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Nebraska Needs More Rural Attorney's

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) - Nebraska Supreme Court Chief Justice Michael Heavican says the state has a growing need for rural attorneys and for language interpreters to serve the courts.

Heavican told lawmakers Thursday that a shortage of lawyers in rural areas has contributed to an increase in Nebraskans who represent themselves in court. His comments came during his annual State of the Judiciary address.

The chief justice also pointed to the state's increase reliance on interpreters for criminal defendants, victims and witnesses.

Nebraska supplied interpreters in 46 different languages for 24,000 appointments last year, a 20 percent increase from the previous year. Heavican says Spanish is still the most in-demand language.

Gov. Pete Ricketts has recommended an additional \$250,000 annually for interpreter services in his budget proposal to lawmakers.

Associated Press