

Date of Hearing: April 13, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Rhodesia Ransom , Chair

AB 2341 (Fong) – As Amended April 6, 2026

SUBJECT: Local government: emergency response services: use of languages other than English

SUMMARY: Requires, in the event of an emergency, local agencies to translate emergency response services in languages other than English, when 5% or greater speak English less than “very well”, as specified; *and* speak a language other than English. The language or languages that must be translated must be spoken by 5% or greater of the population that speaks English less than “very well”.

Specifically, **this bill:**

1. Requires local agencies to translate information related to an emergency within its jurisdiction if 5% or more of the people speak English less than “very well”, and to determine whether 5 percent or more of the population within the jurisdiction speak English less than “very well” via data from the American Community Survey or an equally reliable source.
2. Requires local agencies to determine whether a language meets criteria for translation by determining the total population of those within their jurisdiction that speaks English less than “very well,” and, for each language included in the American Community Survey data, determine whether speakers of any language who speak English less than “very well,” comprise at least 5 percent of the total population of that jurisdiction that speaks English less than “very well.”
3. Makes clarifying, nonsubstantive changes, as specified.

EXISTING LAW:

1. Requires, in the event of an emergency within the jurisdiction of a local agency that provides emergency response services and that serves a population within which 5 percent or more of the people speak English less than “very well” and jointly speak a language other than English, the local agency shall provide information related to the emergency in English and in all languages spoken jointly by the 5 percent or more of the population that speaks English less than “very well.” (Government Code Section 7299.7).
2. Requires local agencies to reassess the data every five years to ensure that the language or languages in which the local agency provides information is consistent with the requirements, as specified. (Government Code Section 7299.7).
3. Requires local agencies providing translated sources to ensure the quality of information translated and provided to individuals that speak English less than “very well” is as comprehensive, actionable, and timely as the information provided to English-speaking persons. (Government Code Section 7299.7).

4. Requires local agencies to attempt to utilize community members with the cultural competencies and language skills necessary to effectively communicate with those that speak English less than “very well” using, whenever feasible, native speakers of the relevant languages who also speak English fluently. (Government Code Section 7299.7).
5. Requires the Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation to survey a sample of local agencies every three years to determine the extent to which local agencies are complying with the requirements of this section and shall report the findings to the Legislature, commencing January 1, 2027. (Government Code Section 7299.7).
6. Establishes the California Emergency Services Act, declaring all emergency services functions of this state be coordinated as far as possible with the comparable functions of its political subdivisions, of the federal government including its various departments and agencies, of other states, and of private agencies of every type, to the end that the most effective use may be made of all manpower, resources, and facilities for dealing with any emergency that may occur (Government Code Section 8550)
7. Establishes the Accessibility to Emergency Information and Services, providing that translating emergency notifications into the most commonly spoken language other than English is a critically important governmental activity. (Government Code Section 8594.16).
8. Requires the Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) to create a library of translated emergency notifications that may be used by designated alerting authorities when issuing emergency notifications and consider the two most commonly spoken languages other than English in the state when creating the library. (Government Code Section 8594.16).
9. Requires Cal OES to create a translation style guide that includes a glossary of translated standard abbreviations used in emergency notifications. (Government Code Section 8594.16).
10. Requires designated alerting authorities to consider using the library and translation style guide developed when issuing emergency notifications to the public. (Government Code Section 8594.16)
11. Establishes that to maximize efficiency and use of the system, all and at “911” public safety answering points serving an area where 5 percent or more of the population, speak a specific primary language other than English, operators who speak that other language, in addition to English, shall be on duty or available at all times for “911” emergency services. (Government Code Section 53112)
12. Establishes the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act, providing for the removal of language barriers that prevent the people of this state who are not proficient in English from effectively accessing government services and otherwise communicating with their government. (Government Code Section 7290).

13. Requires every state agency which serves a substantial number of non-English-speaking people and which provides materials in English explaining services shall also provide the same type of materials in any non-English language spoken by a substantial number of the public served by the agency. (Government Code Section 7295.2).
14. Requires a state agency distribute the applicable written materials, as specified, in the appropriate non-English language through all its offices to non-English-speaking persons, or, as an alternative, furnish translation aids, translation guides, or provide assistance in completing and understanding English forms or questionnaires (Government Code Section 7295.4)
15. Requires the Department of Human Resources (Cal HR) to be responsible for informing state agencies of their responsibilities related to the use of foreign languages in public services and providing state agencies with technical assistance (Government Code Section 7299.2)
16. Requires each state agency to conduct a language survey of each of its statewide and local offices every two years, as specified (Government Code Section 7299.4), to be reviewed by Cal HR and reported to the legislature (Government Code Section 7299.6)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown. A fiscal committee has not analyzed this bill.

