

Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the education committee:

My name is Linda Levack Dalpe. I celebrate my 34<sup>th</sup> year of teaching, having taught in Hartford for 19 years, Farmington for 8 years, before becoming the department chair of World Languages in Enfield High School, where I now work. I am also the Vice President, President elect of CT COLT, and the parent of 4 children all with varying degrees of proficiency in Spanish.

I am opposed to bill 944 as it stands for the very reasons that I was here until late Monday night two weeks ago with lucky number 222 testifying in support of bill 945 – the bill that supports a two year minimum high school requirement for foreign language study.

I have attached for you several documents that give all the reasons why the study of language is critical to the economic well being as well as security of our country. I would also like to refer you to the testimony of an esteemed colleague Professor Tim Reagan, that carefully addressed the “Misrepresentation of Evidence proposed in the High School reform plan” and their rationale to have omitted the minimum study of foreign language. I have read the CABE rationale to oppose the foreign language study bill because “according to them” there are not enough teachers in this area. You heard testimony that ARC is addressing the problem of the shortage of language teachers and that they have already produced over 250 language teachers. As stated by Professor Reagan, we don’t omit the study of math or English because we don’t have enough math or English teachers. Colleges will certainly have to amp up their programs to attract and to meet the growing need for language teachers. At this point, why would anyone want to become a world language teacher when jobs are being cut, when language study is not viewed as an essential core subject, and when the first programs on the chopping block are the elementary and middle school programs?

With all due respect to Mr. McQuillan, his testimony about how he believes that language should start in the elementary school, is a moot one. We all believe that! But the reality in these economic times is that the elementary school programs are the first targeted as budgets get tight. We saw this in my own home town of South Windsor, which had a program in the 1960’s and it has never been restored once it was cut. Thus my own children did not have the same opportunity to study language as an elementary school child that I did. In the Hartford Courant you might have seen that my colleague from West Hartford has the elementary program on the chopping block because the FLEP grant has expired. On Friday, I learned that Region 8 RHAM high school has a reduction in force in their language dept. yet there are 60 additional students coming to RHAM. (A dept. head listening to the news told the dept. chair, “well at least your dept isn’t totally wiped out.”) If language is not seen as a core subject that is exactly what will happen across our state.

When these new requirements were put together by the state board of education, who were the language experts who were called in to testify about the importance of language? Why was foreign language study part of goals 2000 and also included in the original reform plan? Why not call in Professor Reagan and speak to him or other language experts in the field?

If bill 944 is passed, here is what I believe will happen.

I sat in the courtroom listening to Horton vs. Meskill, and taught Barnaby Horton. I was teaching in Hartford with Sheff vs. O'Neill, with Sheff sitting in our dept. Have we learned anything from these court cases? I have taught in a district where language was a requirement to graduate – a DRG B – Farmington, where there are 9 periods in a day, and students are taking 8 and 9 classes –with many taking 4 and 5 AP classes in their junior and senior years. My own brother who lived in a lower DRG district sent his children to private elementary, middle and high school, but also sent them to private language school to give them an edge to be bilingual in German. He has taken private lessons in Chinese, studied two semesters in China and now is a very valuable business consultant, having retired from his job. The haves – whether private citizens, or upper DRG school districts will continue to have – they will continue to see the importance of language as a competitive marketable skill.

In Enfield, with a 7 per day, and all of these new requirements of the reform plan in bill 944, you will see our students on the 5 year plan – and while a few will take 2 years minimum to be eligible to get into college-- they won't be able to take AP, if they even can reach the upper levels of language at all! They won't be able to fit it into their schedule – As it is, we continue to experience scheduling conflicts where students have to choose between upper levels of language and their science and labs – which consume two periods in the day. It will clearly decimate most electives, never mind the language dept. Currently 59% of our school population study language, but only 28% of those studying language are in our upper level language classes. It is a constant crusade to encourage our students to remain in language study for the myriad of benefits, to work out as many scheduling conflicts that we can, and to often allow a student to sit in on the upper level class, having to miss two days for science labs each week.

Language is not for the elite...it is a necessary skill for everyone...we can't talk out of both sides of our mouths – insisting that in our mission statements for NEASC accreditation we are preparing our students for a global world, when learning a foreign language is not seen as a core subject.

