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## NATIONAL

NEWS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

# Language laws on the rise despite cacophany of immigrants' voices

**DIVERSITY:** Legislators are trying to mandate English-only laws to cut down language barriers

ALLENTOWN, Pa. (AP) — "One Flag, One Country," Allentown's old downtown monument says. But there are 18 languages in the valley it overlooks, straining on the sense of community hailed by its stone inscription.

Cities like this one, swollen by newcomers, their words and their ways, are driving efforts around the country and now in Washington to make English the official language.

While typically limited by the law to make governments speak in one language, the push has wider goals: speeding assimilation, upending the "linguistic ghettos" that keep foreign schoolchildren in their native tongue, and in some cases discouraging immigration itself.

"I'm an architect" by profession, said Mauro Mujica, a Chilean immigrant leading the group U.S. English and the fight for official English. "We build the foundation first."

A year after Allentown passed an ordinance urging the exclusive use of English in government, little has changed. So few documents were printed in other languages that Mayor William Heydt pegs savings at \$36.

"Absolutely meaningless," the Republican says of the law he neither signed nor vetoed. "Basically you do what you want."

But if English-only laws like Allentown's have no teeth, they do have legs.

More than 20 states and 40 municipalities have laws declaring English official and setting or urging limits on the use of other languages by government.

Bills introduced in the House and Senate appear to have wide GOP support and polls suggest most Americans like the idea, however faintly it has been defined.

In the Republican presidential campaign, Sen. Bob Dole of Kansas, Sen. Dick Lugar of Indi-

ana and commentator Pat Buchanan are behind the cause. A notable exception is Texas Sen. Phil Gramm, who wants to cut off social services to immigrants but has seen no mileage in official English.

As in Allentown, little would change in Washington, at least on the surface.

Advocates of a federal language law could find only 265 foreign-language documents produced by the U.S. government in five years out of 400,000 checked.

Most addressed health and safety and would be exempted from an English mandate.

But even that scant multilingualism is too much for some as it trickles into areas that, while home to periodic waves of immigration, have thought of themselves as American to the core.

The mix of voices from the porches of Allentown's 19th century row houses testifies to the changes that have come to places like this.

"I had to blow up Seventh Street in three languages," Heydt said with a tone of incredulity, recalling the English, Spanish and Vietnamese warning signs posted for a round of urban demolition.

Hispanics alone make up more than 12 percent of the population here, up from four percent in 1980, and more than one-third of the city's schoolchildren.

Kids come to school speaking 18 languages and are shoe-horned into three — primarily English in recently integrated classrooms, supplemented by in-class Spanish and Arabic tutoring.

Nationally, the Census Bureau has found immigrants spreading from big cities and border states to places farther afield, drawn by the same small-town and suburban attractions that appeal to the native born.

In response, Montana, South Dakota and New Hampshire recently joined the ranks of official-English states.

Similar efforts failed under governors' vetoes in Maryland and Georgia and foundered in

Kansas and Oklahoma.

The Allentown ordinance was promoted by city council members who found it galling to see Spanish signs like one saying "Piso Mojado," warning of a wet floor in a public bathroom.

But when the law passed, it was the newcomers who saw the writing on the wall.

"It's because they want people who don't speak English to leave," Inocencia Tirado, who came from Puerto Rico three years ago, said outside the classroom where she is trying to learn the language.

"It was a shock — like a wave," said Ana Sainz de la Pena, head of second-language instruction in the Allentown schools. "It created some feeling among the Anglo community that 'We have control now.'"

Congressional supporters of a language law blame divisions on the orthodoxy of multicultural preservation. They complain of a federal education policy that can keep students learning mainly in their native tongue for most of their schooling.

"Language, history and values — these are the strings that bind our hearts to America," Dole said in a speech endorsing official English.

"But these keys to unity are under attack from our government and from intellectual elites who seem embarrassed by America."

President Clinton defends transitional bilingual education and says Americans should value the "culture, the traditions of everybody."

Heydt, for one, believes a national language law would merely create hard feelings.

The mayor is struggling with bigger challenges from the migrant wave — the burden posed by those who are on welfare, the discord made worse by the bigotry he believes has underpinned some of the backlash.

He saw this year's second annual Puerto Rican parade as a ray of hope.

It was a way, he said, of "trying to make it us, instead of us and them."

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON • FRIDAY & SATURDAY • OCTOBER 20-21

# HOMEcoming 1995

**GO!**

## PEP RALLY

EMU courtyard  
Friday, October 20  
11:50 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.  
Celebration features Jerry Allen,  
the UO pep band, cheerleaders  
and Duck mascot.

## 3K AND 5K CAMPUS FUN RUN

Begins at Johnson Hall  
Saturday, October 21 at 9:00 a.m.  
Registration from 8:15 to 9:00 a.m.  
Free or \$10 fee includes a t-shirt.  
Refreshments and snacks provided.

**FIGHT!**

## HOMEcoming MARCH

Rally Parade leaves from the EMU east lawn  
Saturday, October 21 at 5:30 p.m.  
Follow the cheerleaders, band and Duck mascot  
in a procession to Autzen Stadium.

For more information on these  
and other Homecoming events, call the  
UO Alumni Association at 346-5656.