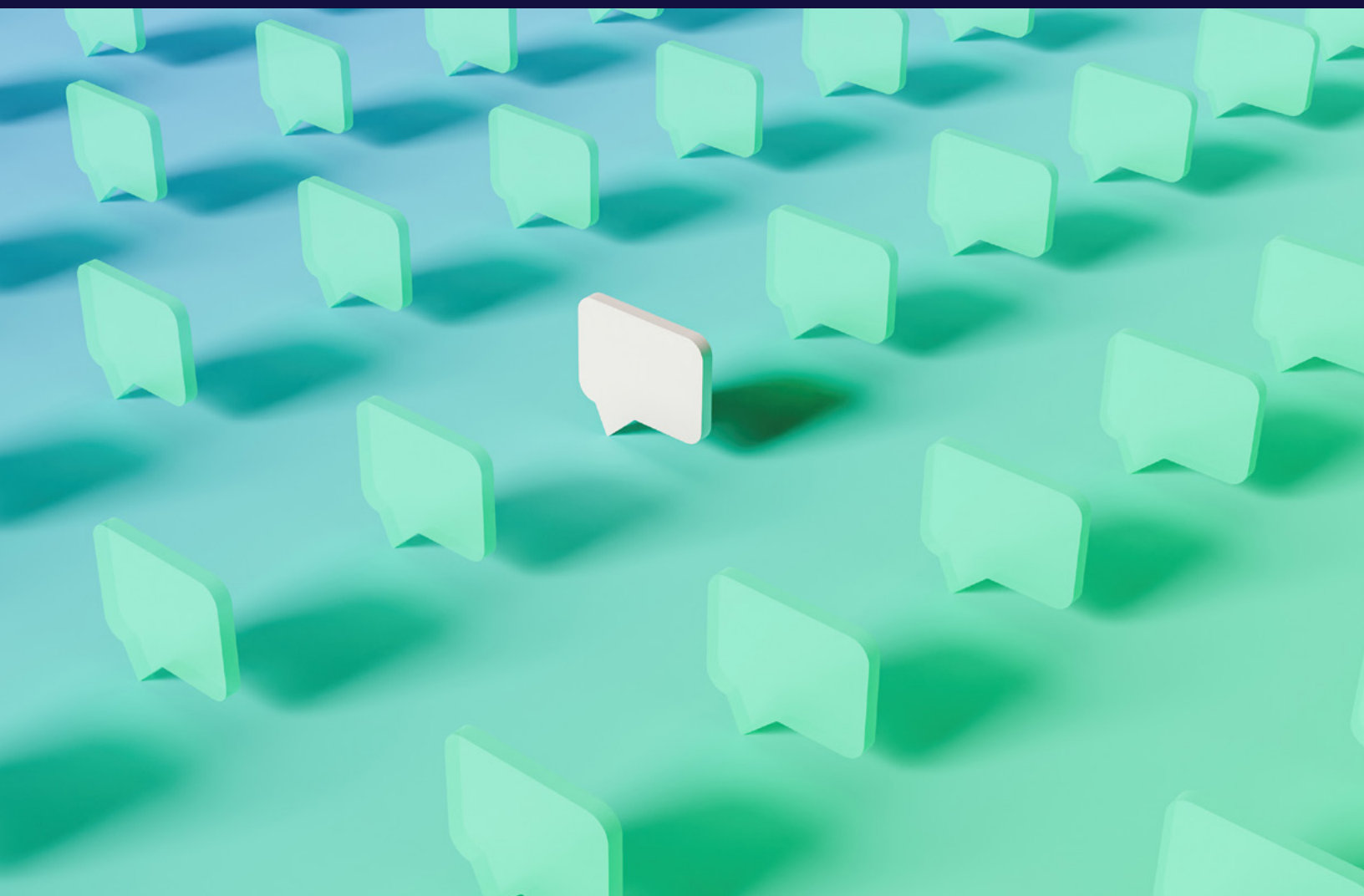


**FACT SHEET**

# **Ballots for All. Improving Language Access for Nevada Voters.**



## **In 2021, a Nevada law was enacted that requires all county and city clerks to send every active registered voter a mail ballot before a primary or general election.**

This was a massive win for Nevada voters in making our elections more accessible. But for this benefit to truly reach every Nevada voter, election officials must offer ballots and voting materials in the languages that Nevadans actually read and speak. Currently, only Clark County provides voting information and ballots in Spanish and Tagalog, due to their being mandated by federal law. Washoe County is the only jurisdiction that voluntarily provides bilingual ballots and voting information in Spanish. Chinese speakers in Clark County and Spanish speakers in Washoe County have narrowly missed out on being covered by federal legal requirements that materials be offered in those languages.

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## **The 2020 census ranked Nevada as the third-most diverse state in the country.**

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More of Nevada's counties should follow the example Washoe County has set. There is a great need for these services. Nevada voters are diverse, and that diversity is growing. The 2020 census ranked Nevada as the third-most diverse state in the country, with the fourth-largest population of residents who identify as Asian and Pacific Islander (API) and the fifth-largest population who identify as Hispanic. When compared to 2010 data, both communities have significantly increased in just a decade: The API population grew 45.6 percent, and the Hispanic community grew 24.3 percent.<sup>1</sup>



Most voters who identify as API or Hispanic speak English as a first language. Still, there are a large number of people in Nevada who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. This is known as being Limited English Proficient (LEP). A voter's limited English proficiency should not restrict their right to vote. Nearly half a million Nevadans (441,675) who are over the age of 18 reported speaking a language besides English,



including 272,317 Spanish speakers and 169,358 speakers of other languages.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, 125,413 Nevadans over the age of 18 are LEP. Legally, they are still entitled to vote, but they are often blocked from doing so because of a lack of translated and accessible materials.

