

THE PROENGLISH Advocate

Senate Passes “National English” Amendment

In an historic vote this spring the U.S. Senate voted to recognize English as the “national language.” The vote took place on an amendment sponsored by Senator James Inhofe (R-OK) to the Senate immigration bill.

When the *ProEnglish Advocate* went to press last May, it appeared that Senate Democratic Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) had succeeded in blocking a vote on the Inhofe amendment. But when Senator Inhofe persisted, Reid relented and finally allowed a vote to take place.

The amendment passed by a vote of 62-35 (see insert “Congress Votes”), but not before Reid viciously attacked it on the Senate floor.

“While the intent may not be there, I really believe this amendment is racist,” Reid said. “I think it’s directed basically at people who speak Spanish,” he said just minutes before ten of



The late Sen. S.I. Hayakawa, founder of the official English movement

his Democratic colleagues voted for the amendment.

In addition to recognizing English as the “national language,” the amendment says that “no person has a right, claim, or entitlement” to communicate with the federal government in a language other than English, unless explicitly authorized by law. The original amendment said “official.” But official was changed to “national” at the insistence of Senator John

McCain, who then agreed to support the amendment.

Senator Inhofe was the driving force behind the measure’s passage.

“The need for official English appears in our newspapers every day – injuries in the workplace, lawsuits over mistranslation in hospitals, people who are unable to support their families – all because they can’t speak English,” said Inhofe, speaking on the floor of the Senate. “Making English the official language would . . . help immigrants assimilate, which is vitally important to becoming an American and preserving our rich heritage.”

Political Cover

Immediately after the Inhofe vote, Senator Ken Salazar (D-CO) offered a competing amendment that recognizes English as the nation’s “common

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and unifying” language – a meaningless statement in the view of most analysts.

The Salazar amendment also had an exception for Executive Order 13166, the mandate signed by President Clinton that requires government agencies and federal funds recipients to provide translations and interpreters for non-English speaking clients.

“The Salazar amendment was intended to provide political cover for those who voted against Senator Inhofe’s amendment, but who didn’t want to be on record voting against English,” said ProEnglish Chairman Bob Park. “It was political cynicism at its worst.” The Salazar amendment passed 58-39 with the help of twelve Republicans who also voted for the Inhofe amendment.

Opponents Devastated

Official English opponents were angry that their plan to use the Salazar amendment to draw support away from “national English” failed, and the Inhofe amendment passed.

“This is devastating,” said Raul Gonzalez, legislative director of the National Council of La Raza, after the Inhofe vote, according to the *Washington Post*.

Inhofe Praised

“We commend Senator Inhofe for his courage and strong leadership in working to preserve our nation’s unity in the English language,” said Park. “If it wasn’t for his tenacity in the face of strong opposition, we never would have had a Senate vote on English.”

But Park warned there is still a long way to go to get an official

English bill through Congress. “There is no similar provision in the House-passed version of the immigration bill and a lot of speculation that the House and Senate will not be able to compromise their starkly different approaches to immigration policy with the Senate bill containing amnesty and the House bill putting enforcement first,” said Park.

“Nevertheless the Senate vote is a huge step forward in the battle to preserve our nation’s linguistic unity and shows the support is there to pass official English. Senator Hayakawa would be pleased,” Park added, referring to the late Senator S.I. Hayakawa, the California Republican of Japanese descent widely acknowledged as the founding father of the official English movement.

**Press
“2” for
Spanish**

“Nowadays you have Spanish radio, Spanish TV, newspapers . . . ,” Xiomara Iglesias, a certified Spanish court interpreter, attributing an increase in the need for interpreters to the fact that today it is much easier for immigrants to get by without learning English.

—*The Washington Times*, July 31, 2006.

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In the Courts

Court interpreter costs climb in capitol area

Courts in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area are overwhelmed with the task of providing translations and interpreters for non-English speakers, according to an article in *The Washington Times*.

In 2005 Virginia officials spent \$3.42 million to employ 113 court interpreters, up 12 percent from the year before. And neighboring Maryland spent \$1.75 million for interpreters. Officials there budgeted more than \$2 million for fiscal 2006.

In the District of Columbia itself the court system spends over \$450,000 annually to employ about 200 interpreters to handle 56 languages. But despite the increased outlays court officials say the demand for interpreters is quickly outpacing the supply.

Hispanics account for 40 percent of the 1 million immigrants and illegal aliens in the region and their population has doubled in the last decade, according to the Urban Institute, a Washington, D.C. think tank.

