

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 20, 2014

Dr. Don M. Randel
Chair of the Board
American Academy of Arts and Sciences
Norton's Woods
136 Irving Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

Dr. Jonathan F. Fanton
President
American Academy of Arts and Sciences
Norton's Woods
136 Irving Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

Dear Dr. Randel and Dr. Fanton:

We write to request that the American Academy undertake a new study, proceeding from the excellent work presented in *the Heart of the Matter*, to examine the nation's current capacity in languages, how a greater attention to language training can improve the education of a citizenry prepared to thrive in a multicultural society and a global economy, and how such preparation influences international cooperation and diplomacy, trade and foreign investment, national security, and the ability of all Americans to enjoy a rich and meaningful life.

English is no longer sufficient as a *lingua franca*—neither at home nor abroad. The percentage of the world's population that speaks English as a first language is declining rapidly; if current demographic trends continue, only 5% will be native English speakers by 2050. At the same time, the ability to communicate in languages other than English has never been more important, as:

- American jobs and exports are more dependent than ever on foreign markets;
- The American population is increasingly multilingual;
- Americans are more engaged diplomatically and militarily around the globe than ever before; and
- Challenges like poverty and disease, and opportunities in scientific research and technological innovation, all require greater international understanding and cooperation.

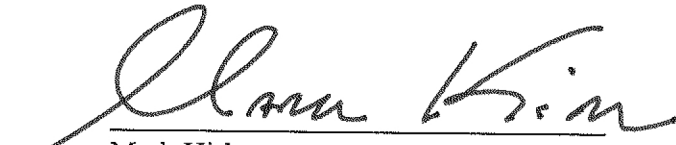


The American Academy of Arts & Sciences has the ability to provide critical assistance in this effort by assembling education, business, and policy leaders to examine the relationship between language learning and the nation's strength, competitiveness, and well-being.

In order to assess the national impact of language learning, we request that the American Academy examine the following questions:

How does language learning influence economic growth, cultural diplomacy, the productivity of future generations, and the fulfillment of all Americans? What actions should the nation take to ensure excellence in all languages as well as international education and research, including how we may more effectively use current resources to advance language learning?

Your answers to these questions will help Congress, the states, and local communities design effective programs to ensure that America remains competitive and strong. We look forward to reviewing the results of your efforts.

Sincerely,


Mark Kirk
United States Senator
Brian Schatz
United States Senator
Orrin G. Hatch
United States Senator
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator