

# Inquiring Minds topic for 17 January 2014

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## English-only?

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia: **English-only movement**, also known as **Official English movement**, refers to a political movement for the use only of the English language in official US government operations through the establishing of English as the only official language in the United States of America.

### Earlier English-only movements

In 1803, as a result of the Louisiana Purchase, the United States acquired French-speaking populations in Louisiana. After the Mexican-American War, the United States acquired about 75,000 Spanish speakers in addition to several indigenous language-speaking populations.

An 1847 law authorized Anglo-French instruction in public schools in Louisiana. In 1849, the California constitution recognized Spanish language rights. French language rights were abolished after the American Civil War.*[citation needed]* In 1868, the Indian Peace Commission recommended English-only schooling for the Native Americans. In 1878–79, the California constitution was rewritten: "All laws of the State of California, and all official writings, and the executive, legislative, and judicial proceedings shall be conducted, preserved, and published in no other than the English language."

In the late 1880s, Wisconsin and Illinois passed English-only instruction laws for both public and parochial schools.

In 1896, under the Republic of Hawaii government, English became the primary medium of public schooling for Hawaiian children. After the Spanish-American War, English was declared "the official language of the school room" in Puerto Rico.<sup>[1]</sup> In the same way, English was declared the official language in the Philippines, after the Philippine-American War.

During World War I, there was a widespread campaign against the use of the German language in the US; this included removing books in the German language from libraries.<sup>[2]</sup> (A related action took place in South Australia as well with the Nomenclature Act of 1917. The legislation renamed 69 towns, suburbs or areas that had German names.)<sup>[3]</sup>

## **English and reasons behind English-only movement**

In 1907, US President Theodore Roosevelt wrote, "We have room for but one language in this country, and that is the English language, for we intend to see that the crucible turns our people out as Americans, of American nationality, and not as dwellers in a polyglot boarding house."<sup>[4]</sup>

ProEnglish, the nation's leading advocates of "Official English," summarizes their belief that "in pluralistic nation such as ours, the function of government should be to foster and support the similarities that unite us, rather than institutionalize the differences that divide us." Therefore, ProEnglish "works through the courts and in the court of public opinion to defend English's historic role as America's common, unifying language, and to persuade lawmakers to adopt English as the official language at all levels of government."<sup>[5]</sup>

Another "Official English" advocate group, U.S. English, summarizes their belief with "the passage of English as the official language will help to expand opportunities for immigrants to learn and speak English, the single greatest empowering tool that immigrants must have to succeed."<sup>[6]</sup>

## **The modern English-only movement**

In 1980, Dade County, Florida voters approved an "anti-bilingual ordinance."<sup>[7]</sup> However, this was repealed by the county commission in 1993, after "racially orientated redistricting"<sup>[8]</sup> led to a change in government.<sup>[9]</sup>

In 1981, English was declared the official language in the state of Virginia.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

In 1983, Dr. John Tanton and U.S. Senator S. I. Hayakawa founded a political lobbying organization, U.S. English. (Tanton was a former head of the Sierra Club's population committee and of Zero Population Growth, and founder of the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), an immigration reductionist group.) In 1986, Tanton wrote a memo containing remarks about Hispanics claimed by critics to be derogatory, which appeared in the *Arizona Republic* newspaper, leading to the resignations from U.S. English of board member Walter Cronkite and executive director Linda Chavez; Tanton would also sever his ties to the organization as a result. That same year, 1986, Larry Pratt founded English First, while Lou Zaeske, an engineer from Bryan, Texas, established the American Ethnic Coalition.

In 1994, Tanton and other former US English associates founded ProEnglish specifically to defend Arizona's English-only law. ProEnglish rejects the term "English-only movement" and asks its supporters to refer to the movement instead as "Official English".<sup>[10]</sup>

The U.S. Senate voted on two separate changes to an immigration bill in May 2006.<sup>[11][12]</sup> The amended bill recognized English as a "common and unifying language" and gave contradictory instructions to government agencies on their obligations for non-English publications.<sup>[13]</sup>

In what was essentially a replay of the 2006 actions, on June 6, 2007 the US Senate again voted on two separate amendments to a subsequent immigration reform bill that closely resembled the amendments to the 2006 Senate bill.<sup>[14]</sup> <sup>[15]</sup> Ultimately, neither the 2006 nor 2007 immigration reform bill has become law.

