

2013

English-only legislation: The Iowa story

Kari Lien

University of Northern Iowa

Let us know how access to this document benefits you

Copyright ©2013 Kari Lien

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/hpt>

 Part of the [Public Policy Commons](#), and the [Social Influence and Political Communication Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Lien, Kari, "English-only legislation: The Iowa story" (2013). *Honors Program Theses*. 584.

<https://scholarworks.uni.edu/hpt/584>

This Open Access Honors Program Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Work at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Program Theses by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uni.edu.

Offensive Materials Statement: Materials located in UNI ScholarWorks come from a broad range of sources and time periods. Some of these materials may contain offensive stereotypes, ideas, visuals, or language.

ENGLISH-ONLY LEGISLATION:
THE IOWA STORY

A Thesis Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Designation
University Honors

Kari Lien

University of Northern Iowa

May 2013

This Study by: Kari Lien

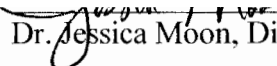
Entitled: English-Only Legislation: The Iowa Story

has been approved as meeting the thesis or project requirement for the Designation
University Honors

May 9th, 2013
Date

Dr. Kenneth Bleile, Honors Thesis Advisor

5/10/13
Date


Dr. Jessica Moon, Director, University Honors Program

The United States of America is a nation that has been developed and shaped by immigrants. The blending and sharing of cultures, as well as languages, has been present throughout the entirety of our history. Since the vast majority of United States citizens have ancestors who arrived in this country speaking languages other than English, why are immigrants still being met with opposition if they do not speak English?

The debate over monolingualism versus bilingualism or multilingualism is not a new issue in our country. This issue has been discussed and debated numerous times throughout the course of our country's history, and in today's society, it continues to have a need for discussion in academia and in the media. The movement of Official English legislation in the recent decades has stirred the feelings of citizens about bilingualism. It is imperative to research and analyze the implications that the English-only movement has on United States citizens, immigrants, and the way that foreigners perceive Americans. English-only policies send a message of racism and hatred to immigrants living in the United States, which is why it is necessary to share this story with U.S. citizens. By further understanding the consequences of Official English legislation, others might shift their viewpoint in order to demonstrate an attitude of respect and appreciation of diversity. Explanations of both sides of this issue and the history of Iowa's official language will provide a background to the analysis of media sources that express reactions to English-only policies.

This project will discuss the recent history of English-Only legislation in Iowa. Common opinions about English-Only legislation will be shared, including quotations from individuals on both sides of the English-Only debate. Finally, this project will examine the way Iowa's story of English-Only legislation raises questions about the future of this legislation in Iowa as well as the nation.

Literature Review

The Constitution of the United States did not establish an official language for the nation, which has caused a stir numerous times throughout the nation's history. The exclusion of an official language declaration causes some individuals to believe that the Founding Fathers never intended for the establishment of an official language because of its infringement on the civil liberties of citizens. However other individuals see the absence of an official language as a need to establish English as the official language of the United States (Zuckerman, 2010).

One historical example that demonstrates the presence of English-only movements in the United States was the banning of foreign language teaching that occurred because of the xenophobic feelings and especially the anti-German sentiment in the late 19th century until World War II. During the time when certain states were creating laws that banned the teaching of other languages, many Americans could be found promoting the exclusive use of English (Zuckerman, 2010).

The current debate about English-Only legislation stems from the actions of United States Senator S.I. Hayakawa in 1981. He unsuccessfully attempted to amend the constitution to establish English as the official language of the United States. This event at the national level created an atmosphere for debate about this topic in the decades that followed (Zuckerman, 2010).

