
By: Senator Derr

Introduced and read first time: February 2, 1996
Assigned to: Economic and Environmental Affairs

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **English Language - Formal Recognition**

3 FOR the purpose of designating the English language as the common official language of
4 the State of Maryland; providing for certain exceptions; providing that this Act may
5 not be construed to require the reversal of any existing law or policy, or the
6 translation into English of any official motto, slogan, or decree; and making
7 provisions of this Act severable.

8 BY adding to

9 Article 41 - Governor - Executive and Administrative Departments
10 Section 18-205
11 Annotated Code of Maryland
12 (1993 Replacement Volume and 1995 Supplement)

13 Preamble

14 WHEREAS, Maryland is comprised of people from many ethnic, cultural, and
15 linguistic backgrounds, each of whom has contributed to this State the richness of their
16 heritage; and

17 WHEREAS, Maryland has been greatly enriched by this diversity, and the
18 government should always take steps to promote the dignity of all the heritages that form
19 this State's pluralistic society; and

20 WHEREAS, It is not the purpose of this Act nor may this Act be construed to
21 infringe upon the rights of citizens to exercise the use of a language of their choice for
22 private conduct; now, therefore,

23 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
24 MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

25 **Article 41 - Governor - Executive and Administrative Departments**

26 18-205.

27 (A) (1) ENGLISH IS RECOGNIZED AS THE OFFICIAL COMMON LANGUAGE OF
28 GOVERNMENT OF THIS STATE.

2

1 (2) AS THE OFFICIAL COMMON LANGUAGE OF THE STATE, ENGLISH IS
2 THE LANGUAGE OF GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONS AND ACTIONS.

3 (B) THE PROVISIONS OF THIS SECTION APPLY TO:

4 (1) THE LEGISLATIVE, EXECUTIVE, AND JUDICIAL BRANCHES OF
5 GOVERNMENT; AND

6 (2) THE STATE AND EACH POLITICAL SUBDIVISION AND MUNICIPAL
7 CORPORATION OF STATE, INCLUDING EACH DEPARTMENT, AGENCY, UNIT,
8 ORGANIZATION, AND INSTRUMENTALITY THEREOF.

9 (C) EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN SUBSECTION (D) OF THIS SECTION, AN ENTITY
10 SUBJECT TO THE PROVISIONS OF THIS SECTION SHALL:

11 (1) WRITE AND PUBLISH EACH OFFICIAL DOCUMENT IN ENGLISH; AND

12 (2) CONDUCT EACH MEETING AND OTHER OFFICIAL ORAL
13 COMMUNICATION IT AUTHORIZES IN ENGLISH.

14 (D) THE STATE AND EACH POLITICAL SUBDIVISION AND MUNICIPAL
15 CORPORATION OF THE STATE MAY CONDUCT ITS AFFAIRS IN A LANGUAGE OTHER
16 THAN ENGLISH TO:

17 (1) COMPLY WITH FEDERAL LAW;

18 (2) PROTECT PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY;

19 (3) PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF CIVIL LITIGANTS, CRIMINAL
20 DEFENDANTS, OR VICTIMS OF CRIME;

21 (4) ASSIST STUDENTS WHO ARE NOT PROFICIENT IN THE ENGLISH
22 LANGUAGE BY GIVING EDUCATIONAL INSTRUCTION WHICH PROVIDES AS RAPID AS
23 POSSIBLE A TRANSITION TO THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE;

24 (5) PROVIDE INTERPRETATION FOR DEAF INDIVIDUALS IN AMERICAN
25 SIGN LANGUAGE;

26 (6) TEACH A FOREIGN LANGUAGE;

27 (7) PROMOTE THE ARTS, INTERNATIONAL COMMERCE, OR TOURISM;
28 OR

29 (8) ASSIST PERSONS NOT PROFICIENT IN ENGLISH IN THE CONDUCT OF
30 LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS.

31 (E) THIS SECTION MAY NOT BE CONSTRUED TO REQUIRE THE REVERSAL OF
32 ANY EXISTING LAW OR POLICY, OR THE TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH OF ANY
33 OFFICIAL MOTTO, SLOGAN, OR DECREE.

34 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That if any provision of this
35 Act or the application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid for any reason
36 in a court of competent jurisdiction, the invalidity does not affect other provisions or any

SENATE BILL 632

3

1 other application of this Act which can be given effect without the invalid provision or
2 application, and for this purpose the provisions of this Act are declared severable.

3 SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
4 October 1, 1996.