On January 22, 2009, voters in Nashville, Tennessee rejected a proposal under a referendum election to make "Nashville the largest city in the United States to prohibit the government from

using languages other than English, with exceptions allowed for issues of health and safety." The initiative failed by a vote of 57% to 43%.<sup>[16]</sup>

In March 2012, Republican presidential candidate Rick Santorum was criticized by some Republican delegates from Puerto Rico when he publicly took the position that Puerto Rico, a Spanish-speaking territory, should be required to make English its primary language as a condition of statehood.<sup>[17]</sup>

## Criticism

The modern English-only movement has met with rejection from the private organization Linguistic Society of America, which passed a resolution in 1986–87 opposing "English only" measures on the grounds that they are based on misconceptions about the role of a common language in establishing political unity, and that they are inconsistent with basic American traditions of linguistic tolerance."<sup>[18]</sup>

Linguist Geoffrey Pullum, in an essay entitled "Here come the linguistic fascists" charges English First with "hatred and suspicion of aliens and immigrants" and points out that English is far from under threat in the United States, saying "making English the official language of the United States of America is about as urgently called for as making hotdogs the official food at baseball games."<sup>[19]</sup>

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has stated that "English Only" laws are inconsistent with both the First Amendment right to communicate with or petition the government, as well as free speech, and the right to equality because they bar government employees from providing non-English language assistance and services.<sup>[20]</sup> Many academics[*who?*] seem to agree.<sup>[21]</sup> On August 11, 2000, President Bill Clinton signed Executive Order 13166, "Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency." The Executive Order requires Federal agencies to examine the services they provide, identify any need for services to those with limited English proficiency (LEP), and develop and implement a system to provide those services so LEP persons can have meaningful access to them.<sup>[22]</sup>

While the judicial system has noted that the laws are largely symbolic and non prohibitive, supervisors and managers often interpret them to mean English is the mandatory language of daily life.<sup>[23]</sup> In one instance, an elementary school bus driver prohibited students from speaking Spanish on their way to school after Colorado passed its legislation.<sup>[24]</sup> In 2004 in Scottsdale, a teacher claimed to be enforcing English immersion policies when she allegedly slapped students for speaking Spanish in class.<sup>[25]</sup> In 2005 in Kansas City, a student was suspended for speaking Spanish in the school hallways. The written discipline referral explaining the decision of the school to suspend the student for one and a half days, noted: "This is not the first time we have [asked] Zach and others to not speak Spanish at school." <sup>[26]</sup>

Some English-Only Movements have been classified as hate groups by the Southern Poverty Law Center.<sup>[27]</sup>

