



Office of  
**Jason Crowell** State  
Senator

The Crowell Connection



Senator Jason Crowell – Serving Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Madison, Mississippi, Perry, and Scott Counties.

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## English as the Official Language

In 1999, the city council of El Cenizo, Texas voted to hold all monthly meetings and all official functions in Spanish. This was the first instance in the U.S. when a community of non-English speakers began to conduct official meetings in a language other than English. Since then, the practice has spread through states such as Texas and California. Although this is a practice that has not yet spread to Missouri, in order to prevent similar instances from ever happening I worked this session to pass House Joint Resolution 7. This resolution will let you decide whether to change Missouri's Constitution and make English the official

language of this state to be used in all official proceedings.



According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there are 114 languages spoken in the state of Missouri, creating the potential for some small populations to try to take actions similar to those in Texas. Some Missouri communities have already felt the need to make English the official language. In Valley

Park, a city outside of St. Louis, the Board of Alderman passed an ordinance making English the official language of the city. The law was challenged and revised, but the intentions and concerns of the Board of Alderman were clear.

Current Missouri law states that English is the common language of the state and that fluency in English is an integral part of American culture. This is an important distinction; however, it does nothing to make sure that English is the language used in official

proceedings. By asking voters to approve a constitutional amendment, we are creating a provision with clear and concrete language that cannot be overturned by activist judges.

If HJR 7 is approved by voters during the November 2008 elections, it will mandate that all official proceedings need to be conducted in English. This includes debate on the Senate floor and school board or city council meetings. The measure does not exclude the use of translators in instances such as court proceedings. Instead, the provision ensures that all official proceedings will be conducted in English and that English will be the language of record.



A 2000 poll revealed that there are 21.3 million Americans that have “limited English proficiency,” a 52 percent increase over the last ten years. Without provisions such as HJR 7, there could come a time when Missourians will not be able to comprehend what is going on during official proceedings in their communities. By giving voters the choice to make English the official language of official proceedings in the state, we are assuring Missourians that they will always be able to understand the business being discussed by their state and local governments. I encourage you to support HJR 7.

### **Contact Me**

As always, I appreciate hearing your comments, opinions and concerns. Please feel free to contact me in Jefferson City at (573) 751-2459. You may write to me at Jason Crowell; Missouri Senate; State Capitol; Jefferson City, MO 65101, or email me at: [jcrowell@senate.mo.gov](mailto:jcrowell@senate.mo.gov) or visit me on the web at <http://www.jasoncrowell.com>.

#### **Contact Information**

**Capitol Office**  
State Capitol Building  
Room 323  
Jefferson City, MO 65101

**Website:**  
<http://www.senate.mo.gov/crowell>

**Phone Number:**  
573.751.2459  
**Fax:**  
573.522.9289

