



The Tragic Toll on Interpreters and Translators from California's AB 5 Termination of Talent, in Black and White

January 2020

Several companies both in and outside California that provide language services spent much of December 2019 sending cutoff notices to hundreds of translators and interpreters in California.

The vast majority of language service professionals operate as independent contractors. This model fits the facts of their work, with often intermittent, highly specialized, but immediate demand to assist Californians in overcoming language barriers in every sector of life.

Many recipients of these termination letters are **extensively trained language service professionals who have earned multiple certifications from the state, reflecting many years and million dollars of collective investment**. Several have lost 30 or 50 percent or more of their work. These and many similar messages were received by members of the Coalition of Practicing Translators and Interpreters of California (CoPTIC).

Adding insult to injury, **some of the companies are located in California, and plan to send work serving Californians to service providers out of state**.

Emphasis indicates the change in the law as basis for the peremptory cutoff. All names are concealed in the actual examples included here:

Termination notice #1:

"Dear XXXX Vendor,

"As you might know, the State of California has **recently passed Assembly Bill 5 (AB5)**, which narrows the classification of independent contractor (aka freelancer, subcontractor, gig worker) and applies to all independent contractors residing in California. Unfortunately, after much consideration, XXXX has determined that there is no way for us to operate within the strictures of this law, so **we have made the business decision to discontinue the use of independent contractors located within California**. This new policy will take effect at the turn of the year, on January 1, 2020."

Termination notice #2:

"I wanted to let you know that unfortunately, XXXX will **no longer work with CA-based sole proprietors going forward due to the passing of the AB5 bill**, which goes into effect on January 1st, 2020."

Termination notice #3:

"This letter is sent as notice that beginning January 1, 2020, XXXX **will not engage an individual person**, or any entity other than a corporation, **as a contractor if such contractor is based in or resident of the State of California**. XXXX will require valid proof of formation of the corporate entity, along with a business license or business tax registration if same is required under the relevant local jurisdiction of such contractor."

Termination notice #4:

"We're unfortunately unable to work with freelancers based in California ... **If you happen to move out of California ... please let us know**."