

or she must, by law, demonstrate an eighth grade level of understanding of the English language.

It was 150 years ago we founded common schools. We call them public schools today. Albert Shanker, the former head of the American Federation of Teachers, said the reason for the common school was so we could teach mostly immigrant children to read and write in English, to do math, and what it means to become an American, with the hope they would go home and teach their parents.

We have always known it is important as Americans to have a common language because that is how we can communicate with one another. Immigrants to our country understand this. That is why they come here. They want to be part of our country that shares the values of liberty and equal opportunity. They want to contribute to our history of striving toward those values. They want to learn our common language, and usually do, as evidenced by long waiting lists for a number of English as a second language adult education courses across our country. That is why this Senate, just a few weeks ago, passed an amendment to the immigration bill by a vote of 91 to 1 to help legal immigrants learn English and to allow those who become fluent in English to become American citizens 1 year faster.

We value our common language. It isn't an argument that is hard to understand. In fact, when I first announced this resolution, the first supportive e-mail I received in my office came from Mr. Ramon L. Cisneros, the publisher of *La Campana*, a Spanish-language newspaper in Nashville with 18,000 subscribers.

He wrote:

. . . Thank you for this resolution. We are Hispanic Americans and sometimes we write in Spanish for the benefit of those newcomers who are in the process of learning English. However, our common language as Americans is and will always be English. And our national symbols should always be said and sung in English.

I didn't ask Mr. Cisneros to write to me, but I am glad he did. He is proud of his Hispanic heritage. He performs an important service for Hispanics in the Nashville area, which is a growing part of our State, but he is also a proud, patriotic American. Our country is enriched by citizens like Mr. Cisneros.

I am puzzled by the reaction from some of my colleagues in the Democratic Party who seem to want to endorse the idea that we should sing the national anthem in some other language and recite the Pledge of Allegiance in some other language. We salute the American flag. We pledge allegiance to the United States, and we speak in our common language. That is how we unite ourselves.

Also, we might do a little bit better if we taught more U.S. history and civics in our public schools, which is another subject I have been working on with strong support on the Democratic

side from Senator KENNEDY, from Senator REID, and especially from Senator BYRD.

I might note that in the House of Representatives, some Democrats have already chosen to cosponsor this same identical resolution. It has been offered by Congressman RYUN of Kansas. I have a hard time understanding why Democrats in the Senate are not supportive. Maybe I just made a mistake. Maybe I misunderstood what has happened. So let me try once again.

I ask unanimous consent that S. Res. 458 be discharged from the Judiciary Committee; further, that the Senate proceed to its consideration. I further ask that the resolution and preamble be agreed to and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, on behalf of other Democratic Members, I will object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I think that makes my point. Apparently, I did not misunderstand. Apparently, the Democratic Party in the Senate does not agree that we should say the Pledge of Allegiance, sing the national anthem, and take the oath of citizenship in our common language, English. That is a grave misunderstanding of our country's greatest accomplishment. Our diversity is a magnificent achievement, but our greater achievement is that we have taken all of this diversity and formed it into one country so that we are the United States of America. It is a central part of becoming American.

I am extremely disappointed by this objection.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

ENGLISH IN AMERICA

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, let me say that Democrats and Republicans are perhaps not all of one mind on the question the Senator just raised.

I personally believe it is absolutely essential to the strength of America that we encourage and insist that people who come to this country speak in English. A common language is absolutely essential to the unity of a nation. I look to our neighbors to the north and see the incredible traumas they have been through because they are speaking in two different languages.

My own strong belief is we ought to say the pledge in English, we ought to sing the national anthem in English. That doesn't prevent someone else from singing it in another language. That does not offend me. But I do think that it is absolutely essential for the strength and the unity of our Nation that those who come here, those who become citizens, are able to speak English.

I come from a proud tradition of immigrants. We are sort of the North Dakota melting pot. I am part Danish, I am part Swedish, I am part Norwegian,

I am part German, I am part Scots-Irish, I am part French. So many of the people of my State came here from Scandinavian and German countries. They are intensely proud of their traditions. Many of them continue to speak the languages they came to this country with, but almost without exception they made a priority of learning English, speaking in English. I believe that is essential to our common heritage, that we have a common language.

I personally certainly believe that in any official setting, we ought to sing the anthem in English, we ought to say the pledge in English. If someone wants to, at some other setting, sing in some other language, that does not offend me, but in any official setting and in terms of what we ask and insist people do who are going to be part of our country, it is absolutely imperative they learn English. That is not just for the good of the country, although it is certainly that, it is also for their own good.

My wife's family came here from Italy. My wife told me many times about growing up in that family. Her grandfather for a time came and lived with them. There was an insistence in their family on speaking English even though the grandfather who lived with them spoke no English.

I find many who come from an immigrant background—as did I, as did my wife and her family—in our families, there was an understanding that the first order of business was to learn English, to speak English if we were going to be part of this country of which we are so proud.

I hope very much this is not presented as a partisan matter. I don't think it is. As one person on this side of the aisle, I believe it is imperative that we take the pledge in English, that we sing the anthem in English, that we insist that people who come to be part of this country learn English. I believe it is absolutely essential that English clearly be the official language of our Nation. That is absolutely imperative for us as a country.

I also believe it is absolutely in the interest of the people who come here. That is certainly the lesson learned in my family, of people coming from all over the globe. My relatives who came from Denmark, my relatives who came from Sweden, my relatives who came from Norway, and my relatives who came from Germany were so proud to be part of this country. And they recognized that it was in their interest and it was their responsibility as a first order of business to learn English.

SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS AND AGRICULTURE DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I rise to talk about the legislation we have just passed and to say to my colleagues there are provisions in the legislation for agriculture disaster that have been ridiculed in some circles. I would say