

HB

512

Alaska State Legislature House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:

LABOR & COMMERCE, CHAIRMAN
MILITARY & VETERANS AFFAIRS, CHAIRMAN
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REVISED SPONSOR STATEMENT

CS HB 512 (HES): English Use With Public Meetings & Documents

English is the nation's single shared language that crosses all ethnic, racial, cultural, and religious lines, and allows diverse Americans to share their various backgrounds. This bill would simply make official what is already common practice in the State of Alaska, which is the use of English in public meetings and with public documents or records. Public documents include such things as birth, death, marriage, and divorce certificates, as well as records of all public meetings. The bill's intent is not to change any practices already occurring in the State; it is to simply give official recognition to what is already being done.

The bill applies only to state agencies. This includes all State Departments, boards and commissions, the University of Alaska, public corporations, municipalities, and school districts. The bill does not apply to private corporations, or to statewide or local native groups, or to federal agencies or to local groups or agencies not a part of state government. It does not apply to private citizens or private groups or activities.

Aside from making a simple statement that English is the official language of state documents, records, and meetings, it then proceeds to a list of the exceptions that are allowed. The bill is not meant to apply to language classes or curricula in schools or universities, or to bilingual programs authorized under federal law, or to tourism promotion, or if public safety or health issues are involved, or if legal testimony is needed from a non-English speaker.

The bill further provides assurances that it in no way infringes on the rights of people to use English in private activities; they can sue the state on this issue; they cannot be denied employment on the basis of lack of facility in a language other than English; and finally, it allows the state officers and employees to use a language other than English in the scope of their duties.

Numerous amendments have been made to the bill in a HESS Committee CS in an effort to tighten up language and meet public concerns. Chief among these is the addition of a opt-out clause which would allow a municipality, a school district, or an REAA by a simple vote to opt out of the requirements of the bill.



Representative Pete Kott



The Eyak Corporation, P.O. Box 374, Cordova, AK 99574

March 25, 1996

The Honorable Brian Porter
Chairman
House Judiciary Committee
Juneau, Alaska

Dear Chairman Porter:


My name is Nancy Barnes and I am Aleut and Tsimshian. I am writing as President of The Eyak Corporation. Our population is comprised of predominately Aleut (Chugachmiut), Eyak, and other Alaska Native people. My father, the first President of Eyak, named to honor the Eyak people, whose numbers were so few before ANCSA became law. Right now, we have only one Eyak-speaking elder left. I believe this is because of the policies and practices of the past.

I urge your committee to not support House Bill 512, which proposes to "establish English as the official language and related to the use of English in public records and at public meetings of state agencies." This law is simply unnecessary. Our Native languages have suffered enough discrimination and persecution in the past.

Why do we need this bill? There is no threat to the English language in Alaska. We have no problem with written records of state agencies for recording or filing purposes, being in English.

I think this bill is more symbolic in nature, and only opens up the wounds of the past. During the past decade, there has been a resurgence of Native language, dance, and pride in our culture. We are seeing more dance groups with children singing songs in their Native languages. Alaska is rich in its cultural diversity--Please, don't let this divisive bill pass and pull us apart! Please, think of the message you will send.

Respectfully,



Nancy C. Barnes, President
The Eyak Corporation

cc: The Honorable Tony Knowles
The Eyak Corporation Board of Directors
Chugach Alaska Corporation

ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES

1995 ANNUAL CONVENTION

RESOLUTION 95-23

TITLE: DECLARING INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES AS NATIONAL LANGUAGES AND OPPOSE ENGLISH-ONLY LEGISLATION

WHEREAS: the Federal government of the United States has a unique responsibility for Indigenous Languages and Native American Governments while, at the same time, an interest in promoting the use of the English language; and,

WHEREAS: Indigenous Languages have historically been used by Native American governments within the United States from time immemorial and have unique cultural, religious and historical importance; and,

WHEREAS: Indigenous Languages do not have foreign homelands whose governments and institutions can be expected to promote them; and,

WHEREAS: studies indicate that more than half of the indigenous languages of the United States are considered "endangered" and many have only a handful of speakers at the end of this century; and,

WHEREAS: the United States Congress is in the process of introducing legislation to declare English and the Official language of the Government of the United States.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the delegates to the 1995 Annual Convention of the Alaska Federation of Natives, Inc., that they actively oppose the passage of legislation to amend the United States Code to declare English as the official language of the Government of the United States; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Alaska Federation of Natives will actively support the maintenance, promotion, preservation, study, teaching, artistic use and survival of the Indigenous languages. AFN will also work to oppose legislation which prevents or hinders the maintenance, promotion, preservation, study, teaching, artistic use and survival of the Native languages of the United States of America.

SUBMITTED BY: Alaska Native Educational Council

COMMITTEE ACTION: ~~Do Pass~~

CONVENTION ACTION: PASSED



FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
1996 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

HB 512

An Act establishing English as the common language and related to the use of English in public records and at public meetings of state agencies.

Consolidated Fiscal Note for Executive Branch

Operating Expenditures (Thousands of Dollars)

Department	FY 97	FY 98	FY 99	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002
Governor	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
DCED	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
DCRA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Corrections	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Education	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Postsecondary	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
DEC	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
ADF&G	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
CFEC	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
DH&SS	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Labor	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Law	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
DMVA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
DNR	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Public Safety	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
DOR	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
DOT&PF	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
TOTAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

This bill would have a zero fiscal impact on all departments.

Prepared by:

Jack Kreinheder

Phone: 465-4676

Division:

Office of the Director

Date: 2/26/96

Approved by Commissioner:

Annalee McConner

Nancy J. Slagle

Date:

2/26/96

Agency:

Office of Management and Budget

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CFEC	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
DH&SS	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Labor	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Law	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
DMVA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
DNR	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
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Approved by Commissioner: Annalee McConnell *Nancy J. Slagle*
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