Bilingual Education Goes To Voters Again

Oct. 23, 2002

Google Ads are provided by Google and are not selected or endorsed by Eagle Forum

The voters in Colorado and Massachusetts will have a chance to vote yes or no on November 5th about bilingual education. This billion dollar boondoggle is a fraud because it doesn't teach two languages; it teaches all subjects in Spanish to Mexican-American kids on the failed theory that they will learn English when they are older.
Bilingual education plays into the hands of the open-borders faction of both political parties. The Democrats want to keep large immigrant neighborhoods speaking a foreign language so they can more easily be instructed how to vote, and because the public school lobby wants to maintain the jobs of its foreign-language bureaucracy.

Republican businessmen are content with this system because it provides a steady stream of cheap labor. But most immigrants want their children to learn English because they know that is the road to living the American dream.

After nearly 30 years of bilingual-ed failure (a fourth of California children were still classified as not proficient in English), California's Proposition 227 to terminate bilingual ed passed in 1998 by 61 to 39 percent. It stated that "the government and the public schools of California have a moral obligation and a constitutional duty to provide all of California's children . . . with the skills necessary to become productive members of our society, and of these skills, literacy in the English language is among the most important."

The liberals rushed into court, playing the race card, to try to get an activist judge to overturn the vote of the people. Their phony argument was rejected even by the liberal Ninth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals, which ruled on October 7 in Valeria v. Davis that no "racial animus motivated the passage of Proposition 227."

California has now had three years of dramatically improved test scores among immigrants as proof that English immersion works better than bilingual ed. The share of Hispanic students scoring above the median in reading has risen from 21 to 35 percent, and in math from 27 to 46 percent.

Arizona's voters dumped bilingual education by passing Proposition 203 in November 2000 with a majority of 63 to 37 percent. As he did in 1998 with California's initiative, Silicon Valley entrepreneur Ron Unz led the charge and provided much of the financing to pass the measure.

The Bush Administration, however, countered this popular trend by actually increasing funding for the bilingual boondoggle. Bush's famous "No Child Left Behind" Act more than doubled the federal appropriation for bilingual education: $750 million in FY 2002 and "such sums as may be necessary for each of the five succeeding fiscal years."

Rep Tom Tancredo (R-CO) valiantly tried to amend the bill to require parental consent for their children to be put in bilingual classes, but the Administration succeeded in watering this down to parental notification.

Before Prop 227 passed, California schools were mandated to teach in 42 different languages, and across the country the number is 60. Just think of the enormous numbers of jobs required and the costs to the taxpayers of inflicting a stupid system on three and a half million limited-English-proficiency (LEP) schoolchildren.

Bilingual education is language apartheid. It means that immigrant children are kept in segregated classrooms for up to 80 percent of the day, often for five to seven years, never learning English.

This nonsense is also driven by the five-fold increase in the number of immigrants, legal and illegal, who have entered our country over the last two decades and been rewarded with taxpayer-financed benefits such as public schools. Such large numbers result in ghettoized neighborhoods of non-English-speaking people who do not assimilate into our culture and who live their daily lives without ever learning to speak English.

The United States assimilated millions of immigrants over two centuries by a process now called English immersion. Their children immediately went into public schools where only English was spoken, so they learned English rapidly and spoke it without a foreign accent.

New York City Mayor Mike Bloomberg has it figured out right. He said, "Children need to learn to read and speak good English. This is an English-speaking country, like it or not."

Our laws require that naturalized citizens must demonstrate "the ability to read, write, and speak words in ordinary usage in the English language." We hope all immigrants realize that they can't become Americans unless they speak English.

Colorado's Amendment 31 and Massachusetts' Question 2 give their voters the opportunity on November 5 to kill state funding for the failed system and adopt the English-immersion system that works.