

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SERVICE

December 11, 2020

Emergency Procurement Determination for Automated Speech Recognition and Closed Captioning for the 2021 Legislative Session

The public health threat caused by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has necessitated closing the State Capitol to the public and has necessitated that the New Mexico Legislature will be conducting the upcoming 2021 session remotely. The legislative session will begin on January 19, 2021. In order to provide the public with meaningful access to the legislative session, while protecting the public from the health threat of COVID-19, it is necessary to offer closed captioning for the webcasts of committee meetings and floor sessions.

Section 13-1-127 NMSA 1978 allows for a state agency to make an emergency procurement to "plan or prepare for the response to a serious threat to public health, welfare, safety or property caused by a flood, fire, epidemic, riot, act of terrorism, equipment failure or similar event". Due to the public health threat caused by COVID-19 and the immediate need for the Legislative Council Service (LCS) to prepare for conducting a remotely held legislative session to begin mid-January, the automated speech recognition and closed captioning services cannot be acquired through normal procurement methods, and it is necessary for the LCS to procure these services from SLIQ Media Technologies, Inc.

The LCS has reviewed several options for closed captioning legislative webcasts, including options on the Webex and Zoom virtual platforms and YouTube, but these options have not proven to be sufficiently reliable. Additionally, the use of an American Sign Language interpreter presents challenges because the interpreter appears in a small window inside the webcast window, which makes it difficult to view the interpretation. Through this review, SLIQ has been found to be the most reliable, efficient and timely option for providing the automated speech recognition and closed captioning services needed. Additionally, because SLIQ currently provides the LCS with archival services for the webcasts of legislative committee meetings and floor sessions, by using SLIQ for the automated speech recognition and closed captioning services, the closed captioning will be able to be retained with the archived files.

Accordingly, the director of the LCS has made an emergency determination to procure the automated speech recognition and closed captioning services from SLIQ.



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