



Legislation Text

File #: Res 1566-2012, **Version:** *

Res. No. 1566

Resolution calling upon the United States Congress to oppose H.R. 1164, also known as the “National Language Act of 2011,” which would drastically reduce the ability of non-English speakers to meaningfully interact with their government and legal system by making English the official language of the United States.

By Council Members Dromm, Arroyo, Barron, Brewer, Chin, Ferreras, Lander and Rodriguez

Whereas, The United States and New York City have historically been beacons of hope and opportunity for people around the world; and

Whereas, According to the 2010 U.S. Census, New York City is home to approximately three million immigrants; and

Whereas, Furthermore, according to the report entitled *Translation Woes: Language Barriers at New York City’s Human Resources Administration*, New Yorkers speak as many as 170 different languages, and one in four New Yorkers identifies themselves as limited English proficient; and

Whereas, New York City has taken steps to address the need for greater language diversity in delivery of government services; and

Whereas, In 2003, Local Law 73 was passed to ensure that immigrant New Yorkers would have equal access to city services; and

Whereas, Additionally, in 2008, Mayor Bloomberg issued Executive Order 120 which requires city agencies to implement language access plans; and

Whereas, Together these measures help alleviate language barriers many New Yorkers face when interacting with the City’s agencies and other institutions; and

Whereas, On March 17, 2011, Congressman Peter T. King introduced H.R. 1164, also known as the

“National Language Act of 2011,” which would make English the official language of the United States government; and

Whereas, If enacted, the National Language Act would require the U.S. government to: (i) conduct its official business in English, including publications, income tax forms and informational materials; (ii) preserve and enhance the role of English as the official language of the United States; and (iii) provide that no person has a right, entitlement, or claim to have the government act, communicate, perform, or provide services or materials in any other language, unless specifically stated in applicable law; and

Whereas, If enacted, the National Language Act would effectively disenfranchise citizens who are not fluent in English; and

Whereas, If enacted, such requirements would disadvantage non-native English speakers’ ability to participate in society; and

Whereas, The United States, especially New York City, is a heterogeneous society whose people are united by their shared ideals and not a common linguistic or ethnic identity; and

Whereas, The cultural and linguistic diversity of our nation and city are great sources of strength and not weaknesses; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the United States Congress to oppose H.R. 1164, also known as the “National Language Act of 2011,” which would drastically reduce the ability of non-English speakers to meaningfully interact with their government and legal system by making English the official language of the United States.

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