

Congressman Steve King has introduced legislation to make it easier for American immigrants to fully realize the benefits of opportunities in the United States.

The English Language Unity Act of 2009 would establish English as the official language of the United States. The bill would require the federal government to conduct business in English without putting restrictions on languages spoken or on the private sector. With 58 original co-sponsors, the bill has broad, bi-partisan support.

There are over 6,000 languages spoken throughout the world, and in the United States there are at least 28 different dominant languages -- those spoken by at least 100,000 people. The English Language Unity Act helps immigrants by encouraging them to learn English to fully integrate into American society.

“English is the language of opportunity in America,” Congressman King said. “Learning English opens doors to better jobs and opportunities, the foundation America was built upon. The only way to fully learn about American culture, and what makes America truly unique, is through our common bond of the English language.”

Almost 12 million Americans are linguistically isolated, according to the U.S. Census. In addition, immigrants who are not proficient in English earn an average of 17% less than English-proficient immigrants with similar backgrounds, experience and education. The gap grows wider with the opportunities English-proficient immigrants realize while moving up the economic ladder.

Regardless of race, gender or citizenship status, Americans have declared their support for an official language. A survey conducted by the nationally recognized Tarrance Group found that 84 percent of Americans favor making English the official language of the United States.

Other polls taken on a state-by-state basis have indicated a similar threshold of support. Twenty-seven states have passed similar English language statutes. In the Iowa Senate, Congressman King led the effort to pass English language unity legislation, signed into law in 2002.

Congressman King introduced similar legislation during the 110th Congress, and 153 House members co-sponsored the legislation. In 1996 the House of

King Introduces Bill to Make English Official Language

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Representatives passed the Emerson English Language Empowerment Act, in a bipartisan vote, which would have made English the official language of the U.S. Government. The Senate failed to act on the bill.