

Bilingual Education's Pioneer State

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Body

In the March 31 front-page article "Tuning In to Anger on Immigration," Shailagh Murray and T.R. Reid wrote:

"The first time Rep. Tom Tancredo got really angry about immigration, the year was 1975 . . . The state had recently passed the nation's first bilingual education law, and Hispanic kids were taken from his class to study in Spanish."

This is incorrect on two points:

Colorado did not pass the first state bilingual education law; Massachusetts did. I helped draft that law, enacted by the Massachusetts legislature in 1971. Bilingual education in Colorado was the result of an administrative directive.

Mr. Tancredo (R-Colo.) also was wrong if he believed Hispanic students were taken from his class to be taught in Spanish. The Colorado directive called for children with limited English ability to be taught subject matter (math, science, etc.) in their native language and English until they were proficient in English and could be "mainstreamed."

The bases of Mr. Tancredo's xenophobia are best left to him to unravel. The accuracy of the historical record is a journalistic responsibility. I hope this letter helps to correct the record.

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The writer was chairman of the state Bilingual Advisory Council that oversaw the implementation of the Massachusetts law.

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