
SENATE BILL 5865

State of Washington **55th Legislature** **1997 Regular Session**

By Senators Benton, Zarelli, Schow, Roach and Hochstatter

Read first time 02/17/97. Referred to Committee on Education.

1 AN ACT Relating to English as the official language of Washington;
2 adding a new section to chapter 1.20 RCW; creating a new section; and
3 providing for submission of this act to a vote of the people.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that English is the
6 common language of the people of the United States and the state of
7 Washington. By making the English language the official language of
8 the state of Washington the legislature intends that this act preserve,
9 protect, strengthen, and perpetuate the English language.

10 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 1.20 RCW
11 to read as follows:

12 (1) The legislature and state officials of Washington shall take
13 all steps necessary to ensure that the English language and the role it
14 has played as the common language of the state of Washington are
15 preserved, protected, strengthened, and perpetuated.

16 (2) Except as required in federal law, no government employee may
17 provide documents, written information, literature, or any other

1 written text in any language other than English. This section shall
2 not apply to:

3 (a) Emergency personnel confronted with a situation concerning the
4 health and safety of the public; or

5 (b) Certified interpreters appointed by a court to assist a non-
6 English-speaking person in a legal proceeding.

7 (3) Any person who is a resident of, or doing business in, the
8 state of Washington has standing to sue the state of Washington to
9 enforce this section.

10 (4) The courts of record of the state of Washington have
11 jurisdiction to hear cases brought to enforce this section.

12 (5) The legislature may provide reasonable and appropriate
13 limitations on the time and manner of suits brought under this section.

14 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** If any provision of this act or its
15 application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the
16 remainder of the act or the application of the provision to other
17 persons or circumstances is not affected.

18 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** The secretary of state shall submit this act
19 to the people for their adoption and ratification, or rejection, at the
20 next general election to be held in this state, in accordance with
21 Article II, section 1 of the state Constitution and the laws adopted to
22 facilitate its operation.

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