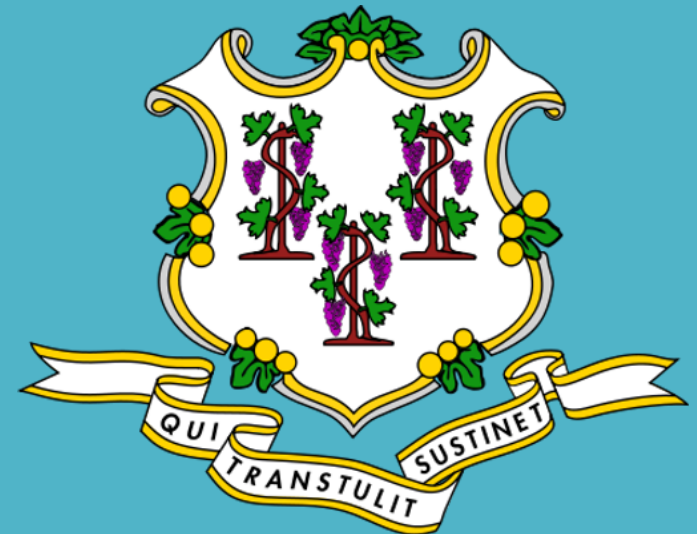


# Removing Language Barriers in Elections

**Scott D. Bates**

Deputy Secretary of the State  
State of Connecticut

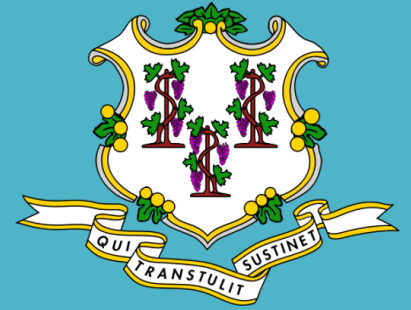


# Language Minority Voters

"Through the use of various practices and procedures, citizens of language minorities have been effectively excluded from participation in the election process."



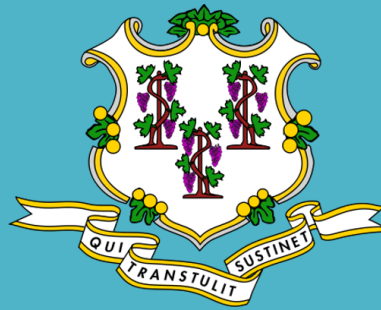
# Language Minority Voters



Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act covers languages that are primarily spoken within a jurisdiction . . .

- By more than 10,000 voting age citizens
- By more than 5% of voting age citizens
- By a group whose illiteracy rate is higher than the national average

# But what if . . .



Norwich, CT

Population: 39,000 (5% = 1,950)

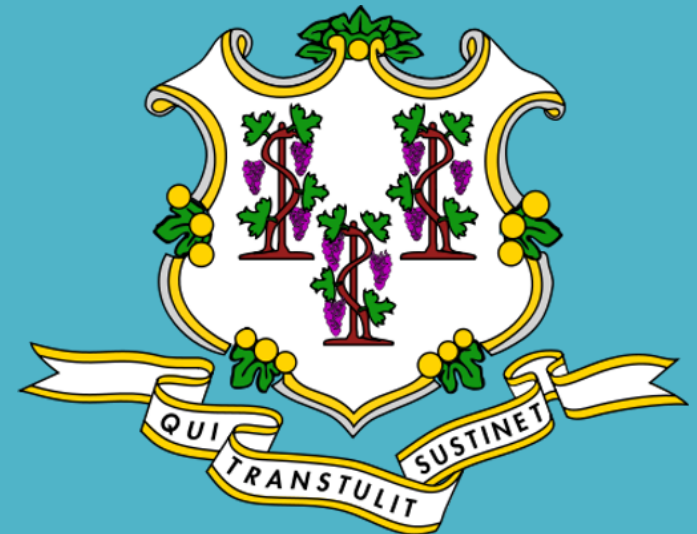
Cape Verdean community: 1,500 (3.8%)

## you speak Portuguese in Norwich, CT?

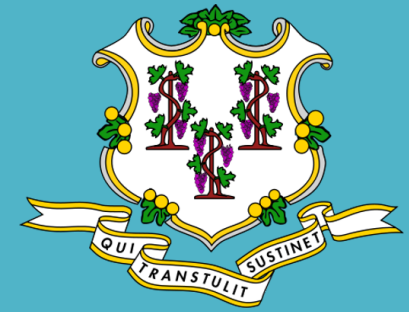
**Cape Verdean community unveils new Talman Street markers in Norwich**



# Multilingual Virtual Poll-worker (MVP) Service



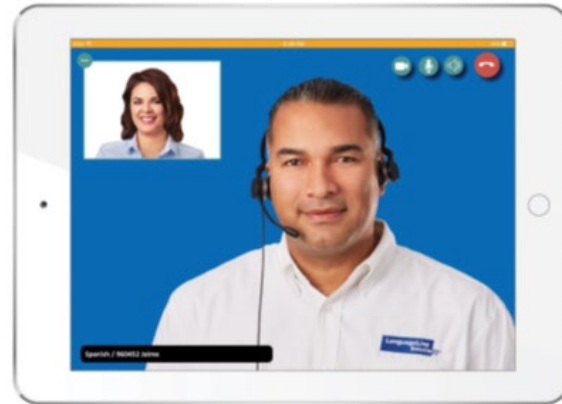
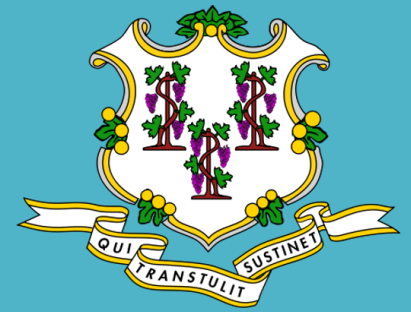
# What is Multilingual Virtual Poll-worker Service?



- The Multilingual Virtual Poll-Worker (MVP) System is a simple to use application, and can be accessed through any smartpone, tablet or laptop.
- Poll workers push a button, and the system will provide a native speaking translator.
- The MVP system has both cell phone and video capability with interpreters in Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Hmong, Arabic, Filipino, Russian, French, Haitian Creole, and American Sign Language along with over 20 additional languages.

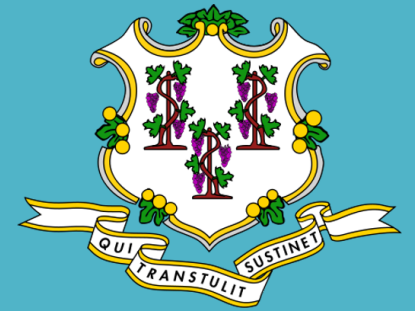


# How does it work?



MVP can be accessed by laptop, tablet or smartphone. Poll workers can have a video chat with a translator to answer questions. This will also provide a more personalized touch for those using American Sign Language. Telephone is still available as an effective standby.

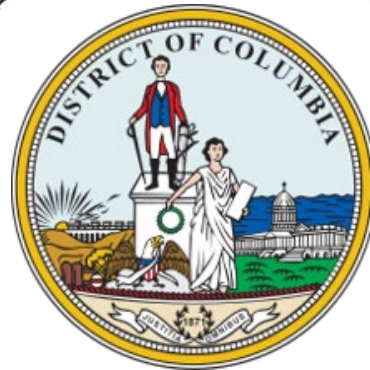
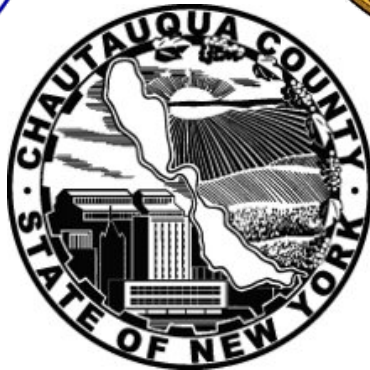
# Who Benefits from MVP?



