

(1) in person in the State or political subdivision in which he resided immediately prior to his removal if he had satisfied, as of the date of his change of residence, the requirements to vote in that State or political subdivision, or (2) by absentee ballot in the State or political subdivision in which he resided immediately prior to his removal if he satisfies, but for his non-resident status and the reason for his absence, the requirements for absentee voting in that State or political subdivision.

**(f) Absentee registration requirement**

No citizen of the United States who is otherwise qualified to vote by absentee ballot in any State or political subdivision in any election for President and Vice President shall be denied the right to vote for the choice of electors for President and Vice President, or for President and Vice President, in such election because of any requirement of registration that does not include a provision for absentee registration.

**(g) State or local adoption of less restrictive voting practices**

Nothing in this section shall prevent any State or political subdivision from adopting less restrictive voting practices than those that are prescribed herein.

**(h) “State” defined**

The term “State” as used in this section includes each of the several States and the District of Columbia.

**(i) False registration, and other fraudulent acts and conspiracies: application of penalty for false information in registering or voting**

The provisions of section 10307(c) of this title shall apply to false registration, and other fraudulent acts and conspiracies, committed under this section.

(Pub. L. 89-110, title II, §202, as added Pub. L. 91-285, §6, June 22, 1970, 84 Stat. 316.)

**Editorial Notes**

**CODIFICATION**

Section was formerly classified to section 1973aa-1 of Title 42, The Public Health and Welfare, prior to editorial reclassification and renumbering as this section.

**§ 10503. Bilingual election requirements**

**(a) Congressional findings and declaration of policy**

The Congress finds that, through the use of various practices and procedures, citizens of language minorities have been effectively excluded from participation in the electoral process. Among other factors, the denial of the right to vote of such minority group citizens is ordinarily directly related to the unequal educational opportunities afforded them resulting in high illiteracy and low voting participation. The Congress declares that, in order to enforce the guarantees of the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments to the United States Constitution, it is necessary to eliminate such discrimination by prohibiting these practices, and by prescribing other remedial devices.

**(b) Bilingual voting materials requirement**

**(1) Generally**

Before August 6, 2032, no covered State or political subdivision shall provide voting materials only in the English language.

**(2) Covered States and political subdivisions**

**(A) Generally**

A State or political subdivision is a covered State or political subdivision for the purposes of this subsection if the Director of the Census determines, based on the 2010 American Community Survey census data and subsequent American Community Survey data in 5-year increments, or comparable census data, that—

(i)(I) more than 5 percent of the citizens of voting age of such State or political subdivision are members of a single language minority and are limited-English proficient;

(II) more than 10,000 of the citizens of voting age of such political subdivision are members of a single language minority and are limited-English proficient; or

(III) in the case of a political subdivision that contains all or any part of an Indian reservation, more than 5 percent of the American Indian or Alaska Native citizens of voting age within the Indian reservation are members of a single language minority and are limited-English proficient; and

(ii) the illiteracy rate of the citizens in the language minority as a group is higher than the national illiteracy rate.

**(B) Exception**

The prohibitions of this subsection do not apply in any political subdivision that has less than 5 percent voting age limited-English proficient citizens of each language minority which comprises over 5 percent of the statewide limited-English proficient population of voting age citizens, unless the political subdivision is a covered political subdivision independently from its State.

**(3) Definitions**

As used in this section—

(A) the term “voting materials” means registration or voting notices, forms, instructions, assistance, or other materials or information relating to the electoral process, including ballots;

(B) the term “limited-English proficient” means unable to speak or understand English adequately enough to participate in the electoral process;

(C) the term “Indian reservation” means any area that is an American Indian or Alaska Native area, as defined by the Census Bureau for the purposes of the 1990 decennial census;

(D) the term “citizens” means citizens of the United States; and

(E) the term “illiteracy” means the failure to complete the 5th primary grade.

**(4) Special rule**

The determinations of the Director of the Census under this subsection shall be effective

upon publication in the Federal Register and shall not be subject to review in any court.

**(c) Requirement of voting notices, forms, instructions, assistance, or other materials and ballots in minority language**

Whenever any State or political subdivision subject to the prohibition of subsection (b) of this section provides any registration or voting notices, forms, instructions, assistance, or other materials or information relating to the electoral process, including ballots, it shall provide them in the language of the applicable minority group as well as in the English language: *Provided*, That where the language of the applicable minority group is oral or unwritten or in the case of Alaskan natives and American Indians, if the predominant language is historically unwritten, the State or political subdivision is only required to furnish oral instructions, assistance, or other information relating to registration and voting.

