

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## TULSA SAY NO TO HATE COALITION STRONGLY OPPOSES SQ 751

Say No to Hate, a coalition of Tulsa organizations committed to fighting bias, bigotry, and racism in our community, strongly opposes State Question 751, the English Only amendment up for vote on the November 2<sup>nd</sup> General Election ballot. If passed, this amendment would threaten Oklahoma's competitive economic advantage, risk public safety and health, and hinder the full engagement of newcomers. It would also send a strong message that Oklahoma is exclusionary and unwelcoming, running counter to our shared values of welcoming the stranger.

### Threatens our competitive advantage

At a time when Oklahoma is seeking to position itself as a regional leader in economic development to attract and retain young talent and economic investment, enforcing English as our official language would hurt our competitive advantage. Multinational corporations will rethink investing in a state that limits the ability to do business in multiple languages. To young professionals in the much sought-after Creative Class—who determine where they want to live before seeking jobs—this amendment will signal that Oklahoma is not a welcoming, forward-moving place.

### Risks public safety and health

The ability of Oklahoma's government to communicate with all residents is essential for public safety. Imposing an artificial language barrier will create confusion and make all Oklahomans less safe. Prohibiting communication in languages other than English will shut out individuals who have important information to share with government officials. Will new immigrants no longer be able to contact a 911 operator if they are victims of a crime, have information to prevent a crime, or need to report a serious accident? How many crimes, fallen electrical lines, or broken streetlights will go unreported?

Agencies translate essential documents because it makes our government more efficient. Imposing an artificial language barrier will slow down customer service lines, create confusion and misinformation, and degrade the quality of services for all residents. Oklahoma should encourage, not discourage, communication between its residents and government employees.

### Hinders acculturation and language acquisition

#### The Shared Value of Welcoming the Stranger

##### Baha'i Tradition (*Abdu'l-Baha*)

One amongst His Teachings is this, that love and good faith must so dominate the human heart that men will regard the stranger as a familiar friend, the malefactor as one of their own, the alien even as a loved one, the enemy as a companion dear and close.

##### Buddhist Tradition (*Itivuttaka 18*)

If beings knew, as I know, the fruit of sharing gifts, they would not enjoy their use without sharing them, nor would the taint of stinginess obsess the heart and stay there. Even if it were their last bit, ... they would not enjoy it without sharing it, if there were anyone to receive it.

##### Christian Tradition (*Matthew 25:35*)

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me.... Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.

*The Tulsa Say No to Hate Coalition champions diversity and advocates for those against whom bias, bigotry, and racism may be directed. Through our efforts and those of likeminded individuals and institutions, the Tulsa Say No to Hate Coalition seeks to improve the cultural, spiritual, physical, emotional, and economic wellbeing of all the people of Tulsa.*

Studies show that newcomers to the United States think it is “essential” that their children learn English. In fact, 80% of foreign-born children from Mexico learn English “well” or “very well,” and 92 percent of second-generation Latinos are fully fluent in English. By the third generation, only 28% of Latinos are still proficient in Spanish.

Today’s immigrants understand the importance of learning English better than anyone, and they are learning English the same way our grandparents did—by getting out into the community and interacting with native speakers of the language. This amendment would only further isolate immigrants, making it much more difficult to learn English — by limiting their access to English classes and social interactions. If the concern is that immigrants are not learning English quickly enough, we should create more opportunities for them to learn rather than passing punitive measures.

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## ABOUT THE TULSA SAY NO TO HATE COALITION

**The Tulsa Say No To Hate Coalition is, first and foremost, an open-ended volunteer network of community-based and civic organizations established as a forum in which to share trends & development, best practices, and calendar events & activities related generally to diversity and, more specifically, to hate-based activity in the Tulsa area.**

- The Tulsa Say No to Hate Coalition is committed to working toward a united Tulsa that respects itself as a community, values all of its people, and provides justice and equality for all.
- The Tulsa Say No to Hate Coalition seeks to preserve the dignity and fundamental freedoms of all people.
- The Tulsa Say No to Hate Coalition serves as a clearinghouse for information on hate-based activity in the Tulsa region and operates as an information exchange for those seeking to disseminate or receive such information.
- The Tulsa Say No to Hate Coalition contests hate-based bigotry and violence directed at a person’s race, ethnicity, gender, religion, national origin, ability, ancestry or sexual orientation.
- Members of the include: City of Tulsa Human Rights Commission, City of Tulsa Human Rights Department, City of Tulsa Police Department, Community Service Council of Greater Tulsa, Coalition of Hispanic Organizations, Islamic Society of Tulsa, Jewish Federation of Tulsa, Oklahoma Center for Community and Justice, Oklahomans for Equality, TEN – The Equality Network, Tulsa City-County Library, Tulsa County Sheriff’s Department, Tulsa Global Alliance, Tulsa Interfaith Alliance, Tulsa Metropolitan Ministry, Tulsa PFLAG, Tulsa Public Schools, and YWCA Tulsa.
- The Tulsa Say No to Hate Coalition champions diversity and advocates for those against whom bias, bigotry, and racism may be directed. Through our efforts and those of like-minded individuals and institutions, the Tulsa Say No To Hate Coalition seeks to improve the cultural, spiritual, physical, emotional, and economic well-being of all the people of Tulsa.
- Specific objectives of the Tulsa Say No To Hate Coalition include:
  - *Eliminating hate-based bigotry and violence in our community;*
  - *Incorporating the needs and issues of all of our diverse community in planning and strategic processes throughout the community;*
  - *Increasing understanding of the identities and experiences of all members of our diverse community through curricular and other educational initiatives; and*
  - *Providing positive leadership in the realm of diversity.*

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### **Hindu Tradition** (*Taittiriya Upanishad 1.11.2*)

Let a person never turn away a stranger from his house, that is the rule. Therefore a man should, by all means, acquire much food, for good people say to the stranger: ‘There is enough food for you.’”

### **Jewish Tradition** (*Deuteronomy 10:17*)

For the LORD your G-d is G-d supreme and Lord supreme, the great, the mighty, and the awesome G-d, who shows no favor and takes no bribe, but upholds the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and befriends the stranger, providing him with food and clothing. You too must befriend the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

### **Muslim Tradition** (*Surah 4:36*)

Do good unto your parents, and near of kin, and unto orphans, and the needy, and the neighbor from among your own people, and the neighbor who is a stranger, and the friend by your side, the wayfarer, and your servants.

### **Secular Humanism** (*Pablo Neruda*)

To feel the intimacy of brothers is a marvelous thing in life. To feel the love of people whom we love is a fire that feeds our life. But to feel the affection that comes from those whom we do not know, from those unknown to us, who are watching over our sleep and solitude, over our dangers and our weaknesses — that is something still greater and more beautiful because it widens out the boundaries of our being, and unites all living things.

### **Shawnee Nation** (*Chief Tecumseh*)

Always give a word or a sign of salute when meeting a passing friend, even a stranger, when in a lonely place. Show respect to all people and grovel to none.

### **Sikh Tradition** (*Guru Granth Sahib*)

None is our enemy, none is stranger to us, we are in accord with one and all.