## Current law

Place	<u>English</u> official	Other official language(s)	Note	Ref
<a href="#">Alabama</a>	Yes	No	since 1990	[28]
<a href="#">Alaska</a>	Yes	No	since 2007; 1998 law ruled unconstitutional	[29]
<a href="#">Arizona</a>	Yes	No	since 2006; 1988 law ruled unconstitutional	[30]
<a href="#">Arkansas</a>	Yes	No	since 1987	[28]
<a href="#">California</a>	Yes	No	since 1986	[28]
<a href="#">Colorado</a>	Yes	No	since 1988	[28]
<a href="#">Connecticut</a>	No	No		[28]
<a href="#">Delaware</a>	No	No		[28]
<a href="#">Florida</a>	Yes	No	since 1988	[28]
<a href="#">Georgia</a>	Yes	No	since 1996	[28]
<a href="#">Hawaii</a>	Yes	<u>Hawaiian</u>	since 1978	[28]
<a href="#">Idaho</a>	Yes	No	since 2007	[28]
<a href="#">Illinois</a>	Yes	No	since 1969; "American"official 1923-1969	[28]
<a href="#">Indiana</a>	Yes	No	since 1984	[28]
<a href="#">Iowa</a>	Yes	No	since 2002	[28]
<a href="#">Kansas</a>	Yes	No	since 2007	[28]
<a href="#">Kentucky</a>	Yes	No	since 1984	[28]
<a href="#">Louisiana</a>	No	No	<u>French</u> has had special status since 1968 founding of <a href="#">CODOFIL</a>	[28]
<a href="#">Maine</a>	No	No		[28]
<a href="#">Maryland</a>	No	No		[28]
<a href="#">Massachusetts</a>	No	No		[28]
<a href="#">Michigan</a>	No	No		[28]
<a href="#">Minnesota</a>	No	No		[28]
<a href="#">Mississippi</a>	Yes	No	since 1987	[28]
<a href="#">Missouri</a>	No	No		[28]
<a href="#">Montana</a>	Yes	No	since 1995	[28]
<a href="#">Nebraska</a>	Yes	No	since 1923	[28]
<a href="#">Nevada</a>	No	No		[28]
<a href="#">New Hampshire</a>	Yes	No	since 1995	[28]
<a href="#">New Jersey</a>	No	No		[28]
<a href="#">New Mexico</a>	No	No	<u>Spanish</u> has had special status since 1912 passage of state constitution	see <a href="#">article</a>
<a href="#">New York</a>	No	No		[28]
<a href="#">North Carolina</a>	Yes	No	since 1987	[28]
<a href="#">North Dakota</a>	Yes	No	since 1987	[28]

<a href="#">Ohio</a>	No	No		[28]
<a href="#">Oklahoma</a>	Yes	No	since 2010	[31]
<a href="#">Oregon</a>	No	No	<a href="#">English Plus</a> since 1989	[28]
<a href="#">Pennsylvania</a>	No	No		[28]
<a href="#">Rhode Island</a>	No	No	<a href="#">English Plus</a> since 1992	[28]
<a href="#">South Carolina</a>	Yes	No	since 1987	[28]
<a href="#">South Dakota</a>	Yes	No	since 1995	[28]
<a href="#">Tennessee</a>	Yes	No	since 1984	[28]
<a href="#">Texas</a>	No	No		[28]
<a href="#">Utah</a>	Yes	No	since 2000	[28]
<a href="#">Vermont</a>	No	No		[28]
<a href="#">Virginia</a>	Yes	No	since 1981	[28]
<a href="#">Washington</a>	No	No	<a href="#">English Plus</a> since 1989	[28]
<a href="#">West Virginia</a>	No	No		[28]
<a href="#">Wisconsin</a>	No	No		[28]
<a href="#">Wyoming</a>	Yes	No	since 1996	[28]
<a href="#">American Samoa</a>	Yes	<a href="#">Samoan</a>		[32]
<a href="#">District of Columbia</a>	No	No		[citation needed]
<a href="#">Guam</a>	Yes	<a href="#">Chamorro</a>		[citation needed]
<a href="#">Northern Mariana Islands</a>	Yes	<a href="#">Chamorro, Carolinian</a>		[citation needed]
<a href="#">Puerto Rico</a>	Yes	<a href="#">Spanish</a>		[33]
<a href="#">U.S. Virgin Islands</a>	Yes	No		[34]

The United States federal government does not specify an official language; however, all official documents in the U.S. are written in English, though some are also published in other languages.[\[35\]](#)


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## External links

- [U.S. English \(advocates for Official English\)](#)
- [Anatomy of the English-Only Movement](#), by [James Crawford](#)
- [Institute for Language and Education Policy](#)
- [Lingo Jingo: English Only and the New Nativism](#), by [Geoffrey Nunberg](#)
- [Iowa Passes "English Only" Measure \(2/27/02\)](#)
- [English-Only Movement: Its Consequences on the Education of Language Minority Children](#)
- [Language Legislation in the U.S.A.](#)
- [Statements and legal actions against English-only law](#) [[dead link](#)] by the [American Civil Liberties Union](#)
- [English as the Official Language of the United States: Legal background and Analysis of Legislation in the 110th Congress](#)