

**KATHY L. RAPP, MEMBER**  
65<sup>TH</sup> LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

**DEPUTY WHIP**

**CAUCUSES**  
ALZHEIMER'S  
AUTISM  
LIBERTY  
PRO-LIFE  
TIMBER



**House of Representatives**  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Harrisburg

September 23, 2011

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**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** All House Members  
**FROM:** Rep. Kathy Rapp  
**SUBJECT:** Proposed Legislation "ENGLISH ONLY DRIVER'S EXAMS"

In the near future I will introduce legislation requiring the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation to administer its written and oral examinations for a driver's license only in the English language.

Currently, PennDOT offers the written exam in English and Spanish. If an applicant does not speak either of those languages, they are permitted to use an interpreter. Interpreters are permitted for both written and oral exams.

This issue is in part a public safety issue. Drivers who cannot read and understand English are a threat to the safety of all motorists, including themselves. Such drivers cannot understand traffic signs and directions, read highway warning signs or read hazard signs on other vehicles. And they cannot communicate with police or public safety officials in the event of an accident or other emergency.

My proposal also would lead to more cost-effective government by limiting the number of forms necessary to administer these examinations. It also would serve to encourage non-English speaking Pennsylvanians to learn the English language.

Another point to consider is that administering driver's license exams in foreign languages increases the risk of cheating and makes it very difficult to prevent or detect fraud. Eleven years ago, PennDOT stopped offering the written exam in Russian, Vietnamese, and Chinese languages after discovering widespread cheating that raised serious safety concerns 15 months after the tests were introduced.

While this particular legislation is limited to driver's license exams, it is noteworthy that 31 states already have enacted legislation declaring English the official language in those states. Declaring English the official language means that official government business at all levels must be conducted solely in English. This includes all public documents, records, legislation and regulations, as well as hearings, official ceremonies and public meetings.

If you would like to join me as a co-sponsor of this legislation, please contact Annette at 787-1367 or email [amioff@pahousegop.com](mailto:amioff@pahousegop.com). Thank you.

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