Present day immigration trends create a unique situation for English-only legislation. According to David Masci, a staff writer who specializes in social policy for the Congressional Quarterly, twenty-five percent of United States citizens are expected to be Hispanic immigrants by 2050 (Masci, 1998). Columnist Maria Anglin wrote in the San Antonio Express-News about experiences as a bilingual English and Spanish speaker and expressed concern for the way she is

perceived due to her use of two languages. Depending on who she is speaking with, Maria is addressed by name in the Spanish version or the Anglicized version; she chooses to respond to both pronunciations. However, Maria chooses her pronunciations of proper nouns carefully depending upon her audience. In reference to the proper noun “San Antonio,” Maria (2012) stated, “Choose the Spanish version amid a certain crowd and you’re seen as an angry minority with a fist-pumping agenda” (para. 4). However, if Maria chooses the English version around an equally specific crowd, she is seen as trying to abandon her roots. Anglin questioned “Shouldn’t a bilingual person be able to pronounce a name in Spanish without getting a here-we-go-again eye roll...San Antonio sounds different when pronounced by a Spanish-speaker. There’s nothing wrong with Ann-toe-knee-oh, but saying it the other way is, technically, correct. So pronouncing it that way shouldn’t be seen as defiant” (para. 7 & 8).

Some individuals feel that we need to look past differences in ethnicity or spoken language in order to concentrate on unity. As cited by Masci (1998), U.S. English Director of Research Eric Stone stated “We have to focus on what unites us as Americans, rather than on ethnic identity and [Latinos’] status as oppressed minorities” (p. 819).

The idea of America as the melting pot is a concept that has been transformed since the founding of our nation. Charles Clark (1997), senior correspondent at Government Executive Media Group and former writer for the Congressional Quarterly, wrote, “The history of the American ‘melting pot’ reflects alternating tensions and accommodations between newcomers and the old guard. No country on earth, it is said, has absorbed immigrants in greater numbers or variety, or has done more to incorporate immigrants into the national culture” (p. 49.) Masci (1998), observed the distinction between immigration in the late 20th century and 21st century and immigration from our nation’s early history, stated, “the idea of the melting pot – a place

where all peoples slowly adopt a culture – is being replaced by a new ideal, the mosaic, where everyone keeps their native culture and adopts some American values” (p. 818).

Maria Anglin connected language to the idea of the melting pot by stating “The English language is constantly evolving. As we watch the American melting pot change in color, we’ll hear changes in how we communicate, which is good” (para. 10). The way the English language continues to evolve can be attributed not only to immigration trends and the strong presence of Spanish in the United States, but also to other factors in society, such as technology and science.

Opposing Attitudes

There are two opposing attitudes that society holds about the creation of a law that makes English the official language of the United States. In recent decades, English-only advocates have been arguing with individuals who believe that Official English legislation is unnecessary and potentially hurtful to minority groups living in the United States.

English-only advocates argue that a common language is needed to symbolize national unity and preserve the heritage of the United States. Some Americans worry that our nation is in danger of losing the language that unifies us if we do not declare English as our official language (Masci, 2000). Several political leaders at the state and federal level are members of the English-only movement, and conservative citizens largely support these political leaders.

On the other side of the issue are accusations that English-only laws are discriminatory and fueled by racial prejudices. The Institute for Language and Education Policy, which is a nonprofit organization dedicated to research-based advocacy for English-language and heritage-language learners, is directed by James Crawford. According to Donegan (1996), Education writer James Crawford holds this view as Crawford pointed out that “It is certainly more

respectable to discriminate by language than by race” (p. 51). Crawford spoke before the House Subcommittee on Education Reform on July 26, 2006 in order to share the views of the Institute for Language and Education Policy on legislation that would designate English as the official language of the United States. Crawford shared that English-only legislation is unnecessary because English does not need legal protection when it is the dominant language in our country and new immigrants are learning the language at a very fast rate. Crawford pointed out in his speech (2006) that Official English is punitive: “Restricting government’s ability to communicate in other languages would threaten the rights and welfare of millions of people, including many U.S. citizens, who are not fully proficient in English” (p. 1). Crawford (2006) reasoned that because the proposed English-only legislation was not going to make English language-learning programs more accessible, the legislation was pointless: “Official-English legislation offers no practical assistance to anyone trying to learn English. In fact, it is likely to frustrate that goal by outlawing programs designed to bring immigrants into the mainstream of our society” (p.1). In addition, Crawford felt that English-only legislation is divisive because it cultivates hostility towards minority groups, especially Latinos and Asians, it is inconsistent with American values because it violates Freedom of Speech, and finally, it is self-defeating because in the era of globalization, multilingualism is essential to success in the areas of economics and national security (Crawford, 2006).