**(d) Action for declaratory judgment permitting English-only materials**

Any State or political subdivision subject to the prohibition of subsection (b) of this section, which seeks to provide English-only registration or voting materials or information, including ballots, may file an action against the United States in the United States District Court for a declaratory judgment permitting such provision. The court shall grant the requested relief if it determines that the illiteracy rate of the applicable language minority group within the State or political subdivision is equal to or less than the national illiteracy rate.

**(e) Definitions**

For purposes of this section, the term “language minorities” or “language minority group” means persons who are American Indian, Asian American, Alaskan Natives, or of Spanish heritage.

(Pub. L. 89-110, title II, §203, as added Pub. L. 94-73, title III, §301, Aug. 6, 1975, 89 Stat. 402; amended Pub. L. 97-205, §§2(d), 4, June 29, 1982, 96 Stat. 134; Pub. L. 102-344, §2, Aug. 26, 1992, 106 Stat. 921; Pub. L. 109-246, §§7, 8, July 27, 2006, 120 Stat. 581.)

**Editorial Notes**

**CODIFICATION**

Section was formerly classified to section 1973aa-1a of Title 42, The Public Health and Welfare, prior to editorial reclassification and renumbering as this section.

**AMENDMENTS**

2006—Subsec. (b)(1). Pub. L. 109-246, §7, substituted “2032” for “2007”.

Subsec. (b)(2)(A). Pub. L. 109-246, §8, substituted “the 2010 American Community Survey census data and subsequent American Community Survey data in 5-year increments, or comparable census data” for “census data” in introductory provisions.

1992—Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 102-344 amended subsec. (b) generally. Prior to amendment, subsec. (b) read as follows: “Prior to August 6, 1992, no State or political subdivision shall provide registration or voting notices, forms, instructions, assistance, or other materials or information relating to the electoral process, including ballots, only in the English language if the Director of

the Census determines (i) that more than 5 percent of the citizens of voting age of such State or political subdivision are members of a single language minority and (ii) that the illiteracy rate of such persons as a group is higher than the national illiteracy rate: *Provided*, That the prohibitions of this subsection shall not apply in any political subdivision which has less than five percent voting age citizens of each language minority which comprises over five percent of the statewide population of voting age citizens. For purposes of this subsection, illiteracy means the failure to complete the fifth primary grade. The determinations of the Director of the Census under this subsection shall be effective upon publication in the Federal Register and shall not be subject to review in any court.”

1982—Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 97-205, §4, substituted “Prior to August 6, 1992” for “Prior to August 6, 1985”.

Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 97-205, §2(d), inserted “and American Indians” after “Alaskan natives”.

**Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries**

**EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1982 AMENDMENT**

Amendment by Pub. L. 97-205 effective June 29, 1982, see section 6 of Pub. L. 97-205, set out as a note under section 10301 of this title.

**EXTENSION TO AUGUST 6, 1992, OF PROHIBITION ON USE OF VOTING INSTRUCTIONS, ASSISTANCE, OR OTHER MATERIALS OR INFORMATION IN ENGLISH ONLY; LIMITATIONS BASED ON 1980 CENSUS AND SUBSEQUENT CENSUS DATA**

Pub. L. 97-205, §4, June 29, 1982, 96 Stat. 134, provided in part that: “[T]he extension made by this section [amending subsec. (b) of this section] shall apply only to determinations made by the Director of the Census under clause (i) of section 203(b) [subsec. (b)(i) of this section] for members of a single language minority who do not speak or understand English adequately enough to participate in the electoral process when such a determination can be made by the Director of the Census based on the 1980 and subsequent census data.”

**§ 10504. Judicial relief; civil actions by the Attorney General; three-judge district court; appeal to Supreme Court**

Whenever the Attorney General has reason to believe that a State or political subdivision (a) has enacted or is seeking to administer any test or device as a prerequisite to voting in violation of the prohibition contained in section 10501 of this title, or (b) undertakes to deny the right to vote in any election in violation of section 10502 or 10503 of this title, he may institute for the United States, or in the name of the United States, an action in a district court of the United States, in accordance with sections 1391 through 1393<sup>1</sup> of title 28, for a restraining order, a preliminary or permanent injunction, or such other order as he deems appropriate. An action under this subsection shall be heard and determined by a court of three judges in accordance with the provisions of section 2284 of title 28 and any appeal shall be to the Supreme Court.

(Pub. L. 89-110, title II, §204, formerly §203, as added Pub. L. 91-285, §6, June 22, 1970, 84 Stat. 317; renumbered §204 and amended Pub. L. 94-73, title III, §§302, 303, title IV, §406, Aug. 6, 1975, 89 Stat. 403, 405.)

<sup>1</sup> See References in Text note below.