

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to House Resolution 123. This legislation is at best misguided; at worst, mean spirited, and does not reflect the America I know nor the community that I serve.

If we wanted to simply declare the obvious and designate English as the official language, it would not be difficult. We could do it without controversy. It would be easy to provide necessary guidelines, if we feel some of the current legislation dealing with bilingual requirements need tightening up. But the trail of exceptions in this bill are an admission to the flaw that it is inappropriate to deny the tools to deal with citizens in the best way to help meet their needs.

Monday this House unanimously declared that it is the sense of Congress that the government of Serbia should ensure the rights of its Albanian minority to be educated in their native language rather than in Serbian. Far more native born Americans of Mexican ancestry live in the former Mexican provinces of Texas and California than the 2 million Albanians which this Congress expressed their concern that they would be able to be educated in their native language. With this bill, we are saying that what is fair and just for the minority people of Serbia is just too good for the non-English-speaking minorities of the United States.

The proponents of this English only legislation, Mr. Chairman, ought to acknowledge that we either believe that people have a right to be educated in their native language or we do not, either we provide English instruction to non-English speakers or we do not. Let us drop the hypocrisy, the doublespeak and acknowledge in plain English that at best this bill makes the business of government harder. At worst, it panders to prejudice.