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President's Message

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It is my pleasure to continue to give you information related to our 97th AATSP conference theme – Meeting the Needs of a Changing Profession. As of April 15, 2015, The SB-267 Biliteracy Bill passed the Indiana House Floor with a 95-0 vote. This bill is now ready to be signed by Indiana Governor Michael Pence. Indiana High School students would receive a Certificate of Biliteracy and a notation on the transcript that would recognize proficiency in English and another language. Indiana AATSP President and Indiana Foreign Language Teachers Advocacy Chair Israel Fernando Herrera is to be congratulated for his work on behalf of this legislation.

It is gratifying to see that the legislators see the value of learning world languages and promoting multicultural and multilingual education. Proficiency in one or more languages is an asset in political, social, and economic contexts and in expanding trade with other countries. The demand for employees to be fluent in more than one language is increasing throughout the world. Employers see the need to be fluent in more than one language to better serve the needs of customers and open communication.

Are you wondering now – Does my state recognize the Seal of Biliteracy? Currently the following states approve the Seal of Biliteracy: California, Illinois, Louisiana, Minnesota, New Mexico, New York, Texas and Washington. States where the Seal of Biliteracy are under consideration are: Massachusetts, Nevada, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Utah and Virginia. The following states are in the early stages of consideration: Colorado, Florida, Maryland, Michigan, Ohio, Oregon and Wisconsin.

When and where did this begin? An organization in California – Californians Together developed the concept in 2008. Californians Together is a coalition of teachers, parents and education advocates committed to equal access to quality education of all children. In 2011 California passed legislation to establish a state seal of Biliteracy.

What is the seal? The Seal of Biliteracy recognizes high school graduates who have achieved a high level of proficiency in speaking, reading and writing in one or more foreign languages. The gold seal is affixed to the diploma or transcript of a graduating senior. College admissions and future employers see this as a mark of achievement. Some school districts are awarding Bilingual Pathway Awards which recognize bilingual progress from Preschool up to the high school. The Seal of Biliteracy is not just for English learners mastering a second language. Students learning English as a second language and developing proficiency in their home language are eligible for the seal.

Some of the criteria to achieve the Seal of Biliteracy are: fulfillment of the English language requirements at the high school level; demonstrating language proficiency by passing one of the

following exams: the AP test with a 3.0 or 4.0; passing a school language exam; passing the International Baccalaureate (IB) exam with a 4 or higher; passing a four year high school world language course with an average of 3.0 or higher ; achieving a score of 600 or more on the Scholastic Aptitude Test II; passing the Spanish DELE exam; or passing a test based on the ACTFL guidelines such as the ACTFL OPI with a score of Intermediate – Low or higher.

We are all happy for the state of Indiana and thankful to Israel Herrera and others for their work on behalf of foreign languages.