

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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119th MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION-1999

Legislative Document

No. 264

H.P. 186

House of Representatives, January 11, 1999

An Act to Establish English as the Official State Language.

Reference to the Committee on State and Local Government suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joseph W. Mayo".

JOSEPH W. MAYO, Clerk

Presented by Representative SHIELDS of Auburn.
Cosponsored by Representatives: CARR of Lincoln, GAGNE of Buckfield, GILLIS of
Danforth, NUTTING of Oakland.

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

2 Sec. 1. 1 MRSA §221 is enacted to read:

4 §221. State language

6 1. Official language. English is the official language of
8 the State. It is designated as the language of all public
10 documents and records and of all public proceedings and executive
12 sessions.

14 2. Definitions. As used in this section, unless the
16 context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the
18 following meanings.

20 A. "Executive sessions" means a meeting at which only
22 members of the elected or appointed public body and their
24 legal counsel, authorized staff and invited witnesses may be
26 present.

28 B. "Official language" means the prescribed language of all
30 public documents, records and proceedings.

32 C. "Official public documents and records" means all
34 documents officially compiled, published or recorded by the
36 State.

38 D. "Public proceedings" has the same meaning as in section
40 402, subsection 2 and includes the information recorded at
42 such proceedings.

44 3. Ballots. Public documents and records specifically
46 include all ballots used in statewide or local elections.

48 4. Exemptions. The provisions of this section do not apply:

50 A. To all public proceedings between the State of Maine and
 Canada when, in the opinion of the state department head or
 representative involved in such proceedings, it is necessary
 to conduct those proceedings wholly or partially in French
 and to use official public documents and records that are
 written wholly or partially in French during the proceedings;

B. To instruction in foreign language courses or other
 requirements of the University of Maine System and the
 State's public schools;

C. To instruction designed to aid students with limited
 English integrating into the general education system;

2 D. To the promotion of international commerce, tourism and
3 sporting events;

4 E. When the provisions interfere with the needs of the
5 justice system;

6 F. When the public health, public safety or emergency
7 services require the use of other languages, including, but
8 not limited to, highway signs and other public signs; and

9 G. When expert testimony or witnesses require a language
10 other than English, except that, for purposes of
11 deliberation, decision making or record keeping, the
12 official version of such testimony or commentary must be the
13 official English translation.

16

18 **SUMMARY**

20 This bill establishes English as the official state language.