

**IL****CRA****SPRING****2022**www.ilcra.org**ad infinitum****ILLINOIS
COURT
REPORTERS
ASSOCIATION****In this issue**

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President's Message



2022. New Year, New Challenges

Well, it is time to leave 2021 behind and start anew with 2022. One great thing that happened was the 2021 ILCRA convention and the ability to get together with our colleagues in Oak Brook. We had a great speaker lineup and about 75 people show up onsite. Once again, we had many ILCRA members participating in the realtime and speed contests who impressed us all with their speed and accuracy skills. There is more about the contests in another article in this Ad Infinitum so read on. The level of enthusiasm by our members was awesome and that was highlighted with the opening casino night reception where the members tried their luck to win great prizes. A fun time was had by all.

Now onto the future. ILCRA and our members are facing new legislative and market-based challenges. We need every single reporter and captioner to defend the profession that you love and have worked so hard for. We are calling for volunteers to help fill needed spots to protect the profession. It does not take a lot of time to make a big difference. Please email dwenhold@mwcapitol.com to let us know that you are willing to help out. 2022 is not a year to sit on the sidelines, it is the year to jump into the game. United we stand!

*Mary Ann Casale
CSR, RDR, CLVS, CMRS, CLR*



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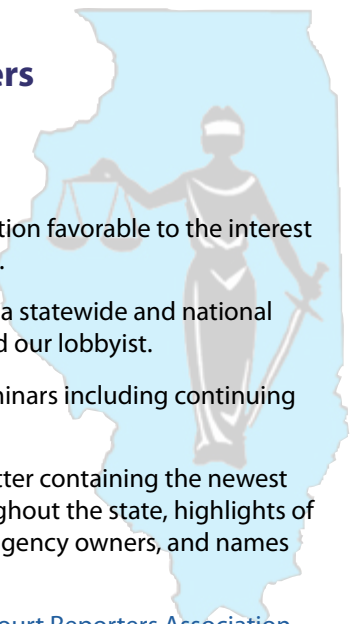
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What ILCRA Does for Illinois Reporters

- **Works** to maintain your right to be certified.
- **Monitors, promotes, and lobbies** to pass legislation favorable to the interest of court reporters, captioners and CART providers.
- **Monitors** legislation affecting our professions on a statewide and national basis through both our Legislative Committee and our lobbyist.
- **Sponsors** an annual conference and one-day seminars including continuing education and the latest in reporting technology.
- **Publishes** *Ad Infinitum*, a quarterly online newsletter containing the newest up-to-the-minute reporting developments throughout the state, highlights of board meetings, advertisements of vendors and agency owners, and names and telephone numbers of ILCRA officers.
- **Serves** as an affiliated state unit of the [National Court Reporters Association](#).
- **Offers** members significantly reduced rates for the conventions and seminars.
- **Awards** Student Scholarships, a Distinguished Service Award, an Award of Excellence for an Outstanding Educator, and conducts [speed contests](#) each year.
- **Provides** resources on the ILCRA website, including the CSR Act, Court Reporters' Act, Rules and Regulations of the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation, Transcript Act, and ILCRA Bylaws. It also includes officers' names and contact information as well as Committees and Committee Members. ILCRA Member Information is included on the website under "Find a Reporter."
- **Offers** an Online Student Mentor Program.
- **Promotes** student recruitment.
- **Organizes** letter-writing campaigns on issues affecting our professions.
- **Sends** representative members to legislative boot camps, leadership conferences, and the national convention for training and education.
- **Provides** reporters for demonstrations on request and attends career days throughout the state.
- **Provides** free CART brochures to its members.
- **Provides** a court reporters network through Constant Contact which allows ILCRA to immediately be in touch with members via email.
- **Serves** the membership with the phone number 703-729-4861 and a [website](#).
- **Provides** an association management company to assist members.



ILCRA MISSION STATEMENT

To maintain standards of excellence in verbatim shorthand reporting, to provide continuing educational opportunities and advocate technological advancements, and to promote a spirit of mutual assistance between the profession of verbatim shorthand reporting and its consumers.