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## **Without action by Nevada officeholders, these 125,413 Nevadans will likely be left without a voice at the ballot box.**

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Nevada law [gives county and city clerks the option to provide voting materials in languages](#) other than English if there is “a significant and substantial need.” In response, All Voting is Local, in partnership with groups who serve Nevada’s diverse language communities, studied geographic and census data to identify populations with significant need of translated ballots and materials. We found that [more counties should be voluntarily serving the numerous communities in Nevada](#) who speak Spanish, Tagalog, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Korean, Thai, and Amharic.

“Allocating a portion of funds from the Help America Vote Act to translate voting education materials and to allow county clerks to translate ballots would drastically increase voter access to the polls in communities like West Wendover. Our right to vote is fundamental, and by eliminating language as a barrier to vote, we ensure that more Nevadans are able to exercise this right! ”

**DANIEL CORONA, MAYOR OF WEST WENDOVER**



## Recommendations

To ensure fair and equitable access to the ballot box for voters whose first language is not English, county and city clerks should use their discretionary power, as Washoe County does currently, to translate voting materials that serve their communities. For example, Clark County should inform voters in any informational piece sent in English to voters that they have the option to request ballots and information in Spanish or Tagalog, along with the hotline number available for each language. Nevadan citizens who are over the age of 18 (362,728) are reported to speak another language besides English in Clark County alone. Impactful change is not limited to just Clark, though.<sup>3</sup> In the vast majority of Nevada's rural counties — 13 out of 15 — more than three percent of the voting-age citizen population speaks Spanish.<sup>4</sup>

### Top Non-English Languages Spoken in Nevada:

**69%**  
Spanish

**9%**  
Tagalog

**The Nevada secretary of state (SOS) and legislature also must do more to make voting accessible. The SOS in particular is legally responsible for administering Help America Vote Act funds, which should be used for translation services and conducting outreach programs to voters in need.**

“The decision to offer printed bilingual ballots last year was not a difficult choice to make. While we currently offer bilingual ballots and voting materials, we would like to offer more services in Spanish and other languages.”

**HEATHER CARMEN, ASSISTANT REGISTRAR  
OF WASHOE COUNTY**





The SOS needs to provide voter education materials and election updates in Spanish, Tagalog, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Korean, Thai, and Ahmeric. Their office should act as a hub where counties can access translated information. Once voter education materials are translated in multiple languages, the SOS should send an official notification to county clerks and encourage clerks to provide this information on their county website and to print it out as necessary.

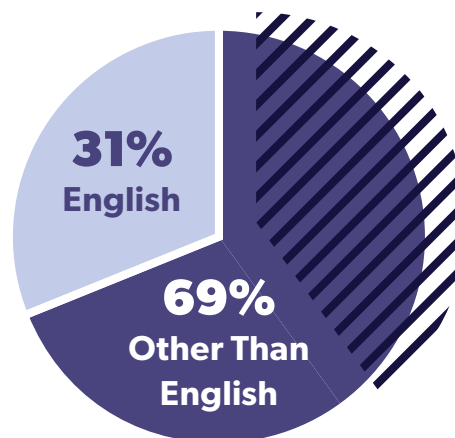
The SOS should add Tagalog as an option for the online voter registration system (currently, it provides only Spanish voter registration forms). The SOS office should also collect uniform information from all county voter registration forms and track the language of the voter registration form used.

Meanwhile, the legislature should allocate a portion of [Help America Vote Act](#) funding for translation of voter education materials, a common practice in other states, as well as allocate funding to county clerks to provide facsimile ballots in two to three different languages.

**Nevada's democracy benefits when our officials commit to and invest in holding elections in which all their citizens can participate, regardless of their ability to read or speak English. Together, our officials can make sure that LEP voters are given access, not afterthoughts, and are encouraged to participate in elections where all individuals can vote comfortably and knowledgeably.**



**Asian Americans  
in Nevada Who  
Speak Languages  
Other Than English  
at Home**



**40%**  
**Speak English Less  
Than "Very Well"**

“ It is critical for us to take proactive steps toward language access and equity at all levels, but especially for new immigrants and their families.

The diversity of the AANHPI community in Nevada only highlights the need for language access, as Clark County missed the required number of Chinese LEP Citizen Voting Age Population for a mandatory Chinese ballot by 434 residents. This forces households who are experiencing language barriers to rely on friends and family to help translate their ballots in order to vote. ”

**ERIC JENG, DIRECTOR OF OUTREACH, ASIAN COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL**




# ALL VOTING IS LOCAL


**ALL VOTING IS LOCAL** fights to eliminate needless and discriminatory barriers to voting before they happen, to build a democracy that works for us all. It is a collaborative campaign housed at The Leadership Conference Education Fund and The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights.


For more information about All Voting is Local, visit [allvotingislocal.org](https://allvotingislocal.org) and follow us on Twitter [@votingislocal](https://twitter.com/votingislocal).


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<https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/08/2020-united-states-population-more-racially-ethnically-diverse-than-2010.html>  
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- 3 Ibid.
- 4 U.S. Census Bureau. 2021 Section 203 Complete Public Use File, accessed December 8, 2021