COMMENTS:

Purpose of the Bill: According to the author, “following a mass shooting that took place in my District in 2023, I introduced a bill to require translation to be provided in certain languages during an emergency situation. Translation is required if 5% of the population who speaks another language at home speaks English “less than very well” according to the American Community Survey. AB 2341 makes a minor change to make it clear that local agencies must translate emergency information into any language spoken by at least 5% of that population that speaks English less than “very well.”

Equity Impact: According to author staff, “providing translations, especially during emergency situations such as mass shootings or natural disasters are critical, especially for immigrant communities that may not have mastered the English language. These communities are at particular risk if they are unable to understand guidance by local agencies.”

Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act: The Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act (Act) became law in 1973 and later amended by AB 2253 (Ting), Chapter 469, Statutes of 2014. This Act ensures all Californians, including limited-English-proficient (LEP) people, can access public services regardless of language barriers. The Act mandates that state and local agencies must provide information in English and, if the agency serves a “substantial number” of non-English speakers, any other relevant languages based on their jurisdiction. Agencies must conduct surveys every other year to assess their contact with the LEP population and determine which languages they will publish. Additionally, the Act mandates that every state and local agency have bilingual staff and translated written materials so that they and the LEP population can effectively communicate. Furthermore, each agency must post how to submit complaints of alleged Act violations, in all relevant languages, on their website’s homepage. Cal HR must issue

orders deemed appropriate to implement the Act if a state agency has yet to make reasonable progress toward reaching compliance.

Recent Disasters with Large Populations of Non-English Speakers: In January 2023, a mass shooting occurred in Monterey Park, Los Angeles County, where the gunman killed eleven people and injured nine others. In that same month, a mass shooting occurred in Half Moon Bay, where seven people were killed and one person was critically injured. These communities are predominately Asian or Asian and Latino, respectively, and have a significant number of community members that speak languages other than English. In these instances, law enforcement did not immediately apprehend the perpetrator. Law enforcement shared safety information with the public, but the author's office is concerned about whether these communities received adequate updates in their primary languages.

Later that year, in March 2023, a broken levee in Monterey County flooded the entire town of Pajaro and forced more than 2,000 people to evacuate. Pajaro is predominately a town of farmworkers where a large portion of the community only speaks Mixteco. Various news articles identify the failures of local agencies communicating with these individuals as well as the detrimental impacts on safety and access to recovery information.

Arguments in Support: The California State Association of Counties (CSAC) and Urban Counties of California (UCC) write in support, "While the law (AB 1638) was intended to require translation into the top language(s) spoken other than English, specifically at least five percent of a city or county, late amendments created confusion about which languages must be translated. One reading of the law could require that every single language included in the American Community Survey (ACS) is required to be translated, causing local agencies to translate dozens of languages during an emergency. This could cause significant problems, consuming vast public resources during a crisis and, more importantly, crowding out information for those who most need it. Many local agencies use phone notifications during an emergency, delivering information via text or phone calls directly. If a county uses text or phone call notices to residents, they may have to deliver that notice in well over thirty languages under a reading of the current law. This could create unnecessary confusion or fatigue, causing residents to miss crucial notification about the emergency. AB 2341 would fix this problem, ensuring that emergency translations are delivered into languages spoken by at least five percent of speakers with translation needs – defined as those that speak English less than "very well." The bill provides vital clarity for public agencies and ensures the law can meet its intended purpose: to deliver rapid emergency notices in languages most commonly spoken in a city or county."

Relevant Legislation

AB 1638 (Fong), Chapter 587, Statutes of 2023. Requires that any materials explaining services available to the public shall be translated into any non-English language spoken by a substantial number of the public served by local agencies.

SB 707 (Durazo), Chapter 327, Statutes of 2025. Requires local agencies to translate agendas in a language spoken jointly by 20 percent or more of the applicable population, provided that 20 percent or more of the population that speaks that language in that city or county speaks English less than "very well."

AB 2253 (Ting), Chapter 469, Statutes of 2014. This bill requires state agencies that serve a substantial number of non-English speakers, as defined, under the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual

Services Act (Dymally-Alatorre), to provide translated forms and processes for submitting complaints about language access.

AB 67 (Dymally), Chapter 259, Statutes of 2007. This bill standardizes and defines language in the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act, clarifies the State Personnel Board's responsibility to establish bilingual fluency standards, and expands the SPB's ability to grant exemptions to the language survey and implementation plan.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**Support**

California State Association of Counties (CSAC)
Urban Counties of California (UCC)

Opposition

None on file.

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