

Foreign Language Education Partnership Act

Endorsed by:

American Translators Association, American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, Michigan World Language Association, Southwest Conference on Language Teaching, New York State Association of Foreign Language Teachers, National Council of Organizations of Less Commonly Taught Languages, American Council of Teachers of Russian, Foreign Language Educators of New Jersey, Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, Florida Foreign Language Association, Foreign Language Association of Georgia, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, Center for Applied Linguistics, Southern Conference on Language Teaching, National Committee for Latin and Greek, Connecticut Council of Language Teachers, Wisconsin Association for Language Teachers, Massachusetts Foreign Language Association, Coordinators of Foreign Languages in Connecticut, International Association for Language Learning Technology.

Dear Colleague:

According to the National Research Council, a pervasive lack of knowledge about foreign cultures and foreign languages in this country threatens the security of the United States and our ability to compete in the global marketplace and produce informed citizens. According to the U.S. Department of Education, only 44 percent of American high school students are enrolled in foreign language classes, and only 31 percent of American elementary schools even offer foreign languages.

Research indicates that language education beginning in primary school is the best way to introduce a child to a foreign language. The length of time students spend studying languages at the K-12 level has stagnated, and many students reach only introductory levels of proficiency. Research demonstrates that success lies not only in the number of years of learning but also in having carefully sequenced and articulated programs of language learning across a child's school experience.

That is why I have introduced H.R.2111 the Foreign Language Education Partnership Act (See reverse for a summary). The bill amends the Foreign Language Assistance Program in NCLB-Title V to create a new K-12/higher education foreign language education partnership program. This legislation would provide incentives for creating model programs of articulated, sequenced foreign language instruction from K-12, with the goal of graduating high school students with an advanced level of proficiency.

I ask that you cosponsor H.R. 2111 to ensure we are developing foreign language skills at young age and continuing them through college in order to protect our national security, compete in the global marketplace and produce informed citizens.

Sincerely,

RUSH HOLT
Member of Congress

Bill Summary

- The bill amends the Foreign Language Assistance Program in NCLB-Title V to create a new K-12/higher education foreign language education partnership program.
- The legislation was developed in wide consultation with the K-12 and higher education foreign language communities, and represents a consensus on what new federal program is needed to improve foreign language education in grades K-12.
- The new legislation would provide incentives for creating and maintaining model programs of articulated, sequenced foreign language instruction from K-12, with the goal of graduating high school students with an advanced level of proficiency.
- Model programs must also include activities to expand understanding and knowledge of the historic, geographic, cultural, economic and other contextual factors of countries where the foreign language is spoken.
- Eligible partners include local and/or state education agencies and institutions of higher education, and may include businesses and nonprofit organizations.
- Any foreign language is eligible, but the Secretary of Education may establish priorities on languages critical to national needs.
- Grants may be provided initially for four years, and if success is demonstrated, may be followed by two additional 5-year grants.
- The first two years of an initial four-year grant may be used for planning and development for languages critical to national needs for which there are shortages of teachers, curriculum materials, and language assessments.
- Target proficiency levels must be identified and assessed at critical benchmarks.
- Program design and teaching strategies must be informed by best practices recognized by the foreign language field and available research.
- Funds may be used for a variety of activities, including, among others, the development of curriculum materials, in-service and pre-service teacher development, teacher recruitment, development or improvement of language assessments for K-12, study abroad and immersion opportunities for grades 9-12, and community involvement including heritage populations.
- Research and evaluation must be built into the model program, and data collected made available to the Secretary of Education and the public.
- Information on successful programs and practices will be widely disseminated by the Secretary of Education.
- \$50 million is authorized in the first fiscal year, and such sums for each succeeding fiscal year.