

# The Effects of Ethnic Diversity and Economic Conditions on the Enactment of English-Only Laws in the United States

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## What are English-Only Laws (EOLs)?

- EOLs mandate government employees to conduct government business in English only.
- These laws ban or restrict the use of other languages.
- Some are more restrictive, others are “primarily symbolic.”
- EOLs deny limited English proficient (LEP) citizens access to public goods and services.
- Of the 308.7 million people in the U.S., only 11 million (3.6%) are undocumented aliens.

# LEP Populations in the U.S.

- LEP persons are those individuals who have a limited ability to read, write, speak or understand English.
- Increased by 80% between 1990-2010.
- 40 languages are spoken or used in the U.S.
- LEP individuals are 12.5% of the U.S. population.
- Deaf/hard of hearing individuals and some Native Americans are included in LEP populations.

# Historical Overview



- EOLs have coincided with waves of immigrants.
- Three waves of immigrants increased nativists need to defend the English language.
  - World War I (1914-1918)
  - World War II (1939-1945)
  - Change in immigration law (1965)
- A number of EOLs were enacted in 1980s due to the large foreign born population that grew during the decade.

# Influence of Economic Conditions and Ethnic Diversity on the Passage of English-Only Laws

- Limited English speaking workers tend to earn less than comparable workers.
- With influx of immigrants nativists felt that the American culture was under attack.

# Methodology

- Focus on relationship between economic conditions and ethnic diversity on state enactment of EOLs.
- **Dependent variable**—English-Only Laws
- **Independent variables**—political ideology, immigrant population, economic condition, racial/ethnic diversity, and region.
- These terms are defined in Table 1 of the Appendix.

# Hypotheses



- H<sub>1</sub>. *States with a higher percentage of immigrants are more likely to adopt English-Only laws, compared to states with lower percentage of foreign-born individuals.*
- H<sub>2</sub>. *States with difficult economic conditions are more likely, than states with less difficult economic conditions, to adopt English-Only laws.*
- H<sub>3</sub>. *States with low racial/ethnic diversity are less likely to adopt English-Only laws compared to states with high racial/ethnic diversity.*

# Discussion and Results

Table 2. Correlation		
	Other Language	Unemployment Rate
Foreign Born	0.876	0.07
Other Language		0.118



# Results (continued)

Table 3. Logistic Regression of English Only Laws in the U.S.: 1990 through 2007

Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Coefficient	z-value	Coefficient	z-value	Coefficient	z-value
<i>Political Party Affiliation Variables (PPAV)</i>						
Democratic Governor and Unified Democratic Legislature	-.203 (.238)	-0.85	-.151 (.235)	-0.64	-.229 (.247)	-0.92
Democratic Governor and Unified Republican Legislature	-.103 (.244)	-0.42	-.148 (.247)	-0.60	-.096 (.249)	-0.38
Democratic Governor and Split Legislature	-.805 (.304)	-2.64 ***	-.846 (.304)	-2.78 ***	-.846 (.310)	-2.73 ***
Republican Governor and Unified Democratic Legislature	.058 (.251)	0.23	.141 (.252)	0.56	.037 (.258)	0.14
Republican Governor and Split Legislature	-.877 (.282)	-3.11 ***	-.825 (.279)	-2.96 ***	-.909 (.285)	-3.19 ***

# Results (continued)

Table 3. Logistic Regression of English Only Laws in the U.S.: 1990 through 2007

Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Coefficient	z-value	Coefficient	z-value	Coefficient	z-value
<i>Non-PPA Variables</i>						
Foreign Born	-.024 (.019)	-1.28				
Other Language			-.032 (.010)	-3.11 ***		
Foreign Born * Other Language					-.000 (.001)	-0.15
<i>Economic Variable</i>						
Unemployment Rate	-.252 (.062)	-4.04 ***	-.239 (.063)	-3.82 ***	-.247 (.062)	-3.98 ***
<i>Racial/Ethnic Diversity</i>						
White	-1.255 (.223)	-5.64 ***	-1.333 (.203)	-6.56 ***	-1.134 (.210)	-5.40 ***
<i>Regional/Spatial Controls</i>						
Northeast Region	-1.516 (.315)	-4.81 ***	-1.361 (.290)	-4.70 ***	-1.694 (.305)	-5.56 ***
Midwest Region	-.607 (.274)	-2.21 **	-.544 (.270)	-2.02 **	-.681 (.273)	-2.49 **
West Region	-.422 (.278)	-1.52	-.221 (.265)	-0.83	-.612 (.274)	-2.23 **
Constant	2.789 (.413)	6.76 ***	2.854 (.406)	7.02 ***	2.659 (.403)	6.59 ***
R <sup>2</sup>		0.150		0.157		0.149
Model (Wald) X <sup>2</sup> (11)		136.29 ***		144.75 ***		133.27 ***
N		861		857		857

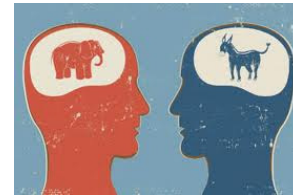
**Notes:** 1. The state of Nebraska was not included in these models because it has a unicameral legislature.

