

University Study Indicates Better Lawsuit Results for English Speakers

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DALLAS – A study from the Texas Tech University Rawls College of Business™ indicates that English-speaking Hispanic plaintiffs experience better results in civil lawsuits than their non-English-speaking counterparts.

The study, presented in a paper by Dallas attorney Angel Reyes and Texas Tech professors Bradley T. Ewing, Ph.D. and James C. Wetherbe, Ph.D., is based on the outcomes of more than 200 personal injury verdicts between 1996 and 2007. In examining the cases, the authors sought to determine whether any contributing factor could be linked to jury verdicts where the amounts awarded were significantly less than what plaintiffs were offered in out-of-court settlements.

While other recent research has shown that jury verdicts rarely exceed the last settlement offer, the results of the Reyes-Ewing-Wetherbe study indicate that Hispanic plaintiffs who relied on an interpreter during testimony were 15 percent less likely than an English speaker to obtain a jury verdict that exceeded the last settlement offer.

“What this study shows is that while Lady Justice is blindfolded, she certainly is not deaf,” says Mr. Reyes, co-author of the study. “This study raises profound questions not only about the right to a fair jury trial, which is one of the foundations of our

Constitution, but also the economic and social impact presented by language differences in our legal system.”

The Reyes-Ewing-Wetherbe study, based upon 223 personal injury jury verdicts over the past decade in over 16 Texas counties, highlights the challenges facing not only non-English-speaking citizens, but the Hispanic community as a whole.

“We entered this project expecting to find some disparity, and although this was a limited study, the results were an eye-opener,” says Mr. Reyes. “The finding that jury verdicts may not be language-neutral should also be of interest to policymakers, judges and community leaders who deal with Hispanic issues. This is something that certainly warrants further research.”

Angel Reyes is an attorney in Dallas, Texas, whose practice involves business litigation and personal injury matters.

For more information on the study involving language and trial outcomes, please contact Mark Annick at 800-559-4534, 214-213-1754 (mobile) or mark@androvett.com.

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