

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS, MILITARY AND HOMELAND
SECURITY

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Don Myers at 1:30 P.M. on January 31, 2007 in Room 241-N of the Capitol.

All members were present.

Committee staff present:

Art Griggs, Revisor of Statutes Office
Athena Andaya, Kansas Legislative Research
Heather O'Hara, Kansas Legislative Research
Betty Caruthers, Committee Assistant

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Representative Don Myers
Ben Piper, Dir. Of Government Relations for Pro-English
Barbara Gibson, Dept. Of Health & Environment
Sandy Jacquot, League of Kansas Municipalities
Steve Cadue, Chairman, Kickapoo Tribe Kansas
Anna Lambertson
Melinda Lewis, El Centro, Kansas City
Arthur Solis
Rev. Rene Tario, Wichita Hispanic Ministerial Alliance

Others attending:

See attached list.

Chairman Myers opened hearings on **HB 2140 - English official language of the State of Kansas.** He requested the Vice Chair head the Committee as Chairman Myers stepped forth as the first conferee to address the Committee.

Vice-Chair Goico recognized Representative Myers for testimony. (Attachment 1) He stated that this bill is to declare English as the official language of Kansas and to encourage those who are not proficient in the common language of English to move in that direction. Presently 28 states have passed English as official language statutes.

Chairman Myers recognized Revisor, Art Griggs to explain the bill and the exemptions for the Committee.

Chairman Myers recognized Ben Piper who testified as a proponent on the bill. (Attachment 2) He noted that nationwide polls consistently show that the vast majority of Americans support making English the official language as well as a 2006 poll showing 77% of Kansans supporting this. There was a recommendation made that Kansas keep track of money spent for documents being made in languages other than English.

Chairman Myers recognized Barbara Gibson who testified as neutral on the bill. (Attachment 3) The testimony centered around wording and possible misinterpretation within the text of the bill.

A written only testimony was turned in as neutral from Mike Taylor, Unified Government of Wyandotte County, Kansas City. (Attachment 4)

Chairman Myers recognized Sandy Jacquot who testified as an opponent to the bill as currently written but stated that if certain changes which she was recommending were made to the bill she would then be neutral. (Attachment 5) The amendment she presented would "allow cities to publish official public documents in other languages at their discretion, but still require all such publications to be in English."

Chairman Myers recognized Steve Cadue who testified as an opponent on the bill. (Attachment 6) His recommendation was to embrace diversity and learn from each other. He mentioned an "English Plus" approach using a bilingual additive to the Kansas School curriculum. Steve also stated that he feels the language of the bill would be contrary to the Kansas Constitution.

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE House Committee on Veterans, Military and Homeland Security at 1:30 P.M. on January 31, 2007 in Room 241-N of the Capitol.

Chairman Myers recognized Anna Lambertson who testified as an opponent on the bill. (Attachment 7) Her testimony related to the need for people to be proficient in languages other than English. She would like to see an amendment to the bill which would reflect a philosophy similar to English Plus which would stress the importance of English as well as promote learning of other languages.

Chairman Myers recognized Melinda Lewis who testified as an opponent on the bill. (Attachment 8) She sees this bill as “unnecessary, ambiguous, unfair, and potentially harmful.

Chairman Myers recognized Arthur Solis who testified as an opponent on the bill. (Attachment 9) His request was for this bill to be killed in Committee.

Chairman Myers recognized Reverend Rene Tario who testified as an opponent on the bill. (Attachment 10) He believes that **HB 2140** “is unconstitutional due to the violation of freedom of speech.” He sees the bill as “irrelevant and unnecessary, unfair and bias.”

Written only testimony was received from two other opponents; Bob Holloran (Attachment 11) and Ricardo Meza. (Attachment 12)

Chairman Myers closed hearings on **HB 2140**.

Chairman Myers adjourned the meeting at 3:15.

Next meeting scheduled for Thursday, February 1, 2007.