



MALDEF

Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund

Chicago

Regional Office
11 East Adams Street
Suite 700
Chicago, IL 60603
Tel: 312.427.0701
Fax: 312.427.0691

National Headquarters

Los Angeles
Regional Office
634 S. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90014
Tel: 213.629.2512
Fax: 213.629.0266

Atlanta

Regional Office
41 Marietta Street
Suite 1000
Atlanta, GA 30303
Tel: 678.559.1071
Fax: 678.559.1079

San Antonio

Regional Office
110 Broadway
Suite 800
San Antonio, TX 78205
Tel: 210.224.5476
Fax: 210.224.5382

Washington, D.C.

Regional Office
1717 K Street, NW
Suite 311
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: 202.293.2828
Fax: 202.293.2849

Houston

Program Office
Ripley House
4410 Navigation
Suite 118
Houston, TX 77011
Tel: 713.315-6494
Fax: 713.315-6404

Sacramento

Satellite Office
1107 9th Street
Suite 240
Sacramento, CA 95814
Tel: 916.443.7531
Fax: 916.443.1541

Talking Points in Opposition to HB 477

- English-only laws are based on the myth that the primacy of the English language is under threat. In fact, more than 92% of our country's population speaks English well, according to the last Census.
- We can all agree that learning English is critical to participating in, contributing to and succeeding in American society. An overwhelming majority of Latinos—92%-- believes that teaching English to the children of immigrants is very important.
- But English-only statutes do nothing constructive to advance the important goal of English proficiency for Latino and other immigrants.
- Contrary to false stereotypes, these immigrants are learning English as quickly or more quickly than previous generations of immigrants.
- Instead, these laws interfere with and undermine local government's ability to communicate quickly and effectively, leaving English language learners and the community at large more vulnerable to threats to public health and safety.
- While HB 477 includes an exemption to protect or promote the public health, safety or welfare, who would determine when something should be translated? There is a risk that local officials may not understand, until it is too late, that a threat to health and safety is possible and will not therefore communicate effectively to English language learners.
- English-only laws and policies erect a barrier between English language learners and their government, interfering with their ability to petition and communicate with agencies that provide essential programs and services. Would you not want local schools to be able to communicate effectively with parents in order to increase the student's success? What good can come of hampering the ability of the police department and other agencies to communicate with the public about issues of community safety?
- The Supreme Court, in striking down an English-only provision in *Meyer v. Nebraska*, noted that "[t]he protection of the Constitution extends to all, to those who speak other languages as well as to those born with English on the tongue." *Meyer v. Nebraska*, 262 U.S. 390 (1923).
- It is unconstitutional to deprive Limited English Proficient individuals of access to information about the government when multilingual access may be available and may be necessary to ensure fair and effective delivery to limited or non-English speaking persons. *Ruiz v. Hull*, 191 Ariz.441,453 (Ariz.1998)

Celebrating Our 39th Anniversary
Protecting and Promoting Latino Civil Rights
www.maldef.org

- English-only laws also violate the First Amendment by depriving elected officials and public employees of the ability to communicate with constituents and the public.
- The agencies providing English as a Second Language (ESL) classes often have overflow classrooms and wait-lists. The best way to encourage greater numbers of people to learn the English language more quickly is to increase funding for ESL and similar programs, rather than cutting off barriers to communication while individuals wait in line for the opportunity to learn English.
- The requirement of the proposed legislation to track expenditures for interpreters, translation, printing or recording separately will encourage public bodies and agencies to limit their use of such methods of reaching limited English proficient Ohioans.