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Assembly California Legislature



WARREN T. FURUTANI
ASSEMBLYMEMBER, FIFTY-FIFTH DISTRICT

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LEGISLATIVE CAUCUS

March 15, 2011

Daniel Claypool
Executive Director
Citizens Redistricting Commission
1130 K Street, Suite 101
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act

Dear Mr. Claypool:

Last year, an audit was conducted to measure how well state agencies were complying with the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act. Enacted in 1973, the Act became one of the first laws in the country to require access to government services for limited English speaking residents. As chairs of the Asian Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus, the Latino Legislative Caucus and the Legislative Black Caucus, we understand the importance of making sure the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act is applied for all Californians. Given the significant work being done by the Citizens Redistricting Commission and its impact on the rights of all Californians, we would like to know what work the Commission is doing to ensure that it is compliant with the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act. It is our hope that in ensuring that all Californians are properly represented, the Commission is also working to ensure that all Californians are properly included in the process.

Released last November, the California State Auditor's report found that many agencies either do not know of their responsibilities under the Act or are not fully meeting the legal requirements to aid limited English speaking residents whom they serve. The failure of government agencies to comply with the Act means that a substantial number of persons who live, work and pay taxes in this state are unable to receive vital government services and benefits to which they are entitled because of language barriers.

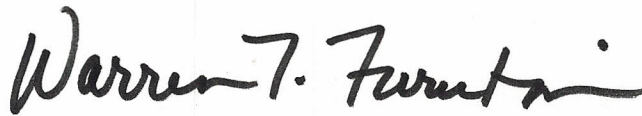
The policy goal of the Act rests on the principle that the effective maintenance and development of a free and democratic society depends on the right and ability of its residents

to communicate with their government. Over 6 million Californians or 20 percent of the population is limited English proficient (LEP). In cities like San Francisco, 13 percent of households are “linguistically isolated,” where no one over the age of 14 is deemed proficient in English. In Southern California, where Latinos and Asians make up more than half the population, 45 percent of Latinos and 40 percent of Asians are LEP.

Language barriers can undermine government accountability and threaten our democratic values. When our government is unable to communicate with 20 percent of its residents, it simply cannot address the needs of or expect participation from a cross section of the population. Democracy depends on an informed electorate—when government fails to communicate effectively with a significant number of people, it limits our ability to achieve a true democracy.

We look forward to hearing from you on this issue. Please contact Leilani Aguinaldo Yee in Assembly Member Furutani’s Office at (916) 319-2055 if you have any questions.

Respectfully,



Assembly Member Warren T. Furutani, 55th AD
Chair, Asian Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus



Assembly Member Tony Mendoza, 56th AD
Chair, Latino Legislative Caucus



Senator Curren Price, 26th SD
Chair, Legislative Black Caucus