
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 40

Session of
1999

INTRODUCED BY MAYERNIK, HERSHEY, STABACK, READSHAW, ARMSTRONG,
LAUGHLIN, SEYFERT, SCHRODER, EGOLF, GIGLIOTTI, FARGO AND
SOLOBAY, JANUARY 20, 1999

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, JANUARY 20, 1999

AN ACT

1 Designating English as the official language of the
2 Commonwealth; and providing for a right of action.

3 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
4 hereby enacts as follows:

5 Section 1. Legislative findings.

6 The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

7 (1) The people of the United States can trace their
8 origins to a multitude of nations throughout the world.

9 (2) The various cultural heritages represented in the
10 United States greatly enhance and strengthen us as a nation.

11 (3) Despite the diversity of backgrounds, the people of
12 the United States can live in harmony and work as citizens of
13 one country.

14 (4) English has been the traditional language of the
15 United States and while it enjoys no special legal protection
16 as such, a working knowledge of English is essential in order
17 for citizens to exercise their constitutional freedoms to the

1 fullest extent, to be aware of citizen checks against
2 government abuses and to enjoy individual prosperity and
3 independence.

4 (5) English is the common bond and link to one another
5 as fellow citizens of the United States.

6 Section 2. Designation of official language.

7 English is hereby designated the official language of the
8 Commonwealth.

9 Section 3. Enforcement.

10 It shall be the duty of every elected and appointed officer
11 of the Commonwealth to take all necessary steps to insure that
12 the role of English as the common language of the Commonwealth
13 is preserved and enhanced.

14 Section 4. Limitations.

15 The provisions of this act shall not apply when:

16 (1) Federal law imposes contrary provisions.

17 (2) The public health, welfare, safety and justice
18 mandate the use of other languages.

19 (3) The religious freedom or priorities of various
20 persons or groups may be adversely affected.

21 (4) Instruction and learning occur in foreign language
22 courses.

23 Section 5. Personal right of action.

24 (a) Creation of right.--Any resident of this Commonwealth
25 shall have standing to bring an action against the Commonwealth
26 to enforce this act.

27 (b) Jurisdiction.--The Commonwealth Court shall have
28 jurisdiction to hear and decide an action brought under
29 subsection (a).

30 Section 6. Effective date.

1 This act shall take effect in 60 days.