

105TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 622

To amend title 4, United States Code, to declare English as the official language of the Government of the United States.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 5, 1997

Mr. STUMP (for himself, Mr. PETRI, Mr. HERGER, Mr. HILLEARY, Mr. BUNNING, and Mr. EWING) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce, and in addition to the Committee on the Judiciary, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

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## A BILL

To amend title 4, United States Code, to declare English as the official language of the Government of the United States.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2       *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3       **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4       This Act may be cited as the “Declaration of Official  
5       Language Act of 1997”.

6       **SEC. 2. ENGLISH AS OFFICIAL LANGUAGE.**

7       (a) IN GENERAL.—Title 4, United States Code, is  
8       amended by adding at the end the following new chapter:

## 1   **“CHAPTER 6—LANGUAGE OF THE GOVERNMENT**

“Sec.

“161. Declaration of official language.

“162. Preferred language of communication

“163. Preserving and enhancing the role of the official language

“164. Duties of citizenship.

“165. Reform of naturalization requirement.

“166. Exceptions.

“167. Preemption.

“168. Construction.

“169. Enforcement.

### 2   **“§ 161. Declaration of official language**

3       “English is the official language of the Government  
4 of the United States.

### 5   **“§ 162. Preferred language of communication**

6       “English is the preferred language of communication  
7 among citizens of the United States.

### 8   **“§ 163. Preserving and enhancing the role of the offi-** 9                           **cial language**

10       “The Government of the United States shall promote  
11 and support the use of English for communications among  
12 United States citizens. Communications by officers and  
13 employees of the Government of the United States with  
14 United States citizens shall be in English.

### 15   **“§ 164. Duties of citizenship**

16       “All United States citizens should be encouraged to  
17 read, write, and speak English to the extent of their phys-  
18 ical and mental abilities.

1   **“§ 165. Reform of naturalization requirements**

2           “(a) It has been the long-standing national belief that  
3 full citizenship in the United States requires fluency in  
4 English. English is the language of opportunity for all im-  
5 migrants to take their rightful place in American society.

6           “(b) The Immigration and Naturalization Service  
7 shall—

8                   “(1) enforce the established English language  
9 proficiency standard for all applicants for United  
10 States citizenship, and

11                   “(2) conduct all naturalization ceremonies en-  
12 tirely in English.

13   **“§ 166. Exceptions**

14           “‘This chapter does not apply to the use of a language  
15 other than English for—

16                   “(1) religious purposes,

17                   “(2) training in foreign languages for inter-  
18 national communication, or

19                   “(3) use of non-English terms of art in govern-  
20 ment documents.

21   **“§ 167. Preemption**

22           “‘This chapter preempts any State or Federal law  
23 which is inconsistent with this chapter.

1 **“§ 168. Construction**

2 “This Act is not intended to affect programs in  
3 schools designed to encourage students to learn foreign  
4 languages.

5 **“§ 169. Enforcement**

6 “(a) CAUSE OF ACTION.—Whoever is injured by a  
7 violation of this chapter may, in a civil action, obtain ap-  
8 propriate relief.

9 “(b) ATTORNEY’S FEES.—In any action under this  
10 chapter, the court may allow a prevailing party, other than  
11 the United States, a reasonable attorney’s fee as part of  
12 costs.”.

13 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of chapters  
14 for title 4, United States Code, is amended by adding at  
15 the end the following new item:

**“6. Language of the Government ..... 161”.**

16 (c) REPEALS.—Title VII of the Elementary and Sec-  
17 ondary Education Act of 1965 (other than sections 7201  
18 through 7309) is repealed.

19 **SEC. 3. REPEAL OF BILINGUAL VOTING REQUIREMENTS.**

20 (a) IN GENERAL.—

21 (1) BILINGUAL ELECTION REQUIREMENTS.—

22 Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (42  
23 U.S.C. 1973aa–1a) is repealed.

1           (2) VOTING RIGHTS.—Section 4 of the Voting  
2       Rights Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 1973b) is amended  
3       by striking subsection (f).

4       (b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

5           (1) REFERENCES TO SECTION 203.—The Voting  
6       Rights Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 1973 et seq.) is  
7       amended—

8           (A) in section 204, by striking “or 203,”;  
9       and

10          (B) in the first sentence of section 205, by  
11       striking “, 202, or 203” and inserting “or  
12       202”.

13          (2) REFERENCES TO SECTION 4.—The Voting  
14       Rights Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 1973 et seq.) is  
15       amended—

16          (A) in sections 2(a), 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 4(d),  
17       5, 6, and 13, by striking “, or in contravention  
18       of the guarantees set forth in section 4(f)(2)”;

19          (B) in paragraphs (1)(A) and (3) of sec-  
20       tion 4(a), by striking “or (in the case of a State  
21       or subdivision seeking a declaratory judgment  
22       under the second sentence of this subsection) in  
23       contravention of the guarantees of subsection  
24       (f)(2)”;

1           (C) in paragraphs (1)(B) and (5) of sec-  
2           tion 4(a), by striking “or (in the case of a State  
3           or subdivision which sought a declaratory judg-  
4           ment under the second sentence of this sub-  
5           section) that denials or abridgments of the right  
6           to vote in contravention of the guarantees of  
7           subsection (f)(2) have occurred anywhere in the  
8           territory of such State or subdivision”.

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