Teamwork

By Georgia Northway, ILCRA Immediate Past President

The question of “What is ILCRA doing?” has been around longer than my tenure on the Board.

I’ve had the opportunity since the late ‘90s/early 2000s to experience firsthand what it meant to commit to ILCRA Board service. My own mother spent countless nights and hours in the office of our house, reading and responding to e-mails. She was absent on the weekends when the Board would call an in-person meeting. I read her Ad In articles. I took a picture of her that served as her official presidential photo. There was fun to be had, but she was also the one meeting with the AOIC and representing Illinois official court reporters in front of a panel of chief judges, when ILCRA was fighting to abolish the rule that disallowed court reporters to work on transcripts during courthouse hours.

The answer, in short, of what ILCRA is doing for you, for the profession, for legislation, is A LOT. On top of a regular business day at the courthouse, or running a freelance firm, or captioning back-to-back assignments, or taking an all-day deposition, we are coming home

and working for ILCRA. It takes us away from dinnertime, from our families, and it takes up a lot of space in our thinking mind when there are incredible goals to reach.

We all volunteered for ILCRA with an understanding that there would be a time commitment required of us. None of us are here and blindsided by what was being asked of us when someone on the Board more or less strong-armed us into service. We had an idea of what we were saying “yes” to, even though we may not have felt ready, or we were unsure we had what it took to be on the Board – be it time, experience, or just fear of not doing a good job.

I am very cognizant of the fear that is running rampant through our profession right now, especially because the source of that fear threatens our very livelihood. When people are in a state of fear, there are four reactions that can kick in: fight, flight, freeze, or fawn. I’ve seen people choosing to fight; reacting without all the facts or information, and without thought to how this might affect the future. I’ve seen flight; where people completely disengage, become apathetic, and choose to ignore the threat in the hopes that it will just go away. There’s freeze, rather akin to paralysis by analysis, where every choice looks

treacherous, so they stand in place, hoping to pause long enough until the “right” answer becomes clearer. And then there’s fawn; a protective tactic employed by people who are trying to keep the peace and please everyone around them, sometimes while betraying themselves.

There is no right or wrong to assign when we talk about reactions to fear. But some things can be more productive than others in terms of advancing the way towards problem-solving that paves the way towards a solution.

When we take a moment to respond instead of react, these ways are easier to see. All too often, we get caught up in the moment, and we quit listening to learn. Instead, we listen to make our next argument. We disengage so as not to have to face the problem. We stand paralyzed before a crossroad and fear the next step. Or we tell everyone what they want to hear, even if it’s in complete contradiction to what we told someone else.

There are so many cliches about teamwork, how it makes the dream work; how it divides the task and multiplies the success – you’ve heard them before. But as cliches go, they tend to become that way because at one point, they were very true and very impactful.



So let's talk about teamwork; because in what I've seen lately, that is something that Illinois court reporters could stand to explore. I came across this quote while learning about the importance of teamwork:

"Group cohesion is essential for businesses focused on success. Without it, individuals will be more likely to apply their efforts for their own benefit rather than the benefit of your company. And with everyone working toward slightly different purposes, your project — and your business — will suffer."¹

The challenges we are facing regarding the integrity of our profession are serious, and we have more people who don't understand the severity of these challenges than we do friends. It is going to be impossible to overcome our legislative obstacles if we continually create obstacles for ourselves.

Who can take us seriously if we are arguing amongst ourselves? Who can believe we are trying to do the right thing when we can't agree on what the right thing is? How can we get more people to get involved and help as a united front when there are those who ridicule our efforts? I ask that next time you find yourself needing to ask these questions of yourself, employ the THINK standard: is your point Thoughtful, Helpful, Inspiring, Necessary, and Kind? If not, is there a better way to say what you intend to fit these parameters?

I encourage and implore you all, if you've thought about Board service, NOW is the time to reach out. We have several committees waiting to be filled with volunteers who want to make an impact without having too much responsibility. You also get to see just what it is ILCRA is doing in between conventions.

