

1 STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2 1st Session of the 52nd Legislature (2009)

3 HOUSE BILL 1589

By: Fields

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6 AS INTRODUCED

7 An Act relating to definitions and general
8 provisions; enacting the Oklahoma English Language
9 Act; stating legislative findings; providing for an
10 official language of Oklahoma; requiring the business
of this state be done in the official language;
11 providing exceptions; defining term; providing for
12 codification; and providing an 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 establish English as the official language of the
19 respective states, and otherwise to promote the English language
20 within the respective states, subject to the prohibitions enumerated
21 in the Constitution of the United States and in the laws of the
22 respective states.

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

4 A. The English language is the official language of the State
5 of Oklahoma.

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

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

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

15 2. Teach or study other languages;

16 3. Protect the rights of criminal defendants or the victims of
17 crime;

18 4. Promote trade, tourism, or commerce;

19 5. Facilitate activities pertaining to the compilation of any
20 census;

21 6. Comply with the federal Individuals with Disabilities
22 Education Act;

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

1 8. Comply with the Constitution and laws of the United States
2 of America, or the Constitution of the State of Oklahoma.
3 Except in exigent circumstances, when an official government
4 document is translated into any language other than English under
5 this section, an English translation will also be provided in the
6 same document, appearing in such a manner as to afford the reader
7 the opportunity to observe the English translation of all phrases
8 used.

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

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

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

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

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

22 SECTION 4. This act shall become effective November 1, 2009.

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