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## Panel passes bill to make English official language

**By Howard Fischer**  
*CAPITOL MEDIA SERVICES*

PHOENIX - The House Judiciary Committee voted Thursday to declare English the state's official language.

The prime sponsor of the legislation, Rep. Russell Pearce, R-Mesa, said the use of Spanish and other languages damages national unity.

Pearce's bill won support from the Republican-dominated committee in a 6-3 party-line vote.

"In the name of diversity, we continue to promote and encourage people to speak other languages," Pearce said, comparing the practice to spoiling a child by providing a car, an allowance and a place to stay. "Pretty soon, if you're good enough to him there's no need for them to go get a job.

"If you're going to encourage people not to learn English and provide crutches for them, then you continue to damage what brings us all together as a nation. We're Americans. We speak English."

HCR 2030 would require all "official actions" of government to be conducted in English. That includes anything done on behalf of state or local government that binds or commits the government or "appears to present the views, position or imprimatur" of the government.

Exceptions are provided to comply with federal law, teaching other languages, encouraging international trade, protecting the rights of crime victims and anything that protects public health and safety.

It also would permit "informal and nonbinding" communications.

That provision appears designed to resolve problems with a similar constitutional amendment approved by voters in 1988. That amendment was subsequently struck down after courts said it would interfere with the ability of lawmakers and others to communicate with the public.

Pearce said the intent is to stop government "from encouraging multiculturalist kinds of attitudes by giving out crutches."

He said places like Canada, Malaysia and France with multicultural societies "have tension and clashes and civil wars that are brewing."

Rep. Ben Miranda, D-Phoenix, said people want to learn English and suggested that Pearce's bill include a requirement that the state provide adequate funding for programs to teach it.

Pearce rejected the suggestion, noting that he believes enough already is being spent.

The last word, though, will likely come from the courts. A federal judge has ordered Arizona to invest more money into public education to teach English to students from homes where it is not the main language.

The measure now goes to the full House. If adopted, voters who would have to approve the change in the 2006 election.

The 1988 version was approved by a margin of less than 1 percent.

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