If you know someone who is not an

ILCRA Board member, encourage that person to sign up. One of our most valuable assets is our lobbyist, and she has been working overtime to keep us informed on the legislation. ILCRA relies on membership dues and attendance at seminars in order to retain these services, and we need to ensure the retention of our lobbyist now more than ever.

If you're not sure where to start or how to get involved, reach out. ILCRA has an e-mail address, we have a Facebook page, and we would be happy to get you started. We need to form a more unified approach to our problems. When we can't be united internally, I don't know how much of a chance we stand against the external forces.

1. <https://getsling.com/blog/importance-of-teamwork/>

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*pending NCRA approval



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What's The Fastest Way To Empty A Room Full Of Court Reporters? It's Just One Simple Word

By Greg Weiland

The word "testing" sends a shiver up the spines of most court reporters. We all remember it too well. The testing torture I endured in court reporting school can still give me nightmares. What other course of study can you think of where you fail more tests than you pass? How many times did you have to force yourself to sit down at that evil machine when you could have been out partying with friends? Back in my court reporting school days, the last thing I wanted to see was that khaki manual - yes, manual - steno machine. But that was back then. After 30-plus years working as a court reporter, I have grown to love that machine, even miss it at times.

I graduated from court reporting school in Daytona Beach, Florida, in 1988. Before I left Daytona, I sat for the RPR twice. I passed on the second attempt. When I moved to Chicago in 1990, I passed the CSR in Illinois on my second attempt. In mid 1995, I achieved the RMR after several fails. The testimony at 260 eluded me, but I finally passed. Then in 1998 I received the CRR. In the early 2000s, I fell under the misguided belief that I didn't need

to be a member of NCRA anymore [the subject of another discussion], and when I rejoined NCRA in 2008, I had to start over again and sit for all the exams. I received the CRR and RMR again in 2011.

I am sharing that little bit of history about my personal journey because I want you to understand how important certifications are to me and why I felt it necessary to recertify. While passing the Illinois CSR exam grants us a license to work as court reporters, I propose that those requirements to pass should be viewed by us as **minimum** standards. Personally, I am not satisfied with qualifications that are classified only as "minimum" in order to perform this job, and I don't think you should be either. There are no victories in "minimum."

There are a multitude of benefits of having the RMR. The speeds needed to pass the RMR will give you higher proficiency and accuracy in your everyday, normal writing situation, be it deposition, in court, or captioning. For litigation reporters, that will translate to less editing time, which means a higher hourly wage because you're working less, and more free time. You can walk into your jobs with the confidence that you have skills that

exceed what is expected, so when you are getting killed in a job by fast talkers, you have the confidence to say, "Hey, slow down!" While many of us have become quite skilled at shooting poison darts with our eyes, it doesn't help later when you're trying to piece together the record.

With the invasion of digital recorders into our market, for me it's a no-brainer that achieving advanced certifications is how stenographers make themselves stand out. In addition, you will have the skills necessary to provide realtime; you can provide rough drafts with accuracy exceeding 95 percent a couple of hours after the job ends, something digitals can only dream of doing.

I know at some level I am preaching to the choir here. Some of you have already earned your CRR and RMR. Congratulations! You are a superstar! For those that haven't yet, I urge you to consider putting in the practice, improving your skills, and taking the tests. You're going to love the payoff! And who knows...maybe we will see a room full of confident stenographers at the next speed contest.

Happy writing, Stenographers!

A Class Act: 225 ILCS 415/

By Cathrine A. Rajcan

Over the past year I have spent an inordinate amount of time reading, studying, and internalizing many sections of the Illinois CSR Act, a truly great piece of legislation. Now more than ever we CSRs have a duty to protect the continued efficacy (no, this is not about COVID) of this law. As court reporters we know that laws consist of statutes, rules, regulations, and case law. And all laws are not worth the paper they are figuratively printed on unless they are referred to, cited, and relied upon to achieve fair outcomes and/or justice.

