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2012 Professional Practices Program

Language Determination in Los Angeles County: New Mandated Languages

Submitted by:

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Language Determinations in Los Angeles County: New Mandated Languages

ABSTRACT OF THE PROGRAM

As the largest election jurisdiction in the U.S. (4.3 million registered voters and 5,000 voting locations), the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk strives to stay in the forefront of providing service to our diverse electorate. The ultimate goal is to achieve 100% participation of eligible voters in elections. Various options are provided by the Multilingual Services Program, not only to meet current legal requirements but to continually improve the voting experience for every voter. The Multilingual Services (ML) Program is the first comprehensive program in the nation to address issues for Limited-English "Multilingual (ML) Voters". The ML Program maximizes partnerships with community organizations, schools, businesses and individuals to provide best practices in government service with limited staff, budget and other resources.

In response to new language requirements following the results of the 2010 Decennial Census, the Department embarked on a research project sought to better understand the diversity of our target populations and to expand our partnerships in these communities. This effort is in line with the Department's values of providing customer service rather than simply seeking minimal compliance. These values and the project that we submit for your consideration are keys to the County's success in providing effective language assistance in the most linguistically diverse jurisdiction.

THE PROBLEM/NEED OF THE PROGRAM

On October 13, 2011 the U.S. Census Bureau published new language assistance requirements for election jurisdictions. The determinations were made pursuant to Section 203 of the federal Voting Rights Act, 42 U.S.C. Sec 1973aa-1a. Based on the languages identified by the Bureau, jurisdictions are required to provide language assistance to voters belonging to the covered language groups.

There is no available voter information about the new language categories of Asian Indian and Other Asian Non Specified. Furthermore, unlike the existing languages covered by the County, the new categories identified by the US Census Bureau do not refer to a single defining language. The new language categories of Asian Indian and Other Asian Non Specified present nuanced challenges to developing and implementing new language assistance programs in the County. Neither of the two categories specified by the Census refers to a specific language. While the Asian Indian category generally refers to persons of Asian Indian heritage (that is persons of Indian origin or have ancestors of Indian origin or immigrants from India), the nation of India is characterized by extraordinary linguistic diversity. Similarly, the Other Asian Non Specified category refers to an amalgamation of nationalities artificially grouped by the Census Bureau.

The Department needs to obtain important baseline data in order to determine and provide appropriate language assistance services to those voters that are in the two broad categories.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

The research project that was conducted to develop the Department's language determinations included several components:

1) Census Data. An analysis of 2010 American Community Survey data. This included an analysis prepared for the department by the Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration at the University of Southern California;

2) Surname Analysis. The department partnered with the Asian Pacific American Legal Center utilizing Department's existing voter database against ethnic name lists and provides estimated counts of bilingual voters by precincts/poll locations. The Department was able to identify Asian Indian and Cambodian native voters through this process.

3) Voter Registration "Birth Place" Analysis. Background research to obtain voters' birth place information for Thai native voters.

4) Community Input. A series of meetings with key community organizations and advocates to discuss the Department's research and direction.

Each component can be made available to other staff members who need to refine the Department's targeting system in future elections.

RESULTS/SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAM

The project generated important qualitative and quantitative information that helped the Department make important determinations that identified *Hindi, Khmer, and Thai*, as the new covered languages. All election materials will be translated into these 3 new languages. In addition, where a local need is determined, the Department will serve additional Asian Indian languages by providing language assistance in the form of bilingual poll workers. These Asian Indian languages include: *Bengali and Gujarati*.

A total of 80 precincts/poll locations were identified as Hindi language targeted precincts; 49 precincts Khmer targeted precincts and 14 Thai targeted precincts. Staff was able to produce and supply translated materials to those targeted precincts for the June 2012 Presidential Primary Election. More new language voters are continued to be added to the language assist request list. Asian Pacific American Legal Center, who has been a partner with the Department in this new language project, was invited to talk about election to a Thai language channel. As part of the campaign to inform the community, a press release about the newly added languages was sent to all media outlets that serve the Los Angeles County community. A "Media Day" was held in May 2012 for the 3 new languages local media outlets and 8 representatives attended the event and filed reports announcing election services to those 3 new language voters. .

What distinguishes our approach and research project is our commitment to data and community input. In implementing new language requirements the department used demographic data to better understand the diversity of the "Asian Other" population and also the linguistic diversity within the Asian Indian population in the County. More importantly, our partnership with key community organizations within the respective communities leveraged their collective expertise and cultural acumen helped provide important qualitative input and direction. Community organization partnership provided input such as where and how to locate voters who need bilingual language assistance, within the respective language communities.