In the 1950s a book came out called The Ugly American that talked about our diplomats, Americans out in the rest of the world who not only don't speak the language of the country but clearly don't understand the culture. Congressman Paul Simon wrote a book in 1980 called The Tongue Tied American in which he gave statistic after statistic of the business errors, political errors, tactical errors, and diplomatic errors that Americans continue to commit in the rest of the world. This past Friday night's NBC news clip showed Hillary Clinton - embarrassed in her efforts to improve relations with Russia because of a translation error. Cleverly she gave a button that she thought said "restart"....and then she learned from the diplomat that it was translated wrong, and that the word meant "overcharge". The Russian bilingual diplomat pointed out the embarrassing error. How clear is the message that we must do better in this arena!

I am doing my part to create life long language learners. The 6 week CT SPAIN partnership student exchange is a massive part of my life – it is what my husband jokingly calls my third job without pay – it requires such a tremendous amount of time, planning, preparation, fundraising, and ultimately travel. It is a sacrifice that my family continues to support - I give up my vacation week as part of the 3 week exchange so that our students miss less school. These vacation weeks aren't recoverable ,and if you have ever traveled and lived with students, you are working constantly, while at the same time

connected back to your own classroom, and for me to the VP who is scheduling the department for the following year, and at that point trying to resolve the conflicts. When the Spaniards come, I open my home to host a teacher. All of the reservations for the excursions, the fundraising, document collection, data collection, lesson plans to leave behind, and the 100 page prepared journal prompts are all just a small part of the entire program. This program is a gift to my district that I choose to give. I have just completed an in depth study of the past five years of the program. The survey took approximately 25 minutes for all students who traveled with the program in Spain to complete. I received 94% response. Here are some partial results:

71% of the students have maintained contact with their host families and their friends that they made.

15% have returned to Spain to study and or visit their Spanish "families".

74% believe that the continued use and study of Spanish in their life is important or very important to them .

86% believe that being able to speak Spanish is very important in the workplace in this global economy.

68% have continued with their study of Spanish. Of those who did not continue, the most reported issue was in the difficulty of scheduling a Spanish course, especially an upper level course.

22% are currently studying for a career in education, with 29% majoring or minoring in Spanish. Additionally numerous students are studying criminal law, international business, and international communications.

My own superintendent is worried that the board is looking at the cost of the substitute teachers- - the only money that the district has to pay towards the program...while my Spanish counterparts have the trip paid for by their government, and the teachers even receive additional pay for taking the trip. My point here, is that such a valuable program, regardless of the thousands of hours that is given to create, maintain and grow this program is not free from being affected by the economic situation, nor the incredible impact hat it has had on the lives of the students who have traveled to Spain.

I implore you to think of the ramifications of passing bill 944 with no provision for foreign language study included as a core subject. At the same time, I ask you to carefully consider the importance of bill 945 to better prepare our students to take their place in what truly is a global economy. Please read the countless benefits of language study . Please read Dr. Reagan's response to this bill. And finally please consider what we are trying to do to prepare our students to navigate this new flat world where diversity, linguistic and cultural proficiency are going to be critical to their economic future.

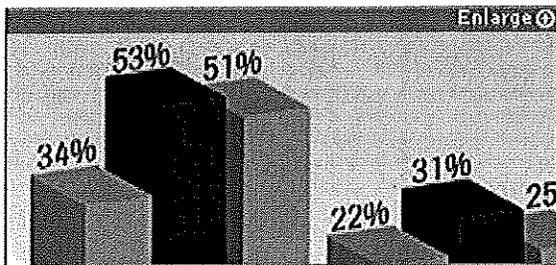


Robert Slater, the director of the National Security Education Program, which is housed in the U.S. Department of Defense, said it was troubling that elementary school foreign-language offerings are slipping nationwide, "because children learn second and third languages easier at that level."

"That's what the rest of the world does," he noted, implying that the United States will fall even further behind other nations in producing bilingual people if primary schools aren't engaged in the task.

### Tongue-Tied

Fewer elementary schools are teaching a foreign language than they were a decade ago.



SOURCE: Center for Applied Linguistics

The decline of foreign-language instruction at the elementary level could make it harder for the United States to create a pool of language specialists who can speak both English and those languages deemed critical to the country's economic success or national security, such as Chinese and Arabic.

But, in fact, while fewer elementary schools overall are teaching foreign languages, Chinese and Arabic offerings at that level have increased slightly, while French and German classes have decreased over the past decade, according to preliminary results from a survey by the Washington-based Center for Applied Linguistics, which will be published in a report in the fall. Spanish is provided in 88 percent of the elementary schools that teach a foreign language.

