

1 STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2 2nd Session of the 51st Legislature (2008)

3 HOUSE BILL 3034

By: McMullen

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6 AS INTRODUCED

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7       B. Other languages may be used by government officials, and in  
8 official documents, whenever necessary to:

- 9       1. Protect the health, safety, or liberty of any citizen;
- 10       2. Teach or study other languages;
- 11       3. Protect the rights of criminal defendants or the victims of  
12 crime;
- 13       4. Promote trade, tourism, or commerce;
- 14       5. Facilitate activities pertaining to the compilation of any  
15 census;
- 16       6. Comply with the federal Individuals with Disabilities  
17 Education Act;
- 18       7. Use proper names, terms of art, or phrases from languages  
19 other than English; or
- 20       8. Comply with the Constitution and laws of the United States  
21 of America, or the Constitution of the State of Oklahoma.

22 Except in exigent circumstances, when an official government  
23 document is translated into any language other than English pursuant  
24 to this section, an English translation will also be provided in the

1 same document, appearing in such a manner as to afford the reader  
2 the opportunity to observe the English translation of all phrases  
3 used.

4 C. Nothing in this section shall be construed to:

5 1. Diminish the usage of, prevent the study or development of,  
6 or discourage the use of, any Native American language in any  
7 context or for any purpose;

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

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

14 D. As used in this section, "official" means any government  
15 action or document that binds the government, is required by law, or  
16 is authorized by law.

17 SECTION 4. This act shall become effective November 1, 2008.

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