To Assimilate Or Not To Assimilate; That's The Question

by Phyllis Schlafly December 12, 2007

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Are you tired of anonymous voices on the phone telling you to "Press 1 (or sometimes 2) for English"? The ability to speak and communicate in English is the litmus test of whether our immigrants are assimilating into the American culture or not.

To become a naturalized American citizen, the law states that the immigrant must demonstrate "the ability to read, write and speak ordinary English." All public opinion polls confirm by majorities approaching 90 percent that this is what the American people want.

Despite the law, the Pew Hispanic Center just reported that only 52 percent of Hispanic naturalized citizens speak English well or pretty well. Pew also reported that 28 percent of Latino immigrants speak only Spanish on the job.

Even those who seek diversity in politics, in religion, in morals, in lifestyles and in nationalities reject diversity when it comes to speaking English. It's the tie that binds; it's the e pluribus unum of our culture; it's the route to success in education, careers, and the chance to live the American dream.

As George W. Bush rounds out his second term as President, pundits will be speculating on what his legacy will be. The Census Bureau just answered that

question: his legacy is admitting the staggering number of 10.3 million foreigners into the United States, both legally and illegally, plus many more illegal residents the Census Bureau could not identify.

The jury is still out on whether those 10.3 million will assimilate into the American socio-economic culture or will remain in neighborhoods where they associate only with each other and fail to communicate and compete with citizens of their adopted country.

One would think that sound government policy should encourage assimilation, but unhappily our government, both the Bill Clinton and George W. Bush administrations, is retarding assimilation.

Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) lifted the lid on one of the government's major campaigns to discourage assimilation when he offered an amendment to the Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Bill (H.R. 3093) to prohibit federal funds from being used by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to sue employers for requiring English to be spoken by employees on the job. EEOC filed over 200 such lawsuits against employers in the past year.

EEOC accuses the Salvation Army at Framingham, Mass., of discriminating against two employees "on the basis of their national origin." The charge is ridiculous because the Salvation Army actually hired the two employees and gave them a year to learn enough English to speak it on the job, which they failed to do.

Since Alexander's amendment reflected extraordinary bipartisan congressional common sense, it passed the Senate 75-19. The amendment was approved by the House 218-186, and headed for the conference committee.

Then the Hispanic caucus had a tantrum, threatened to block passage of every bill until the amendment was removed, and blocked debate on a popular revision to the

unpopular Alternative Minimum Tax. Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D-IL) trotted out inflammatory accusations of "bigotry and prejudice."

Hispanic Caucus Chair Rep. Joe Baca (D-CA) yelled that "There ain't going to be a bill" with the Alexander language. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) and Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) halted all action on appropriations to fund the FBI, NASA and the Justice Department.

Our government also discourages assimilation by printing foreign language ballots, even though only U.S. citizens are supposed to vote. Another way that government programs retard assimilation is by forcing children with Hispanic-sounding names into Spanish-language classes in public schools, often over the opposition of their parents.

One of the most objectionable anti-assimilation policies is Clinton's Executive Order 13166, which requires all recipients of federal funds to provide all information and services in any language requested by any recipient of federal funds (such as a private-practice physician who accepts a Medicare or Medicaid patient). Despite the unnecessary costs and unpopularity of this unilateral Clinton action, the Bush Administration has continued the policy.

All Republican presidential candidates affirmed in the televised debate from New Hampshire on June 5, under questioning by Wolf Blitzer, that English should be "the official language of the United States." Only John McCain offered a muddled modification about Native Americans using their own languages.

That's why it's unfortunate that the Republican candidates agreed to participate in a Spanish-language debate sponsored by the Spanish-language television channel Univision.

Memo to Republican Presidential candidates: English language is as valuable an issue for you as driver's licenses for illegal aliens, an issue that forced New York Governor Eliot Spitzer and candidate Hillary Clinton to reverse themselves. Go for it, and leave Pelosi and Reid scrambling to deal with the divisions in their own Party.