

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING

AB 2341 (Fong)

As Amended May 5, 2026

2/3 vote. Urgency

SUMMARY

Requires, in the event of an emergency, local agencies to translate emergency response services in languages other than English, when 5% or greater speak English less than "very well", as specified; *and* speak a language other than English. The language or languages that must be translated must be spoken by 5% or greater of the population that speaks English less than "very well".

Major Provisions

- 1) Requires local agencies to translate information related to an emergency within its jurisdiction if 5% or more of the people speak English less than "very well", and to determine whether 5% or more of the population within the jurisdiction speak English less than "very well" via data from the American Community Survey or an equally reliable source.
- 2) Requires local agencies to determine whether a language meets criteria for translation by determining the total population of those within their jurisdiction that speaks English less than "very well," and, for each language included in the American Community Survey data, determine whether speakers of any language who speak English less than "very well," comprise at least 5 percent of the total population of that jurisdiction that speaks English less than "very well."
- 3) *Declares the urgency of this act to take effect immediately, necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety within the meaning of Article IV of the California Constitution. The facts constituting the necessity are to ensure that local agencies are able to provide translations during emergencies as required under law.*

COMMENTS

Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act: The Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act (Act) became law in 1973 and later amended by AB 2253 (Ting), Chapter 469, Statutes of 2014. This Act ensures all Californians, including limited-English-proficient (LEP) people, can access public services regardless of language barriers. The Act mandates that state and local agencies must provide information in English and, if the agency serves a "substantial number" of non-English speakers, any other relevant languages based on their jurisdiction. Agencies must conduct surveys every other year to assess their contact with the LEP population and determine which languages they will publish. Additionally, the Act mandates that every state and local agency have bilingual staff and translated written materials so that they and the LEP population can effectively communicate. Furthermore, each agency must post how to submit complaints of alleged Act violations, in all relevant languages, on their website's homepage. Cal HR must issue orders deemed appropriate to implement the Act if a state agency has yet to make reasonable progress toward reaching compliance. *Recent Disasters with Large Populations of Non-English Speakers:* In January 2023, a mass shooting occurred in Monterey Park, Los Angeles County, where the gunman killed eleven people and injured nine others. In that same month, a mass shooting occurred in Half Moon Bay, where seven people were killed and one person was critically injured. These communities are predominately Asian or Asian and Latino, respectively,

and have a significant number of community members that speak languages other than English. In these instances, law enforcement did not immediately apprehend the perpetrator. Law enforcement shared safety information with the public, but the author's office is concerned about whether these communities received adequate updates in their primary languages.

Later that year, in March 2023, a broken levee in Monterey County flooded the entire town of Pajaro and forced more than 2,000 people to evacuate. Pajaro is predominately a town of farmworkers where a large portion of the community only speaks Mixteco. Various news articles identify the failures of local agencies communicating with these individuals as well as the detrimental impacts on safety and access to recovery information.

According to the Author

Following a mass shooting that took place in my District in 2023, I introduced a bill to require translation to be provided in certain languages during an emergency situation. Translation is required if 5% of the population who speaks another language at home speaks English "less than very well" according to the American Community Survey. AB 2341 makes a minor change to make it clear that local agencies must translate emergency information into any language spoken by at least 5% of that population that speaks English less than "very well."

Arguments in Support

The California State Association of Counties (CSAC) and Urban Counties of California (UCC) write in support, "While the law (AB 1638) was intended to require translation into the top language(s) spoken other than English, specifically at least five percent of a city or county, late amendments created confusion about which languages must be translated. One reading of the law could require that every single language included in the American Community Survey (ACS) is required to be translated, causing local agencies to translate dozens of languages during an emergency. This could cause significant problems, consuming vast public resources during a crisis and, more importantly, crowding out information for those who most need it. Many local agencies use phone notifications during an emergency, delivering information via text or phone calls directly. If a county uses text or phone call notices to residents, they may have to deliver that notice in well over thirty languages under a reading of the current law. This could create unnecessary confusion or fatigue, causing residents to miss crucial notification about the emergency. AB 2341 would fix this problem, ensuring that emergency translations are delivered into languages spoken by at least five percent of speakers with translation needs – defined as those that speak English less than "very well." The bill provides vital clarity for public agencies and ensures the law can meet its intended purpose: to deliver rapid emergency notices in languages most commonly spoken in a city or county."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

This bill was not keyed fiscal.

VOTES

ASM EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT: 6-0-1

YES: Ransom, Hadwick, Arambula, Bennett, Calderon, DeMaio

ABS, ABST OR NV: Bains

UPDATED

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