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Judge puts English only on voter forms

Rep. King had sued; some worry about consequences

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A Polk County judge has ordered Iowa Secretary of State Michael Mauro to stop using languages other than English in the state's official voter registration forms.

District Judge Douglas Staskal ruled in favor of U.S. Rep. Steve King, an Iowa

Republican who sued state officials last year, contending they were violating the state's English-language law. He brought the suit against Gov. Chet Culver, who previously served as secretary of state, and Mauro, contending they had placed illegal voting forms on the secretary of state's Web site.

The dispute began shortly

before Election Day in 2006, when King demanded that Culver remove voting information in languages other than English from the Web site. The site offered information in Spanish, Laotian, Bosnian and Vietnamese.

Non-English voter forms were removed from the state's Web site late Thursday afternoon.

King, a former state senator, said the materials were illegal because under an English-language law authored by King and signed by Democratic Gov. Tom Vilsack in 2002, all official government communications must be in English.

Culver had said the English-language law included a

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What the law says

U.S. Rep. Steve King sued Gov. Chet Culver and Secretary of State Michael Mauro last year, contending they were violating the state's English-language law by offering the state's voter registration forms in four languages other than English.

THE LAW: The English-language law, which King authored as a state senator, calls for all official government communications to be in English. Former Gov. Tom Vilsack signed the bill in 2002.

PROVISION: Culver, backed by Attorney General Tom Miller, has pointed out that the English-language law included a provision that allows for "any language usage required by or necessary to secure the rights guaranteed by the Constitution and laws of the United States of America, or the Constitution of the state of Iowa."

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