

February 16, 2017

Become an Original Cosponsor of the World Language Advancement and Readiness Act

****Supported by the Joint National Committee for Languages - National Council for Languages and International Studies (JNCL-NCLIS) and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)****

Dear Colleague:

America is more globally engaged in its intelligence, diplomatic, and economic activity than at any other point in our history. Our nation's success in these endeavors depends on strong academic programs in critical foreign languages. Strategic resourcing in language, regional expertise, and cultural studies is critical to our nation's economic competitiveness and national security.

Multiple GAO reports have cited shortfalls of languages and culture skills in the U.S. military and intelligence community, finding that our nation's language deficit could threaten our priorities and missions around the globe. Meanwhile, American business and their clientele are diversifying and globalizing their operations, requiring language skills to access global markets and serve a multilingual population.

This is why we are introducing the bipartisan **World Language Advancement and Readiness Act of 2017** to establish high-quality world language programs in our nation's elementary and secondary schools. The bill would allow the Secretary of Defense, in consultation with the Director of National Intelligence and the Secretary of Education, to authorize competitive grants to support local and state school districts that want to establish, improve, or expand innovative programs in world language learning for elementary and secondary school students.

Research demonstrates that a second language is most easily acquired in one's youth. Bilingual individuals outperform their monolingual peers in academic achievement, college matriculation rates, job placement, salary earnings, and age-related cognitive decline. Strategic investment in world language learning is therefore best leveraged through elementary and secondary school programs.

The Commission on Language Learning of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, requested by Congress in 2014, will release its final report on February 28, 2017. The initial data demonstrate that "by several measures, the United States has neglected languages in its educational curricula, its international strategies, and its domestic

policies.” It is clear that effective communication is the basis of international cooperation, and a strong national defense depends substantially on the ability of Americans to communicate and compete by knowing the languages and cultures of other countries.

We urge you to join us in addressing these gaps by cosponsoring the World Language Advancement and Readiness Act. If you would like to cosponsor, or if you have any questions, please contact Nora Blalock (Representative Price) at nora.blalock@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

DAVID E. PRICE
Member of Congress

LEONARD LANCE
Member of Congress

JOSEPH CROWLEY
Member of Congress

DON YOUNG
Member of Congress