

119TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

**S.** \_\_\_\_\_

To modify certain notice requirements, to study certain election requirements,  
to clarify certain election requirements, and for other purposes.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

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Mr. PADILLA (for himself, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Ms. WARREN, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. SCHIFF, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. LUJÁN, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Ms. SMITH, Mr. KIM, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. BOOKER, and Ms. HIRONO) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

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**A BILL**

To modify certain notice requirements, to study certain election requirements, to clarify certain election requirements, and for other purposes.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2       *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3       **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4       This Act may be cited as the “Expanding the Vol-  
5       untary Opportunities for Translations in Elections Act”  
6       or the “Expanding the VOTE Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. LANGUAGE MINORITY NOTICE REQUIREMENTS.**

2 Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (52  
3 U.S.C. 10503) is amended—

4 (1) by amending subsection (b)(3)(A) to read as  
5 follows:

6 “(A) the term ‘voting materials’—

7 “(i) means registration or voting no-  
8 tices, forms, instructions, assistance, or  
9 other materials or information relating to  
10 the electoral process, including ballots; and

11 “(ii) includes digital and printed ma-  
12 terial or information produced relating to  
13 the electoral process;”;

14 (2) by redesignating subsection (e) as sub-  
15 section (g); and

16 (3) by inserting after subsection (d) the fol-  
17 lowing new subsections:

18 “(e) RESPONSIBILITY OF STATES PROVIDING VOT-  
19 ING MATERIALS IN COVERED POLITICAL SUBDIVI-  
20 SIONS.—The prohibition under subsection (b) shall apply  
21 to any State that provides voting materials to a political  
22 subdivision subject to such prohibition.

23 “(f) NOTICE.—The Attorney General shall submit a  
24 notice of the prohibition of subsection (b), and the thresh-  
25 old at which such prohibition applies, to each State or po-  
26 litical subdivision that is—

1 “(1) below the threshold requirement under  
2 subclause (II) of subsection (b)(2)(A)(i) by not more  
3 than 1,000; or

4 “(2) below the threshold requirement under  
5 subclause (I) or (III) of subsection (b)(2)(A)(i) by  
6 not more than 0.5 percent.”.

7 **SEC. 3. PROVISIONS RELATED TO AMERICAN INDIAN AND**  
8 **ALASKA NATIVE LANGUAGES.**

9 Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (52  
10 U.S.C. 10503), as amended by section 2, is further  
11 amended—

12 (1) in subsection (b)(3)(C), by striking “1990”  
13 and inserting “most recent”; and

14 (2) by striking subsection (c) and inserting the  
15 following:

16 “(c) PROVISION OF VOTING MATERIALS IN THE LAN-  
17 GUAGE OF A MINORITY GROUP.—

18 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (2),  
19 whenever any State or political subdivision subject to  
20 the prohibition of subsection (b) provides any reg-  
21 istration or voting notices, forms, instructions, as-  
22 sistance, or other materials or information relating  
23 to the electoral process, including ballots, it shall  
24 provide them in the language of the applicable mi-  
25 nority group as well as in the English language.

1 “(2) EXCEPTIONS.—

2 “(A) WHEN WRITTEN AMERICAN INDIAN  
3 AND ALASKA NATIVE TRANSLATIONS FOR VOT-  
4 ERS ARE NOT REQUIRED.—In the case of a mi-  
5 nority group that is American Indian or Alaska  
6 Native, if the Tribal government of that minor-  
7 ity group has notified the Attorney General that  
8 the language is unwritten or the Tribal govern-  
9 ment does not want a written translation, a  
10 State or political subdivision subject to the pro-  
11 hibition of subsection (b) shall only be required  
12 to furnish that minority group, in the covered  
13 language, oral instructions, assistance, trans-  
14 lation of voting materials, and other informa-  
15 tion relating to registration and voting.

16 “(B) OTHER MINORITY GROUPS WITH UN-  
17 WRITTEN LANGUAGE.—In the case of a minor-  
18 ity group that is not American Indian or Alaska  
19 Native, if the language of that minority group  
20 is unwritten, a State or political subdivision  
21 subject to the prohibition of subsection (b) shall  
22 only be required to furnish that minority group,  
23 in the covered language, oral instructions, as-  
24 sistance, translation of voting materials, and

1           other information relating to registration and  
2           voting.

3           “(3) WRITTEN TRANSLATIONS FOR ELECTION  
4           WORKERS.—Notwithstanding paragraph (2), a State  
5           or political division subject to the prohibition of sub-  
6           section (b) shall provide written translations of all  
7           voting materials, with the consent of any applicable  
8           Tribal government, to election workers to ensure  
9           that the translations from English to the language  
10          of a minority group are complete, accurate, and uni-  
11          form.

12          “(4) TRIBAL GOVERNMENT DEFINED.—In this  
13          subsection, the term ‘Tribal government’ means the  
14          recognized governing body of any Indian or Alaska  
15          Native Tribe, band, nation, pueblo, village, commu-  
16          nity, component band, or component reservation, in-  
17          dividually identified (including parenthetically) in  
18          the list published most recently as of the date of en-  
19          actment of the Expanding the VOTE Act pursuant  
20          to section 104 of the Federally Recognized Indian  
21          Tribe List Act of 1994 (25 U.S.C. 5131).”.