Many people see linguistic diversity as an asset for our nation. Those who support bilingualism and multilingualism believe that diversity in language is a strength that should be encouraged (Donegan, 1996). Bernard Spolsky, professor emeritus at Bar-Ilan University in Israel, (2011) stated “The dominant status of English, together with the power of overt and covert policies supporting English only, leads to a dramatic loss of heritage language knowledge

in the United States” (p.4). Some people believe that the ability to speak more than one language helps a person to feel comfortable around diverse people and environments. The ability to feel comfortable in different environments and appreciate other cultures can provide educational and professional advantages in life (4 Kids Early Learning Network, 2010).

English-Only Legislation in Iowa

The difference in attitudes towards this issue can be seen, not only nationally, but also here in the state of Iowa. The Iowa English Language Reaffirmation Act, also referred to as “IELRA”, was signed by Governor Tom Vilsack in 2002 as a way to “symbolically” unite the state. The IELRA requires government documents and publications to appear in English, the official language of Iowa.

The origins of this law can be traced to State Senator Steve King, a Republican from Kiron, Iowa, who sponsored a proposal to declare English as the “common language” of the state in 1997. According to Seite (2007), King’s goal was to “create an ‘umbrella of communication’ to strengthen state unity” (p. 1371). King’s proposal was met with opposition from Iowa Senate Democrats who believed that Iowa should be committing to teach English to immigrants rather than establishing an official language. In 1997, English-only legislation was not passed or even voted on due in part to the House Senate’s issue-intensive schedule (Seite, 2007).

In 1999, the issue reemerged when Iowa Senate Republicans introduced a new official-English bill by expressing their interest in helping legal immigrants adapt to the culture and life in Iowa. Senators reasoned that immigrants who could not speak English would be stuck in poverty, which made it essential to encourage non-English speakers to succeed economically by learning to speak English. The proposed bill was designed to promote cultural assimilation by

funding the development of a center focusing on helping legal immigrants and foreign nationals to adapt to life in Iowa and by adding a provision to Iowa Code declaring English as the state's official language. During this round of legislation, the Iowa House narrowly voted to remove the Official-English provision from the bill, preventing the declaration of an official language in the state of Iowa. While the English-only legislation did not pass in 1999, it fostered an atmosphere for future debates about this issue (Seite, 2007).

The English-only movement gained momentum and popular support in the state of Iowa when the proposed legislation was marketed as a symbolic message. By October of 2000, eleven of Iowa's 99 counties had passed legislation at the county-level requiring all county business to be conducted in English. The growing success of the Official-English movement at the county level provided state legislators with public support and the momentum that was needed to pass the legislation at the state level. In the 2001 term, one legislative objective of the Republican Party was to pass the Official-English legislation at the state level. The Official-English bill, which was co-sponsored by Republicans Senator Steve King and Representative Dwayne Alons, was passed on March 8th, 2001 by the State Senate. King claimed that the passage of this bill would both maintain that State government business would be conducted in the standard language of English as well as send a message to the Federal government that the State of Iowa supports having English as the official language of the nation. While Steve King was pleased with his bill's success in the State Senate, several legislators were upset with Iowa's Official-English law. According to Seite (2007), State Senator Betty Soukup, a Democrat of New Hampton, stated, "This bill simply stirs the pot of bigotry, hatred and racism." (p. 1374.) Seite (2007) also shared the viewpoint of Senator Johnie Hammond from Ames who stated the law was a "do-nothing bill except for one thing: it hurts people" (p. 1374).

Iowa's Official-English bill moved to the State House, where it was debated by the House Local Government Committee for nearly one year. After it was approved by the committee, it moved to the House floor for debate, where it was later approved by a vote of 56 to 42. Then-Governor Tom Vilsack had to decide whether or not he wanted to sign or veto the bill, which had 80% popular support during a year when he was seeking re-election. Vilsack signed the bill on March 1st, 2002, which enacted Iowa Code section 1.18, the Iowa English Language Reaffirmation Act. This act took effect on July 1st, 2002 (Seite, 2007).

