

Idaho makes English official

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State is 29th to adopt unifying language policy for all residents

Idaho Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter signed S. 1172 into law Wednesday, making Idaho the 29th state to adopt English as its official language. Sponsored by Sen. Mel Richardson, the bill makes English the official language of the state government with common sense exceptions for areas such as health care and judicial proceedings. The measure previously passed the Idaho House of Representatives on March 19 and the Idaho Senate on March 7.

"I want to thank Gov. Otter and Sen. Richardson for their efforts to promote the language that unites all Idahoans," said Mauro E. Mujica, Chairman of U.S. English, Inc. "Idaho, like our nation, is made up of immigrants who have united behind our common flag and our common language. Making English the official language of Idaho continues that proud tradition and promotes the continuation of the American dream."

Under the law, all state meetings, publications and transactions are to be done in English. Numerous exceptions are made to comply with federal law, including communications to promote public health and safety, protect the rights of criminal defendants, and encourage tourism within Idaho. Educational efforts and the teaching of foreign languages are specifically encouraged by the law, which calls upon the state to initiate, continue and expand programs in English as a second language.

Idaho is now the 29th state to enact English as its official language, following Arizona where English was adopted as the official language by popular vote in Nov. 2006. Efforts to enact official English legislation are currently pending in 13 states without existing laws: Connecticut, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, Washington, and West Virginia.

"Across, the nation, Americans are realizing that while personal multilingualism is beneficial, government multilingualism keeps society divided socially and economically," continued Mujica. "The Idaho government has taken the important step of removing the linguistic crutch that keeps immigrants lagging behind. I look forward to seeing other states follow Idaho's lead."

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