

English language bill generates overwhelming support

by Bend Weekly News Sources

(SALEM) Oregon State Representative Donna Nelson (R-McMinnville) has received overwhelming support for HB 2459, the bill to make English Oregon's official language.

Phone calls and e-mails to the Representative have been almost universally positive, providing feedback from all over the state. "I'm getting calls from Pendleton to Medford to Tillamook," said Representative Nelson. "I'm grateful to hear from so many Oregonians - and I encourage everyone calling in from outside my legislative district to let their legislators know the importance of this bill."

Rep. Donna Nelson Incoming e-mails have been approximately 95% favorable, with support coming in from Oregon Democrats as well as Republicans. "While I am a Polk County Democrat, I would back a bill to make English the official language of Oregon," wrote Terri, from Dallas. "I think you will see a lot of public support on this."

The English Language Bill is gaining momentum in both chambers of the Legislature. "I am in support of Rep. Nelson's proposal to adopt English as our official language," said Representative Sal Esquivel (R-Medford), one of the co-sponsors of HB 2459. "It is our official language and we need to protect the American culture by maintaining English as the first method of communication." Two Senators, Gary George (R-McMinnville) and Jason Atkinson (R-Central Point), have also signed on to the bill.

Recent surveys show strong public backing of English as an official language. A January 18 survey from Portland television station KATU showed 92% of respondents favor English as Oregon's official

language. A 2006 Zogby poll indicated 84% of Americans favor English as the official language of government.

House Bill 2459 is getting attention from as far away as our nation's capital. "It is good to see Oregon's legislators are recognizing the importance of making English the official language," said Rob Toonkel, a spokesman for Washington, D.C. based grassroots organization U.S. English, Inc. "Declaring English the official language is something we need to ensure unity within our diverse society."

The English Language Bill has received its first reading in the Oregon House of Representatives, and now awaits committee assignment from Speaker of the House Jeff Merkley. Public hearings on HB 2459 may be scheduled once a committee is assigned.

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