Overall, one in four elementary schools offered foreign-language classes in 2008.

"A lot of schools are telling us [the decline] is for budget reasons," said Nancy C. Rhodes, the director of foreign-language education for the center. In addition, she said, "We had a specific question about the No Child Left Behind Act and whether it affected programs. Many said, yes, it's had a negative effect on their programs because they are under so much pressure to allocate time to math instruction and English-language arts."

The most significant decrease occurred in public elementary schools.

Ms. Rhodes said, however, that the percentage of U.S. secondary schools that provide foreign-language classes has stayed about the same over the past decade.

## Crowded Curriculum

Officials of the Tucson Unified School District in Arizona had hoped to expand their school system's foreign-language offerings at the high school level. Instead, the school board rescinded a requirement in December that all high school students, starting with the class of 2012, must take two years of a foreign language, which the board had approved last March.

Maggie R. Shafer, the chief academic officer for the 56,800-student district, said the "very forward-thinking policy" was voided because of "budget considerations." She said the state had increased graduation requirements for math and science courses at the same time, and the school district couldn't afford to hire additional teachers for those subjects and for foreign languages. Arizona doesn't require students to take foreign-language courses.

The Springfield, Mass., district is among those that have greatly pared back foreign-language programs in its 32 elementary schools. About a decade ago, Spanish or French was offered in all elementary schools.

Azell M. Cavaan, the chief communications officer for the 25,000-student urban district, said the program was reduced because "there has been a shift in focus to math, science, and English-language arts." She didn't elaborate on whether the district was responding to provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act that require testing only of mathematics, science, and English-language arts.

In 2004, elementary schools in Springfield employed 25 foreign-language teachers; now, four are on board, said Ms. Cavaan. The number of foreign-language teachers in middle schools has decreased from 28 to 18 since then, though foreign-language offerings at the high school level have been maintained, she said.

In 2006, the school district in Akron, Ohio, dropped a Japanese program in one of its elementary schools, the only primary school in the district that offered foreign languages, for financial reasons, according to Karen Ingraham, a spokeswoman for the 2,300-student district. At the same time, it dropped French and Spanish programs in all its middle schools, but restored those this school year after the community passed a tax levy.

Administrators in districts that have provided foreign-language classes with the help of subsidies from foundations, state education agencies, or other entities say the recession is causing them to consider reducing or eliminating the programs for next school year because they can't run them with outside funds alone.

Marion County public schools and Nelson County schools in Kentucky are in that predicament. For three years, the two rural districts have partnered with a Chinese organization and their state education agency to hire visiting teachers from China to teach that country's language and culture. The statewide program, which 22 districts are participating in, has been restructured, requiring the school systems to pay the visiting teachers more next school year.

Roger L. Marcus, the superintendent of the Marion County district in Lebanon, Ky., said his school system has offered Chinese in grades K-12 for three years, reaching 1,500 to 1,800 of the district's 3,200 students each year.

"We were attempting to build a program from the elementary level up to the high school level with the intent of adding additional resources—before the resources started to dwindle," Mr. Marcus said. "State budget reductions over several years and the reduction in local revenues as a result of the economic recession leave us with little choice" but to cut Chinese next school year, he explained.

## **Embassy to the Rescue**

The Chinese program in Nelson County, in Bardstown, Ky., is also likely to be reduced or eliminated next school year, said Janice O. Lantz, the district's superintendent. The Nelson County district, which has 4,850 students, received a \$45,000 state grant this school year to strengthen the program at the elementary level. Ms. Lantz said the district is hoping it might receive a similar grant next school year, which would permit it to support one visiting Chinese teacher. But she said the district will not have the funds to employ three Chinese teachers, as it has this year and last.

But the superintendent of a 355-student one-school district in Sprague, Conn., may have found a way to keep a teacher on board who has taught Italian for seven years at the K-8 Sayles School.

Ed Senesac, the superintendent, said he was able to implement the Italian program only with the help of small grants from a foundation associated with the Italian Embassy. But he figured for the 2009-10 school year, for which he didn't plan on getting a grant, he only had money to hire the Italian teacher three days a week. He called the foundation and was told he will get enough money to hire the teacher full time for another year.

