

By Legislators Taylor, Boyce and Delehanty

Intro. No. ____

LOCAL LAW NO. __ OF 2020

ENACTING LOCAL LAW ENTITLED "AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS AT ALL MONROE COUNTY GOVERNMENT PRESS CONFERENCES HELD DURING EMERGENCY SITUATIONS"

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE COUNTY OF MONROE, as follows:

Section 1. Legislative Intent. Monroe County is home to one of the largest per-capita populations of individuals who 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. Because local jurisdictions such as Monroe County are primarily responsible for responding to emergencies and natural disasters, it is our responsibility to lead the way in initially making such improvements. Accordingly, this Legislature determines that the County should initiate steps through its Department of Public Safety to ensure adequate emergency communication with individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing through the provision of American Sign Language interpreters at all press conferences held during emergency situations including natural and manmade disasters.

Section 2. Definitions. The following terms used in this local law shall have the meanings indicated:

1. "Director" shall mean the Director of Public Safety.
2. "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 a "Public Disaster," as defined in Section 21-2 of the Monroe County Administrative Code and a "Disaster," as defined in Section 20(2) of the New York State Executive Law.
3. "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.
4. "Emergency situation press conference" shall mean a press conference relating to or involving an emergency situation.
5. "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.

Section 3. Sign Language Interpreters at Emergency Situation Press Conferences.

1. It shall be the responsibility of the Director 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 Director 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 Director shall establish protocols for securing the services of qualified and certified American Sign Language interpreters at all emergency situation press conferences.

Section 4. 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 5. Effective Date. This local law shall take effect in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Home Rule Law and the Monroe County Charter.

Committee of Whole; April 29, 2020 - CV: 29-0
File No. 20-0126.LL

ADOPTION: Date: _____

Vote: _____

ACTION BY THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

APPROVED: _____ VETOED: _____

SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____

EFFECTIVE DATE OF LOCAL LAW: _____