The CSR Act is up for sunset review in 2023; and as you may know from massive efforts on the part of local and national legal services corporations who have been advertising “digital court reporting” or “video court reporting,” there are some major forces who may be focused on diluting, at least, or undoing, at worst, the CSR Act.

Now is the time to focus your energies on sharing with attorneys the uniquely superior benefits of engaging the services of professional licensed court reporters: our neutrality, our instant read-back, our securing the legal record by asking for restatement of testimony or bases of objections, our ability to filter out ambient noise to capture the spoken word, our realtime translation skills, ability to provide instant rough draft transcripts, our contemporaneously identifying each speaker and accurately attribute each statement to the correct person, and perhaps most important (in the time of competitive entities falsely claiming digital audio recording and outsourcing transcription is [laughably] superior to a stenographer) preserving and protecting litigants’ private, personal, and confidential information.

We are Officers of the Court, *we* are the Guardians of the Record, we are inimitable.

Take note when companies or individuals falsely claim

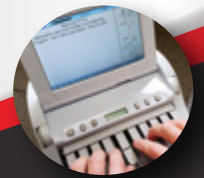
they can provide the same services as a court reporter, for less cost, by having a person show up at a legal proceeding with recording equipment and a note pad to make quick notes of which attorney interrupted. We know that a person doing this rudimentary process cannot honestly compete with the incomparable skills of a CSR; this is why these companies resort to puffery, exaggeration, and pretense.

Be aware that:

* The State of Illinois, when it passed the CSR Act, declared that the services provided by court reporters affect the “health, safety, and welfare” of the people of this state; and therefore the practice of certified shorthand reporting shall only be performed by persons trained, skilled and licensed, and thus qualified

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A Class Act

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to serve in this role. (225 ILCS 415/1)

* The language in the Act specifies that only CSRs may use the terms "CSR," "Court Reporter," or "Certified Shorthand Reporter;" "...directly or indirectly in connection with his or her profession or business." (225 ILCS 415/5)

* The statute states that advertising of court reporting services must be "truthful and not misleading," and "shall not include false, fraudulent, deceptive, or misleading material or guarantees of success"...and "[a]dvertisements shall also not include any offers of any gift or item of value to attorneys or their staff or any other persons or entities associated with any litigation." (225 ILCS 415/19)

* By law, the only means by which a court reporter can create the official verbatim record of proceedings is by manual (pen) or mechanical shorthand "of a proceeding while in attendance at such proceeding for the purpose of reporting the same." (225 ILCS 415/4(6))

In other words, a company sending a person to audio or video record the proceedings, and later have a transcriptionist type up a text record of the proceedings, is circumventing the express terms of the Act because the official transcript of legal proceedings in Illinois are to be contemporaneously captured by a *shorthand reporter* who is *present at the proceedings*.

If you become aware of a person or an entity who you believe is violating any of these, or any other sections of the CSR Act (225 ILCS 415), or a section of the Court Reporters Act (705 ILCS 70/1), which pertains to CSRs performing the role of court reporter in an Illinois court, file a complaint with the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation to protect the People of the State of Illinois, and to establish a record to keep the CSR Act intact. <https://idfpr.com/Admin/DPR/Complaint.asp>

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Spread the word!

Encourage someone you know to explore court reporting, captioning, and CART as a career. Ensuring that qualified reporters are in the field is the only way to protect the profession and to fight digital technologies from taking over our industry.

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I Feel the Need for Speed

**By Rita Corson,
ILCRA Realtime and Speed Contest Chair**

The ILCRA Speed and Realtime Contest this year saw a lot of new faces. Since we didn't have a convention last year, the contestants were raring to go this year! Some of my contestants have been practicing daily for this. You just got to admire their tenacity when it comes to being the Fastest Fingers in Illinois!

Our contests are possible because of our sponsors, so thank you to Donna Urlaub of Urlaub, Bowen and Associates for sponsoring the Realtime Contest. And even though Melanie Humphrey Sonntag was not in attendance, she still sponsored the Gary L Sonntag Memorial Speed Contest, so thank you, Melanie.

