

## **Corps Members Will Provide Surge Capacity to Help Federal Agencies Meet Foreign Language Challenges**

(Washington, D.C.) - Legislation passed on Thursday evening by the U.S. House of Representatives would permanently establish a National Language Service Corps (NLSC) within the Department of Defense to help meet critical defense-related foreign language needs.

The NLSC provision was written by U.S. Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12) and Sen. Daniel Akaka (D-HI). It is part of the National Defense Authorization Act, which is expected to pass the Senate and be signed into law in the days ahead.

“America is linguistically malnourished,” Holt said. “Far too few Americans can speak or understand foreign languages, and as a result, we are hampered in participating in global commerce and in defending our national security. The permanent establishment of the National Language Service Corps is a meaningful step toward helping our government address its shortfall of skilled foreign language speakers.”

“The National Language Service Corps is a unique effort to take advantage of the Americans who learned a language at home or in school and are eager to put that ability to work for their country in times of need,” said Richard B. Brecht, Executive Director of the Center for Advanced Study of Language.

The bill provides that the NLSC will “provide a pool of nongovernmental personnel with foreign language skills who... agree to provide foreign language services to the Department of Defense.” The Secretary of Defense will then be able to “call upon members of the Corps to provide foreign language services to the Department of Defense or another department or agency of the United States.”

The NLSC currently exists as a pilot program that has recruited more than 1,800 members. To date, NLSC members have worked with the Department of the Navy, the National Security Agency, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other federal agencies. For instance, the NLSC provided translation and interpretation support services to the U.S. Army

Pacific for counterinsurgency training in Thailand.

Holt originally introduced the language authorizing the NLSC as an amendment during House consideration of the National Defense Authorization Act in May. The final provision was included in the conference version of the bill negotiated by a House-Senate committee earlier this month.

The permanent establishment of the NLSC is the latest of several steps that Holt has taken in to strengthen Americans' foreign language skills.

In the early 2000s, he secured funding to expand the Language Flagship program of the National Security Education Program at the Defense Department, which develops strategic partnerships between the national security community and higher education.

In 2007, Holt wrote legislation that established the TEACH Grant program, which provides up to \$16,000 in upfront tuition assistance to students who commit to become foreign language teachers.

Together with Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), Holt has introduced the Foreign Language Education Partnership Program Act, which would provide up to \$50 million for model programs of sequenced foreign language instruction that begin in kindergarten and continue through high school.