

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3989

To retain language proficiency and readiness to support national security goals of the United States.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 12, 2025

Mr. PANETTA (for himself, Mr. TONY GONZALES of Texas, and Mrs. KIGGANS of Virginia) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services

A BILL

To retain language proficiency and readiness to support national security goals of the United States.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Fluent Forces Act”.

5 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

6 Congress finds the following:

7 (1) Since 1941, the United States has recog-
8 nized the need for military intelligence units to have
9 a competitive edge through language proficiency. Al-
10 though investments in linguists were made since

1 World War Two to support American military and
2 foreign policy, the terrorist attacks on September
3 11, 2001, exposed a shortage of members of the
4 Armed Forces who speak highly valuable languages.
5 The terrorist attacks highlighted the persistent and
6 continuous need for the Department of Defense to
7 maintain a designated cohort of qualified linguists to
8 respond to crises or contingencies anywhere in the
9 world. In response, the Defense Language Institute
10 Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) was created.
11 Today, DLIFLC remains the premier school of the
12 Department of Defense for culturally based foreign
13 language education and training.

14 (2) Fluency in foreign languages and cultures
15 underpins successful foreign policy and national se-
16 curity, as evidenced across an array of conflicts, in-
17 cluding counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, and
18 great power competition.

19 (3) Despite growing developments in technology
20 and artificial intelligence, person-to-person engage-
21 ment remains an intimate component of America's
22 military strategy, including in multinational conflicts
23 throughout the Middle East and Europe.

24 (4) The skillset provided by language and cul-
25 tural training supports effective communication and

1 interoperability between members of the Armed
2 Forces of the United States and partner forces, al-
3 lows for connections with local populations in politi-
4 cally sensitive environments, and offers more effi-
5 cient diplomatic engagement with state representa-
6 tives or negotiation teams.

7 (5) With foreign language skills, members of
8 the Armed Forces, including members of both active
9 and reserve components, can make informed and po-
10 tentially lifesaving judgements regarding strategy
11 and operations that can be culturally-sensitive both
12 at home and abroad. As information plays a more
13 considerable role in military and foreign policy, lin-
14 guistic skills provide increased support for intel-
15 ligence gathering and subsequent interpretation.

16 (6) The Foreign Area Officer program, with
17 language instruction completed at the DLIFLC,
18 serves as another indispensable component of Amer-
19 ica's foreign policy strategy. Through their foreign
20 language and cultural expertise, Foreign Area Offi-
21 cers are members of the Armed Forces grounded in
22 the profession of arms who—

23 (A) provide leadership and expertise in di-
24 verse organizations in joint, interagency, inter-
25 governmental, and multinational environments;

1 (B) advise senior leaders as regional ex-
 2 perts; and

3 (C) offer unique war fighting competencies,
 4 including cross-cultural capabilities, inter-
 5 personal communications, and foreign language
 6 skills, that are critical to mission readiness of
 7 the Department of Defense in a dynamic na-
 8 tional security environment.

9 **SEC. 3. ANNUAL ASSESSMENT ON RECRUITING PRACTICES**
 10 **TO INCREASE ATTENDANCE AT THE DEFENSE**
 11 **LANGUAGE INSTITUTE FOREIGN LANGUAGE**
 12 **CENTER.**

13 (a) ASSESSMENTS.—Not later than December 31,
 14 2025, and annually thereafter until December 31, 2030,
 15 the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the Committees
 16 on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Rep-
 17 resentatives an assessment of recruiting methods of the
 18 Department of Defense to increase attendance at the De-
 19 fense Language Institute Foreign Language Center.

20 (b) ELEMENTS OF ASSESSMENT.—Each assessment
 21 submitted under subsection (a) shall include, with respect
 22 to the 12-month period ending the month before the date
 23 of the submission of the assessment, the following:

24 (1) An identification of the public and private
 25 secondary schools engaged by military recruiters for

1 the purpose of increasing attendance at the Defense
2 Language Institute Foreign Language Center.

3 (2) An identification of the number of persons
4 recruited from such schools who completed enlist-
5 ment or accession into the Armed Forces and subse-
6 quently enrolled at the Defense Language Institute
7 Foreign Language Center.

8 (3) An identification of challenges to recruiting
9 qualified individuals from such schools that limit
10 progress toward increasing the number of personnel
11 attending the Defense Language Institute Foreign
12 Language Center, including challenges with respect
13 to—

14 (A) procedures for recruiters to gain access
15 to such schools;

16 (B) the conduct of relationship-building ac-
17 tivities between military recruiters and high
18 schools;

19 (C) the ability of military recruiters to fol-
20 low-up with interested students; and

21 (D) any other issues the Secretary con-
22 siders appropriate.

23 (4) Recommendations for new recruitment
24 methods to increase attendance at the Defense Lan-
25 guage Institute Foreign Language Center through

1 increased awareness of linguist professions in the
2 United States Armed Forces and similar professions
3 within the United States Government that might re-
4 quire proficiency in a foreign language.

5 (5) Recommendations for how the Department
6 of Defense can develop procedures to systematically
7 document effective engagement and activities with
8 high schools.

9 (6) The plan of each Secretary of a military de-
10 partment to implement the recommendations de-
11 scribed in paragraphs (4) and (5).

12 (7) Measurable benchmarks of progress of cur-
13 rent initiatives by the Department of Defense to re-
14 cruit qualified individuals to attend the Defense
15 Language Institute Foreign Language Center.

16 (c) DISAGGREGATION REQUIREMENT.—Each assess-
17 ment submitted under subsection (a) shall, with respect
18 to the information required by paragraphs (1), (2), and
19 (3) of subsection (b) that relates to public secondary
20 schools, include such information in a form that is
21 disaggregated by local educational agency.

22 (d) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act, the terms “local edu-
23 cational agency” and “secondary school” have the mean-

- 1 ing given the terms in section 8101 of the Elementary and
- 2 Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