1 **SEC. 4. GRANTS TO JURISDICTIONS TO INCENTIVIZE THE**  
2 **PROVISION OF VOTING MATERIALS IN LAN-**  
3 **GUAGES NOT TRIGGERING SECTION 203 COV-**  
4 **ERAGE IN APPLYING JURISDICTION.**

5 (a) AVAILABILITY OF GRANTS.—

6 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Election Assistance  
7 Commission (in this section, referred to as the  
8 “Commission”) shall make incentive grants under  
9 subsection (b) to States and political subdivisions to  
10 assist the States and political subdivisions in pro-  
11 viding voting materials during an election cycle in  
12 the language of a covered language minority group.

13 (2) APPLICATION REQUIRED.—In order to re-  
14 ceive a grant under this section, a State or political  
15 subdivision shall submit to the Commission, at such  
16 time and in such form as the Commission may re-  
17 quire, an application containing such information  
18 and assurances as the Commission may require,  
19 such as a plan for the State or political subdivision  
20 to engage stakeholders with a demonstrated experi-  
21 ence of serving the relevant covered language minor-  
22 ity group.

23 (b) INCENTIVE GRANTS.—

24 (1) USE OF FUNDS.—The Commission shall  
25 make an incentive grant under this subsection to a  
26 State or political subdivision to cover the reasonable

1 costs incurred by the State or political subdivision in  
2 providing voting materials in the language of a cov-  
3 ered language minority group for an election cycle.

4 (2) CONTINUATION OF PROVISION OF MATE-  
5 RIALS FOR GROUPS IN SUCCEEDING ELECTION CY-  
6 CLES.—If a State or political subdivision receives an  
7 incentive grant with respect to a covered language  
8 minority group for an election cycle, the State or po-  
9 litical subdivision will certify to the Commission that  
10 the State or political subdivision will continue to  
11 provide voting materials in the language of that cov-  
12 ered language minority group for each succeeding  
13 election cycle unless the population of the group dur-  
14 ing the succeeding cycle has dropped by 0.5 percent  
15 or more from the population of the group during the  
16 first election cycle for which the State or political  
17 subdivision received an incentive grant with respect  
18 to the group.

19 (3) PROHIBITING MULTIPLE GRANTS FOR SAME  
20 LANGUAGE MINORITY GROUP.—If a State or political  
21 subdivision receives an incentive grant with respect  
22 to a covered language minority group, the State or  
23 subdivision may not receive another incentive grant  
24 with respect to that same covered language minority  
25 group.

1 (c) DEFINITIONS.—In this section—

2 (1) the term “covered language minority  
3 group”—

4 (A) means, with respect to a State or polit-  
5 ical subdivision, the members of a single lan-  
6 guage minority who do not meet the require-  
7 ments of clause (i) or (ii) of section  
8 203(b)(2)(A) of the Voting Rights Act of 1965  
9 (52 U.S.C. 10503(b)(2)(A)); and

10 (B) includes the language minorities de-  
11 scribed in section 203(g) of such Act (52  
12 U.S.C. 10503(g)) and any other language mi-  
13 nority;

14 (2) the term “election cycle” means the period  
15 which begins on the day after the date of a regularly  
16 scheduled general election for Federal office and  
17 which ends on the date of the next regularly sched-  
18 uled general election for Federal office;

19 (3) the term “State” means each of the several  
20 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth  
21 of Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands,  
22 American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of  
23 the Northern Mariana Islands; and



1 (4) the term “voting materials” has the mean-  
2 ing given under section 203(b)(3)(A) of the Voting  
3 Rights Act of 1965 (52 U.S.C. 10503(b)(3)(A)).

4 (d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There  
5 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section  
6 \$15,000,000, to remain available until expended.

7 **SEC. 5. STUDY ON CERTAIN LANGUAGE MINORITY NOTICE**  
8 **REQUIREMENTS.**

9 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Comptroller General of the  
10 United States, in consultation with the Director of the  
11 Census, the Attorney General, and the Election Assistance  
12 Commission, shall conduct a study on the impact of—

13 (1) reducing the threshold requirement—

14 (A) under subclause (II) of section  
15 203(b)(2)(A)(i) of the Voting Rights Act of  
16 1965 (52 U.S.C. 10503(b)(2)(A)(i)) to 7,500  
17 and 5,000, respectively; and

18 (B) under subclause (I) or (III) of section  
19 203(b)(2)(A)(i) of the Voting Rights Act of  
20 1965 (52 U.S.C. 10503(b)(2)(A)(i)) to 4 per-  
21 cent, 3 percent, 2.5 percent, and 2 percent, re-  
22 spectively; and

23 (2) expanding the definition of the term “lan-  
24 guage minorities” to include native speakers of Ara-  
25 bic, French and Haitian Creole, and any other lan-

1        guage that the Comptroller General determines to be  
2        appropriate.

3        (b) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date  
4 of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the  
5 United States shall submit to Congress a report on the  
6 findings of the study conducted under subsection (a).