
HOUSE BILL 1645

State of Washington

61st Legislature

2009 Regular Session

By Representatives McCune and Haler

1 AN ACT Relating to designating English as the official language of
2 the state; and adding a new section to chapter 1.20 RCW.

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

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** A new section is added to chapter 1.20 RCW
5 to read as follows:

6 (1) English is designated as the official language of the state of
7 Washington.

8 (2) The official language is designated as the language of any
9 official public record and any official public meeting.

10 (a) An official public record is any record officially compiled,
11 published, or recorded by the state and any other document or record
12 subject to public inspection and copying under the public records act,
13 chapter 42.56 RCW.

14 (b) An official public meeting is any meeting required to be open
15 under chapter 42.30 RCW.

16 (3) Except as otherwise provided by law, no state agency or
17 political or taxing subdivision of the state may be required to provide
18 any documents, information, literature, or other written materials in
19 any language other than English. Nothing prohibits state agencies or

1 political or taxing subdivisions from: (a) Publishing any official
2 public document or record in languages other than English at their
3 discretion, so long as the document or record is also published in
4 English; or (b) permitting a person who does not speak English to speak
5 or communicate at an official public meeting with the assistance of an
6 interpreter.

7 (4) This section shall not be construed in any way to infringe upon
8 the rights of citizens under the Washington state Constitution or the
9 United States Constitution in the use of language in any private
10 activity. No agency or officer of the state or any political or taxing
11 subdivision of the state may place any restrictions or requirements
12 regarding language usage in any business operating in the private
13 sector other than official documents, forms, submissions, or other
14 communications directed to government agencies and officers, which
15 communications shall be in the official language as recognized in this
16 section.

17 (5) The state of Washington recognizes the importance of
18 establishing and actively promoting English language classes, English
19 language training, or citizenship classes for nonnative speakers. The
20 institutions of higher education and community and technical colleges
21 are encouraged to offer such services and are encouraged to seek the
22 assistance of local political subdivisions, community-based agencies
23 and organizations, migrant worker groups, refugee resettlement
24 programs, schools, churches, and others in making nonnative speakers
25 aware of the availability of such classes and training and ensuring
26 their continuation and expansion.

27 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** If any provision of this act or its
28 application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the
29 remainder of the act or the application of the provision to other
30 persons or circumstances is not affected.

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