Mr. Senesac says the Italian program has been "a shining star" in a small town with a low per-capita income. "We've had kids visit Italy; people from Italy have visited us. ... With all these budget cuts, we have to keep our eye on the fact that we have a responsibility to make sure these kids can compete in the international community 10 or 15 years from now."

## **Some Expansions**

Despite the economic downturn, some districts are expanding foreign-language offerings.

In September, the 17,000-student Ann Arbor, Mich., district plans to launch a foreign-language program intended eventually to reach all elementary students. The district will start by offering Spanish to 3rd graders in its 21 elementary schools.

Liz Margolis, the director of communications, said the district struck a special agreement with the teachers' union that permits it to use student-teachers from the University of Michigan to teach the language classes, which will run two half-hour periods each week.

Donald Freeman, the director of teacher education at Michigan, said the partnership benefits the university, which provides the student-teachers at no cost to the district. It gives the institution "the ability to work in a closely sustained way in clinical settings to develop world languages, which isn't done well in many places."

A limited number of districts are benefiting from federal grants to expand programs. For several years now, the U.S. Department of Defense's Foreign Language Education Program has given grants of \$750,000 to \$1 million annually to each of two partnerships engaging the Portland, Ore., and the Dearborn, Mich., public schools to establish a K-16 pipeline for teaching Chinese or Arabic.

But mostly, says Ms. Rhodes of the Center for Applied Linguistics, the communities that are able to maintain robust foreign-language programs tend to be those in high-income areas. "All in all," she said, "in the United States, we still have a long way to go if we are just teaching foreign languages in high school, in getting the students up to a proficient level."

<http://spanish.about.com/b/2008/02/22/advice-from-obama-and-clinton-learn-a-foreign-language.htm>

## Advice From Obama and Clinton: Learn a Foreign Language

Friday February 22, 2008

Learning foreign languages is a good thing, the two leading candidates for the Democratic Party's nomination said in a [debate shown on the Spanish-language Univision network](#) Thursday.

As might be expected in a debate aimed partly at Spanish-speaking voters, Sens. Hillary Rodham Clinton and Barack Obama were asked about bilingualism in the United States. Although the two avoided the issue of the extent to which Spanish (or any other non-English language) should have legal recognition, they agreed that English is and should be a unifying language but that it is commendable to learn another language. Clinton's comments:

I think it's important for as many Americans as possible to do what I have never been able to do, and that is learn another language and try to be bilingual because that connects us to the rest of the world. ... I represent New York. We have 170 languages in New York City alone. And I do not think that we should be, in any way, discriminating against people who do not speak English, who use facilities like hospitals or have to go to court to enforce their rights. But I do think that English does remain an important part of the American experience. So I encourage people to become bilingual. But I also want to see English remain the common, unifying language of our country.

And Obama's:

Well, I think it is important that everyone learns English and that we have that process of binding ourselves together as a country. I think that's very important. I also think that every student should be learning a second language. ... I want to make sure that children who are coming out of Spanish-speaking households had the opportunity to learn and are not falling behind. If bilingual education helps them do that, I want to give them the opportunity. But I also want to make sure that English-speaking children are getting foreign languages because this world is becoming more interdependent and part of the process of America's continued leadership in the world is going to be our capacity to communicate across boundaries, across borders, and that's something frankly where we've fallen behind.

As far as I can recall, the issue didn't come up at Republican debates during the past year except in the context of immigration reform. The likely Republican nominee, John McCain has historically objected to efforts at restricting uses of language other than English. But at a debate held in New Hampshire last year, he didn't object to the concept of "official English." He was the only candidate who qualified his position, though, pointing out with apparent approval that Navajos in his own state frequently hold official meetings in their own language.

As outlined in [this report](#), both Obama and Clinton have portions of their official websites in Spanish. McCain does not, although he has sought the support of Spanish-speaking voters in other ways.

What's your view on issues of bilingualism and "official English" as a political issue? Feel free to share your perspective by clicking on the Comments link below.

## **Tongue-tied America, then and now: Bernd Debusmann**

Fri Feb 8, 2008 10:21am EST

Bernd Debusmann is a Reuters columnist. The opinions expressed are his own.

By Bernd Debusmann

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The book was entitled "The Tongue-Tied American: Confronting the Foreign Language Crisis" and its author found that a deficit of language skills threatened U.S. business and national security. That was in 1980. The words "globalization" and "jihad" had not yet become household terms.