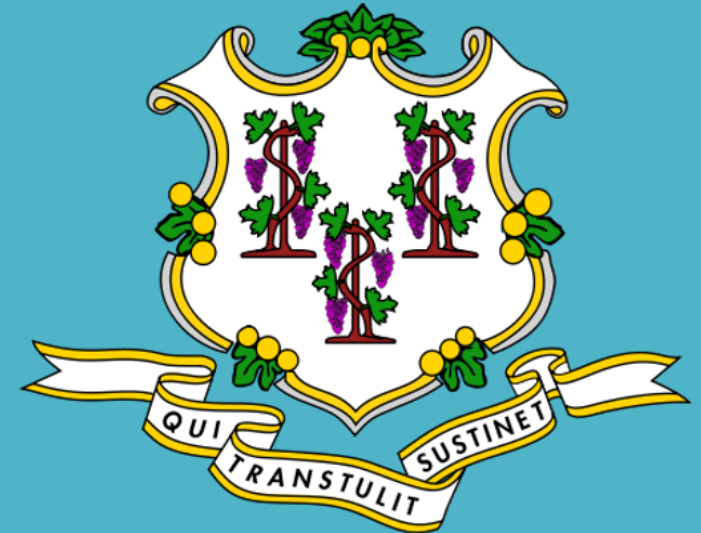
- Voters who are not fluent in English or common languages spoken in their towns or cities
- Voters who communicate via American Sign Language
- MVP makes the job easier on election officials
- MVP breaks down language barriers in voting and increases democracy by allowing more people to vote



- The Department of Justice uses MVP within the court system
- States such as Ohio, New York, California, Texas and Washington, D.C., use MVP for election purposes



Where else is MVP being used?

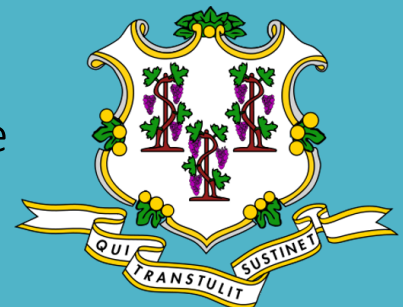


# Languages available for video interpreting

(plus over 250 available for audio interpreting)

Albanian	German	Khmer	Romanian
Amharic	Greek	Korean	Russian
Armenian	British Sign Language	Laotian	Somali
Arabic	Haitian Creole	Lithuanian	Spanish
Bengali	Hebrew	Malay	Swahili
Bosnian	Hindi	Mandarin	Tagalog
American Sign Language	Hmong	Nepali	Thai
Burmese	Italian	Polish	Tigrigna
Cantonese	Japanese	Portuguese	Turkish
Farsi	Karen	Punjabi	Vietnamese
French			

Especially useful for languages that are only spoken, such as some American Indian languages.



# How will Connecticut use MVP?

- To increase voter participation across languages
- In all Town Clerks' offices leading up to the election
- In every polling location across the state on Election Day



## Connecticut's Election Landscape

- No county government
- 169 municipalities
- 1 Town Clerk → manages absentee balloting
- 2-3 Registrars of Voters per town → manage polling locations
- More than 800 polling locations

# Other Applications of MVP



- Business Services
- Apostilles & Authentications
- Wider sharing of official information leading up to an election
- Educating voters who are traditionally marginalized
- Other ideas?

## Key Take-aways:

- The MVP system is not a substitute for any requirement of the Federal Voting Rights Act.
- It allows those with language barriers to exercise their constitutional right, even if federal law does not require translation services.



## Service Provider: Inclusion Solutions

[www.inclusionsolutions.com](http://www.inclusionsolutions.com)

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Suite 3 Evanston, IL  
60202

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# Questions? Comments?

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