

Leaders from Business, Government, Academia, and the Arts Call for Improved Access to Language Education

A working group of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences has published a call-to-action featuring nearly 200 endorsements.

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Press Release

CAMBRIDGE, MA | May 30, 2018 — In support of its recent report, [*America's Languages: Investing in Language Education for the 21st Century*](#), the American Academy of Arts and Sciences has released a call-to-action signed by 37 individuals and over 150 organizations who urge greater support for languages in order to maintain and enhance American global leadership.

The call-to-action, "[*Bridging America's Language Gap*](#)," includes endorsements from business, government, and cultural leaders such as **Norman R. Augustine**, retired Chairman and CEO of Lockheed Martin Corporation; **Melody C. Barnes**, former Director of the White House Domestic Policy Council; documentary filmmaker **Ken Burns**; **Robert D. Haas**, Chairman Emeritus of Levi Strauss; former Secretary of Defense and Director of the Central Intelligence Agency **Leon E. Panetta**; and **Natasha Trethewey**, 19th United States Poet Laureate.

"Bridging America's Language Gap" has been endorsed by dozens of businesses, academic and professional associations, school systems, and other institutions that support the five recommendations of the *America's Languages* report:

- **Provide access to languages for all age groups** and every level of the education continuum, from early childhood through retirement;
- **Prepare more language teachers**, without whom we cannot advance language education;
- **Promote public-private partnerships** in language education to amplify the work begun in our schools;
- **Support heritage and indigenous language communities** in their traditions and birthrights, and as an important and distinctive national resource; and
- **Encourage international learning experiences** for students, teachers, and workers through educational and professional programs, as a critical aspect of advanced language learning.

"The people and organizations who have signed this call-to-action are witnesses to the enduring importance of language education in the United States," said **Jonathan F. Fanton**, President of the American Academy. "They affirm the fundamental recommendation of the Academy's report: to improve access to language education for as many Americans as possible in order to strengthen our relationships at home and abroad."

The American Academy will continue to collect endorsements for "Bridging America's

Language Gap" and will update the document periodically.

"Bridging America's Language Gap" is the first product of the America's Languages Working Group, an informal group convened under the aegis of the American Academy that includes representatives from the language profession, academia, government, business, NGOs, and heritage and indigenous communities. Over the next few years, Working Group members will be undertaking a series of collaborative activities in support of the *America's Languages* report.

"The members of the Working Group have come together, across institutional divides, to advance the common cause of improving language education," Fanton added. "This collaborative spirit is as important as any report or call to action and is the basis of real change. The Academy is proud to have inspired such cooperation through its *America's Languages* report, and we are happy to help sustain the Working Group's ongoing efforts."

The members of the America's Languages Working Group include:

Marty Abbott, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

Mohamed Abdel-Kader, The Aspen Institute

Lenna Aoki, General Counsel to Senator Brian Schatz (D-HI)

Erlin Barnard, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Richard Brecht, University of Maryland and American Councils Research Center

Dan E. Davidson, American Councils for International Education and Bryn Mawr College

Ambassador Ruth A. Davis, International Women's Entrepreneurial Challenge and the International Mission of Mercy USA

Kathleen Diamond, ASTM F43 Language Services and Product

Rosemary G. Feal, Wellesley College

Sharon Ahern Fechter, Montgomery College

Stephen Kidd, National Humanities Alliance

Gail McGinn, former (retired) Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Plans in the Office of the Secretary of Defense

Maria Pulcini (secretary), Joint National Committee for Languages

Bill Rivers, Joint National Committee for Languages

Julia A. Smith, Association of American Universities

Emily Spinelli, American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese

John Tessitore (chair), American Academy of Arts and Sciences

Santiago Wood, National Association for Bilingual Education

Sonia Zamborsky, Marriott International

"Bridging America's Language Gap" is available at www.amacad.org/language-gap.

The *America's Languages* report is available at www.amacad.org/language.

To join the effort, contact John Tessitore at jtessitore@amacad.org.

Follow the conversation at #AmericasLanguages.