

**Ocean State Policy Research Institute (OSPRI)**  
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*Free Markets and Free Minds, the Cornerstone of 21st Century Liberty*

**PRESS RELEASE**  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## ***Sponsors, not state, should provide interpreting resources for immigrants as incentive for assimilation***

**October 22, 2007:** "Sponsors, not the state, should provide interpreting resources for immigrants as an incentive for assimilation," said William Felkner, President of the Ocean State Policy Research Institute, today responding to the recent discussion of state expenditures for interpreters.

"OSPRI agrees with the ACLU that the provision of interpreters in the ***criminal justice system*** is appropriate and just as necessary as the provision of counsel for those who cannot afford it.

"However, OSPRI has identified at least 24 state employees who are interpreters for the welfare and benefits provision arms of state government -- ***NOT*** for the court system. This is the serious problem recently targeted by Governor Donald Carcieri as he struggles with an out of control state budget.

"The Governor correctly maintains that the social safety net for immigrants begins with their sponsor. This is federal law and common sense. Thence it proceeds not to the taxpayer, but to community groups who claim to be conducting direct action in hopes of providing a better experience for immigrants. Rather than lobbying for access to taxpayer funded services, community groups should backstop immigrant sponsors with volunteer translation and with community generated resources that can alleviate the need for government services. This would lessen perceived cultural rifts.

"Evidence that immigrants are not focused on assimilation, whether reflecting anecdotal or demographically significant results, is a disservice to those immigrants who do contribute economically and don't disproportionately burden the social welfare apparatus.

"Federal law discourages the provision of benefits to immigrants, obviously cognisant of a greater spokesperson for the free market than I, Milton Friedman, famously intoned: "It's just obvious you can't have free immigration and a welfare state," (*Forbes, December 29, 1997*). This was a question of incentives and not a policy preference on immigration as Friedman elaborated to the Institute for Liberty and Policy Analysis World Libertarian Conference, August, 1999 in San Jose, Costa Rica: "I would like to see a world in which you could have open immigration, but stop kidding yourselves."

"Less idiomatic, but equally poignant is support offered to Governor Carcieri by the famous progressive populist, Teddy Roosevelt, who said with great import to the current debate in Rhode Island :

" "...[I]f the immigrant who comes here does in good faith become American and assimilates himself to us he shall be treated on an exact equality with every one else, for it is an outrage to

discriminate against any such man because of creed or birth-place or origin. But this is predicated upon the man's becoming in very fact an American and nothing but an American. If he tries to keep segregated with men of his own origin and separated from the rest of America, then he isn't doing his part as an American. . . . We have room for but one language here, and that is the English language, for we intend to see that the crucible turns our people out as Americans, of American nationality, and not as dwellers in a polyglot boarding-house..." (Chicago Daily Tribune, p. 4, Jan. 7, 1919, quoting letter of Theodore Roosevelt to the American Defense Society, Jan. 3, 1919)

"Some argue that the progressive sentiments of this era were shot through with xenophobia. But this tempered expression by Roosevelt -- even delivered as it was in an a time of growing concern over revolutionary socialist ambitions in America -- does not forbid the nurturing of respect for one's birth heritage, political or cultural. Rather it suggests that respect for the traditions of one's adopted nation are a requisite part of the immigration bargain. Inclusion of traditions from the many cultures that contributed to the melting pot should be part of the legacy of immigration not some kind of up front perverse incentive that puts the cart of multiculturalism before the horse of assimilation. Assimilation does not speak only to language and cultural practices, but also to embracing the economic ideals of self reliance and voluntary works as the source or charitable resources that are part and parcel of our national identity.

"Rhode Island's laboratory of democracy has flouted the federal recommendation against providing welfare to immigrants by doing so with state moneys that the federal government refuses to reimburse. This in itself is responsible not only for the costs of the benefits themselves, but for additional state employees to service this population above and beyond interpreters. It can be argued that this policy does not serve the interests of immigrants in the long run. But, if one alternatively accepts it as our state's early implementation of Teddy Roosevelt's maxim to treat immigrants with exact equality, it certainly gives the governor room to maneuver for the adoption of Roosevelt's corollary: that assimilation is the qualification for such equal treatment. OSPRI suggests that the Governor has the power and the duty to structure this largess as an incentive for assimilation and for voluntary community and sponsor based interpreting assistance to fill any perceived gap while immigrants pursue a better command of English."

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