



# RRB News

## U.S. Railroad Retirement Board

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### RRB Reaffirms Commitment to Accessibility for LEP Customers

In recognition of yesterday's 24<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the issuance of Executive Order 13166, "Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency," the U.S. Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) is reaffirming the agency's fundamental commitment to ensuring program accessibility to all individuals, including people with limited English proficiency (LEP).

For over two decades, the RRB has partnered with the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice and other stakeholders to eliminate any language barriers that may prevent LEP individuals from accessing agency programs and services. Being able to communicate with LEP customers is critical whether enrolling them for railroad retirement annuities or railroad unemployment and sickness benefits, or in any other related circumstances. For example, when the RRB supplies translations of vital documents or provides an interpreter during applicant interviews, it enhances the effectiveness of its programs and services, guaranteeing they reach and benefit all intended communities.

Like other federal agencies, the RRB prioritizes implementing effective language access policies and procedures to eliminate language barriers to its programs. Those policies and procedures are contained within the RRB's language access plan (LAP). An LAP is the cornerstone of a federal agency's effort to provide LEP individuals equitable access to its services and programs. It is also a "living document" that is regularly reviewed and, if necessary, modified to ensure its optimal application. Currently, the RRB is one of more than forty federal agencies that has revised or is revising its LAP.

In addition, the RRB offers LEP services that, if not unique, address the needs of its own customer base. Although its contacts with LEP individuals are limited, the agency prints Spanish-language booklets about RRB programs and makes them available online via a dedicated Spanish-language page on its website for its predominant LEP community. More generally, bilingual or multilingual RRB employees act as translators or interpreters for a variety of languages to assist customers. Agency employees are also regularly surveyed to find willing and able staff to serve in those capacities and to try to maintain a consistent source of assistance. While the RRB believes it is usually able to satisfy the needs of its LEP population, the agency is working to secure professional translator/interpreter services to greatly expand access to any individuals who may be underserved by its current LEP procedures.

In the coming year, the RRB will continue to consult with the Department of Justice's Federal Language Access Working Group about conducting effective language access training for RRB employees; recruiting, assessing, hiring, and retaining multilingual staff; contracting for qualified translators and interpreters; and using technology to deliver accurate and reliable language assistance services.

*(More)*

Through its continuing efforts, the RRB seeks to fulfill the promise of Executive Order 13166; that is, to prevent discrimination and ensure equal treatment under the law for LEP individuals by providing meaningful access to agency services and programs.

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*An independent federal agency based in Chicago, the RRB administers approximately \$14 billion a year in benefits under the federal Railroad Retirement and Railroad Unemployment Insurance Acts covering the nation's railroad workers and their families.*