



# Policy Brief from the Office of Assemblywoman Latoya Joyner

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## Why court can be a scary place for our diverse community

New York City Housing and Civil Court is one of the busiest court systems in the country. In the Bronx, approximately 2,000 tenants go through Bronx Housing Court daily and more than 85,000 cases are heard annually, which is more than any other borough, according to a report from New Settlement Apartments' CASA and Urban Justice Center. Also, there were more than 1.7 million civil cases heard in 2010, according to the Court Statistics Project.

More help is needed for those who are not proficient in English. Nearly 60 percent of the population in the Bronx and 50 percent of New Yorkers speak a language other than English at home. In 2014, there were a total of 9,923 evictions in the Bronx, according to New York City Marshals.

Each one of these court actions can have a major impact upon the quality of life. It is essential that all parties to stipulations fully understand each stipulation, and the potential consequences of their actions before entering into an enforceable agreement.

### Legislation:

**Assembly Bill A.7968:** Requires Notice of Petitions, Petitions for Nonpayment and Postcards by filers be provided to parties in their native language in Housing Court in the six most common languages in the City of New York.

**Assembly Bill A.7847:** Requires certain Civil Court documents, orders and any other court documents which include stipulations be directed, and provided to such parties in their native language.

**Assembly Bill A.10245:** Requires the Office of Court Administration to collect and maintain data on limited English proficient litigants in the state stipulations directed, and provided to such parties in their native language.

### Message from Assemblywoman Joyner:

Bronxites and all New Yorkers deserve the respect and dignity of understanding legal actions being brought against them in Housing Court and Civil Court. This legislation builds upon the intent of current state and federal policies designed to ensure that witnesses and parties in court cases have access to translators as needed. It is a right that closes an existing loophole requiring the translation of stipulations and recognizes the growing and diverse demographic of New York families. Our differences are what make our community great, and we should support these differences in all facets of our community.

# 57.6%

- Percentage Bronxites who speak a language other than English at home

# 34%

- Percentage Bronxites who are foreign born

# 46.3%

- Percentage of Bronxites speak Spanish at home

**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau