

1 STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2 1st Session of the 51st Legislature (2007)

3 COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE

4 FOR

5 HOUSE BILL NO. 1423

By: Faught

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7 COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE

8 An Act relating to the English language; enacting the
9 Oklahoma English Language Act; specifying findings;
10 providing for an official language of Oklahoma;
11 requiring the business of this state be done in the
12 official language; providing exceptions; defining
13 term; providing for codification; and providing an
14 effective date.

15 BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

16 SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
17 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 401 of Title 25, unless there is
18 created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

19 This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Oklahoma
20 English Language Act".

21 SECTION 2. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
22 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 402 of Title 25, unless there is
23 created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

24 The Legislature of the State of Oklahoma finds and declares the
following:

1 1. The State of Oklahoma is comprised of individuals from
2 diverse ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds, and continues
3 to benefit from this rich diversity;

4 2. The common thread binding individuals of differing
5 backgrounds has been the English language. Command of the English
6 language is necessary to participate in and take full advantage of
7 the opportunities afforded by American life. Absent a rudimentary
8 command of the English language, citizens of this state are unable
9 to make their voices heard in the legislative process, effectively
10 exercise their right to vote, or fully understand the rights
11 afforded them by the United States and Oklahoma Constitutions. Such
12 citizens also have a more difficult time finding gainful employment,
13 affordable housing, health insurance, and otherwise availing
14 themselves of the full benefits of American life for themselves and
15 their families; and

16 3. Among the powers reserved to the states respectively is the
17 power to establish English as the official language of the
18 respective states, and otherwise to promote the English language
19 within the respective states, subject to the prohibitions enumerated
20 in the Constitution of the United States and in the laws of the
21 respective states.

22 SECTION 3. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
23 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 403 of Title 25, unless there is
24 created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

1 A. The English language is the official language of the State
2 of Oklahoma.

3 B. All official business of this state will be conducted in
4 English absent compelling circumstances. All official documents,
5 regulations, orders, and publications shall be printed in English
6 and all official programs, meetings, transactions, and actions
7 conducted by or on behalf of this state and all its political
8 subdivisions shall be in English.

9 C. Other languages may be used by government officials, and in
10 official documents, whenever necessary to:

11 1. Protect the health, safety, or liberty of any citizen;

12 2. Teach or study other languages;

13 3. Protect the rights of criminal defendants or the victims of
14 crime;

15 4. Promote trade, tourism, or commerce;

16 5. Facilitate activities pertaining to the compilation of any
17 census;

18 6. Comply with the federal Individuals with Disabilities
19 Education Act;

20 7. Use proper names, terms of art, or phrases from languages
21 other than English; or

22 8. Comply with the Constitution and laws of the United States
23 of America, or the Constitution of the State of Oklahoma.

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1 Except in exigent circumstances, when an official government
2 document is translated into any language other than English under
3 this section, an English translation will also be provided in the
4 same document, appearing in such a manner as to afford the reader
5 the opportunity to observe the English translation of all phrases
6 used.

7 D. Nothing in this section shall be construed to:

8 1. Diminish the usage of, prevent the study or development of,
9 or discourage the use of, any Native American language in any
10 context or for any purpose;

11 2. Prohibit any elected official from speaking to any person in
12 a language other than English while campaigning or providing
13 constituent services, although such officials are encouraged to use
14 English as much as possible to promote fluency in English; or

15 3. Disparage any language other than English, or discourage any
16 person from learning or using a language other than English.

17 E. As used in this section, "official" means any government
18 action or document that binds the government, is required by law, or
19 is authorized by law.

20 SECTION 4. This act shall become effective November 1, 2007.

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