

Freelance Translators and Interpreters Need Relief

As Congress and the executive branch consider relief measures to combat the economic fallout of the coronavirus pandemic, they must remember to include freelance translators and interpreters, as well as other self-employed professionals and small to medium-sized language service companies. They must be reminded that language matters in a pandemic. Translators and interpreters are essential to how our society makes sense of public health guidance.

According to the sixth annual “Freelancing in America” study¹ conducted by Upwork and the Freelancers Union in 2019, 57 million Americans are freelancers. At nearly \$1 trillion, freelance income accounts for almost 5% of total US GDP, more than the US construction or transportation industries. Skilled professionals make up 45% of freelancers. Freelancing is cross-generational, with 29% of baby boomers and 31% of Gen X workers being freelancers. But for the younger Millennials and Generation Z workers, freelancing is even more popular at 40% and 53%, respectively. Statista reports even higher numbers of freelancers in the United States, showing 57.3 million in 2017, which increased to 64.8 million in 2020, and projects growth to 90.1 million by 2028.²

A recent survey from Common Sense Advisory Research³ reported that more than 75% of translators and interpreters are self-employed, and only 6% work in-house as employees. That is in line with the American Translators Association’s (ATA) own surveys that show that 71% of its members are freelancers.

Professional translators and interpreters are already experiencing adverse effects as a result of the pandemic and the related economic contraction. Interpreters have lost and continue to lose significant amounts of their income due to the cancellation of conferences, medical appointments, and many other in-person events such as government meetings, civil and administrative court cases and hearings, interpreting in the schools, and other on-site interpreting assignments. Translators are increasingly seeing a reduction in work, which will be greatly exacerbated as businesses seek to cut costs in response to their loss of revenue.

Congress must not ignore the economic impact of translators and interpreters and other freelancers in the United States and must ensure that any legislative relief be timely and include this vital asset of the American economy.

Contact your Senator and Congressional representative today and make your voice heard. Ensure they know that you and other professional translators and interpreters deserve the same relief as wage-earning employees.

- **Find your Representative here:** <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>
- **Find your Senator here:** https://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm

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¹ Source: 2019 Freelance in America, <https://www.upwork.com/press/2019/10/03/freelancing-in-america-2019/>

² Source: Statista, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/921593/gig-economy-number-of-freelancers-us/>

³ Source: CSA Research, The State of the Linguist Supply Chain <https://insights.csa-research.com/chapters/305013106/MethodologyandInform>