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The Economic Impact Payment Letter: Trillions for Anglos and Billions for Hispanics?

New York, NY – May 21, 2020 – Something doubly surprising has just happened. The White House has sent a letter addressed to the entire country that has been written in English on one side and in Spanish on the other. And, at the same time, a huge translation error has been made. Translating the White House letter ratifies the recognition of Hispanics as the country's largest minority, even though many obviously can't read English well. However, the big mistake in the translation is that the letter for Hispanics speaks of billions instead of trillions of dollars in aid. This problem is due to the fact that many translations aimed at Hispanics in the United States respond to linguistic approaches that reflect the international Spanish standard instead of the reality of the Spanish language in the United States.

The White House letter sent to hundreds of millions of Americans has this anomaly (bolding added):

English text: ...to fast-track this **\$2.2 trillion** in much-needed economic relief

Spanish text: ... para acelerar este alivio económico de **\$2.2 billones** de dólares...

Obviously, the vast majority of Hispanic Americans understand that *billions* are *billones* and *trillions* are *trillones*, even if they have never read the U.S. Spanish language standard currently registered and published on [digital.gov](https://www.digital.gov):

"Billions and Trillions

Much has been debated about these two terms and how to translate them into Spanish in the United States. To avoid confusion for Spanish speakers in the United States, a literal translation from English is recommended.

Translation in the United States

Billion = Billón (1,000,000,000)

Trillion = Trillón (1,000,000,000,000)"

This standard was recommended and validated by the North American Academy of the Spanish Language ("ANLE" by its Spanish acronym) in response to an urgent request from the U.S. government in 2009 concerning the translation of "trillion".

Nothing better illustrates the need for calquing trillions as *trillones* from English into Spanish of the United States than this surprising letter from the White House.