

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

JIM MATTOX ATTORNEY GENERAL

November 3, 1988

Dr. Hector D. Garcia 1315 Bright Street Corpus Christi, Texas 78405

Dear Dr. Hector:

Thought this would be of interest!

If there is any assistance we can lend, please feel free to call upon me.

Warm regards,

PAUL D. RICH

Special Assistant

PDR:cz

Encl.

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Hispanic Influx Spurs Step to Bolster English

By JEFFREY SCHMALZ

Special to The New York Times

MIAMI, Oct. 25 - With 300,000 Hispanic immigrants a year pouring into the South and the West, Spanish has supplanted English in some areas, and many Americans who say they feel like aliens in their own country are stepping up a battle to reaffirm the use of English.

In Florida, Arizona and Colorado, proposals on the Nov. 8 ballot would guage, applying primarily to government documents and meetings. Proponents argue that Hispanic Americans have been slower than previous immigrant groups to adopt English and that the ballot measures are necessary to encourage clarity of communication and the assimilation of Hispanic immi-

"I didn't move to Miami to live in a Spanish-speaking province," said Dr. Mark A. LaPorta, a 32-year-old Miami Beach internist who is the son of an Italian immigrant and a leader in the fight to declare English the official lan-

Opponents See Bigotry

Opponents argue that the measures represent nothing less than bigotry against the Hispanic. Freedom to express oneself, the opponents contend, includes the right to decide what language to speak. They say America might as well face the fact that the future of the country will be multilingual; whether it is English and Spanish in Florida or English and Japanese in California.

Sociologists and political analysts say that in Arizona and Colorado, as well as in California, where a declara-

designate English as the official lan- tion of English as the official language passed in 1986, the treatment of new immigrants is similar to the way European immigrants were treated 100 years ago. Like their predecessors, the Hispanic immigrants tend to be poor and undereducated and are often looked down upon by Americans whose families have been in the country for generations.

But in Florida, and particularly here

Continued on Page 14, Column 1



A banner, in Spanish, advertising the state lottery at a store in Hialeah, Fla. Proposals on the Nov. 8 ballot in Florida, Arizona and California would designate English as the official language.

Continued From Page 1

in Miami, where Hispanic Americans are more than 55 percent of the city's population and 35 percent of the metropolitan area's population, the issue is different, academics and civil-rights activists say. Although many of the immigrants here are poor and undereducated, a large number are successful and prominent. The Mayor, Xavier Suarez, is Hispanic, as are many business leaders.

Success Creating Resentment

It is Hispanic Americans' very success in Florida, sociologists say, that is creating resentment against them. Some blacks, for example, have long been angry that Hispanic immigrants, many of whom came from the educated middle and upper-middle class in their own countries, have skipped over blacks and taken the better jobs.

Thomas D. Boswell, a geography professor at the University of Miami who has studied the migration of people from the Caribbean, said: "Something has happened in Miami unlike anything in other United States cities. In just one generation, the Hispanic population has come to dominate. There's no question it has created a backlash."

What especially galls longtime Floridians is not so much what they perceive as Hispanic Americans' slowness to learn English as the fact that native Americans are increasingly finding that they have to speak Spanish. Many of the major corporations here, while not specifically requiring their executives to speak Spanish, say that any executive who wants to flourish should learn it.

At the Del Monte Tropical Fruit Company, for example, which maintains its world headquarters in Coral Gables, Fla., Alfredo Vela, vice president for public affairs, said that within the headquarters, three out of five senior executives speak Spanish. "Just about all of our support personnel are bilingual," he said.

Learning Spanish

At one of Florida's largest banks, Southeast Banking Corporation, the chairman, Charles J. Zwick, said, "Certainly a young officer at the bank should learn Spanish if he wants to do well"

Miami is a center for banks dealing with Latin America, and Mr. Zwick said he was planning to learn Spanish. "We're working on a transaction now," he said, "where I could have been more effective if I could have carried on the luncheon conversation in Spanish."

In Northern cities, New York, for example, any extensive use of Spanish is confined to Hispanic neighborhoods. But here, it is citywide. Some people with jobs that bring them into contact with the general public, such as store clerks and airport security guards, do not always speak English. Signs on everything from parking meters to exhibitions at the zoo are in both Spanish and English.

