



STAN STANART

COUNTY CLERK

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HARRIS COUNTY IS PREPARED FOR NEW LANGUAGE CHALLENGE

Houston, TX –The U.S. Census Bureau has determined that there are now at least 10,000 voting age citizens of Chinese ancestry in Harris County who do not “speak or understand English adequately enough to participate in the electoral process”. As a result, in accordance with section 203 of the 1975 Voting Rights Act (VRA), Harris County must provide voters of Chinese ancestry, with limited English proficiency, the information, materials and assistance needed to access the voting process in a Chinese language.

“We will perform due diligence in implementing the Chinese language into our election process and will work with the stakeholders in making this a successful transition”, said Harris County Clerk Stan Stanart, the chief election officer of the county. The Census Bureau has made the language determinations following each decennial census since the inception of the 1975 Voting Rights Act. Under the language provisions of the VRA, the Census determinations are effective upon publication in the Federal Register and are not subject to judicial review.

In 2009, with the anticipation of the growing Chinese population, the Harris County Clerk’s Office convened a group of Chinese leaders in an effort to begin defining a language that is common to the county’s Chinese community. The group helped to translate the county’s election information brochures into traditional Chinese. The translated materials cover all aspects of the voting process, including instructions on how to operate the voting equipment and the methods Texas affords its citizens to exercise their right to vote.

“I am committed to taking important steps during this election that will help us get ready to fully comply with the federal government’s determination by the 2012 elections,” added Stanart. Unfortunately, according to Stanart, the ballot and all legal forms, notices and instructions for the Nov. 8th election were finalized almost a month prior to the Census’ determination, so this prevents the inclusion of a Chinese language on voting materials for this election.

The Census’ determinations this time were made using data from the 2005-2009 American Community Survey (ACS) population estimates. In 2009, the ACS estimated the overall Chinese population in Harris County to be 40,609 or less than one percent of Harris County’s total population.

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