The stated purpose of the Iowa English Language Reaffirmation Act is to encourage English proficiency in order to promote civic and economic participation in society (Zuckerman, 2010). Governor Tom Vilsack reasoned that by signing the bill into law, the lives of children in Iowa would be improved.

The act requires that “all official documents, regulations, orders, transactions, proceedings, programs, meetings, publications, or actions taken or issued, which are conducted or regulated by, or on behalf of, or representing the state and all of its political subdivision shall be in the English language”. The requirements do not apply to any government actions, documents, or policies in the context of economic regulation, public health or safety, census compilation, or the protection of victims of crimes or criminal defendants.” (Seite, 2007).

Application of the Iowa English Language Reaffirmation Act

English-Only legislation is typically found in three different forms. The first type of English-Only legislation includes statutes that restrict government communications to English only. The second form includes statutes that require English but are less restrictive and have a symbolic characteristic. The third way that English-Only legislation is detailed is by statutes that

declare English to be the official language for the sole purpose of symbolism, similar to the designation of a state flower or state bird (Zuckerman, 2010).

While original claims stated that the Iowa English Language Reaffirmation Act was strictly symbolic in nature, judicial proceedings that occurred after the passing of the law proved otherwise. Problems arose during the 2006 Gubernatorial Race between Chet Culver and Jim Nussle. During this election, Iowa Attorney General Tom Miller declared the plain language of the IELRA permitted the Secretary of State to provide ballot request forms or other documents in English as well as other languages. Then-Secretary of State Chet Culver agreed with the decision made by the Attorney General and made voter registration materials available in multiple languages. Six days before the election in November, Congressman Steve King called for Culver to remove the multilingual documents from the Secretary of State's website. Culver viewed King's threats as an attempt to assist Republican Nussle's campaign and he believed that King would drop the issue after the election. King however sued Governor-Elect Chet Culver and new Secretary of State Michael Mauro two days before Culver's inauguration in 2007. The cause of this lawsuit was that King claimed that Voter Registration Cards in Spanish, Laotian, Bosnian, and Vietnamese violated Section 1.18 of the IELRA (Seite, 2007).

Attorney General Miller and Secretary Mauro cited the conclusion that publishing voter registration materials in languages other than English was necessary to ensure the constitutionally protected right to vote, which made it exempt from the requirements of section 1.18 (Seite, 2007).

Judge Douglas Staskal heard arguments on December 21, 2007. During the judicial proceedings, ten petitioners fell into three categories of standing: county auditors, citizens, and taxpayers. The county auditors claimed they had standing based on a conflict between their duty

as county auditors and the application of the IELRA, the citizens claimed they had standing because of a stake based on a general application of the law, and the last group of petitioners claimed they had standing because of a stake derived from their status as taxpayers (Seite, 2007).

A petitioner must demonstrate a specific interest in resolving the issues beyond a simple interest in enforcing the law. The second group of petitioners did not demonstrate standing as citizens because of their mere desire to ensure governmental compliance with the law. The third group of petitioners lacked standing as taxpayers because of the minimal costs associated with providing multilingual voter registration materials. These materials were not mass-printed or physically distributed; they were simply available online at the Secretary of State's web page. The citizens had to print their own registration material in order to register to vote. Additionally, because the multilingual voter registration cards mirrored the English voter registration cards, it did not require a translator to enter the information that was submitted in a language other than English. This decision meant that only the County Auditors had sufficient standing in the case. The court began by interpreting the text of the statute and concluded that its plain language restricts government communications only to English (Zuckerman, 2010). The court found that the availability of multilingual documents would substantially undermine any incentives to learn English, which contradicts the stated intent of section 1.18(2) to "encourage every citizen of this state to become more proficient in the English language" (Seite, 2007.)

Because of the court's interpretation of the IELRA, the Secretary of State was prevented from providing voter registration forms in non-English versions. This means that eligible voters in the state of Iowa are unable to participate in state or national elections if they do not understand English (Zuckerman, 2010).