The city's main newspaper, The they m Miami Herald, publishes daily in both lation.

English and Spanish. The radio station with the largest advertising revenues in the Miami area last year, WQBA, broadcasts solely in Spanish.

It is possible to work and live here without speaking English. And at some major banks dealing with Latin America, there are executives who speak only Spanish.

Trend Toward Bilingualism

But anyone who wants to move up in business generally has to learn English. The trend in this city, therefore, is toward bilingualism, with economic pressures pushing Hispanic Americans to learn English and Anglo Americans to learn Spanish.

Dr. LaPorta, who is fighting for the ballot issue, has learned Spanish and said he welcomes immigrants. He said he was merely concerned that the formal language of government, for the sake of clarity, be English. Yet he also voiced a frustration that is often heard here.

"The Latins are coming up fast," he said. "There's a headiness, a certain righteous sense of superiority."

In all three states, the English proposal is in the form of a state constitutional amendment. The Arizona meas-

'I didn't move to Miami to live in a Spanish-speaking province.'

ure explicitly requires state and municipal officials to conduct government business in English. The Florida and Colorado proposals declare English the official language of the state and leave it to the Legislature to interpret.

Bilingual Teaching Not Affected

Opponents say the measures would lead to the elimination of interpreters at government proceedings and of Spanish translations now available on everything from state lottery tickets to welfare documents.

It is generally agreed that the English-only provision would not be applied to such matters as the 911 emergency telephone network. Bilingual education would not be affected since it is mandated by the Federal Government.

Polls in the three states have found that the ballot proposals have overwhelming support. In Florida, the Census Bureau puts the Hispanic population at 1.5 million, about 12 percent of the total population of 12.3 million. In 1970, Hispanic Americans numbered 405,000, or 5.9 percent of the population.

In Colorado, the Hispanic population, is about 400,000, just over 11 percent of the state total. But Hispanic-Americans make up about 25 percent of the Denver metropolitan area. In Arizona, the Hispanic account for 16 percent of the total population, or about 440,000 out of 2.7 million. In the Tucson area, they make up 24.6 percent of the population.

Supporters of the ballot proposal say Hispanic immigration differs from that of other ethnic groups in several ways, most importantly, in its size. The Census Bureau estimates Hispanic immigration to the United States at 315,000 in 1987, most of it to the South and the West. By comparison, Italian immigration, for example, was only 286,000 at its highest in 1907.

The supporters point out that previous immigrant groups came in spurts, while Hispanic immigration has been steady and increasing. In addition, they note that immigrant groups in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were usually unable to return to visit their native countries once they arrived in the United States. But the new Hispanic immigrants can travel back and forth because of airplanes and because they tend to have more money than earlier immigrants.

All those factors, the supporters of the English proposal say, keep Spanish entrenched among Hispanic immigrants.

Clouding the battle for the ballot issue has been a series of resignations by board members at U.S. English, a private group that is a main sponsor of the proposal in each of the states. The resignations came after it was disclosed that a contributor to the group had advocated forced sterilization of some minority group members and that an official of the group had written a memorandum in 1986 complaining that too many immigrants were Roman Catholic and that Hispanic immigrants had a propensity toward committing crime.

English Already Official

A leader in the opposition to the Florida proposal, Osvaldo Soto, a 59-year-old lawyer who fled Cuba in 1959, says the ballot issue is "the product of bigots and racists." He said English was already the official language of the country and that the only purpose of passing the ballot proposal would be to belittle Hispanic-Americans.

Mr. Soto said most Hispanic-Americans want to learn English and want their children to learn "because that's how they're going to succeed in this country." He said Hispanic-Americans were a relatively new immigrant group and that they would follow the pattern of previous groups in the use of English: The first generation does not speak it; the second generation speaks both English and the language of the home country; the third generation speaks only English.

Hispanic-Americans are learning English, Mr. Soto said, adding that the continuing immigration of Hispanics gave the impression that Hispanic-Americans were not learning it. He said that many of the early Hispanic immigrants, those fleeing Cuba in the late 1950's, were middle-aged and had found it difficult to learn a new language.

"On any given day," Mr. Soto said, "I don't get less than 10 calls from elderly people, saying they can't get this translated or they can't get that translated. And that's before the amendment even passes."