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State of Minnesota
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

EIGHTY-FIFTH
SESSION

HOUSE FILE No. 241

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The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections

1.1 A bill for an act
1.2 relating to state government; designating English as the official language;
1.3 proposing coding for new law in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 1.

1.4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

1.5 Section 1. **[1.55] OFFICIAL STATE LANGUAGE.**

1.6 Subdivision 1. **Designation.** English is the official language of the state of
1.7 Minnesota. English is designated as the language for use by the state and local
1.8 governments, for government officers and employees acting in the scope of their
1.9 employment, and for government documents and records.

1.10 Subd. 2. **Exceptions.** This section does not apply:

1.11 (1) to instruction in foreign language courses;

1.12 (2) to instruction designed to aid students with limited English in a timely transition
1.13 and integration into the general educational system;

1.14 (3) to the promotion of international commerce, tourism, and sporting events;

1.15 (4) when determined to interfere with needs of the justice system;

1.16 (5) when the public safety, health, or emergency services require the use of other
1.17 languages; provided that any authorization for the use of languages other than English in
1.18 printing informational materials or publications for general distribution must be approved
1.19 in a public proceeding by the governing board or authority of the relevant state or local
1.20 government entity and the decision recorded in publicly available minutes; and

1.21 (6) when expert testimony or witnesses may require a language other than English;
1.22 provided that for purposes of deliberation, decision making, or record keeping, the official
1.23 version of the testimony or commentary must be the officially translated English-language
1.24 version.

2.1 Subd. 3. **Costs.** All costs related to the preparation, translation, printing, and
2.2 recording of documents, records, brochures, pamphlets, flyers, or other informational
2.3 materials in languages other than English resulting from an exception in subdivision 2 must
2.4 be delineated as a separate budget line item in the agency, departmental, or office budget.

2.5 Subd. 4. **Employment.** No person may be denied employment with the state or with
2.6 any political subdivision of the state based solely upon that person's lack of facility in a
2.7 foreign language, except when related to bona fide job needs reflected in the exceptions in
2.8 subdivision 2.

2.9 Subd. 5. **Construction.** This section must not be construed in any way to
2.10 infringe on the rights of citizens under the Minnesota Constitution or the United States
2.11 Constitution in the use of language in activities or functions conducted solely in the
2.12 private sector. No agency or officer of the state or of any political subdivision of the
2.13 state may place any restrictions or requirements regarding language usage for businesses
2.14 operating in the private sector other than in official documents, forms, submissions, or
2.15 other communications directed to government agencies and officers, which must be in
2.16 English as required by this section.

2.17 Subd. 6. **Right of action.** Any citizen of the state has standing to bring an action
2.18 against the state to enforce this section. The district court has jurisdiction to hear and
2.19 decide actions brought under this section.