

President's Message September, 2015

I want to thank the more than 400 attendees of our 97th Conference held in Denver. Our keynote speaker, Linda Egnatz, 2014 ACTFL National Language Teacher, spokesperson for the profession and advocate for the Seal of Biliteracy for high school diplomas gave a moving speech about helping students to achieve proficiency and followed up her talk with a session on moving students from novice to intermediate proficiency.

During the conference Kevin Cessna-Buscemi, Director of the National Spanish Examination, reported that some 3900 teachers had students participating in the NSE. A total of 163,496 students took the exam which was a 2.75% increase over last year. In another announcement Kate Hoin was named the new Editor of *Albricias*, the student journal of the Sociedad Honoraria Hispánica. Debora Ferreira, Director of the National Portuguese Exam, announced there is a Facebook page dedicated to information on the Portuguese exams.

Don't forget that the 2016 conference will be in Miami, Florida next summer from July 8–11 at the Marriott Biscayne Bay Hotel. We have started planning some enjoyable excursions for the Miami area. The call for proposals has opened. Several proposals were received on the opening day!!!!

During the summer *The Guardian*, an online, international news source published a report from the Instituto Cervantes, *El español, una lengua viva*, announcing that the United States is the second largest Spanish-speaking country after Mexico. We currently have 41 million native speakers with another 11.6 million bilingual speakers, mainly children of immigrants. The U.S. Census bureau calculates that by 2050 the USA will be the largest Spanish-speaking nation, with Spanish being the mother tongue of almost one-third of the population.

The southwest has our biggest concentration of Spanish speakers. The highest percentage is in New Mexico at 47%; California and Texas tie at 38% and Arizona has 30%. Even 18% of the population of New York consists of Spanish speakers.

Since the founding of the AATSP in 1917 we have held our conference once in Arizona, twice in New Mexico, six times in Texas, ten times in California and fourteen times in New York; seven of those meetings were held in conjunction with the MLA.

Also announced at the end of July was the formation of the Commission on Language Learning. This will be the first study on Foreign Language Learning in more than thirty years. The last study was published in 1979 by the President's Commission on Foreign Languages and International Studies. The current study was requested by a bipartisan group from the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives. This commission will examine the current state of U.S. language education, project future needs and recommend ways to meet these needs.

The congressional members want to examine the actions the U.S. should take insure excellence in international education as well as how language learning influences economic growth and cultural diplomacy.

Our society is multilingual with many Americans working in different parts of the globe yet according to some estimates as many as 80% of Americans only speak one language.

The commission will study ways in which Americans receive language education from traditional classes, to government programs to workplace enrichment. Then they will identify

the best practices and opportunities for improvement. To support the commission the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation provided a \$220,000 grant.

So in closing, please get out that 2016 calendar and post a note for January to remind yourself about the 2016 conference in Miami for the dates July 8-11!

Elaine Davis
2015 AATSP President