

Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies

April 19, 2011

The Honorable Arne Duncan
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan:

On behalf of the 3,000 members of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies, we write with deep concern over reports of a severe, \$50 million or 40% cut to the Department of Education's International Education and Foreign Language Studies programs—**Title VI and Fulbright-Hays**—in the final FY 2011 Continuing Resolution agreement.

We understand the difficult decisions faced by the Department of Education on spending cuts for the remainder of FY 2011, and the upcoming FY 2012 deliberations. Under H.R. 1473, it is our understanding that you have discretion to decide final funding levels for programs not specifically cited for cuts in the bill, and such is the case for Title VI and Fulbright-Hays. It is our hope that you will have the latitude to administer these education cuts proportionately and equitably.

In making these tough choices, we urge you to consider the important role played by international and foreign language education programs in supporting our nation's long-term **national security, global leadership, economic competitiveness**, as well as mutual understanding and collaboration around the world. Successful U.S. engagement in these areas, at home or abroad, relies on Americans with global competence, including foreign language skills and the ability to understand and function in challenging global environments.

Simply put, the number of Americans with these skills and expertise does not match our growing strategic needs at home or abroad. Now more than ever, our nation's students must have access to a high-quality international education and skills-training needed to compete and collaborate in the rapidly changing global economy.

Title VI and Fulbright-Hays programs are the federal government's most comprehensive programs supporting the development of national capacity in international and foreign language education. They directly feed business and government sectors. Programs support activities to improve our capabilities throughout the educational pipeline, from K-

12 outreach through graduate education and strategic research. Instruction is provided in over 130 languages and 10 world areas, with emphasis on the less commonly-taught, strategic languages, such as Russian, Arabic, Turkish, Pashto, and Chinese.

Title VI and Fulbright-Hays alumni include Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, former Ambassador to Russia James Collins, advisor to six Secretaries of State Aaron David Miller, and *NYTimes* Pulitzer prize-winning journalist Anthony Shadid. The programs support the President's Export Initiative through training of small and mid-size businesses to engage in emerging markets and create jobs. In short the dividends from these programs vastly outweigh the small 0.2% investment in the Department of Education's budget.

Most of these university-based programs would be eliminated without Title VI support, especially when state and local governments and institutions of higher education also are financially strapped. Significantly cutting programs in this carefully designed "program pipeline" would seriously weaken our nation's international education capacity, which has taken decades to build and would be impossible to easily recapture.

After 9/11, Congress began a decade of enhancements to Title VI and Fulbright-Hays because of the sudden awareness of an urgent need to enhance the nation's in-depth knowledge of world areas, transnational issues and fluency of U.S. citizens in foreign languages. A 40% cut now would eliminate the gains made since FY 2002, and in turn have an adverse long-term impact on our national interests.

In developing your spending plan for FY 2011, we urge you to provide the maximum amount possible for these programs. Thank you for your consideration of our views and for your support of international education.

Sincerely,



Bruce Grant
President, Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies
Professor, New York University



Lynda Park
Executive Director, Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies