



# DOJ wants to replace interpreters with video explaining rights at first deportation hearings: report

BY JOHN BOWDEN - 07/03/19 06:35 PM EDT

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The Justice Department is reportedly planning to end the use of in-court interpreters for undocumented immigrants appearing at their first deportation hearings, where the migrants are informed of their rights and the schedules for their trials.

The [San Francisco Chronicle](#) reported Wednesday that under a new plan, immigrants would instead watch videotaped instructions that explain to defendants the scope of their rights and how their proceedings will be carried out in immigration courts.

Department of Justice (DOJ) officials reportedly informed the nation's immigration judges of the change last month. The videos are prerecorded in Spanish and a number of indigenous languages, the Chronicle reports, as many of those coming north from Central America are not native Spanish speakers.

An official with the agency told the Chronicle that the plan was “part of an effort to be good stewards of [DOJ's] limited resources.”

However, the head of a union representing immigration judges, who are DOJ employees, told the Chronicle that the plan would remove an “integral” part of the immigration court system.

“Interpreter cost is not a surprise cost — it's an integral part of every case,” Ashley Tabaddor said, according to the newspaper.

"If they actually look at the courts as a real court, they would never be dismissive of the role of an interpreter. But the fact that we are here and have these budget shortfalls means they have prioritized the budget in a way that is dismissive of the integral role of the interpreters, and reflects the flaw of having the courts run by a law enforcement agency," she added.

"What if you have an individual that speaks an indigenous language and has no education and is completely illiterate?" asked one judge, who remained anonymous in order to discuss the plan with the Chronicle.

"You think showing them a video is going to completely inform them of their rights? How are they supposed to ask questions of the judge?" the judge reportedly added, calling the decision "a disaster in the making."

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