

STATE SENATOR • JOHN J. GLEASON • 27TH DISTRICT

Gleason Press Release

P.O. Box 30036 • Lansing • Michigan • 48909-7536 • 517-373-0142 • Fax: 517-373-3938
E-mail: SenJGleason@senate.michigan.gov • www.senate.mi.gov/gleason



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Oct. 25, 2007

Contact: Sen. John Gleason
Phone: (517) 373-0142

Senator Gleason, Deaf Community Celebrate Governor Granholm's Signing of Law to Ensure Equality for Deaf Community

Certified Sign Language Interpreters Would Close Vital Communication Gap

LANSING —Senator John Gleason (D-Flushing), representatives from the Department of Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the Michigan School for the Deaf, and other members of the deaf community joined Governor Granholm this morning for her signature of legislation to require the use of certified sign language interpreters to provide equal communication for the deaf and hard of hearing in important life situations, including educational, financial, legal, and medical interaction. The legislation, Public Act 23, is Senator Gleason's first Senate bill signed into law, and will also establish universal standards for sign interpreters.

"It's a joy to be joined today by the people this legislation will directly affect, and the Governor, who made it a reality today," said Gleason. "Everyday communication can be a gauntlet for those with hearing issues, and the inability to properly interact can have a significant, negative impact on their daily lives. This basic need has gone unaccounted for far too long, and I'm pleased to finally be able to help these important citizens, especially in 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The act updates outdated legislation from 1982 to provide for and regulate the use of interpreters in administrative and judicial proceedings and in certain other instances;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.

###