

Introduced by: Legislator Joshua Lafazan

Co-Sponsored by: Minority Leader Kevan Abrahams and Legislators Ellen Birnbaum, Siela Bynoe, Delia DeRiggi-Whitton, Arnold Drucker, and Debra Mule

**LOCAL LAW<sup>7</sup> - 2018**

**A LOCAL LAW TO ADD TITLE 84 TO THE MISCELLANEOUS LAWS OF NASSAU COUNTY TO REQUIRE AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS AT ALL NASSAU COUNTY GOVERNMENT PRESS CONFERENCES HELD DURING EMERGENCY SITUATIONS**

Passed by the Nassau County Legislature on April 23, 2018  
Voting: Ayes: 18, Nays: 0, Abstained:0  
Became a law on April 26, 2018 with Approval of the  
Deputy County Executive acting on behalf of the County Executive.

APPROVED AS TO FORM

  
PETER J. CLINES MINORITY COUNSEL

**BE IT ENACTED** by the Legislature of the County of Nassau as follows:

**Section One.** A new Title 84 is hereby added to the Miscellaneous Laws of Nassau County as follows:

**TITLE 84**

**AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS AT ALL NASSAU COUNTY GOVERNMENT PRESS CONFERENCES HELD DURING EMERGENCY SITUATIONS**

§1. Legislative Intent.

It is estimated that over forty-eight million Americans are deaf or hard of hearing. This population is especially vulnerable to the dangers and hardships associated with natural disasters and other public emergencies. According to the National Association for the Deaf, it has been well documented that this population frequently experiences the most difficulty preparing for and recovering from emergencies and disasters.

Among the many difficulties faced by the deaf and hard of hearing during times of emergency is the inability to receive potentially life-saving information from government agencies responsible for emergency management. Research by the National Council on Disability has found that access to emergency services for deaf and hard of hearing individuals is in need of significant improvement. See, *Effective Communications for People with Disabilities: Before, During and After Emergencies*. Because local jurisdictions such as Nassau County are primarily responsible for responding to emergencies and natural disasters, it is their responsibility to lead the way in initially making such improvements. Accordingly, this Legislature determines that the County should initiate steps through its Office of Emergency Management to ensure adequate emergency communication with deaf and hard of hearing individuals through the provision of American Sign Language interpreters at all press conferences held during emergency situations including natural and manmade disasters.

## § 2. Definitions.

1. As used in this section, the following terms shall have the definitions:
  - (a) "Commissioner" shall mean the Commissioner of the Nassau County Office of Emergency Management.
  - (b) "Disaster" shall have the definition set forth in section 20(2) of the New York State Executive Law.
  - (c) "Emergency situation" shall mean disaster, rioting, catastrophe, severe weather, flooding, or similar event whether or not a state of emergency has been officially declared, including "emergency conditions" as defined in section 2113 of the Nassau County Charter.
  - (d) "Press conference" shall mean a meeting, organized by a County official, employee, or other representative of the County with one or more journalists and other representatives of the media, for the purposes of officially distributing information to the media and answering questions.
  - (e) "Emergency situation press conference" shall mean a press conference relating to or involving an emergency situation.
  - (f) "Qualified and certified American Sign Language Interpreter" shall mean an interpreter fluent in American Sign Language and meeting the requirements set forth in Section 390 of the Judiciary Law.

## § 3. Sign Language Interpreters at Emergency Situation Press Conferences.

1. It shall be the responsibility of the Commissioner to ensure that qualified and certified American Sign Language Interpreters are available to provide sign language interpretation services at all emergency situation press conferences. Such sign language interpreters shall be present and shall provide such services at each emergency situation press conference held by any officer, official, employee or agent of the County. To the maximum extent possible, the Commissioner shall ensure that the sign language

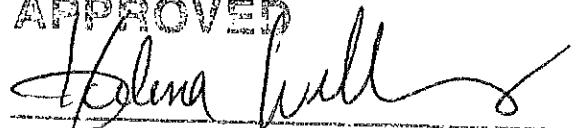
interpreter shall be so physically positioned that his or her face, body, arms, and hands are visible in the video transmission of the press conference at all times.

2. The Commissioner shall establish protocols for securing the services of qualified and certified American Sign Language interpreters at all emergency situation press conferences.

**Section 2. Severability.** If any clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, section, or part of this law or the application thereof to any person, individual, corporation, firm, partnership, entity, or circumstance shall be adjudged by any court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid or unconstitutional, such order or judgment shall not affect, impair or invalidate the remainder thereof, but shall be confined in its operation to the clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, section or part of this law, or in its application to the person, individual, corporation, firm, partnership, entity, or circumstance directly involved in the controversy in which such order or judgment shall be rendered.

**Section 3. SEQRA Determination.** It is hereby determined, pursuant to the provisions of the State Environmental Quality Review Act, 8 N.Y.E.C.L., section 0101 et seq. and its implementing regulations, Part 617 of 6 N.Y.C.R.R. and section 1611 of the County Government Law of Nassau County, that the adoption of this local law is a "Type II" Action within the meaning of Section 617.5(c)(20) and (27) of 6 N.Y.C.R.R., and, accordingly, is of a class of actions which do not have a significant effect on the environment; and no further review is required.

**Section 4. Effective Date.** This Law shall take effect immediately.

APPROVED  
  
County Executive  
DATE 4-26-18