

HB 263 -- LANGUAGE OF OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS

SPONSOR: Nieves

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Special Committee on Immigration by a vote of 4 to 2 with 1 present.

Upon voter approval, this bill makes English the language for all official proceedings in Missouri.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on state funds in FY 2008, FY 2009, and FY 2010.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that Missouri already recognizes English as the common language of the state and that fluency in English is necessary for full integration into our culture, so this is a common-sense step.

Testifying for the bill was Representative Onder.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill say that they are concerned that it will cause political leaders to think they cannot generally communicate with non-English speaking populations in their own language, for example, in times of natural disasters or emergencies. The term "official proceedings" is confusing and ambiguous and should be clarified.

Testifying against the bill were Missouri Catholic Conference; and Missouri National Education Association.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say that "official proceedings" should be clarified, public meetings defined under the Sunshine Law should be considered official proceedings, but all official proceedings will not be public meetings. The committee should keep in mind that the federal government administers the oath of citizenship in foreign languages.

Testifying on the bill were Jewish Federation of St. Louis; and Office of the Attorney General.