Appeals court to hear AZ English workplace case

After a delay of almost a year and a half, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals scheduled a hearing in

the case of an Arizona couple charged with illegal discrimination by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) for having an English-on-the-job rule at their drive-in restaurant.

The hearing is set to take place October 16th before a three-judge panel of the court in San Francisco. Richard and Shauna Kidman, the owners of RD's Drive-In in Page, Arizona, are disputing the legality of an EEOC-drafted settlement agreement they refused to sign and say they never agreed to. Among other things, they discovered that EEOC lawyers had tried to insert conditions in the text of the agreement that had never been discussed in settlement negotiations.

U.S. District Judge Steven McNamee sternly rebuked EEOC's unethical conduct. But he sided with the agency and ruled the Kidmans had to implement certain provisions of the EEOC's draft, including a section requiring them to temporarily suspend their policy. ProEnglish has intervened to support the Kidmans' legal defense.

If the Kidmans win their appeal it will force the court to rule on the merits of the EEOC's discrimination charge, something both the EEOC and Judge McNamee seem eager to avoid.

Rasmussen: 85% Back Official English

Yet another poll showing the vast majority of Americans support making English the official language was released in June. The Rasmussen survey of 1,000 adults found that only 11 percent disagreed and 4 percent were undecided.

Official English was favored by 92 percent of Republicans, 79 percent of Democrats, and 86 percent of independent voters.

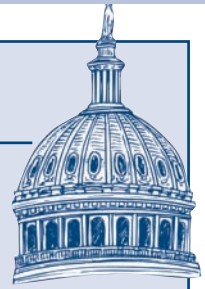
Rasmussen also found that 76 percent of minority Americans support official English, contradicting Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid's claim that official English is "racist" (see story p. 1)

Among those who say immigration is "very" important in terms of how they will vote this November, 92 percent favor making English the official

language of the U.S.

The Rasmussen poll, taken after the Senate passed Sen. Inhofe's "national language" amendment, reaffirms the findings of a Zogby poll commissioned by ProEnglish earlier this spring that found 84 percent of likely voters supported making English the official language.

On Capitol Hill



Congress renews bilingual ballots

In July pro-English forces lost a year-long battle to stop Congress from reauthorizing bilingual ballots when Congress voted to extend the “temporary” bilingual ballot provisions of the Voting Rights Act for another 25 years.

The key vote came on an amendment offered by Rep. Steve King (R-IA) to eliminate the bilingual ballot provisions from the underlying bill to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act. Bowing to heavy pressure from the Bush Administration and the combined opposition of both the Republican and Democratic leaders in Congress, the amendment failed by a vote of 185-238 (see insert “Congress Votes”).

Despite the loss, 80 percent of House Republicans defied their own leadership and the White House to vote in favor of the amendment. But the measure failed due to virtual unanimous opposition from House Democrats who combined with a minority of Republicans to keep bilingual ballots alive.

The House then voted 390-33 in favor of reauthorization. And the Senate quickly passed the reauthorization bill by a unanimous vote, 98-0.

“This is a bitter pill for the American people who are overwhelmingly opposed to the idea of printing ballots in foreign languages,” said K.C. McAlpin, executive director of ProEnglish. “Even though we lost this battle, we are proud of the stand we took. And I promise the war against this costly, divisive, and un-American policy will continue.”

ProEnglish testified against bilingual ballots before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution and met personally with staff from dozens of key Congressional offices to make the case against bilingual ballots. This March ProEnglish commissioned a Zogby poll that showed likely voters opposed bilingual ballots by a nearly 2-1 margin (63%).

ProEnglish’s hard work on Capitol Hill and telephone calls, letters and cards from thousands of ProEnglish members and other opponents of bilingual ballots upset White House plans to sail the reauthorization bill through Congress. According to the Washington Post, a “GOP rebellion” in the House forced Speaker Dennis Hastert and Majority Leader John Boehner to allow a vote on the King amendment to strike bilingual ballots that the House leaders had tried to stop from coming up for a vote.

House holds official English hearing

In July a U.S. House of Representatives committee held a hearing on whether to make English the official language. It was the first hearing in the House on making English the official language in nearly a decade.

The hearing quickly turned into a sparring match between witnesses and members of the House Education and the Workforce Subcommittee.

