

# **WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE**

## **2016 REGULAR SESSION**

**Introduced**

### **Senate Bill 470**

BY SENATORS SYPOLT, BOSO AND PREZIOSO

[Introduced February 2, 2106;

Referred to the Committee on Government Organization.]

1 A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding thereto a new section,  
 2 designated §2-2-13, relating to requiring official business and records of the state and its  
 3 political subdivisions be conducted in English; and providing exceptions, limitations and  
 4 definition.

*Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:*

1 That the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, be amended by adding thereto a new  
 2 section, designated §2-2-13, to read as follows:

**ARTICLE 2. LEGAL HOLIDAYS; SPECIAL MEMORIAL DAYS; CONSTRUCTION OF  
 STATUTES; DEFINITIONS.**

**§2-2-13. Official business and records of the state to be in English; exceptions; definition.**

1 (a) All official business of this state shall be conducted in the English language. All official  
 2 records, documents, rules, orders and publications shall be printed in English and all official  
 3 programs, meetings, transactions and actions conducted by or on behalf of the state and all its  
 4 political subdivisions shall be in English.

5 (b) Other languages may be used by government officials, and in official documents,  
 6 whenever necessary to:

7 (1) Protect the health and safety;

8 (2) Teach or study other languages;

9 (3) Protect the rights of criminal defendants or victims of crime;

10 (4) Promote trade, tourism or commerce;

11 (5) Facilitate activities pertaining to the compilation of any census;

12 (6) Comply with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, PL 101476;

13 (7) Use proper names, terms of art, legal terms or phrases from languages other than  
 14 English; or

15 (8) Comply with the Constitution and laws of the United States of America or the

16 Constitution of West Virginia. Except in exigent circumstances, when an official government  
17 document is translated into any language other than English under this section, an English  
18 translation shall also be provided in the same document, appearing in a manner as to afford the  
19 reader the opportunity to observe the English translation of all phrases used.

20 (c) This section may not be construed to:

21 (1) Diminish the usage of, prevent the study or development of, or discourage the use of,  
22 any Native American language in any context or for any purpose;

23 (2) Prohibit an elected official from speaking to any person in a language other than  
24 English while campaigning or providing constituent services, however, those officials are  
25 encouraged to use English as much as possible to promote fluency in English;

26 (3) Disparage any language or discourage any person from learning or using any  
27 language; or

28 (4) Prohibit informal and nonbinding translations or communications among or between  
29 representatives of government and other persons if the activity does not affect or impair  
30 supervision, management, conduct, or execution of official actions and if the representatives of  
31 government make clear that these translations or communications are unofficial and not binding  
32 on the state or any political subdivision of the state.

33 (d) Any examination related to employment administered by any state, municipal or county  
34 entity may be administered in a language other than English if the test is available in that  
35 language.

36 (e) As used in this section, "official" means any government action or document that binds  
37 the government, is required by law or is authorized by law.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to require all official business of this state to be conducted in the English language. The bill provides exceptions and defines "official."

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law, and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.