

Where's the Money?

by *Christiane Wollaston-Joury*

One provision in the recently proposed immigration reform package was that all immigrants should learn English. Many are already! Just because various government forms, publications, advertisements and information are offered in other languages, primarily for Spanish speakers, doesn't mean that immigrants don't want to learn English. Plenty of them ARE learning, while many more who would like to study find there are long waiting lists at most adult education centers.

While there are numerous publicly and privately funded programs that offer English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, the funding for these programs is not nearly adequate to meet the demand. Most states spend less than one percent of their public education dollars on ESOL and Adult Basic Education. Yet, states and local governments contribute \$3 for every \$1 the federal government provides.

In his address to the nation on Monday, May 15th, 2006, President Bush stated that "English is also the key to unlocking the opportunity of America. English allows newcomers to go from picking crops to opening a grocery, from cleaning offices to running offices, from a life of low-paying jobs to a diploma, a career, and a home of their own." He's absolutely right. Now let him put the money where his mouth is!

Christiane teaches English to adult immigrants for the city of Cambridge and hopes her efforts empower students.

English Only?



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- Do you think English should be the official language of the United States? Why or why not?
- Would anything change in your life if English were the official language? What about in the lives of other people you know?
- Sometimes language can be a symbol for other things. What else could speaking English "mean" in this debate?