I pulled Bonni Shuttleworth out of retirement to help Judy Lehman dictate. They both did an outstanding job as dictators for the contests. Thank you, ladies, for always being there for me.

I had lots of great helpers grading tests, monitoring the room, and helping me set up for the contests. I couldn't do this without my great helpers.

Well, let's find out who this year's speedy fingers are!

Realtime Contest:

I had 7 contestants who took part in the realtime contest on Thursday, October 14, 2021. There are two parts to this test – 180 wpm Literary and 200 wpm Testimony. It takes 95% accuracy to qualify. That's only 45 errors on the 180 Lit and 50 errors on the Testimony. For any of you who have taken the CRR test, you know how hard it is to distinguish between capital and capitol, piece and peace, flour and flower and other homophones. Well, these contestants nailed it each and every time! One of

my contestants told me after the contest that she didn't think "flour" was in her dictionary, so she finger-spelled it. At 180 words per minute! These reporters are amazing and their daily practices really paid off! You will be amazed when you hear some of these percentages.

The 180 Lit was entitled "Don't Worry – Be Happy." It gave sage advice to those people age 60 and older, but there was some good advice for those younger than 60 also.

The 180 wpm Literary qualifiers were:

1. Jennifer Costales, 95.22%
2. Stephanie Battaglia, 95.33%
3. Lorie Kennedy, 96%
4. Donna Urlaub, 96.33%
5. Judy Walsh, 98.78%
6. Tina Dillon, 99.56% (a new contestant who had only 4 errors and the best paper of the entire contest)

The 200 wpm Testimony was about a domestic dispute that involved small children. To qualify you had to have 50 errors or less and the take has to be written in upper and lower case, which makes it so much harder

The 200 wpm Testimony qualifiers were:

1. Greg Weiland, 95.20%
2. Tina Dillon, 96.20%
3. Stephanie Battaglia, 96.6%
4. Lorie Kennedy, 97.4%
5. Donna Urlaub, 97.9%
6. Judy Walsh, 98.4%

By averaging both of the scores from the 180 Lit and the 200 Testimony, I come with up a first, second, and third place. These contestants received medals, and our first-place winner took home the Bonni Shuttleworth traveling trophy.

The third-place medal went to Donna Urlaub with an overall score of 97.12 %.

Our second-place medal went to Tina Dillon with an



I Feel the Need for Speed

Continued from page 9

overall score of 97.88 %.

The first-place medal and the winner of the Realtime Contest and receiving the Bonni Shuttleworth Realtime traveling trophy with a score of 98.59% was Judy Walsh. I didn't know this at the time of the award ceremony, but I found out later that Judy also won the USCRA Realtime Contest a few days earlier!

Congratulations, Judy, and to all my other contestants. Great job!

On Friday, we held the Speed Contest, and here are those results:

Gary L. Sonntag Memorial Speed Contest:

I had 7 contestants participating in the Speed Contest. They worked very hard to be able to take home the Sally Cochran Speed Contest trophy. The takes were extremely difficult, and I apologize for that. I will do a better job next year with the material. I admire you all for putting in the time to practice and for your dedication to your craft. You guys are amazing.

The Speed Contest consisted of three takes - 220 wpm Literary, 230 wpm Legal Opinion, and 270 wpm Testimony.

The 220 Lit was taken from an article I read in the Rushville Times written by Roger Eddy, a retired member of the Illinois House serving the 109th Legislative District. It wasn't quite long enough to make it 5 minutes, so I added some of my own insights. It was entitled, "Especially this year, thank a teacher." To qualify, our contestants had to have 55 errors or less.

You could have 55 errors on the 220 Lit, and we had one contestant who qualified – Donna Urlaub with 95.27%.