Fast forward to the present and the latest report on foreign languages and international education by the research council of the National Academies: "A pervasive lack of knowledge about foreign cultures and foreign languages threatens the security of the United States as well as its ability to compete in the foreign market place."

So has nothing changed since the late Paul Simon, then a congressman, later a senator, warned about the consequences of a tongue-tied America? Judging from a wealth of statistics, there has been much effort but little progress.

Then and now Americans who are fluent in other languages and familiar with other countries are a small minority. Language deficits span fields from international business and diplomacy to intelligence, law enforcement and the military.

The September 11 attacks might have been thwarted had there been linguists to sift through and analyze Arabic-language message traffic in the days before. At one point after the attacks, the government said it had a 123,000-hour backlog of tapes in Middle Eastern languages.

### **SOME HOPE**

Not all is gloom, however. Since the September 11 attacks and the resulting focus on the Middle East, there have been sharp increases in enrolments in Arabic classes and Middle East studies courses at U.S. colleges.

The increases sound impressive: Arabic enrolments up 126.5 percent from 2002 to 2006, according to the Modern Language Association. That makes 23,974 students out of a student population of around 14.5 million. The increase has been so substantial there now is a shortage of language instructors.

The trend of sharp percentage increases and relatively modest absolute numbers transcends academia. The Department of State, whose role is to foster better understanding with foreign countries, reports a 36 percent increase in the number of officers who can hold a conversation in Arabic.

That means from 198 to 270 out of a foreign service of 11,500. An estimated 250 million people speak Arabic and the United States has embassies and consulates in almost all Arab countries.

President George W. Bush's 2009 budget request, sent to Congress this week, provides for an additional 300 slots for diplomats to study Arabic and other "superhard" languages, so called because it takes most students at least two years of six-hour-a-day instruction to get fluent enough for discussions on "practical, social and professional topics."

The State Department is not alone in its problems of communicating with Middle Easterners in their own language. The military, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Central Intelligence Agency and others have all stepped up efforts to recruit linguists or native speakers of Arabic, Farsi, Dari and Pashto - the languages of Iran and Afghanistan - and all still fall short of the numbers they need.

#### LANGUAGE GAP ON COMMERCIAL FRONT

So much for the Middle East, where being tongue-tied and half-deaf poses obvious security problems for the United States. It suffers a language handicap, too, on the commercial front, where China is fast rising as a rival with superpower ambitions.

Enrolment in Chinese classes jumped more than 50 percent, the second-biggest increase after Arabic, between 2002 and 2006 but here, too, the number is tiny: 51,582. More than a billion people speak one of the two main Chinese languages.

For some Americans (and their British cousins), such disparities are no cause for concern. Before paying his first visit to China last month as British prime minister, Gordon Brown promised efforts to help the Chinese learn English, which he described as "a bridge across borders (and) the common future of human commerce and communication."

That is an argument native English speakers can (and routinely do) turn round to read "why should I learn a foreign language? The foreigners are learning English." With that mindset, there never was a "foreign language crisis."

But language is not only a means of communication, it is a window into the mind of other people and a key to their culture.

Apart from language studies at home, the main gate to other cultures for many college-age Americans have been programs that take them to foreign countries for a semester or a year.

These programs have more than doubled over the past decade, according to the Institute of International Education (IIE). But again, percentage increases tell only part of the story.

In 2006, more than 220,000 young Americans studied outside the United States. The small army of American students abroad accounted for 1.5 percent of the college population.

Britain has long been the top destination for Americans studying abroad, though China has been moving up and now stands at 7th place.

"Even if the present rate of growth continues, the study abroad numbers will not add up to what is required to produce global citizens," says IIE president Allan E. Goodman.

Will the U.S. ever produce enough global citizens? By at least one statistic, there is more reason for despair than for hope. In 1965, there were around 16 enrolments in foreign language courses for every 100 college students. By 2006, that had shrunk by half.

(You can contact the author at [Debusmann@Reuters.com](mailto:Debusmann@Reuters.com))

Text size: 

# Go Global, Connecticut

## INTERNATIONAL READINESS • State must prepare students for world economy

February 21, 2009

If there is a silver lining to the cloud of economic gloom in Connecticut, it's our export numbers. Last year, 4,636 Connecticut companies exported \$15.3 billion in goods and commodities, according to the World Institute for Strategic Economic Research. The total is an increase of more than 40 percent since 2005.