Secretary of State Michael Mauro commented on the issue: “When we came into office here, we believed that the information out there was correct, and that we were providing a service to the public, making it more convenient to participate. I have never seen anything wrong with participation” (Petroski & Duara, para. 10). Mauro believed that he was doing the correct thing in encouraging citizens to participate by eliminating barriers. Senator Steve King, however, cited his approval for the ruling that was made in favor of his agenda when he said, “English is our official language. The English language united us as a state and as a nation...I believe that, and I am thankful that our official English law has been upheld” (Petroski & Duara, para. 14).

King v. Mauro taught Iowans that the IELRA could limit the government’s ability to respond to Iowa's largest growing population, which are Latino immigrants. Additionally, the state saw Steve King utilize judicial proceedings as a method of gaining publicity for the legislation he supports. Finally, this case is evidence that Iowa’s Official English legislation is a non-symbolic law (Seite, 2007).

It is impossible to know the extent of the damage that this court ruling will have on immigrants in the state of Iowa. Jorge Espejel, the Mexican consul in Omaha, wrote “As you know, for the people who have become a U.S. citizen, it’s better to know what they’re signing in their own language...They are going to be afraid. It’s not going to be easy for them” (Petroski & Duara, para. 18).

In Their Words: Reactions to English-Only Legislation

In support of English-Only Legislation, Congressman Steve King, representing the 4th Congressional District of Iowa since 2003, stated: “We need to recognize, in spite of all of the different subcultures that are part of America itself, there is a greater overall umbrella of American culture that ties us together, and that’s what I call cultural continuity...Language is a

bonding agent. It's the glue that holds us together" (Norman, 2007, para. 5). This quote from Congressman King is his way of expressing that all American citizens must be united through language. However King's definition of 'united' is when the individuals who are different than he is join the majority by leaving behind their differentiating characteristic, which, in this case, is language. Why should others have to change when King is unwilling to change? Why is King's way the 'right' way? American culture will be rich in diversity if we respect and appreciate its subcultures, rather than challenge and attempt to extinguish them.

Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa questioned the consequences of the legislation sponsored by King and stated: "I've learned that sort of thing [Steve King's official-English legislation] sends a signal that maybe we don't welcome new people, we don't appreciate other cultures, and things to that nature, and I think we have to be a welcoming nation" (Norman, 2007, para. 10).

Grassley's statement about the need to be a welcoming nation should be echoed throughout the 'Land of the Free' in the hopes that more citizens begin to show respect for individuals who speak languages other than English. Additionally, Grassley's quote should make U.S. citizens worry about the people who are hurt by legislation that openly discriminates against their spoken language.

Several years after Iowa passed its Official-English Legislation, Iowans watched Congressman Steve King bring his English-Only crusade to the national level. In response to King's actions, an article written by Jane Norman appeared in the Des Moines Register on February 17th, 2007. The article, titled "Iowa's King drives U.S. charge for English as official language" stirred the emotions of numerous Iowans who submitted their comments in the Sunday Opinion Section of the Des Moines Register published on March 4th.

Speaking against King's English-Only Movement, Tom Rial of Des Moines shared:

“The immigrant community has always learned and used the English language, even as their influence expands the language’s character, similar to the way our language is continually refreshed by scientific and technological advancement and globalization. Congressman King is wrong; it is not language that binds American culture together, but a shared belief of freedom and democracy, coupled with the entrepreneurial spirit that has driven this country forward...It is through these ideals, not a common heritage or language, that our country has experienced cultural continuity flowing from one generation to the next, and from one citizen to another. If cultural continuity is King’s real concern, then he should feel secure in the knowledge that, regardless of accent, English-language ability, or time living and working in the United States, all Americans share the belief that we are free to participate, unfettered, in a political and economic system whose productivity, ethics and success surpasses any nation in the world at any point in human history” (English only, 2007, para. 3, 4, 6, & 7).

Rial’s comments about the way language changes over time are a very practical way to frame the influence that Spanish has on the English language. If citizens are not objecting to the influences that technology mediums and scientific advancements have on the English language, there is no reason for them to object to the interactions of English and foreign languages. Evolution over time is natural, and this fact holds true for language.