The 230 Legal Opinion was an argument before the

Appellate Court of an appeal in a delivery of controlled substance case. Legal Opinions are always so hard you can't even imagine, but we did have two qualifiers. They could only have 58 errors:

230 wpm Legal Opinion:

1. Donna Urlaub, 95.3%
2. Lorie Kennedy, 95.65% (with a difference of four fewer errors)

The 270 Testimony was testimony about a search warrant involving a John Doe affiant. We again had two qualifiers who had fewer than 68 errors:

270 Testimony:

1. Lorie Kennedy, 96.74%
2. Donna Urlaub, 96.96% (with a difference of three fewer errors)

In order to win a medal in the speed contest you have to qualify in all three areas, and we had one contestant who did just that.

The winner of the Gary L. Sonntag Memorial Speed Contest and receiving the Sally Cochran traveling trophy with a score of 95.85% was Donna Urlaub. Congratulations, Donna. Donna is a fantastic writer. She also won the NCRA Speed Contest in Las Vegas this past July!

I am so in awe of all of these contestants. Just sitting for these contests makes them winners in my book. They made me proud to be a part of this contest experience. Please come back next year. I promise the material won't be as dense as this year.

If you have never attempted a speed contest, why don't you sign up next year. Contact these contestants and inquire about their daily practice group. You can learn from them, and by practicing for this contest you can only improve your skills as a court reporter and make your job so much easier.



2021 Fall Conference

The 2021 Fall Conference was AMAZING!

If you missed the 2021 convention, all I have to say is that was a great time, and it was awesome opportunity to reconnect with many of your colleagues. After being cooped up for two years, the energy was off the charts, the seminars were superb and the casino reception party was epic!

Below are some pictures of the event and we are hoping that you will be able to join us at the next one in Springfield, IL on October 6-7, 2022. Don't miss out this year.





What Else Can I Say But What A Year It Has Been

By Stephanie Battaglia

Going into 2022 there are so many things that are changing, but yet so much that stays the same. That being said, digital technology is getting stronger every day. What are you doing to set yourself apart?

I challenge every reporter out there, in Illinois and across the country, BE THE BEST YOU CAN BE.

Are you truly the best reporter you can be? We are so worried about digital technology taking over, but are you your best when you go on your job every day?

Here's a few tidbits that I think truly will always set us apart from a digital any day of the week:

1. Read your caption. Do a quick Google search. At least know what case you are appearing on. Look up what your case is about.
2. Look at the parties. Make sure you know who is representing which side. At least have the law firm names down ahead of time.
3. Treat every single job as if it will be ordered as a rough draft. And that means quick turnaround. No use in getting the rough draft tomorrow if they are on trial today.
4. Turn in work on time. ON TIME. Make a system that you know what day your job is due.
5. Don't take on more than you can handle. If you are booked five days in a row and Day 1 is a 300-page expedite let the agencies know!!!!
6. Be professional. Sign on early. A 9:00 a.m. assignment doesn't mean you log in at 8:55. Log in early. Talk to the players. Ask questions. See what today will entail.
7. Dress professional. We all laugh about how we can wear sweats on a Zoom job. But seriously, make sure you look professional from the waist up.
8. What does your background look like? If your desk is a mess make sure it is not in view.
9. If you have access to a portal that has prior deps, spend at least 15 minutes the night before, look at prior transcripts, make a word list.
10. IN-PERSON WORK.... I get Covid and people not wanting to expose themselves to danger. But are you turning down in-person work because of Covid or you just don't want to go? If I were to look at your Facebook account would I see you out and about all over town but yet won't go in person because it isn't safe? If we don't cover it, who will?
11. I'm a firm believer in practice. If you're interested contact me and I will fill you in on the practice group I am in. If I want to be the best I have to be my best.
12. And if you aren't providing realtime DO IT NOW. GET YOUR CERTIFICATION!!!! This is what truly sets us apart. Digital cannot compete with realtime.

We truly have the best profession in the world. It is up to us to stay number one, the gold standard at all times. Be the gold standard. Be the best. Make 2022 a year to remember.

SAVE THE DATE

ILCRA 2022 Fall Conference

October 6-8, 2022

President Abraham Lincoln Hotel
Springfield, IL



Join ILCRA

**Membership with the Illinois Court Reporters Association has its privileges!
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MEMBER-ONLY access to the Website with the latest legislative news

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