

Socrates Café

Wednesday, November 20, 2019

*Our Socrates Café is an opportunity to exchange thoughtful ideas and experiences
All political, economic, and social points of view are welcomed and encouraged.
The only ground rule is that we will be polite to those opinions that differ from our own.*

Should English Be The Official Language Of The United States?

Counties have varying practices about the languages taught and accepted for commerce (de facto) and government (de jure). A de jure language is one in which government documents (laws and transactions) are conducted. A de facto language is the common one or ones used for normal dialogue among people.

Worldwide at least 173 countries have at least one official language. Some, such as Brazil (Portuguese), China (Mandarin), Cuba (Spanish), Denmark (Danish), Egypt (Arabic), France (French), Poland (Polish), Hungary (Hungarian), Italy (Italian), Japan (Japanese), Sweden (Swedish) and Turkey (Turkish) have the same official language (de jure) as the one for every day communication (de facto).

Multiple countries have more than one official language, with 51 having English as an accepted language for government business. Some (such as India with 23) have multiple official languages. Canada has two official languages (English and French). Several, such as in Germany and Spain, have an official language for their county, but exceptions for specific areas. Still others, England, Australia, and the United States have none.

In the United State the federal Voting Rights Act (1975) requires that 263 counties, cities, and jurisdictions in 29 states with significant Asian American, Latino, American Indian and native Alaskan populations print ballots in multiple languages. Of these jurisdictions, many are in Texas (89) and California (27). In eight states, only one jurisdiction must offer non-English ballots (sometimes in more than one language): Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Maryland, Nevada, Oklahoma, Utah and Virginia. Three states – California, Florida and Texas – also must provide Spanish translations of any elections material issued statewide.

Businesses have adopted methods they feel are conducive to being more attractive to customers. Banks or stores frequently say, “Press 2 for Spanish” when called. In written billing statements Blue Cross adds a page stating the 21 different languages in which they offer assistance.

What Are The Consequences Of Adopting English As Our Official Language?

Should We Have More Than One Official Language?

What Are The Implications Of Continuing To Have None?