



THE PROENGLISH Advocate

Move grows to scrap multilingual driver's license tests

Can you understand this sign? It doesn't mean "stop." It means "danger" in Spanish. Perhaps you remember that word from the Spanish you took in high school or college. But what about signs in Spanish that say "ceda el paso," which means "yield" or "cruce escolar" which means "school crossing."

State lawmakers are waking up to the fact that their departments of public safety are licensing thousands of motorists every year who cannot read traffic warning signs in English any better than most Americans can read signs in Spanish. Even worse, many states let applicants who only speak a language like Chinese, Arabic, or Farsi that don't even use the Roman alphabet take their driver's license test in those languages too.

Letting non-English speaking drivers take driver's license tests in their native language put lives at risk. In Texas 23 bus passengers fleeing Hurricane Rita burned to death because their driver could not speak English well enough to warn them their bus was on fire. Alarmed



by such incidents and numerous reports from police and public safety personnel about increasing numbers of traffic accidents and dangerous situations in which the inability to understand English played a role, state lawmakers are taking action.

Last year Oklahoma passed a law introduced by State Rep. Randy Terrill scrapping a Spanish-language version of its driver's license test and requiring motorists to take their driver's test in English. Led by State Sen. Jack Murphy, the Georgia legislature is considering a similar law, S.B. 67, this spring.

Other states are joining the parade. Tennessee State Rep. Eric Watson sponsored H.B. 262 requiring driver's license tests to

be in English. In Missouri, the fight is being led by State Rep. Cynthia Davis, who has introduced H.B. 1231. Similar bills are pending in South Carolina, New York, Minnesota, Idaho, and South Dakota.

Opposition has come from multicultural groups who contend such measures impose hardships on immigrants, and from some foreign corporations like Bridgestone Tire with manufacturing facilities in the U.S..

ProEnglish board chairman Bob Park commented, "This is first and foremost a safety issue. It is outrageous that many states have bowed to pressure from self-appointed 'immigrants' rights' groups and quietly abandoned their duty to protect the health and safety of their own citizens," Park said. "But we also are backing these moves to require driver's license tests to be in English because we believe it is critical to maintain strong incentives for immigrants to learn English if they are ever going to assimilate and succeed in America," he added.

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New study says Puerto Rican statehood could cost US \$26 billion/year

A new study by the Arlington, VA-based Lexington Institute entitled "Statehood for Puerto Rico and the Potential Fiscal Impact of Official bilingualism for the United States" estimates the cost of running a bilingual government like Canada after admitting officially Spanish-speaking Puerto Rico as a state would be \$26 billion a year.

The study is timely because a bill called "The Puerto Rico Democracy Act, H.R. 2499," calling for a two-stage plebiscite in Puerto Rico on the issue of statehood is pending in the House of Representatives. ProEnglish and other critics charge the voting process is rigged in favor of statehood.

During committee consideration majority Democrats rejected an amendment by Georgia Rep. Paul Broun that would have required Puerto Rico to adopt English as the language of its government before it could be admitted as a state. The amendment could be offered again when H.R. 2499 comes up for a

vote on the House floor. But the committee's action raises the risk that Puerto Rico could be the first state admitted to the Union with a language other than English as the language of its government.

"House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Democratic Majority Leader Steny Hoyer are playing with political fire if they allow this legislation to proceed without the English language amendment," said ProEnglish Director of Government Relations Jayne Cannava. "No territorial government with a language other than English has ever been admitted as a state," Cannava continued. "Voters will hold Democrats responsible if they wake up one day and discover their government has been transformed into an officially bilingual government like Canada's without their consent," she added.

The study also raised fears that as the poorest state in the Union with a poverty rate twice that of

Mississippi, Puerto Rico would be a huge black hole for federal funds.

The report notes that Puerto Rico's government is already \$53 billion in debt and its residents' median income is only 35 percent that of the US. The study cited a 2006 analysis by the Joint Committee on Taxation that estimated the net cost of the federal earned income tax credit alone in Puerto Rico would total \$40 billion over ten years after it became a state.

Cannava said, "We commend the Lexington Institute for doing this important study. It raises a huge red flag about the ability of Puerto Rico to support itself as a state and the staggering cost of transforming the U.S. into an officially bilingual nation like Canada, which Americans adamantly oppose," she added. Copies of the report can be downloaded on the Internet at www.lexingtoninstitute.org.

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Administration



Government rejects demand for driver's test in Farsi

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Office of Civil Rights has rejected an Oklahoma man's complaint that Oklahoma violated civil rights law by not making driver's license tests available in Farsi, the dominant language of Iran.

An Iranian immigrant filed the complaint in 2007 after the Oklahoma Department of Public Safety (ODPS) refused to provide written driver's license tests in Farsi to two of his relatives from Iran. He based his allegation on Executive Order 13166 (EO 13166) maintaining that the ODPS action discriminated against his relatives on the basis of national origin.

In a letter to the complainant, Payam Sharif, dated Feb. 25, 2010, the federal agency noted that EO 13166 "cannot be used as a legal basis for the enforcement of Title VI requirements (of the civil rights law) related to LEP (limited English proficient) individuals." But then the letter went on to discuss whether or not ODPS had violated EO 13166's guidelines. It concluded that ODPS's action felt short of the guidelines and said "ODPS did not unlawfully discriminate against (Mr. Sharif) on the basis of national origin when it refused to translate the driver's license examination into Farsi."

ProEnglish Executive Director K.C. McAlpin commented, "While we are pleased that National Highway Traffic Safety Administration rejected Mr. Sharif's allegations, we are troubled that the federal agency gives any credence whatsoever to an unconstitutional mandate like EO 13166 that has no basis in law."

At the time the complaint was filed ODPS was giving driver's license tests in both English and Spanish. But it stopped giving the tests in Spanish last year after Oklahoma passed a law requiring its driver's tests to be in English.

US conducting Census in record number of languages

As millions of Americans discovered on reading letters from the U.S. Department of Commerce notifying them they would be receiving Census forms in the mail, the 2010 decennial Census is being conducted in a record number of languages.

In an effort to reach the U.S.'s growing population of non-English speaking residents, part of the letter's text also was printed in Chinese, Russian, Spanish, Korean, and Vietnamese, the languages in which the 2010 Census forms are being made available in addition to English.

The Census Bureau also announced it would be mailing more than 13 million bilingual Spanish-English forms and conducting advertising campaigns in 28 languages, up from 17 languages used in the 2000 Census. The 2010 Census is expected to show a significant increase in the U.S.'s non-English speaking population.

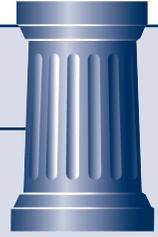
"The fact that the U.S. today is more linguistically diverse than ever before in our history is a compelling reason why it is more urgent than ever to make English our official language and preserve it as our unifying national tongue," said ProEnglish Chairman Bob Park.

No left turn?

"I didn't know I couldn't make a left turn"... "I couldn't read the sign"...

— some of the statements overhead by a bystander listening to court interpreters translating for non-English speaking drivers in California, *California Chronicle*, Mar. 2, 2010.

Congress



GOP House leader pushes Puerto Rican statehood

Rep. Mike Pence (R-IN), is leading the effort to get Republican House members to co-sponsor H.R. 2499, a bill by Democrat Pedro Pierluisi of Puerto Rico authorizing a new Puerto Rican plebiscite on the issue of statehood. As Chairman of the House Republican Caucus, Pence holds a powerful position as third ranking member in the House Republican Leadership. His efforts to date have netted 58 Republicans out of a total of 181 co-sponsors, making H.R. 2499 a truly bipartisan bill.

Many Republican congressmen and political observers have questioned why Pence has taken such a position since Pence is known as a conservative and it is widely believed that if Puerto Rico were to become a state, as the poorest state in the Union it would elect big government liberals to Congress.

Pence shed light on his motivation during Hispanic Heritage Month, Sept. 15-Oct. 15. In a memo to all GOP House members, Pence's office offered advice on outreach to Hispanic voters and mentioned H.R. 2499 as one of the legislative opportunities GOP members had to curry favor with Hispanics. The memo said, "...announcing your co-sponsorship of either of these bills would fit perfectly into a press release celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month."

The problem with Pence's analysis is that it's wrong. Prior to the last Puerto Rican plebiscite on statehood in 1998, Puerto Rican and Cuban Foreign Policy Perspectives did a survey on the issue and found that more than 70% of U.S. voters of Mexican, Cuban, and Puerto Rican descent in the U.S. *opposed* Puerto Rico statehood.

And two prominent members of the Hispanic Caucus in the House, Caucus Chair Rep. Nydia Velazquez (D-NY), and Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D-IL) oppose H.R. 2499 because they believe the two-stage plebiscite process it

creates is undemocratic and biased in favor of statehood. A statement issued by Velasquez said, "The political future of Puerto Rico must be decided by a fair, inclusive and transparent dialogue with all sides ...and all views heard. The collaboration and dialogue among people of Puerto Rico is the best way forward to achieve self-determination. Unfortunately the proposed H.R. 2499 was not the product of an effort to achieve that so I cannot support it."

