



2000 L ST., NW ■ SUITE 702 ■ WASHINGTON, DC 20036  
TELEPHONE: 202-833-0100 ■ FAX: 202-833-0108

## Multilingual Ballots: How much do they cost?

The Federal Voting Rights Act (42 U.S.C., Section 1973 aa-6) states: "Any voter who requires assistance to vote by reason of blindness, disability or inability to read or write may be given assistance by a person of the voter's choice, other than the voter's employer or agent of that employer or officer or agent of the voter's union." This includes assistance for those who have an inability to read or write the English language.

One of the issues U.S. English feels strongly about is the need to eliminate bilingual and multilingual ballots. After all, to become a naturalized American citizen, one must be able to read, write and speak English. By providing multilingual ballots, we are opening up our voting process to the increased possibility of mistakes that may subvert the sanctity of our elections. We are also placing additional financial burden on already cash-strapped localities. People often ask: how much do bilingual ballots cost?

Unfortunately, this is a number that is difficult to pinpoint, as county and state governments often do not make known the cost of printing ballots, and the numbers that are provided are often estimates. However:

- In February 2012, The Morning Journal (Ohio) stated that the Lorain County Board of Elections estimated a cost of up to \$23,000 to comply with bilingual ballot requirements ordered by the U.S. Department of Justice.
- In October 2011, Highlands Today (Florida) stated that in Highlands County alone, a bilingual ballot requirement could cost the county \$32,000 to \$50,000 per election.

In October of 2011, the federal government ordered 248 counties in 25 states to provide bilingual or multilingual ballots. If each of these 248 counties and jurisdictions pays even \$20,000 for these ballots, the cost nationwide would be close to **5 million dollars**. Keep in mind that this number would just apply to ballots—not to other bilingual and multilingual translations that currently take place—such as those at the Department of Motor Vehicles and various government agencies.

U.S. English strongly advocates that to fully participate in the democratic process and all that America has to offer, one must be able to read, write and speak in English. Rather than providing bilingual and multilingual ballots, we should instead encourage non-English speakers to learn the language of success in this country: our common, shared language, English. We will continue to spread this message and advocate for government actions that fall in line with our stance.