

Statement by

**Ms. Holly Kuzmich
Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy and Programs
for Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings
U.S. Department of Education**

before the

**Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management,
the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia
United States Senate**

**Lost in Translation: A Review of the Federal Government's Efforts
to Develop a Foreign Language Strategy**

January 25, 2007

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Department of Education regarding our efforts to improve the Nation's foreign language education, especially in critical need languages.

As you know, we face a severe shortage of Americans who speak languages that are critical to our national security and economic vitality. While only 44 percent of our high school students are studying any foreign language, and less than one percent study a critical need foreign language, learning a second or even a third language is compulsory for students in the European Union, China, Thailand, and many other countries. Many begin learning at an early age. And as fluent adults, who speak without an accent, they will have a strong advantage over monolingual Americans in developing new relationships and businesses in countries other than their own.

The Administration has been acutely aware of the need for skilled professionals with competency in languages critical to U.S. national security and global competitiveness, and the important role that the U.S. Department of Education can play in supporting the teaching and learning of foreign languages. Recognizing the potential benefits of greater coordination among Federal agency foreign language programs, the President asked the Departments of Education, Defense, and State, and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence to undertake a thorough review of Federal efforts to increase the support of foreign language capacity and to develop a comprehensive plan to expand foreign language education. Under the President's direction, this interagency initiative is working to implement a plan designed to meet the Nation's foreign language needs beginning in early childhood and continuing throughout formal schooling and in the workforce. On January 5, 2006, President Bush formally announced the National Security Language Initiative (NSLI).

The NSLI is built around three broad goals to address weaknesses in our teaching and learning of foreign languages, especially critical need languages, defined as foreign languages considered most critical for national security and global competitiveness. These include Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Russian, the Indic language family including Hindi, the Iranian language family including Farsi, and the Turkic language family including Turkish. The NSLI goals are to:

- 1) Increase the number of Americans mastering critical need languages;
- 2) Increase the number of advanced-level speakers of foreign languages, with an emphasis on critical need languages; and
- 3) Increase the number of teachers of critical need languages and provide resources for them.

The Administration launched the NSLI with its fiscal year 2007 budget request of \$114 million, which includes \$57 million for the Department of Education – increases totaling \$35 million over the fiscal year 2006 appropriation. Specifically, the request included:

- \$24 million for a new Advancing America Through Foreign Language Partnerships program, to allow for the creation of continuous programs of study of critical need languages from kindergarten through university. The Administration seeks to expand on the success of the Department of Defense's K-16 pipeline model as part of the long-term strategy to rapidly replicate and expand the number of programs across the United States.
- a \$2 million increase for Foreign Language Assistance, for a total of \$24 million for this existing program, to provide new incentives to school districts and States to offer instruction in critical need foreign languages, in elementary and secondary schools.
- \$5 million for the Language Teacher Corps, which would provide training to college graduates with critical need language skills who are interested in becoming foreign language teachers with the goal of having 1,000 new foreign language teachers in our schools before the end of the decade. The program would offer Americans with proficiencies in critical need languages opportunities to serve the Nation by teaching foreign languages in our Nation's elementary and secondary schools.
- \$3 million for the Teacher-to-Teacher Initiative to provide intensive summer training sessions and online professional development for foreign language teachers.
- \$1 million for a nationwide e-Learning Clearinghouse to help deliver foreign language education resources to schools, teachers, and students across the country. This Clearinghouse would provide a central repository for schools, teachers, and the public to find materials and web-based programs in critical need languages

developed by national resource centers, K-12 instructional programs, institutions of higher education, and agencies of the Federal Government.

While continuing to advocate for additional appropriations for NSLI, the Department has leveraged its existing foreign language programs and resources to institutionalize the goals of NSLI.

For example, in the fiscal year 2006 grant cycle, the Department gave priority to applicants in the Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP) that proposed to develop projects that would establish, improve, or expand foreign language learning in grades kindergarten through 12 in one or more of the critical need languages. We also gave preference to school districts that proposed to use FLAP funding to promote the sequential study of foreign languages, beginning in the elementary grades; intensive summer professional development programs; effective uses of technology; and two-way language learning. Of the 70 grants made to school districts, 57 address one or more of the critical need languages for a total of \$32.1 million. Of the four grants awarded to State education agencies, three address one or more of the critical need languages for a total of \$1.5 million. Many of the grants are going to innovative language programs. The Department plans to continue promoting projects in these areas in the fiscal year 2007 competition for this program.

