, who presented Gleason with its 2007 Legislator of the Year Award for his legislative efforts to improve the lives of those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

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