

Know Your Rights: Executive Order Threatens Access to Federal Programs

March 18, 2025

On March 1, 2025, President Trump issued Executive Order [14224](#) declaring English to be the official language of the U.S. and revoking Executive Order [13166](#), Improving Access to Services for Persons With Limited English Proficiency, issued by President Clinton in 2000.

Language rights are deeply rooted in long-standing federal and state mandates, which have been critical to maintaining our individual and collective health, safety, and well-being, as well as ensuring that all communities, regardless of what language we use, can participate in and contribute to a thriving society. Although these existing federal and state laws have not been changed by Trump's executive order, the order threatens more than two decades of progress towards meaningful language access for all.

The Asian Law Caucus, California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc. (CRLA), and Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles (LAFLA) have developed this FAQ to help community groups and state and local officials understand the reach and impact of Trump's Executive Order 14224.

**The information in this document may change over time.
For the latest updates, visit asianlawcaucus.org/language-ee**

This document provides general guidance only and should not be construed as legal advice. If your organization needs legal assistance, or if you have further questions about these topics, please contact:

- Asian Law Caucus at 415-896-1701 or asianlawcaucus.org/contact
- California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc. at 1-800-337-0690 or crla.org/locations
- Legal Aid Foundation for Los Angeles at 1-800-399-4529 or lafla.org/get-help/

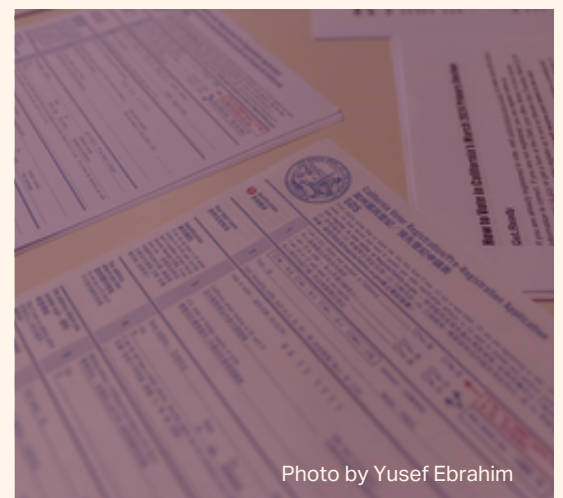


Photo by Yusef Ebrahim

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What does Executive Order 14224 on English as the official language of the United States do?

The order declares English as the official language of the United States. The order also revokes Executive Order 13166, an executive order signed by President Clinton in 2000.

Clinton's Executive Order 13166 required federal agencies to develop and implement plans to allow individuals with limited English proficiency to meaningfully access federally conducted programs and activities. The Clinton order also required federal agencies to issue language access guidance for entities that receive federal funding, to ensure meaningful access for all.

Trump's Executive Order 14224 requires the Attorney General to withdraw any policy guidance documents issued under EO 13166 and provide "updated guidance," but does not require federal agencies or entities that receive federal funding to stop existing language support they may be providing to people who use non-English languages. The executive order states that "nothing in this order ... requires or directs any change in the services provided by any agency" and that agencies "are not required to amend, remove, or otherwise stop production of documents, products, or other services prepared or offered in languages other than English."

It remains to be seen, however, whether federal agencies, at their own discretion, choose to change or reduce the amount of language support they provide individuals with limited English proficiency, or issue "updated" language access guidance that differs significantly from prior guidance.

What is the impact of English being named as the official language of the United States?

The United States is home to more than 350 languages, spoken by over 69 million people. Every day, schools, healthcare institutions, courts, and other government agencies at all levels provide resources and services in multiple languages. Our individual and collective health, safety, and well-being depend on ensuring that there is effective and meaningful communication with and language access for all of our communities.

Despite Trump's Executive Order 14224, and even without Executive Order 13166, **language access is required by law**. Executive orders cannot overturn existing laws or regulations.

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Additionally, every person in the United States – no matter where they come from, their English proficiency, or their immigration status – is protected against discrimination based on national origin, including language. Federal and state laws also continue to require sign language interpretation for Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities.

We should collectively monitor and enforce our rights under these ongoing language access laws and regulations, as needed.

What are some examples of laws and regulations that require language access, notwithstanding this new Executive Order?

[Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#) prohibits recipients of federal funding from discriminating on the basis of “national origin,” which the Supreme Court has previously interpreted to include discrimination based on language. Title VI regulations also address situations where language services must be provided.

[Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act](#) and the [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) require sign language interpreter services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals, in addition to other accommodations.

Other federal mandates that require language access in certain contexts include, but are not limited to:

- [Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968](#) (law enforcement, courts)
- [Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act](#) (hospitals, health clinics, health insurance issuers, state Medicaid agencies, community health centers, physician’s practices and home health care agencies; and [more](#))
- [Food Stamp Act](#) (state and local agencies administering SNAP benefits)
- [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](#) (state and local agencies administering employment related benefits)
- [Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act](#) (election materials)
- [Fair Housing Act](#) (state and local agencies ensuring fair housing)
- [Equal Educational Opportunities Act \(1974\)](#) (schools/educational context; see more [here](#))
- [Stafford Act](#) (FEMA disaster relief; see more [here](#))

[State anti-discrimination laws and language access requirements](#) may apply to local and state entities, including certain service providers.

For decades, federal agencies have also created language access plans and policies rooted in federal law and constitutional protections which remain in effect.

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How does Trump's order affect recipients of federal funding, such as local courts, schools, and hospitals?

Recipients of federal funding can include, for example, states and municipalities, state courts, hospitals and doctor's offices, state and local agencies that administer public benefits, and public schools. All recipients of federal funding must continue to follow existing law and provide language access. As noted above, there are many statutes and regulations that continue to mandate language access, including written translation, oral and sign language interpretation, and notices advising community members on how to access language support. Executive orders cannot properly cancel or change existing laws.

While we monitor how federal agencies respond to this change, local and state governments and entities that receive federal funding – including school districts and hospitals – can serve as a source of stability and safety for the public by affirming their continued commitment to multilingual services. Some federal fund recipients, such as the [Hawai'i State Judiciary](#), have already reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring meaningful language access.

Can people still request an interpreter or written documents in their primary language from government agencies and organizations that receive federal funding?

Yes! In most cases, everyone still has a legal right to obtain language assistance from programs and services that receive federal funding. This can include communicating with staff members who share their language, working with qualified interpreters, and/or receiving translated documents. Resources like [I Speak Cards](#) can also help community members identify their primary language and request language assistance services.

What should an individual do if they are denied language access by a government agency or organization that receives federal funding?

If an individual is trying to access services provided by a government agency or organization that receives federal funding and are refused an interpreter or translated documents in their primary language, they should seek assistance from a legal services provider.