

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
79R5271 MXM-F

C.S.S.B. 213
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Government Organization
3/1/2005
Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S/SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

As introduced, S.B. 213 directs state agencies that have direct and constant contact with Spanish speaking constituents to create a Spanish version of their vital information and forms, so all Texans can equally have access to state information and resources.

The committee substitute senate bill clarifies the original language by putting the onus of translation on state agencies and making it clear that what needs to be translated is the vital information and forms of the agency.

Nearly a third of all Texans speak Spanish and 10 percent of all Texans do not speak English. The significant number of Spanish speaking citizens in Texas has caused an increased demand in equal access to state resources.

Texas residents are increasingly becoming more dependent on the Internet to address their needs. The state's website, www.TexasOnline.com is making great strides to serve the public's needs in cost effective ways. TexasOnline provides a one-stop accessible site to services in areas that range from renewal of occupational licenses and driver's licenses, to easy access to agency information. This website is vital for people in and out of Texas to access state government information and services.

Addressing the demand of the large number of Spanish-speaking Texans and the need to access state resources means encouraging and pushing state agencies to work to translate vital information and necessary forms. Only five state agencies currently have the entire contents of their sites available in Spanish and another 10 person publish some of their content in Spanish. C.S.S.B. requires that all state agencies follow federal guidelines requiring that state agencies that have direct and constant contact with Spanish-speaking constituents make vital information and their forms available in Spanish.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter F, Chapter 2054, Government Code, by adding Section 2054.116, as follows:

Sec. 2054.116. SPANISH LANGUAGE CONTENT ON AGENCY WEBSITES. (a) Defines "person of limited English proficiency."

(b) Requires each state agency to make a reasonable effort to ensure that Spanish speaking persons of limited English proficiency can meaningfully access state agency information online.

(c) Requires each agency to make certain considerations in determining whether a state agency is providing meaningful access.

(d) Provides that in making a reasonable effort to provide meaningful access, the agency must avoid certain access-limiting activities.

(e) Provides that this section does not apply to interactive applications provided through TexasOnline.

SECTION 2. Defines "person of limited English proficiency" and "state agency." Requires each state agency to examine the online information that it provides to the public in relation to Section 2054.116, Government Code, as added by this Act. Requires the agency, in performing the examination, to provide adequate opportunity for individuals interested in the examination to provide input, including persons of limited English proficiency and related organizations.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2005