



# The President's Priorities

## I would ask the new administration

to commit to the goal of making sure that language is a focus of a world-class public education for all students. We need leadership in promoting and improving the teaching and learning of languages to foster a well-educated population that can connect and communicate with their neighbors near and far. At present, the U.S. lacks the language competence that is needed for diplomatic, social, business, security, and other purposes. At the same time, students who enter our schools with proficiency in a language other than English often suffer academically and lose their home language because they receive instruction only in English. Research shows that these students could benefit academically and cognitively from continued development in their native language, maintaining that language and mastering English. Native English speakers benefit in many ways from gaining proficiency in other languages as well. We need a renewed focus on policy that supports dual language education and other strong, well-articulated, language development programs from early childhood through adult education.

**Donna Christian**, President  
Center for Applied Linguistics  
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## Two days after the election, I was listening to an international call-in program

("Talk of the World"). I was amazed at how all the callers, clearly not native speakers of English, were able to express their views coherently and cogently in English. I wondered how many of our native-born citizens could do the same if they were given the opportunity to call into a broadcast from another country. Alas, the numbers would undoubtedly be small. If the U.S. is going to be a major player on the world stage, able to be directly engaged with others, President-elect Obama will need to be a leader in putting the spotlight on language study by providing a means for all children to become proficient in another language, an advantage he himself had as a child. I urge our new President to support educational reform that will allow all members of our society to participate in world events through an appreciation and knowledge of other languages and cultures.

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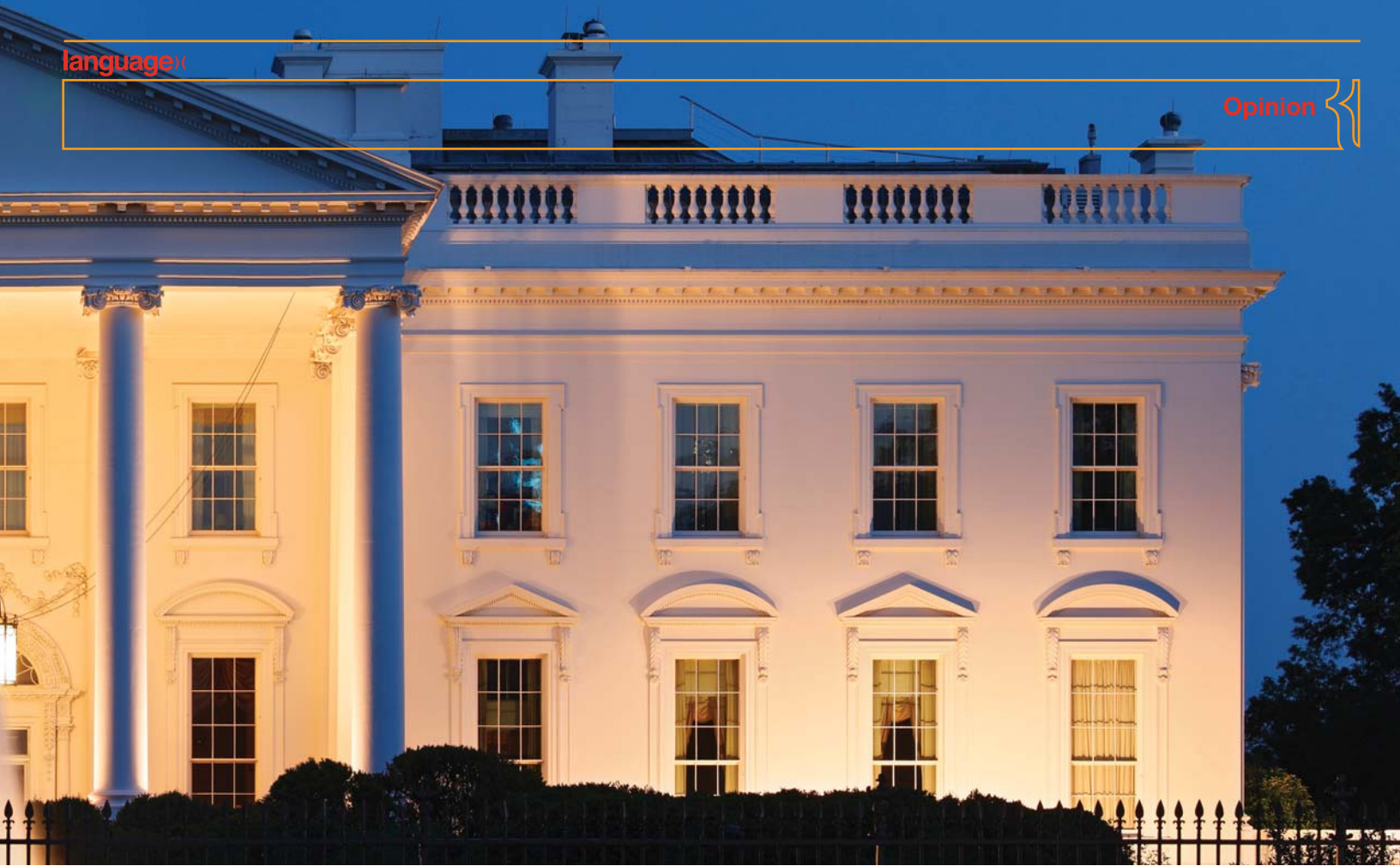
## In the 21st century, oral and written