Export activity accounts for more than 7 percent of the state's economy and supports 30 percent of our manufacturing jobs. Engagement in the global economy has also led to more foreign investment in Connecticut; subsidiaries of foreign companies account for nearly 105,000 jobs here.

So if the global economy is where the growth is, shouldn't we be increasing our presence?

The state does well on the business level: The Department of Economic and Community Development and business groups aggressively go after international trade. But according to educators and other participants in a recent World Affairs Council program on international readiness, we aren't preparing our young people for the global economy, at least on a consistent basis.

For example, foreign language instruction is offered at differing levels of intensity across the state and is often one of the first victims of budget cuts. The world language requirement was recently dropped from the state's proposed high school reform standards and is now an elective.

Also, some state college scholarships do not allow recipients to study abroad. Why not?

Simsbury Superintendent Diane Ullman said Connecticut needs a "a state strategy, a plan for international readiness." She's right. It should include not only K-12 language instruction and foreign study, but training teachers to teach the international aspects of their subjects and measuring our educational standards against those of other countries.

Many of the financial service jobs that brought waves of cash into the state are gone. We need to replace those jobs. If the future is the increasingly flattening world, we would be remiss in not preparing our students for it.

What's your opinion? Be heard with a Letter to the Editor: [www.courant.com/writeletter](http://www.courant.com/writeletter)

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## **Rep. Rush Holt**

Posted September 18, 2008 | 06:32 PM (EST)

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# **Why Foreign Language Education Matters**

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Imagine a storeroom full of hundreds of hours of audio recordings and documents in Farsi, Pashto, Urdu, or Korean. The materials might hold the clues to prevent a future terrorist attack or help American intelligence officials finally locate Osama bin Laden, only a handful have been translated because a lack of trained linguists.

We have those storerooms now. We lack these translators now.

Such troves of untranslated materials exist, and in at least one case FBI officials admitted that they destroyed a storeroom of documents before they were even translated.

The problem is not only in the area of national defense. Our companies lose international contracts to competitors, our scientists miss important collaborations, international assistance organizations fail to understand local customs critical to advancing America's interests, and average Americans are deprived of a cultural enrichment in their lives.

Illinois Senator, Barack Obama, recently expressed concerns about our nation's foreign language deficit saying, "You should be thinking about how can your child become bilingual. We should have every child speaking more than one language."

Senator Obama's opponents seized upon his remarks, making the claims that he was trying to force Americans to learn a secondary language. Such criticism is not only foolish, it is dangerous.

Rather than attack Senator Obama, I would hope we could reach a political consensus in this country that our government must change course and stop undervaluing and under-investing in foreign language education. Leaders from both parties should recognize the issue's importance and bring forth strategies to increase our interest and our ability in foreign languages.

Some members of the public and media might question why, with our unparalleled military and economic might, would Americans need to learn the languages of the world. Doesn't everyone speak English anyway? It is no exaggeration to say that bolstering foreign language education for ensuing generations is vital to our nation's economic and national security.

Our national security is heavily dependent on translators, specialists, and interpreters within the intelligence community, the diplomatic corps, and the military. Prior to September 11, 2001 our intelligence community was at only 30 percent readiness in languages critical to national security. The government revealed after the 9/11 attacks that it had a 123,000-hour backlog of Arabic language recordings waiting to be analyzed. Five years after the attacks, news reports demonstrated that only 33 FBI agents had limited proficiency in Arabic, and "none of them work in the sections of the bureau that coordinate investigations of international terrorism."

Our ability to compete in the global marketplace -- one in which China and India continue to rise - is dependent on our knowledge of other languages and cultures. Already, China claims to be the second largest English-speaking nation in the world. As the non-partisan Committee for Economic Development wrote in a 2006 report, "Many small- and medium-sized businesses from New England to the Pacific Northwest are now finding it necessary to do business in the languages and cultural environments of the world's emerging markets." Still, the same report cited a study showing that 30 percent of large U.S. corporations believed they failed to exploit fully their international business opportunities due to insufficient personnel with international skills.

Recognizing the importance of foreign language understanding has not been -- nor should it be -- a liberal or Democratic viewpoint. In speeches, President Bush and Secretary of State Rice have shared the view that the U.S. should do more to support foreign language education.

In 2005, the Wall Street Journal Editorial Page approvingly cited a report published by the Department of Defense that recommended "immediate...engagement by public, private and government agencies to improve the nation's foreign language and cultural competency." That same report noted that after September 11, 2001, Americans were "caught flat-footed, unprepared to confront Al Quada terrorists."

