

NEWS RELEASE

CABINET COMMITTEE ON OPPORTUNITIES FOR SPANISH SPEAKING PEOPLE

Office of Public Affairs and Information

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CABINET COMMITTEE JOINS WITH HEW IN CALLING FOR

ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS TO ENSURE EQUAL EDUCATION

FOR THE SPANISH SPEAKING

Five School Districts Warned of Federal Funds Cut-off
If They Fail To Take Action
To Meet Needs of Spanish Speaking Students

Both President Nixon's Cabinet Committee on Opportunities for Spanish Speaking People and HEW's Office of Civil Rights have recently called for stricter enforcement of Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Cabinet Committee Chairman Henry M. Ramirez, a long time civil rights activist and educator, has recommended that the U.S. educational system be completely overhauled to ensure that Spanish speaking students receive an equal education. J. Stanley Pottinger, Director of HEW's Office for Civil Rights, recently renewed a similar call to the nation's educators to meet the needs of Spanish speaking pupils.

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On May 25, 1970 Pottinger issued a memorandum listing actions that federally assisted school systems must take to comply with Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Presently, most school systems fall short of meeting the requirements of Title VI.

The memorandum requires school districts to initiate bilingual/bicultural programs and to ensure that remedial programs do not permanently isolate minority children. School districts must avoid placing minority children in classes for the mentally retarded on the basis of tests that are unfair because of language or cultural bias.

Title VI prohibits the use of federal funds for programs that discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national origin. In so doing, the rights of ethnic minorities are protected, as well as those of racial minorities.

School districts in Boston, Massachusetts; El Paso, Texas; East Chicago, Indiana; Winslow, Arizona; and Uvalde, Texas, have been ordered to take action to correct failures in dealing with language barriers. These districts face a cut-off of federal funds if they don't correct discriminatory practices.

While with the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Ramirez directed a series of seven studies on the education of Mexican Americans in the Southwest. Three of these studies have been published to date, and all have charged Southwest school systems with blatant discrimination.

"We hope that studies such as these will focus public attention on the discrimination that the Spanish speaking have suffered because of the American educational system," said Ramirez.

"Future studies will reinforce our longstanding complaints and demands for equality, and force school systems to comply with Title VI," he continued.

Ramirez praised the recent allocation of \$2.7 million by the Office of Education for 34 projects to provide bilingual education, scheduled to begin this fall.

He recommended the development of special programs to aid Spanish speaking students with special educational needs and also the publication of textbooks which deal with the history and culture of the various Spanish speaking groups.

Ramirez lauded the recent announcement in New York by Albert Shanker, President of the United Federation of Teachers, who cited his intention to publish the first teachers guide on Puerto Rican history and culture.

"This is an example that must be followed by all school systems if the Spanish speaking are to be proud of their culture," the Chairman said, "If this teachers guide lives up to its expectations, it could transform the educational patterns of Puerto Rican Students, particularly those in New York City."

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