
National Security Language Initiative

Fact Sheet from the Office of the Spokesman, Washington, D.C., 5 January 2006

President Bush today [5 January 2006] launched the National Security Language Initiative (NSLI), a plan to further strengthen national security and prosperity in the 21st century through education, especially in developing foreign language skills. The NSLI will dramatically increase the number of Americans learning critical need foreign languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Hindi, Farsi, and others through new and expanded programs from kindergarten through university and into the workforce. The President will request \$114 million in fiscal year 2007 to fund this effort.

An essential component of U.S. national security in the post, 11 September 2001 world is the ability to engage foreign governments and peoples, especially in critical regions, to encourage reform, promote understanding, convey respect for other cultures and provide an opportunity to learn more about our country and its citizens. To do this, we must be able to communicate in other languages, a challenge for which we are unprepared.

Deficits in foreign language learning and teaching negatively affects our national security, diplomacy, law enforcement, intelligence communities, and cultural understanding. It prevents us from effectively communicating in foreign media environments, hurts counter-terrorism efforts, and hampers our capacity to work with people and governments in post-conflict zones and to promote mutual understanding. Our business competitiveness is hampered in making effective contacts and adding new markets overseas.

To address these needs, under the direction of the President, the Secretaries of State, Education and Defense and the Director of National Intelligence have developed a comprehensive national plan to expand U.S. foreign language education beginning in early childhood and continuing throughout formal schooling and into the workforce, with new programs and resources. The agencies will also seek to partner with institutions of learning, foundations and the private sector to assist in all phases of this initiative, including partnering in the K-16 language studies, and providing job opportunities and incentives for graduates of these programs.

The National Security Language Initiative has three broad goals:

- Expand the number of Americans mastering critical need languages and start at a younger age.
 - Providing \$24 million to create incentives to teach and study critical need languages in K-12 by re-focusing the Department of Education's Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP) grants.
 - Building continuous programs of study of critical need languages from kindergarten to university through a new \$27 million program, which will start in twenty-seven schools in the next year through Department of Defense's NSEP program and the Department of Education, and will likely expand to additional schools in future years.
 - Providing Department of State scholarships for summer, academic year and semester study abroad, and short-term opportunities for high school students studying critical need languages to up to 3,000 high school students by summer 2009.
 - Expanding the State Department Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Program, to allow 300 native speakers of critical need languages to come to the U.S. to teach in U.S. universities and schools in 2006 and 2007.

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- Establishing a new component in State's Teacher Exchange Programs to annually assist 100 U.S. teachers of critical need languages to study abroad.
 - Establishing Director of National Intelligence language study "feeder" programs, grants and initiatives with K-16 educational institutions to provide summer student and teacher immersion experiences, academic courses and curricula, and other resources for foreign language education in less commonly taught languages targeting 400 students and 400 teachers in five states in 2007 and up to 3,000 students and 3,000 teachers by 2011 in additional states.
 - Increase the number of advanced-level speakers of foreign languages, with an emphasis on critical needs languages by:
 - Expanding the National Flagship Language Initiative to a \$13.2 million program aiming to produce 2,000 advanced speakers of Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Persian, Hindi, and Central Asian languages by 2009.
 - Increasing to up to 200 by 2008 the annual Gilman scholarships for financially-needy undergraduates to study critical need languages abroad.
 - Creating new Department of State summer immersion study programs for up to 275 university level students per year in critical need languages.
 - Adding overseas language study to 150 U.S. Fulbright student scholarships annually.
 - Increasing support for immersion language study centers abroad.
 - Increase the number of foreign language teachers and the resources for them by:
 - Establishing a National Language Service Corps for Americans with proficiencies in critical languages to serve the nation by:
 - Working for the federal government;
 - Serving in a Civilian Linguist Reserve Corps (CLRC);
 - Joining a newly created Language Teacher Corps to teach languages in our nation's elementary, middle, and high schools. This program will direct \$14 million in fiscal year 2007 with the goal of having 1,000 volunteers in the CLRC and 1,000 teachers in our schools before the end of the decade.
 - Establishing a new \$1 million nation-wide distance-education E-Learning Clearinghouse through the Department of Education to deliver foreign language education resources to teachers and students across the country.
 - Expand teacher-to-teacher seminars and training through a \$3 million Department of Education effort to reach thousands of foreign language teachers in 2007.
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