

Idaho House votes to make English the official language

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Governor's signature would make state the 29th with official English law

WASHINGTON - The Idaho House of Representatives voted 46-20 last night to make English the official language of the state, sending the bill to Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter for his signature. If signed into law, Idaho will be the 29th state to enact official English legislation.

"Idaho residents should be proud of the effort their legislators have made to maintain economic prosperity and the American dream in Idaho," said Mauro E. Mujica, Chairman of the Board of U.S. English, Inc. "The passage of this legislation is consistent with the expectation that newcomers to Idaho will make an effort to learn English and become Americans. By making English the official language, the Idaho legislature is working to ensure that government multilingualism will not develop into a permanent linguistic crutch for new immigrants."

Introduced by Sen. Mel Richardson, the measure would require that most government business be done in English, while calling for an expansion in programs that teach English as a second language. Numerous common sense exceptions are contained in the legislation, including the use of foreign languages in health care, for tourism, and in judicial proceedings. The bill also makes no effort to curtail foreign language learning programs. It was previously approved by the Idaho Senate on March 7.

"As an immigrant myself, I would never want to live in an 'English-only' state, but I would have never been able to succeed by living in an 'English- optional' state," continued Mujica, who came to the United States from Chile. "Our citizens should always be able to speak many languages, but our unity depends upon the government leading people toward self-sufficiency by promoting our common language. I look forward to Gov. Otter's signature on this bill."

According to recent polls by Mason-Dixon and BSU, more than seven-in-ten Idaho residents favor making English the official language of the state.

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