Darren Holmes of Des Moines shared an opposing viewpoint:

“What people do not understand is that the law is about unity. A lot of opponents to the English-only law do not realize the segregation they are supporting. To be able to speak a common language and interact with other cultures can break barriers and bring people together. It doesn’t mean people have to give up their pride in their culture or language.” Darren continued by stating that separation

through language is extreme and that the Klu Klux Klan resulted from extremists (English only, 2007, para. 12).

Holmes attempted to create an argument that the government is creating segregation without passing an English-only law. However, the creation of English-only legislation marginalizes citizens who cannot speak English, which invalidates Holmes' argument. Either way, a separation exists that prevents all citizens from being treated equally. The difference is that English-only is a way of breeding hatred and promoting exclusion while a language barrier is a challenge that allows for educational opportunities and development of cultural awareness and sensitivity. Holmes also failed to acknowledge the services that prevent segregation in the absence of English-only legislation, such as translators, interpreters, and English Language Learning classes. In certain cases, it is not possible for these services to exist under English Language laws, which makes the laws self-defeating and annuls the argument of Holmes.

Al Manning of Waterloo supports King's legislation with a viewpoint that is similar to that of Darren Holmes, which Manning expressed through his letter to the editor: "Which position is more hateful: Wanting everyone in this country to have a common language so they can fully assimilate into this melting pot that is America, made great by its diversity? Or, segregating people into enclaves where they never have to learn English because the government caters to whatever language they speak, and which Balkanizes our country, rather than unifies it? I suggest the latter is much more hateful" (English only, 2007, para.14-16). Hypocrisy shines through Manning's quote when he suggests that complete assimilation forms the melting pot of the United States that he also describes as being 'made great by its diversity'. Manning must choose a melting pot

made as homogenous as possible through the process of complete assimilation or a melting pot that is great because of diversity, but he cannot utilize both descriptions. Manning's support of complete assimilation by having a common language is evidence that his definition of 'diversity' is differences among citizens who speak English. This discrepancy weakens his argument in support of English-only.

Alfredo Lozano, a Des Moines restaurant owner and a Mexican immigrant who has been living in the United States for 20 years, shares a viewpoint that contrasts Representative Heaton's opinion about the law: "Some of my customers became citizens just two years ago, not enough time to speak really good English." In the past 20 years, Lozano has become fluent in English but many of his customers continue to struggle with the language, which is why he believes the law is not helpful (Clayworth, 2009, para.16). Lozano's viewpoint supports the idea that legislation is wasteful unless it takes action. Iowa's English-only legislation failed to create successful government programs to teach English to speakers of other languages, which makes it a do-nothing law. The state government is expecting individuals to learn English without providing any means to accomplish this goal. Lozano correctly stated that it takes many years to become proficient in a language, especially when one does not have access to explicit instruction.

Some politicians are concerned about Iowa's financial burdens if the English-only law were to be repealed. State House Representative Kraig Paulsen from Hiawatha, Iowa, expresses concerns about the millions of dollars it would cost the state of Iowa to utilize bilingual road signs if the English-only law were to be repealed: "You need a common language for government to do business" (Clayworth, 2009, para. 19). While Paulsen believes that a common language is a necessity for the government to do business, international precedents show that

many nations have more than one declared official language. Other nations' commitments to multilingualism demonstrate an emphasis on the importance of appreciating diversity and allow for greater success in the area of globalization.

Eric Gutierrez, an attorney in Washington for the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund, thinks that the government does not recognize how intensely most immigrants want to learn English, which causes waiting lists for ESL classes in many cities across the country. Gutierrez points out that the flaw in English-only legislation is that the government is not willing to provide money for more English education: "Our sentiment is that this is really a piecemeal attempt at comprehensive immigration reform" (Norman, 2007, para. 15). Gutierrez correctly identified the biggest problem with English language legislation when he explained that the services to learn English in order to comply with English-Only laws are not available to immigrants.

Bruce Hunter, Iowa State Representative from the 62nd District, commented on the Iowa English Language Reaffirmation Act: "The people of Iowa have always been a giving and welcoming people, but with this law, I don't see it in government" (Capps, 2009, para. 3). Additionally, Hunter commented, "I think it has given Iowa a bad name in the immigrant community and elsewhere around the country with that law in our books" (Clayworth, 2009, para. 3). Hunter's concerns about how Iowa is perceived because of this law should be a reason to reevaluate the goals and consequences of it.

