
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE BILL

No. 1052 Session of
2011

INTRODUCED BY McILHINNEY, RAFFERTY, FOLMER, VOGEL, FONTANA,
WAUGH, FERLO, ALLOWAY, EARLL, SCARNATI, SOLOBAY, GORDNER,
ARGALL, D. WHITE, KASUNIC, MENSCH AND BRUBAKER, MAY 10, 2011

REFERRED TO STATE GOVERNMENT, MAY 10, 2011

AN ACT

1 Providing for the English language as the official language of
2 the Commonwealth.

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

5 Section 1. Short title.

6 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Official
7 Language Act.

8 Section 2. Purpose.

9 (a) Purpose.--It is the purpose of this act to preserve,
10 protect and strengthen the unifying role of English as the
11 official language of the Commonwealth. English has been this
12 nation's language by custom only and warrants special legal
13 protection.

14 (b) Rights preserved.--This act shall not be construed to
15 infringe on the rights of citizens, who have every right to
16 choose their own primary language, in the use of language for
17 private conduct, nor shall this act be used to dictate language

1 policies for the operation and administration of organizations
2 or businesses in the unregulated private sector.

3 Section 3. Definitions.

4 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall
5 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
6 context clearly indicates otherwise:

7 "Official acts of government." Any of the following:

8 (1) Actions of the Commonwealth and of its political
9 subdivisions that carry the full weight and authority of law.

10 (2) Official documents recorded and maintained by the
11 Commonwealth and its political subdivisions for the public
12 domain, including tax records, professional licenses, deeds,
13 real estate records, publicly probated wills and other
14 documents of the court systems and public proceedings of the
15 governing bodies of the Commonwealth and its political
16 subdivisions.

17 Section 4. Designation of language of official acts.

18 English is recognized as the official language of the
19 Commonwealth and shall be designated as the language of official
20 acts of government.

21 Section 5. Policies.

22 The Commonwealth and its political subdivisions shall make no
23 policies expressing a preference for any language other than
24 English or diminishing or ignoring the unifying role of English
25 as designated under this act, subject to the limitations under
26 section 7.

27 Section 6. Enforcement.

28 (a) General rule.--Elected and appointed officers of the
29 Commonwealth and its political subdivisions shall take all
30 reasonable steps to ensure that the role of English as the

1 official language is preserved and enhanced.

2 (b) Standing.--Any citizen of this Commonwealth shall have
3 standing to bring an action against the Commonwealth or any of
4 its political subdivisions to enforce this section.

5 Section 7. Limitations.

6 The provisions of this act shall not apply to the following:

7 (1) When Federal law imposes contrary provisions.

8 (2) When the public safety, health or justice requires
9 the use of other languages.

10 (3) Instruction in foreign language courses.

11 (4) Instruction designed to aid students with limited
12 English proficiency in their transition and integration into
13 the education system.

14 (5) The promotion of international commerce or tourism.

15 (6) The provision of interpretation for hearing impaired
16 individuals in American Sign Language.

17 Section 8. Appropriations.

18 The General Assembly and the governing bodies of its
19 political subdivisions shall make no appropriation to promote
20 the use of or demonstrate a preference for any language other
21 than the official language, subject to the limitations under
22 section 7.

23 Section 20. Effective date.

24 This act shall take effect in 90 days.