Also during fiscal year 2006, the Department conducted a series of summer workshops through its Teacher-to-Teacher program, to promote best practices for foreign language instruction with an emphasis on critical need languages. We brought together over 500 teachers to share best practices in two workshops, one in California and one in Virginia focused on Mandarin Chinese. In the summer of 2007, the Department will expand the number of workshops for foreign language teachers to four and the languages included will be focused on

both critical need languages and commonly taught languages in an effort to expand our reach. In addition, the Department of Education will co-host a workshop for foreign language teachers with the Office of the National Intelligence Director in the city of Chicago as part of the ODNI Startalk summer program.

Another way the Department is able to improve language skills is through our International Education and Foreign Language Studies Domestic Programs, authorized by Title VI of the Higher Education Act of 1965, and our Fulbright-Hays Overseas programs, currently funded at \$91.5 million and \$12.6 million, respectively. The National Resource Centers (NRCs), one of the largest Title VI programs, is a Federal vehicle for developing and sustaining our national expertise in world areas and foreign languages. Today's NRCs include an elementary and secondary (K-12) outreach component and service to professional schools and a greater emphasis on integrated global forces and their regional impacts, as well as the less commonly taught languages of these regions. NRCs are funded in a variety of world areas, including Central Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, East Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Europe and Eurasia, Africa, and Latin America. In fiscal year 2006, the Department encouraged NRC grantees to consider the NSLI goals as they launched their new projects.

During fiscal year 2007, the Department has continued its efforts to support the teaching and learning of critical need foreign languages by announcing that it will award additional points to applications that propose a language focus in the following less commonly taught languages: Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Russian, as well as Indic, Iranian, and Turkic language families. The Department has established this priority in the Title VI competitions under the Undergraduate International Studies and Foreign Language program and International Research and Studies; and for the Fulbright-Hays' Group Projects Abroad, Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad, and the Faculty Research Abroad programs. In addition, the Department

also encouraged applicants in the Title VI Business and International Education program to focus activities on the targeted world areas of the Middle East, East Asia, South Asia, Russia, and Africa and will encourage applicants in the American Overseas Research program to establish or maintain existing centers for countries where critical need languages are spoken.

In addition, the Department is undertaking a comprehensive review of the Title VI programs, its largest foreign language investment, to ensure that they are meeting their purpose and adequately preparing Americans for public service and fluency in critical need languages. This review will inform the Department's recommendations for updating and reforming the program during reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

Critical foreign languages are also emphasized in a new student grant program signed into law in February 2006 – the National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent (National SMART grants) Program. National SMART Grants provide up to an additional \$4,000 to third- and fourth-year Pell Grant-eligible college students who have maintained a 3.0 GPA, are enrolled full-time, and major in math, science, engineering, technology, or critical foreign languages. The Secretary has used her authority under this program to encourage undergraduate students to major in critical need languages that are of vital interest to national security and global competitiveness. The Department collaborated with the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) to determine which languages should be funded under the SMART Grants program. The ODNI Foreign Language Executive Committee developed a consolidated list that reflected the highest needs of the Intelligence Community organizations.

Most recently, Secretary Margaret Spellings, along with Assistant Secretary of State Dina Powell, returned from leading a delegation of 12 United States university presidents on a

three-country Asia tour to highlight the United States as a premier destination for study abroad and increase collaborations with governments, educational institutions, and businesses in other nations. This trip was a direct outcome of the January 2006 University Presidents' Summit. Two-way educational exchanges have never been more important than they are in today's global economy. In her travels to Japan, Korea, and China, Secretary Spellings emphasized the importance of the National Security Language Initiative.

The NSLI has produced a unique collaboration among Federal agencies. Having reached agreement on the importance of foreign language acquisition and the goals of this initiative, the agencies are working in a coordinated way to allocate needed resources and implement the initiative, with each agency concentrating on those activities and programs that best utilizes its existing expertise and relates to its individual mission.

If Congress supports the Administration's NSLI, we will be able to use Federal resources to significantly enhance the teaching and learning of foreign languages in our schools, particularly critical need languages. In addition, we will be able to increase the numbers of graduates from the United States educational system with foreign language skills to work in the Federal service.

The President and his administration are committed to the NSLI and the need to develop foreign language capacity to address both the security and global competitiveness challenges that our country now faces, and have worked to establish a nimble multi-agency organizational structure that can plan for and address the needs of the future. Under NSLI, agencies have an opportunity to work together on ideas and programs that will equip students with the skills they need to succeed, help meet our workforce needs, and contribute to the spread of democracy abroad and the strengthening of it here at home.

The Department of Education looks forward to continuing its important work in improving this Nation's critical foreign language proficiency. I would be happy to respond to your questions.