Concluding Thoughts About The Future of English-Only

In the future, it is possible that states like Iowa will see their English-only laws repealed if they continue to infringe on constitutional rights. Michael A. Zuckerman, professor of history who received his doctorate from Harvard in American Studies, wrote an essay titled

“Constitutional Clash: When English-Only Meets Voting Rights” that examined this idea. Zuckerman concluded that “As states like Iowa begin applying their English-only laws to fundamental areas of individual liberty such as voting, civil rights advocates must stand ready to challenge the constitutionality of these laws” (Zuckerman, 377). Zuckerman explained that government has the choice to encourage participation in the electoral process or marginalize language minority citizens through voting rights.

The history of Iowa’s English-Only movement is a strong predictor of the future of language legislation at the national level. In Iowa, proposed legislation failed more than once before gaining support at the county level, which provided momentum to pass the bill at the state level. In the United States, over two dozen states have passed official-English legislation, which shows that some support is present if the federal level were to pursue the same kind of legislation. Additionally, Steven King, the man responsible for the English-only crusade in Iowa in the late ‘90s and early 2000s, is utilizing the topic of immigration reform as a means to orchestrate conversations about Official English in Washington D.C.

Senator Steve King has sponsored the English Language Unity Act of 2013 to make English the official language of the United States. The proposed legislation requires the official functions of the U.S. government be conducted in English and all naturalization ceremonies be conducted in English. Additionally, a uniform English language rule for naturalization will be established if this piece of legislation is passed. On March 6th, 2013, this act was introduced and referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce and the Committee on the Judiciary. Then on April 8th, 2013, this act was referred to the Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security (113th Congress, 2013). The problems with the proposed legislation include the same problems that arose in Iowa after the passing of the Iowa English Language Reaffirmation Act. By requiring all

official functions of the U.S. Government be conducted in business, immigrants who do not speak English will lose their constitutionally protected right to vote, like they did because of *King v. Mauro*.

Rather than ignoring history and the consequences of Iowa's official language legislation as well as that of other states, it is essential that legislators at the federal level learn from the mistakes of the past. The federal government needs to show its appreciation for diversity by rejecting any proposals for English-only legislation.

References

- 113th Congress. (2013-2014). H.R.997 - English Language Unity Act of 2013. Retrieved from <http://beta.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-bill/997>
- 4 Kids Early Learning Network. (2010, November 1). Raising a bilingual child. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, pp. B-2
- Anglin, M. (2012, September 13). The bilingual two-step is far from a dirty dance. *San Antonio News Express*, pp. 6.
- Capps, A. (2009, February 11). Legislation moves to repeal Iowa's English-only law. *Iowa State Daily University Wire*.
- Clark, C. (1997). The new immigrants. *The CQ Researcher*, 7, 49-72.
- Clayworth, J. (2009). Push to repeal Iowa's English-only law widens. *Des Moines Register*, A1
- Crawford, J. (2006). Official English legislation: Bad for civil rights, bad for America's interests, and even bad for English. Testimony before the House Subcommittee on Education Reform.
- Donegan, C. (1996). Debate over bilingualism. *The CQ Researcher*, 6, 49-72.
- English only: Necessary or mean spirited. (2007). *Des Moines Register*, OP.1.
- Masci, D. (1998). Hispanic Americans' new clout. *The CQ Researcher*, 8, 809-832.
- Masci, D. (2000). Future of language. *The CQ Researcher*, 10, 929-952.
- Norman, J. (2007). Iowa's king drives U.S. charge for English as official language. *Des Moines Register*. A1.
- Seite, E. (2007). Language legislation in Iowa: Lessons learned from the enactment and application of the Iowa English language reaffirmation act. *Iowa Law Review*, 94 & 95, 1369-1399.

Spolsky, B. (2011). Does the united states need a language policy? *CAL Digest*.

Zuckerman, M. (2010). Constitutional clash: *When English-only meets voting rights*. *Yale Law & Policy Review*, 28:2, 353-377.