Both Velazquez and Gutierrez favor letting Puerto Ricans elect delegates to a constitutional convention, and letting the convention debate and reach a consensus on how to proceed regarding Puerto Rico's political status.

Hispanic candidate says official English "essential"

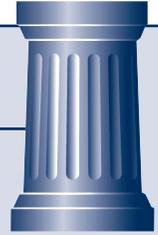
A Hispanic candidate vying to replace Rep. Robert Wexler in Florida's 19th Congressional District in a special election April 13 says making English the official language of the United States is "essential."

Speaking at the annual Conservative Action Political Conference (CPAC) in Washington DC in February, Republican Edward Lynch declared, "I am getting sick and tired, especially as someone who has Hispanic relatives...one of the most racist things we do in our country is not have English as our national language. I think we need a new saying on our telephone system. It's push one for English and push two to go home."

He continued, "I will tell you real quick why it's racist, you know there is a certain level that we have with Hispanic Americans that they can only achieve so much because the rest of our nation and business is done in English so they can only get so high but they can never get any higher. That is racist. I would like to give them the opportunities we have so they can be successful and they can only do that if English is our national language."

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Congress Continued



Lynch was raised by his mother who spoke Spanish at home, but thought it essential for him to learn English to get ahead. He did, and went on to succeed as a business owner and entrepreneur in the telecommunications industry.

He now faces an uphill battle to replace Wexler in a district in which Democrats outnumber Republicans 2-1.

Congressman says feds should pay bilingual bonus

Democratic Congressman Michael M. Honda (Calif.) thinks federal workers who speak a second language in their government jobs should be paid more. He has introduced a bill named the "One America, Many Voices Act of 2010," H.R. 4832, that would give federal employees who speak a language other than English at work an automatic 5 percent increase in base pay.

Justifying his bill, Honda noted that 19 percent of US residents speak a language other than English at home and said it was important to accommodate their language needs.

ProEnglish Executive Director K.C. McAlpin blasted the bill as a costly subsidy for multilingual government, divisive, and directly contrary to the overwhelming desire of the American people who want to make English the official language of government operations according to every public opinion poll. McAlpin added, "At a time when the federal government has racked up a \$12.5 trillion debt, Rep. Honda's legislation has to rank as one of the most irresponsible bills ever introduced in Congress."

Data released by the U.S. Dept. of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis reveal that federal workers on average already earn more than twice as much in terms of total compensation, \$116,450 a year in wages and benefits, as workers in the private sector who average only \$57,616 a year.

Official English backed by 1 in 3 House members

Almost one of every three members of the House of Representatives has signed on as an official cosponsor of official English legislation. But despite the massive show of support, House Democratic leaders are refusing to hold hearings on official English or on any related bill.

The English Language Unity Act of 2009, H.R. 997, by Rep. Steve King (R-IA) declares English the official language of the U.S. and requires naturalization ceremonies to be conducted in English. Counting King it has 135 bi-partisan cosponsors, qualifying it as one of the most widely endorsed bills in the House.

A 2009 poll by Rasmussen Reports found an overwhelming 84 percent of all Americans support making English the official language of government operations. Support is strong across party lines with 74 percent of Democrats, 96 percent of Republicans and 85 percent of Independents favoring official English. Thirty states have already made English their official language, a number that is expected to grow when Oklahoma votes on the issue this November.

"At a time when record numbers of non-English speaking immigrants threaten to overwhelm the assimilation process, it is more important than ever to secure the tie that binds us together as a nation, our common language," said ProEnglish Director of Government Relations Jayne Cannava.

Rep. Steve King spearheaded the effort that resulted in Iowa adopting English as its official language when he served in the Iowa state senate before being elected to the House in 2002. Cannava added, "We are working to get more cosponsors for H.R. 997. And we are going to keep pressuring House leaders until they agree to allow official English to come up for a vote."

Around the Nation



Oregon data confirms bilingual education failure

Five years after entering Oregon's bilingual education classrooms, three quarters of the students enrolled in the program are unable to speak English well enough to be put in regular classes. In the Salem-Keizer school district with the largest number of English language-learning students, the failure rate rises to 84 percent.

These dismal findings were revealed in a year-end report by the Oregon Department of Public Education which also found only 16 of the state's 200 school districts managed to meet federal guidelines requiring them to have at least half their students proficient in English within five years.

Bilingual education refers to the method of teaching non-English students in their native language while they are given supplemental instruction to learn English on the side. When bilingual education was first introduced as a better alternative to English immersion-style classrooms, its promoters claimed most students would transition to regular classrooms within three years.

Acknowledging the failure of its program, the Oregon Board of Education voted earlier to relax the English proficiency standards for some English language learners that will allow them to get a high school diploma without mastering English.

In 2008, an Oregon citizen's initiative limiting the time that English language learners could spend in bilingual education classrooms to two years was defeated at the polls after Oregon teachers unions bankrolled a \$20 million campaign against it.

Automaker says 'hospitality' should override highway safety

A lobbyist for Volkswagen America testified against a bill before the Tennessee legislature that would require all persons applying for a permanent driver's license to pass a driver's

license test in the English language. Appearing before the Tennessee Assembly Subcommittee on Public Safety Mar. 9, attorney Mark Smith said while Volkswagen understood the need for motorists to understand signs, [the bill] is not acceptable to Volkswagen."

Tennessee currently makes driver's license tests available in Japanese, Korean, and Spanish, in addition to English.

Smith said that the "one size fits all" approach of requiring driver's license tests to be in English was not consistent with "Southern hospitality." Volkswagen is building a \$1 billion plant in Chattanooga TN that is expected to start manufacturing early in 2011.

Nashville resident and ProEnglish Advisory Board member Eddie V. Garcia testified in favor of the bill saying that it was critical for highway safety. He pointed out that even a few seconds while driving can mean the difference between life and death. Garcia raised questions about the automaker's reasons for opposing the bill, quoting an email he received from a Volkswagen America executive who assured him that all employees the company transfers to the U.S. from overseas are fluent in English before they arrive here.

Japanese tire maker Bridgestone Americas based in Nashville, said the driver safety legislation sends "a negative message to the many existing international businesses in Tennessee." Despite the opposition, the subcommittee voted 4-1 to approve the bill.

Panel urges English requirement for immigrants

A University of Denver task force seeking solutions to the nation's sticky immigration issue recommended requiring prospective immigrants to demonstrate their proficiency in English before they could obtain permanent visas to come to the U.S. The recommendation was among twenty-five such recommendations made by the

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Around the Nation Continued



twenty-member panel made up of academics, businessmen, and community leaders.

ProEnglish Chairman Bob Park said, "ProEnglish commends the University of Denver panel for its recommendation requiring English fluency for immigration and urges lawmakers considering the overhaul of our immigration policies to make it a reality. In recent years European nations like the Netherlands, England and France have been coming to the same conclusion, which is that it is too costly and divisive to absorb large numbers of immigrants who are unable to speak their national language," he added.

The presence of record numbers of non-English speaking residents in the U.S. has led to demands and bureaucratic mandates like Executive Order 13166 for taxpayer-funded government services in foreign languages in recent years.

The panel also recommended subsidizing English as a second language classes to help bring the cost within reach of most immigrants –

something ProEnglish also endorses. "When immigrants master English it improves their skills, increases their earning power and helps them become self-sufficient," said Park.

Teenager murdered for speaking English

People who think language is not a potential source of violent conflict in human affairs should think about the terrible fate that befell a Hispanic immigrant in Florida recently.

Last December, seventeen-year old Charlie Guzman, a resident of Collier County Florida, was stabbed to death by Mauricio Escalante, a thirty-three year old illegal immigrant farm worker. Escalante was enraged at the fact that Guzman and his friends spoke English instead of Spanish at a local laundromat.

Escalante gave police four different alias before being identified through his fingerprints from an arrest for drunkenness the year before. He faces life in prison if convicted on first-degree murder charges.

Ways to help win the battle for official English online

- 1. Join ProEnglish's online action alert network:** Make your voice heard on official English, bilingual ballots, bilingual education and similar issues. Sign up to receive email alerts when things are happening in Congress. You will get up-to-the-minute information on upcoming votes, talking points, and contact information you can use to email or call your congressmen. To sign up, visit <http://capwiz.com/proenglish/mlm/signup/>.
- 2. Contact your elected representatives:** Express your support for laws to make English the official language, stop government sponsored multilingualism, or expand incentives for immigrants to learn English. To send emails to your elected representatives at no cost, visit our Legislative Action Center online at <http://capwiz.com/proenglish>.
- 3. Help ProEnglish grow:** Tell your friends about our fight to preserve English as the unifying language of our nation. Send them a link to our website at www.proenglish.org. Mention ProEnglish in every email you send by adding information about ProEnglish to your email signature. To find out how to add ProEnglish to your email signature, visit us online at www.proenglish.org/howyoucanhelp/emailsignature.html.
- 4. Write letters to the editor:** Write letters in support of making English our official language. Or respond to news stories about English-on-the-job, English in schools, or the use of English by government agencies. For tips on writing effective letters to the editor, visit our tips page online at www.proenglish.org/howyoucanhelp/letterstotheeditor.html.