ATTACHMENT A



Los Angeles County **REGISTRAR-RECORDER/COUNTY CLERK**

DEAN C. LOGAN
Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk

February 1, 2012

TO: Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Chair
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

William T Fujioka, Chief Executive Officer

FROM: Dean C. Logan, Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk
Dean C. Logan

REPORT ON NEW MANDATED LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS

The Department has completed a review and analysis of new federally mandated language requirements for election jurisdictions. On October 13, 2011 the U.S. Census Bureau published new language assistance requirements for election jurisdictions. The determinations were made pursuant to Section 203 of the federal Voting Rights Act, 42 U.S.C. Sec 1973aa-1a. Based on the languages identified by the Bureau, jurisdictions are required to provide language assistance to voters belonging to the covered language groups.

Review and analysis of the new requirements identified two additional language groups for whom Los Angeles County will provide language assistance programs. The language categories are "Asian Indian" and "Other Asian Non Specified." More specifically, the Department has determined that in Los Angeles County these categories will include the following languages: *Hindi, Khmer, and Thai*. In addition, where a local need is determined, the Department will serve additional Asian Indian languages by providing language assistance in the form of bilingual poll workers. These Asian Indian languages include: *Bengali and Gujarati*. The following report includes the data and findings used by the Department to make new language need determinations for Los Angeles County.

Determining the language needs for these specific categories was difficult because they do not refer to a specific language. To identify the language needs specific to Los Angeles County, the Department analyzed available population and demographic data and consulted with prominent Community Based Organizations with specialized knowledge and understanding of the local Asian Indian and broader Asian American Pacific Islander communities.

Cultural and linguistic diversity is one of Los Angeles County's defining characteristics. Aside from being one of the nation's largest election jurisdictions, it is widely recognized as one of the most diverse as well. This diversity makes for a vibrant democracy. For the past decade Los Angeles County has helped to foster an open and inclusive democratic process by providing language assistance in six languages, other than English. Voters with a limited command of English could exercise their right to

New Voting Rights Language Requirements February 1, 2012 Page 2 of 13 vote by having access to translated election materials and bilingual poll workers in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Tagalog (Filipino), and Vietnamese. The new mandated languages identified will assist thousands of eligible voters exercise their right to vote and strengthen our democratic process.

The Department looks forward to serving our diverse communities and to continuing its commitment to providing Los Angeles County with fair, accessible, and transparent election services.

2011 Language Determinations in Los Angeles County: Understanding the New Requirements

January 31, 2012

Introduction

On October 13, 2011 the U.S. Census Bureau published new language assistance requirements for election jurisdictions. The determinations were made pursuant to Section 203 of the federal Voting Rights Act, 42 U.S.C. Sec 1973aa-1a. According to the published determinations, Los Angeles County will continue to provide language assistance to persons of Latino (Spanish), Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese heritage but, will now be required to also provide assistance to persons of Asian Indian heritage and for the broader non-specific category of "Other Asian Non-Specified". The two new categories would also be covered by provisions of the California Elections Code, Sec. 12303, 14201. Unlike the existing languages covered by the County, the new categories do not refer to a single defining language. The Department conducted important baseline research in order to determine the appropriate language assistance to be provided to the voters of Los Angeles County that might be included in these two broad categories. This report compiles various data profiling each of the language categories and provides initial recommendations on what languages the Department will focus on in 2012.

The research that was conducted to develop the Department's language determinations and prepare this report included several components:

- 1) An analysis of 2010 American Community Survey data. This included an analysis prepared for the department by the Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration at the University of Southern California;
- 2) Background research on language use and diversity among target populations;
- 3) A series of meetings with key community organizations and advocates to discuss the Department's research and direction (see Appendix 1).

The data collected helped to profile each target population. The profiles look at each group population in Los Angeles County. In particular, we profile:

- The population and electorate;
- Educational attainment and occupation;
- English ability and language spoken.

Challenges to Making Language Determinations

The new language categories of Asian Indian and Other Asian Non Specified present nuanced challenges to developing and implementing new language assistance programs in the County. Neither of the two categories specified by the Census refers to a specific language. While the Asian Indian category generally refers to persons of Asian Indian heritage (that is persons of Indian origin or have ancestors of Indian origin or immigrants from India), the nation of India is characterized by extraordinary linguistic diversity. Similarly, the Other Asian Non Specified category refers to an amalgamation of nationalities artificially grouped by the Census Bureau. As a result, the category does not refer to a single language group or even nationality. This made determining the precise languages to focus on difficult.

Population Group Profiles

In this section we have profiled each targeted language group. The profile provides a more detailed picture of these targeted populations within Los Angeles County.

Asian Indian Population of Los Angeles County

Determining the language needs of the Asian Indian population in Los Angeles County required appropriate consideration and analysis. Asian Indian culture is linguistically complex and diverse. As a result, determining the appropriate language to translate is difficult.

Population and Electorate:

- According to the American Community Survey (ACS), in 2010 there were 76,198 individuals who identified as Asian Indian in Los Angeles County. They account for 6% of the overall Asian population in the County.
- A significant share of the Asian Indian population is adult. Nearly 82% (62,170) of Asian Indians are 18 years of age or older.
- More than a third of Asian Indians are naturalized citizens. According to the ACS naturalized citizens account for 36% (27,096) of the Asian Indian population.
- Surname analyses have revealed that there are more than 20,000 registered voters of Asian Indian heritage in Los Angeles County.¹
- A significant share of the Asian Indian population is clustered into several communities in cities throughout the county. Five cities boast the largest concentration of Asian Indians: Artesia, Cerritos, Diamond Bar, Los Angeles, and Walnut.

Language and English Ability:

The 2001 Census of India identified 122 different languages spoken in the country. Language diversity is so pronounced, and a part of Indian culture, that the constitution of India recognizes 22 official languages. Despite the language diversity, however, India does recognize Hindi as the official national language. Hindi is the official language with which the government communicates and is the language spoken by more than 422 million Indian nationals. English is also predominant and declared by the constitution to be an associated national language along with Hindi. While Hindi is the official and predominant language in India, in the Southern states the language is less predominant. Taking this linguistic diversity into account we sought to learn more about the linguistic diversity that might exist within the Asian Indian communities of Los Angeles County. Specifically we sought to identify the predominant Indian languages spoken in Los Angeles County and the level of English acquisition that exists among them.

A custom analysis of 2010 American Community Survey data, prepared for the Department by the Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration (CSII) at the University of Southern California, provided important information on the specific languages spoken by those persons who said they speak a language other than English. The analysis reveals a fair amount of linguistic diversity. Of the languages reported by persons in Los Angeles County, five predominant languages emerged (Hindi, Punjabi, Gujarati, Bengali, and Urdu). Interestingly these languages are spoken in Northern, Eastern, and Western states where Hindi has a strong presence, unlike southern states where the language is less prominent.

The CSII analysis further confirms the high level of English acquisition that exists in Asian Indian communities. Among individuals who speak an Indian language, 89% say they speak English "Very Well" or "Well." These data suggest a fairly bilingual population with a good command of the English language. The level of English ability does vary by specific language group. The majority of people that reported speaking English "Not Well" or "Not at All" are within the four predominant languages we identified.

"Other Asian Non-Specified" Populations in Los Angeles County

The U.S. Census determination of "Other Asian Non-Specified" (herein referred to as Other Asian) is regarded as a subgroup within the general Asian Language Minority group. Asian language determinations issued by the U.S. Census Bureau have, in most cases, referred to a specific national origin or ethnic group (e.g. Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Japanese, etc.). The Other Asian category, however, does not refer to a single or specific origin or ethnic group. In its October release of new language determinations for jurisdictions, the Census Bureau did not issue any clarification or additional guidance to jurisdictions as to the suggested or specific language minority groups to be covered under the category. In the absence of clarifying guidance from the U.S. Census Bureau or Voting Rights Section of the Department of Justice, the Department identified specified Asian subgroups reported in the American Community Survey that could be considered Other Asian and selected the two most prominent Other Asian groups in Los Angeles County to target for language assistance.

¹ Asian Pacific American Legal Center (2009). "Asian Americans at the Ballot Box: The 2008 General Election in Los Angeles County". http://demographics.apalc.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/APALC_BallotBox_LA2008_FINAL.pdf.

For purposes of determining specific groups to consider in the Other Asian category, we reviewed American Community Survey documentation on Race category definitions of Asian². In addition, we reviewed the Race question on the 2010 American Community Survey questionnaire. The questionnaire lists any group other than, Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Guamanian or Chamorro, Japanese, Korean, Native Hawaiian, Samoan, or Vietnamese as “Other Asian.” Based on this review it was determined that Other Asian can refer to those Asian group categories reported by respondents other than, Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Guamanian or Chamorro, Japanese, Korean, Native Hawaiian, Samoan, or Vietnamese.

Six specific Asian groups with a population within Los Angeles County of at least 1,000 were identified. Of these, Cambodian and Thai (the two largest population groups) were selected to further profile and target for language assistance. Because Cambodian and Thai are the largest they are likely to have larger target populations--voting Age Citizens who speak English less than well or not at all.

Table 1.