Language learning is a long-term process; unfortunately there is no short-cut to acquiring fluency in a foreign tongue. It takes hard work, individual commitment, and the proper institutional support. We must ensure that we increase the supply line of students who have strong language skills.

The 110th Congress has taken steps to confront this problem. We passed legislation, based on language I wrote, to create upfront tuition assistance for college students who commit to teaching critical foreign language at public schools. Over the last two budgets, we raised federal funding

from \$16 million to \$44.7 million for the National Security Education Program, a language studies and cultural awareness training program for future federal employees.

We can still do more. We could establish grants for foreign language partnerships between local school districts and foreign language departments at institutions of higher education. We could create an Assistant Secretary for International and Foreign Language Education in the Department of Education, who would provide leadership in directing efforts aimed at international and foreign language education.

There are other approaches to strengthening America's foreign language education, and all of these should be discussed. Unfortunately, some would rather score cheap political points than have a serious discussion about an issue that directly affects our economy and national security.

Another Illinois Senator, the late Paul Simon, in his book, *The Tongue-Tied American*, once called the United States a "linguistically malnourished" nation. He said that almost 30 years ago. Our nation's appetite for learning a foreign language sadly still needs to be filled.

# From Huffington post.Margee Ensign

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## What We Don't Know Can Hurt Us

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"You buy them a Rand-McNally, you meet with generals, you get a lot of flags on the stage, and you give a big speech on foreign policy to display you have some command of the world," explained Republican consultant Alex Castellanos, on a recent CNN segment. This is what it means to be internationally literate?

As we debate whether being able to see Russia from a window counts for foreign policy experience, there is another view of what constitutes adequate knowledge of foreign affairs and very different standards about how to gain an international perspective that universities have supported for decades. The three legs of this global literacy include international experience, gained through study abroad, knowledge of global economics, politics, world history and geography, and cross cultural and linguistic competency. Understanding other countries and cultures requires the ability to speak a foreign language. Cross cultural understanding facilitates diplomacy and business. Knowledge of politics, economics, history and geography is essential for understanding the world and being able to act pro-actively rather than reactively in dealing with other nations. A proactive policy means that we have an ongoing involvement in issues that prevents them from becoming crises.

Unfortunately, Sarah Palin is not alone in her global ignorance. Our colleges and high schools are not doing what is necessary to boost America's international competence, and the current generation is not gaining the knowledge and skills necessary to understand other continents and cultures. Last academic year, less than eight percent of undergraduates enrolled at universities in the US were taking a foreign language course, and less than one percent of our 15 million college's students in the United States studied abroad. Equally alarming are the results of a recent survey of first year students at universities and colleges across the United States. Only about one-third said it was essential for them to learn about other countries and cultures. Being well off financially and raising a family are far more important objectives for this group of Americans. They have yet to realize that our peace and prosperity, and their livelihoods, increasingly depend upon people and processes around the globe.

In this era of globalization, we will not become internationally competent until our K-12 teachers are knowledgeable about international issues. Currently few teacher training programs or schools of education concentrate on global issues. The media contributes to our international ignorance. Entertainment-based or "soft" news media, including shows such as Entertainment Tonight, watched by an estimated 4 million Americans, have grown significantly in the past few decades. Edutainment has a significant impact on shaping public opinion towards foreign policy, at least in the US. This type of coverage, often dramatic in nature, usually lacks the larger political, economic and international context. Researchers have found that viewers are often left without an understanding of the cause and consequences of the stories they are viewing. It is not surprising then that American students know little about the rest of the world, and that more know where the TV show CSI is located than can find Iraq on a map.

Our lack of historical, linguistic and cultural knowledge forms the bases for many of our tragic mistakes in Iraq. Our soldier's inability to communicate has led to numerous tragedies on the ground. The lack of Arabic speakers in the intelligence agencies is one of the reasons for our intelligence failures.

Our future as a country will be determined by whether our society is internationally competent, speaking Farsi as well as French, because our greatest national security threat comes not from Al Qaeda, but from our ignorance about international affairs. Congress should support programs in language, world history, cross cultural awareness and international studies from grades K through 20. Newspaper editors should supplement their international coverage. Network executives should replace parachute journalism and edutainment with permanent correspondents around the world. And we should not elect people to the highest offices in the land who only recently acquired a passport.