



National Association of the Deaf

www.nad.org

January 31, 2025

Susie Wiles
Chief of Staff
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Ms. Wiles:

Founded in 1880 by deaf and hard of hearing leaders, the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) is the nation's premier civil rights organization dedicated to advocating for deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the United States. On behalf of NAD, I write to urgently request that the White House resume providing American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters for all press briefings and related events. As the oldest national civil rights organization, the NAD's mission is to preserve, protect, and promote the civil, human, and linguistic rights of more than 48 million deaf and hard of hearing people in this country.

The NAD and several deaf individuals previously reached a settlement with the President of the United States and other White House officials, regarding the White House's failure to provide American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters during press briefings related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The settlement followed a landmark court ruling in September 2020 that ordered the White House to provide interpreters for all such briefings.

In early 2021, the White House implemented comprehensive ASL interpretation services for all briefings conducted by the President, Vice President, First Lady, Second Gentleman, and/or White House Press Secretary, as broadcast by the White House Communications Agency. These interpreters were visible on the White House's official communication channels, including WH.gov/live, Facebook, Twitter/X, and YouTube. The White House demonstrated its commitment by employing a team of both hearing and Certified Deaf Interpreters.



The White House's efforts were historic: for the first time in history, deaf and hard of hearing Americans had equal access to all White House briefings in real time. The White House's policy for ensuring equal access was stated in a memorandum dated April 26, 2021 (the "ASL Policy"), which is attached. The White House successfully implemented this policy for the last four years.

However, the White House appears to have ceased compliance with the ASL Policy referenced in the settlement and is no longer providing ASL interpreters for press briefings and related events. For example, the White House did not provide an ASL interpreter for Press Secretary Leavitt's remarks on January 28, 2025, or President Trump's January 30, 2025 press conference. Additionally, ASL interpretation is notably absent from recent videos on the White House's YouTube channel.

NAD strongly urges the White House to reinstate ASL interpretation services. Access to White House press briefings is critical for all deaf and hard of hearing Americans, since it is the primary means by which the administration communicates important information to the public. People of all political affiliations have a right and desire to stay informed of what the President and his office are telling the American people in real time. Captioning does not serve the needs of the large population of Deaf individuals whose first and dominant language is ASL and who cannot access information from the White House without ASL access.

Providing ASL interpreters is ethically imperative but legally mandated. The ASL Policy was implemented after a federal court ordered the White House to provide ASL interpreters for all press briefings related to COVID-19, which began in October 2020. Through the ASL Policy, the White House expanded the use of ASL interpreters to *all* press briefings, not just those related to COVID-19. We ask that the White House honor its commitment to accessibility by reinstating ASL interpreters for all relevant events.

Should you require any assistance in this process, including in securing appropriately qualified and certified deaf interpreting teams, please do not hesitate to contact our Chief Operating Officer, Kelby Brick, at kelby.brick@nad.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bobbie Beth Scoggins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bobbie Beth Scoggins, Ed.D.

Interim Chief Executive Officer