Rep. Lynn Woolsey (D-CA) blasted official English advocates, saying that making English the official language would undermine public safety. Official English is “a solution in search of a problem,” said the congresswoman, pointing out the fact that most Americans already speak English.

Committee Chairman Rep. Howard “Buck” McKeon (R-CA), a co-sponsor of Rep. Steve King’s bill to make English the official language, disagreed. McKeon pointed out that in many areas of the country non-English speaking immigrants self-segregate themselves into ethnic enclaves where English is not spoken at all.

He said there was a need to help push these immigrants out of their “comfort zones” and into mainstream American society.

Continued on the next page.

On Capitol Hill (cont.)

One witness noted that Rep. Steve King's "English Language Unity Act," H.R. 997, had exceptions that would allow the federal government to produce public health warnings and announcements in foreign languages.

But it didn't take long for official English opponents to use familiar tactics.

Rep. Ruben Hinojosa (D-TX) said official English was "code for official discrimination." Raul Gonzales, legislative director for the National Council of La Raza, said proposals to make English the official language were "extremist" and "counterproductive."

"Of course, these claims are nonsense," said Ben Piper, director of government relations for ProEnglish. "The fact is that the overwhelming majority of Americans, including foreign-born Americans, support making English the official language."

Piper continued, "Having this hearing was crucial. Now that the House has heard testimony in support of making English the official language, the way is clear for the leadership to bring official English legislation up for a vote."

Sen. Coburn pushes common-sense definition of "LEP"

Sen. Tom Coburn (R-OK) defied his Senate Judiciary Committee colleagues and forced a committee vote on an amendment to include a common-sense definition of "Limited English Proficient (LEP)," in the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act's (VRA) bilingual ballot provisions. The change would have significantly reduced the burden on local governments of providing bilingual ballots.

A little-known fact about the implementation of bilingual ballots is that current law lets the Census Bureau decide who is and is not LEP for the purpose of determining the numbers of LEP voters in various counties and states. This determines how many states and counties are required to provide bilingual ballots under the numerical thresholds.

But the Census Bureau counts people who say they speak English "well" on Census forms as LEP in order to determine the number of LEP voters in the minority language categories that qualify for bilingual ballots. The effect of this questionable definition by Census is to vastly inflate the numbers of "LEP voters" and thus the number of covered states and counties.

Sen. Coburn's amendment would have ended this practice and required the Census Bureau to define only people who say they speak English poorly or not at all as LEP. But the amendment failed on a voice vote when every Senator present at the Committee voted against it except Sen. Coburn.

Rep. John Cambell (R-CA) tried to introduce a similar amendment in the House. But it was blocked by the Rules Committee under its Chairman, Rep. David Dreier (R-CA).

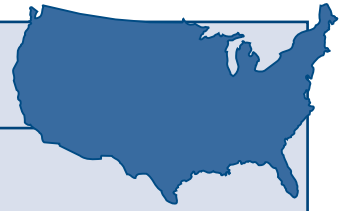
Senator Inhofe introduces official English bill

For the first time since 1997 a stand-alone bill declaring English the official language has been introduced in the U.S. Senate. Sen. James Inhofe (R-OK), who led the successful fight to amend the Senate immigration bill (see p. 1), introduced S. 3828, the National Language Act of 2006.

In addition to making English the nation's official language, S. 3828 eliminates bilingual ballots and revokes the mandate for government translation services known as Executive Order 13166.

"A nation certain of its language and culture can continue to be a welcoming nation to legal immigrants. A nation with uncontrolled borders and no convictions about what it expects immigrants to do once they arrive will soon become a nation in name only," said Sen. Inhofe in introducing his historic legislation on the floor of the Senate in early August.

Around the Nation



Geno's (Philly) Steaks joins English debate

A well-known Philadelphia cheese steak restaurant became a lightning rod in the debate over official English in June when owner Joey Vento put up a sign that read "This is America. When Ordering Please Speak English."

The Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations filed a complaint against the restaurant, alleging that the sign violated the city's antidiscrimination laws by denying service to people on the basis of national origin.

"Whoa, whoa, whoa – this is America. And God forbid Joey Vento says this is America. You speak English in America," said Vento.

Vento, 66, is the grandson of Italian immigrants who struggled to learn English.

"They're in this country. They must learn the language if they want to succeed. Otherwise they're not going to succeed. Just that simple."

The sign and the controversy drew predictable attacks from ethnic activists.

"It's a way of saying no Mexicans allowed. Or no Latino immigrants allowed," said Liza Rodriguez, a community activist, in an interview with CNN's Mary Snow.

Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum backed Vento. "It makes all the sense in the world to have a sign like this," Santorum told the Philadelphia Daily News. "There's not really an extensive menu here. I mean, come on, it's cheese steaks, onions, et cetera. It's not that hard."

Vento is not backing down.

"The American people are speaking out. They found a guy finally who said what he meant. I backed it up. I put my money where my mouth was," Vento told the British Broadcasting Corporation in an interview.

"They threatened me with lawsuits - bring it on! The sign's not coming down."

ProEnglish radio ads target House leaders

A ProEnglish radio ad targeting House Speaker Dennis Hastert produced so many phone calls to the Illinois Congressman's district office that it temporarily shut down the phone system.

The one-minute ad, which ran numerous times during the week of July 4th, urged listeners to call Speaker Hastert and tell him to bring official English up for a vote in the 109th Congress. According to the *Chicago Daily Herald*, a spokesman for Speaker Hastert said the phones did not stop ringing,

"To be honest the response exceeded our expectations," said ProEnglish Chairman Bob Park. "We hope the distinguished Speaker now understands how much his own constituents want English to be the official language of our nation, and will use his power as Speaker to bring legislation like H.R. 997, 'The English Language Unity Act,' to the floor of the House for a vote."

WGN, the Chicago-area radio station that aired the ads, was also flooded with calls, but from listeners who had written down the wrong number. At one point, station officials asked for permission to slow down the ad so that listeners would hear the Speaker's phone number correctly the first time, instead of calling the radio station to get the correct number.

A similar ad targeting House Majority Leader John Boehner aired in Ohio over Memorial Day week.

After the ads ran, the House held its first hearing in nearly a decade on making English the official language (see p. 4).

"This could be the year we make English our official language," said Park. "It could not be clearer that is what the overwhelming majority of the American people want. It's time for Congress to act."

Around the Nation (cont.)

Idaho county leads on language

Canyon County became the first county in Idaho to adopt official English when it passed an ordinance sponsored by Commissioner Robert Vasquez this July. Vasquez is a member of ProEnglish's national advisory board.

The resolution requires all county signs, reports, and documents to be in English.

"At what point do you stop?" asked Vasquez, referring to foreign-language translations. "Once you begin doing that it becomes necessary to do it in every language and in every sign and in every document. This is ...The United States of America. The language is English. If you're going to be here you need to learn the language," Vasquez added.

More states poised to join majority with official English

State lawmakers in the lower houses of Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Delaware voted in recent months to make English the official language. And in Arizona legislators succeeded in putting a referendum on official English on the ballot this November. A number of other states have had official English bills introduced. The activity shows momentum for official English is clearly on the rise.

In Michigan, H.B. 5633 passed the State House of Representatives 73-32 with support from Republicans and Democrats. The measure is now pending action in the State Senate.

"What makes us strong as a state is what we share in common, and language should be one of those things we share," said the bill's sponsor, Michigan Rep. Jack Hoogendyk (R-Kalamazoo), according to the *Detroit News*. Hoogendyk, the son of immigrants from the

Netherlands, introduced his bill by speaking in Dutch to make his point.

Pennsylvania lawmakers approved a similar measure in June. The vote in the State's House of Representatives was an even more overwhelming 159-39.

"We want to reaffirm that English is our language," said Penn. Rep. Adam Harris (R-Juniata), who sponsored the amendment, according to the *Associated Press*. "I think it'll streamline government – we'll be printing only one form, which will save many, many taxpayer dollars in the future."

The Delaware House also approved an official English law in June.

And Arizona lawmakers overcame the opposition of Democratic Governor Janet Napolitano to put official English on the ballot. Napolitano succeeded in blocking a similar effort last year.

Pennsylvania town makes English official

Hazleton, Pennsylvania won both praise and condemnation for making English the city's official language in June. The language provision was passed as part of the 'Illegal Immigration Relief Act,' a city ordinance cracking down on illegal aliens.

The ordinance requires that all city documents be published in English. It also lets the city revoke the business licenses of companies that hire illegal aliens as well as levy fines on landlords who rent to them.

"Let me be clear, this ordinance is intended to make Hazleton one of the most difficult places in the U.S. for illegal immigrants," said Hazleton Mayor Louis J. Barletta in a letter explaining the move to city residents.

Barletta proposed the law following a series of high-profile crimes committed by illegal aliens.

