

FEB 28 2008

SENATE RESOLUTION

URGING THE LEGISLATURE TO DECLARE SEPTEMBER AS LANGUAGE ACCESS MONTH.

1 WHEREAS, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42
2 U.S.C. § 2000d), provides that "No person in the United States
3 shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be
4 excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be
5 subjected to discrimination under any program or activity
6 receiving Federal financial assistance"; and
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8 WHEREAS, according to the 2000 Census, 290,000 of Hawaii's
9 1.2 million people, or approximately twenty-four per cent of the
10 population, speak a language other than English at home; this
11 includes over 250,000 persons who speak an Asian or Pacific
12 Island language; and
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14 WHEREAS, for this portion of Hawaii's population for whom
15 English is not their primary language and who have identified
16 themselves as having limited English proficiency, language is a
17 barrier that often prohibits them from fully participating in
18 the community and undermines their efforts to become self-
19 sufficient and productive; and
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21 WHEREAS, the Legislature recognized and acknowledged that
22 language is a barrier for individuals with limited English
23 proficiency who live in Hawaii and passed Act 290, Session Laws
24 of Hawaii 2006; and
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26 WHEREAS, Hawaii's language access law seeks to break down
27 language barriers by requiring every state agency, and any
28 organization that receives state funding and provides services
29 to the public, to "take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful
30 access to services, programs, and activities by limited English
31 proficient persons", free of charge and regardless of what
32 language the person speaks; and



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2 WHEREAS, as a result of Hawaii's language access law, the
3 Office of Language Access was established to promote equal
4 access and full participation for persons with limited English
5 proficiency through oversight, coordination, and technical
6 assistance to state and state-funded entities and by reviewing
7 and monitoring language access plans; and

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9 WHEREAS, the Office of Language Access has promoted
10 language access through education and training to state agencies
11 and state-funded entities and through outreach to the general
12 public at community events, conferences, and in public service
13 announcements; and

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15 WHEREAS, many residents in Hawaii are still unaware of the
16 language access law and of the everyday challenges faced by
17 limited English proficient persons: when a patient sees a
18 doctor and the doctor only speaks English, but the patient
19 speaks only Chinese; when a state social worker meets with a
20 client applying for food stamps and the social worker speaks
21 English and Ilocano, but the client speaks only Marshallese; or
22 when a public school nurse contacts a child's parents and the
23 nurse speaks English, but the child's mother speaks only Korean;
24 and

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26 WHEREAS, ongoing education and efforts are needed to ensure
27 that language access becomes the standard in the provision of
28 government services; and

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30 WHEREAS, declaring a month dedicated to the promotion of
31 language access will allow the Office of Language Access, in
32 conjunction with community organizations, to showcase the
33 language access law, its requirements, and its benefits; now,
34 therefore,

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36 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Twenty-fourth
37 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2008,
38 that the Governor is urged to designate September 2008 as
39 Language Access Month to raise awareness of the language access
40 laws and the provision of equal access to state and state-funded
41 government services; and



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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the Governor and the Executive Director of the Office of Language Access.

OFFERED BY: Frances Chun Oakland

