

Talking Points to Support HR 2111

- According to the U.S. Department of Education, only 44 percent of American high school students are enrolled in foreign language classes, only 31 percent of American elementary schools even offer foreign languages, and less than 8 percent of U.S. undergraduates study a foreign language.
- According to the 2000 census, only 9 percent of Americans can speak a second language, whereas over 50 percent of Europeans speak one or more foreign languages.
- 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 as well as its ability to compete in the global marketplace and produce an informed citizenry.
- The National Research Council also concluded that early language learning in elementary and secondary school is key to establishing a pipeline of students who can eventually reach a high enough level of proficiency in foreign language and culture to meet national needs.
- Our nation has a severe shortage of foreign language teachers. According to a recent survey from Recruiting New Teachers Inc., 73 percent of the school districts in the United States are in need of foreign language teachers.
- The Committee for Economic Development recently determined that current efforts in this country to develop language skills and knowledge of world regions at an early age are clearly inadequate to prepare high school graduates with the skills necessary for productivity and citizenship in an integrated global economy.
- Research indicates that language education beginning in primary school is the best way to introduce a child to a foreign language and its nuances. Studies also suggest that foreign language study helps develop a child's cognitive skills and improves the child's learning of other subject matter.
- Research demonstrates language acquisition requires a number of years of carefully sequenced, articulated programs of language learning across a student's school experience that bridge the different educational levels.
- A National Geography global literacy survey found that 87 percent of students in the U.S. between ages 18 and 24 cannot find Iraq on a world map, 83 percent cannot find Afghanistan, 58 percent cannot find Japan, and 11 percent cannot even find the United States.
- According to an American Council on Education poll, 79 percent of the American people agree that students should have a study abroad experience, but only 1 percent of our students actually do study abroad.