communication skills will be essential for all American high school graduates. To promote the nation's security, economic success, and harmony in diversity, all American high school graduates should be able to communicate orally and in writing in at least two different languages: English and one other. We know this goal of bilingualism is achievable; psycholinguists tell us that the human brain is wired at birth to acquire more than one language. Bilingual ability should not just be a goal for the college-bound; it should be a goal

for ALL high school graduates.

In his first 100 days, President Obama should request that rigorous graduation standards for bilingual language and literacy be set, and funding allocated to support continuous long-term programs of language study to enable all American students to achieve those standards.

**Elaine Tarone**, Director  
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### ■ Provide greater access to English

language programs by investing additional resources in education including:

- \$850 million for Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act
  - \$750 million for adult education programs under Title II of the Workforce Investment Act
  - Strengthen the Office of English Language Acquisition with additional qualified staff and resources
  - Authorize the English Literacy/ Civics program grants as part of the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act
  - Reauthorize the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act
  - Increase research and investment in appropriate assessment instruments and accommodations for English language learners.
  - Reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act
  - Ease access for international students to study in the U.S.
  - Provide pathways to citizenship for successful undocumented students through the Defense and Relief of Alien Minors (DREAM) Act
  - Expand resources for professional development for teachers of English language learners
- Shelley Wong**, President 2008-2009  
Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages [www.tesol.org](http://www.tesol.org)

As we celebrate the historic inauguration of America's first minority President, *Language Magazine* asks five experts what the new administration should do for languages and literacy in its first 100 days

#### **In the 1979 report, *Strength Through Wisdom: A Critique of U.S. Capability*,**

in the 2007 report, *International Education and Foreign Languages: Keys to Securing America's Future*, and in many other reports published during the years between these major publications; two points have been repeatedly documented:

- Today's students and tomorrow's workforce will be expected to function in an increasingly global society.
- Our national educational practices are not capable of meeting that expectation.

From all perspectives — whether the emphasis is on developing an informed citizenry, on preparing students for careers in a global economy, on protecting our national security, or on providing support for world peace through diplomatic outreach and humanitarian assistance — it is clear that we must make the teaching and learning of other languages and cultures a routine part of every student's curriculum at all levels of the student's schooling.

Simply put, to provide a world-class education in world languages, the U.S. must do what the rest of the developed world does. We must provide extended sequences of second language instruction — sequences that begin in elementary school and continue through high school and college.

Can such a systemic, pervasive lacuna in our educational system be addressed as part of the new President's education, security, and economic agenda? Yes, it can!

**Ray Clifford**, President

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

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