

Protect Asian American Voting Rights

Boston has unanimously passed a Home Rule Petition to provide fully bilingual ballots to Chinese American and Vietnamese American voters. It now needs to be enacted by the state legislature and signed by the governor. Ask your state elected officials to support Boston's Home Rule Petition, Docket #5027, which:

- 1) continues the use of Chinese/English and Vietnamese/English bilingual ballots beyond 2008, and
- 2) provides for fully bilingual ballots, including Chinese transliteration of candidates' names.

TARGET AREA

The bill applies only to elections held in the City of Boston, but includes elections at the municipal, state, and federal level. Chinese/English and Vietnamese/English bilingual ballots would be available in those precincts where the linguistic population is concentrated.

SPECIFIC PROVISIONS

1. As launched by the City of Boston in 2005, bilingual ballots will be provided to Chinese-speaking voters in precincts where there are at least 35 Chinese-surnamed voters and to Vietnamese-speaking voters in precincts where there are at least 30 Vietnamese-surnamed voters.

2. Chinese/English bilingual ballots will include a phonetic rendering of candidates' names into Chinese characters through a process which includes transliteration by a qualified translator, review by the City's Election Advisory Committee, and a seven-day period for candidates to approve, modify, or decline to use the transliterated name.

WHY DO WE NEED VIETNAMESE AND CHINESE BILINGUAL BALLOTS?

Without bilingual ballots, many foreign-born citizens are unable to vote freely and independently.

Specific voting rights complaints by elderly voters led to Boston's agreement to provide bilingual ballots to Chinese and Vietnamese-speaking voters. Bilingual ballots are most needed by elders, who have difficulty learning English, and who were exempted from the English language portion of the citizenship test because they were long-time permanent residents. If lawmakers do not act soon, there will be no Chinese or Vietnamese bilingual ballots beyond 2008, when the current law expires, and elderly voters will be discouraged from voting or vulnerable again to voting rights violations.

WHY DO WE NEED TRANSLITERATION?

Candidate names are the most important part of the ballot for a voter to read!

Transliteration is a way of transferring a word from one writing system into another; in this case, a phonetic rendering of a name using Chinese characters. It is needed because the Chinese language, unlike Spanish or Vietnamese, does not use the alphabet. Transliteration of names is done every day in Chinese newspapers, and, like you, Chinese-speaking voters would not mistakenly think that Mr. Green is green!

Transliteration has been practiced successfully in New York for 13 years, as well as for elections in Los Angeles County, Alameda County, Orange County, San Francisco County, Santa Clara County, and most recently here in the City of Boston in 2007.

HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

Financial costs are negligible. In 2007, when the City of Boston produced fully bilingual Chinese and Vietnamese bilingual ballots for four elections, the total translation and printing costs were less than \$7,000. Expected costs for a state or federal election would be slightly higher.

WHO IS IN SUPPORT OF THIS HOME RULE PETITION?

Boston City Council, Mayor Thomas M. Menino, Sen. Dianne Wilkerson, Sen. Steven Tolman, Sen. Ed Augustus, Rep. Salvatore F. DiMasi, Rep. Willie Mae Allen, Rep. Carlo Basile, Rep. William Brownsberger, Rep. Linda Dorcena Forry, Rep. Gloria Fox, Rep. Jack Hart, Rep. Kevin Honan, Rep. Byron Rushing, Rep. Jeffrey Sanchez, Rep. Frank Smizik, Rep. Martin Walsh

For more information, contact the Coalition for Asian American Voting Rights at (617) 357-4499

Coalition for Asian American Voting Rights

Alderman Amy Mah Sangiolo, Newton * Asian American Christian Educational & Social Services * American Chinese Federation * Asian American Civic Association * Asian Community Development Corporation * Asian Pacific American Agenda Coalition * Asian American Resource Workshop * Blessed Mother Teresa Parish * Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center * Chinatown Main Street * Chinatown Resident Association * Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association * Chinese Historical Society of New England * Chinese Progressive Association * Chung Wah Academy * City Councilor Sam Yoon, Boston * Greater Boston Golden Age Center * Hakka Association * Harry H. Dow Memorial Legal Assistance Fund * Mass Pike Towers Tenant Association * Massachusetts Vietnamese American Women's League * MassVOTE * New Majority * ONE Lowell * Organization of Chinese Americans * Taishan Association and Taishan #1 High School Alumni Association * Tai Tung Village Tenants Association * Viet-AID * Vietnamese American Community of Massachusetts * Vietnamese American Small Business Association