2. Robust standard errors are in parentheses; statistical significance at the 0.01 level, 0.05 and 0.10 level is indicated by \*\*\*, \*\* and \*, respectively.

Sources: World Almanac (2009), U.S. Census Bureau (2009a), U.S. Census Bureau (2009b), National Governors Association (2009).

*Political Ideology will affect the adoption of EOLs. Specifically, we hypothesized that states with governments controlled by the Republican Party were more likely to adopt EOLs than states with governments controlled by the Democratic Party.*

- Political ideology had the expected effect on the adoption of EOLs.



- Observed differences between states with Republican governor and unified Republican legislature and states with political configuration involving split legislature were statistically significant.

*H<sub>1</sub>: States with a higher percentage of immigrants are more likely to adopt EOLs, compared to states with a lower percentage of immigrants.*

- Immigrant population had the opposite effect on the adoption of EOLs.
- This was contrary to our expectation.
- States with a higher percentage of immigrant populations were less likely to adopt EOLs.

*H2: States with difficult economic conditions are more likely, than states with less difficult economic conditions to adopt EOLs.*

- A negative effect of economic conditions was found on the adoption of EOLs.
- It was statistically significant for foreign born as well as populations speaking other languages.
- This finding is not consistent with the literature.

*H<sub>3</sub>: States with low racial/ethnic diversity are less likely to adopt EOLs compared to states with high racial/ethnic diversity*



- Racial/ethnic diversity was found to have a significant effect on the adoption of EOLs.
- States with low racial/ethnic diversity were less likely to adopt EOLs.

*States in the Southern region are more likely to adopt EOLs, compared to states in the Midwest, Northeast, and West.*

- Southern states were found to be more likely to adopt EOLs than states in other regions.
- Results were statistically significant except for those between Southern and Western regions.



# Conclusions

- Some findings contradict the literature.
  - **Economic condition**
- It may not be immigrant population that triggers feelings of anxiety and xenophobia but rather the racial/ethnic composition of the immigrant population.
- Massive growth in non-English and non-Protestant immigrant population for non-European countries is a trigger for the adoption of EOLs.





# Limitations

- Data constraints
  - Restricted to results since 1990.
- Limited measure for political ideology by party affiliation of state officials.
- Simplistic measure of racial/ethnic diversity.
  - White or non-white populations.

**Table 1. Description of the Variables**

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Definition</u>	<u>Mean (SD)</u>	<u>Range</u>	<u>N</u>
<i>English-Only Laws</i>	Measures that mandate people to “speak English only” by banning or restricting the use of other languages by government agencies and private businesses		0 – 1	882
<i>Political ideology</i>	Political party affiliation of state officials			
Democratic Governor and Unified Democratic Legislature	States with a Democratic governor and a Democratic-controlled legislature		0 – 1	862
Democratic Governor and Unified Republican Legislature	States with a Democratic governor and a Republican-controlled legislature		0 – 1	862
Democratic Governor and Split Legislature	States with a Democratic governor and a split (bi-partisan) legislature		0 – 1	862
Republican Governor and Split Legislature	States with a Republican governor and a split (bi-partisan) legislature		0 – 1	862
Republican Governor and Unified Democratic Legislature	States with a Republican governor and a Democratic-controlled legislature		0 – 1	862
Republican Governor and Unified Republican Legislature	States with a Republican governor and a Republican-controlled legislature		0 – 1	862
<i>Immigrant population</i>				
Foreign born	Percentage of foreign born persons in the state, including naturalized U.S. citizens and non-U.S. citizens	6.17 (5.37)	.80 – 27.42	881
Other language	Percentage of persons 5 years and above who speak languages other than English.	11.36 (8.62)	2.09 – 42.61	887
<i>Economic condition</i>	The rate of unemployment in a state.	5.14 (1.37)	2.30 – 11.3	882
<i>Racial/ethnic diversity</i>	The extent of racial/ethnic diversity in a state (the relative percentage of white and non-white in a state).		0 – 1	882
<i>Region</i>				
Northeast	States in the census bureau population region of Northeast		0 – 1	882
Midwest	States in the census bureau population region of Midwest		0 – 1	882
South	States in the census bureau population region of South		0 – 1	882
West	States in the census bureau population region of West		0 – 1	882

# ANY QUESTIONS?