<i>Los Angeles County "Other Asian" Populations 2008-2010</i>		
	<u>Total</u>	<u>% of Total Asian</u>
Cambodian	32,397	2.4%
Thai	23,735	1.8%
Indonesian	10,066	0.7%
Pakistani	9,016	0.7%
Sri Lankan	6,156	0.5%
Laotian	3,141	0.2%

Source: Total Asian Alone by Selected Groups. 2008-2010 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates

Cambodians in Los Angeles County

Population and Electorate:

- Cambodian communities in Los Angeles County account for 2.4% of the total Asian population (32,397).
- Nearly 80% (25,181) of the population are adults.
- Naturalized citizens comprise a sizable share of the Cambodian population. Four out of every ten Cambodians (44%) are naturalized citizens.
- More than one-third of the adult Cambodian population is registered to vote in Los Angeles County. According to a report on the 2008 General Election from the Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC), there were 8,553 Cambodian registered voters in Los Angeles County in 2008.
- Our initial research suggests that a sizable share of the Cambodian community in Los Angeles County is concentrated in the following cities: Long Beach, Signal Hill, Lakewood, Pomona.

Language and English Ability:

While 23 different living languages have been identified in Cambodia, the official and predominant language in the country is Khmer, Central. The language is spoken by approximately 88% of the population. In addition, Khmer is the widespread language spoken by immigrants abroad (Canada, China, France, Laos, United States, Vietnam).

The Cambodian voting population in Los Angeles County is likely to benefit greatly from language assistance. Data from the CSII analysis of 2010 American Community Survey revealed that one-third of the Cambodian population in the County does not speak English well or at all.

Thai Population in Los Angeles County

Population and Electorate:

² “A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Island, Thailand, and Vietnam.” U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey: 2010 Subject Definitions. http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/SubjectDefinitions/2010_ACSSubjectDefinitions.pdf

- Thai communities in Los Angeles County account for less than 2% of the total Asian population (23,735).
- Nearly 90% (21,362) of the Thai population are adults.
- Naturalized citizens account for 42% of the Thai population in Los Angeles County.
- No surname analysis exists to estimate the Thai registered voter population.
- Initial research suggests clustering of Thai communities in the cities of: Cerritos, Glendale, Long Beach, Los Angeles.

Language and English Ability:

The national language of Thailand is Thai. The language is spoken by more than 20 million inhabitants. While there are more than 74 other languages spoken in Thailand the country has a high literacy rate (89%). This suggests that Thai is widely understood throughout the country.

The Thai population in Los Angeles County is likely to benefit from language assistance. Data from the CSII analysis show that a majority of the Thai population in the county speaks English less than “Very Well”, and a quarter speak English “Not Well” or not at all.

Findings

Overall, the new language categories of Asian Indian and Other Asian Non Specified present nuanced challenges to developing and implementing language assistance programs. Neither of the two categories specified by the Census refers to a specific language. While the Asian Indian category generally refers to persons of Asian Indian heritage (that is persons of Indian origin or have ancestors of Indian origin or immigrants from India), the nation of India is characterized by extraordinary linguistic diversity. Similarly, the Other Asian Non Specified category refers to an amalgamation of nationalities artificially grouped by the Census Bureau. As a result, the category does not refer to a single language group or even nationality. This made determining the precise languages to focus on difficult.

After reviewing and analyzing available data and discussing our findings with key community organizations we make the following recommendations:

1. Asian Indian

- Provide translated materials in Hindi. The Hindi language is the national language of India and is spoken by a majority of the population in the country. The language is used by the government to communicate with citizens and the state. Our research of the various Indian languages spoken in Los Angeles County shows that Hindi is clearly the predominant language. Moreover, data also suggests that those who reported another Indian language are likely to come from states where Hindi is understood or may likely have some command of English. A majority of Indian language speakers identified languages spoken in more northern, eastern, and western states. Hindi is less predominant in the southern states of the country.
- To enhance the level of assistance provided to our Asian Indian communities and to account for the known linguistic diversity within these communities, the Department should also recruit bilingual poll workers that can provide oral language assistance in either Gujarati or Bengali languages, depending on the local need identified. While we are confident that a majority of limited English speaking Asian Indian voters will have some comprehension of Hindi or some command of English, having oral assistance available in these languages will provide further assistance on Election Day.

2. Other Asian Non Specified

- After a review of available Census Data the Department should provide translated materials to limited English speaking Cambodian and Thai voters. These languages include Khmer (Cambodian) and Thai.

APPENDIX 1.

Summary of Meetings with Community Organizations

Date	Participating Organization	Topic	Comments
11/22/11	South Asian Network, Asian Pacific American Legal Center	Introduction; Definition of Asian Indian and its language	To continue meeting
12/13/11	South Asian Network, Asian Pacific American Legal Center	Determination of the languages for needs assessment; Outreach to the Asian Indian community	Prepare Robo Call survey; sent outreach staff job announcement
12/16/11	Asian Pacific American Legal Center	Determination of Asian Not-Specified Language	Suggested Cambodian, Accepted by APALC on 2/23/11

1/5/12	South Asian Network, Asian Pacific American Legal Center	Review Robo Call survey questionnaires; RR/CC asked for Bengali language assistance for the call recording	SAN assisted in Bengali Robo Call recording on 1/6/12; Robo Call was launched on 1/11/12
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