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THE SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF THE INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES OF THE AMERICAS

\*\*\* SSILA BULLETIN \*\*\*

An Information Service for SSILA Members

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25.0 SSILA ELECTIONS

The SSILA Nominating Committee (Lyle Campbell, Pam Munro, and Karen Booker) has selected the following slate of candidates for the positions

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to be filled in the 1995 elections:

Vice President (1996) and President Elect for 1997: Robert L. Rankin  
Member-at-Large of the Executive Committee (1996-8): Amy Dahlstrom  
Secretary-Treasurer (1996): Victor Golla  
Member of the Nominating Committee (1996-98): Douglas Parks  
Thomas Smith-Stark

Ballots are enclosed with the October 1995 issue of the SSILA Newsletter, which is reaching most members this week. Completed ballots must be returned to the Secretary-Treasurer no later than December 21, 1995. The results will be announced at the annual business meeting in San Diego, January 5, 1996.

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25.1 LATEST ON "ENGLISH-ONLY" BILLS IN U.S. CONGRESS

[Our Washington correspondent, James Crawford, has sent this update on the progress of legislation in the U.S. Congress that would establish English as the official national language and (under some proposals) virtually eliminate funding for bilingual education and for Native American language preservation.]

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Members of Congress debated the pros and cons of English-only legislation at an Oct. 18 hearing of the House subcommittee on early childhood, youth, and families. Sponsors of the four major "Language of Government" bills stressed several familiar themes: the need to preserve English as the "social glue" uniting Americans, the alleged failure of bilingual education to assimilate immigrants, and the specter of civil strife brought on by language diversity. None made mention of the special situation of Native American languages or how they might be affected by the legislation. Some excerpts follow.

Rep. Bill Emerson (R-Mo.), sponsor of H.R. 123: "In an effort to assist the limited-English proficient individual, the federal government has sanctioned and promoted what amounts to official multilingualism.... Such a policy sends the very destructive message of linguistic and social separatism and would effectively create a number of linguistic ghettos across the country."

Rep. Toby Roth (R-Misc.), sponsor of H.R. 739: "We're losing our common bond. For one in seven Americans, English is a foreign language."

Rep. Pete King (R-N.Y.), sponsor of H.R. 1005: "The purveyors of political correctness have been successful in instituting big government programs to actively dissuade new immigrants from learning English."

Sen. Richard Shelby (R-Ala.), sponsor of S. 356: "I believe all functions of government should be performed in English ... the language of opportunity in this country."

Rep. Sonny Bono (R-Calif.), cosponsor of several bills, called for a "common-sense approach. This is America, English is our language, and that's that. ... Enough is enough of this bleeding-heart stuff."

Opponents questioned the need for an official U.S. language after 200+ years of doing without one, cited the bills' threat to minority rights and educational opportunities, and warned that they would foster intolerance and division. Rep. Jose Serrano, sponsor of H. Con. Res. 83, an "English Plus" resolution, argued that the English-only legislation as currently drafted would make it illegal for him to communicate with constituents in Spanish (and invite lawsuits against him if he did). Rep. Ed Pastor (D-Ariz.) noted that the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals recently struck down a similar English-only measure in his home state, ruling that it violated First Amendment guarantees of free speech for state officials and employees.

Robert Underwood (D-Guam) added that English is already the federal government's de facto official language. No one seriously advocates it should be otherwise and no one offers other languages as official mediums of communication. ... [English-only] advocates should take heart, declare victory, and go home. ... [These bills] encourage nativism in our population and send a very negative message about the conservation of our linguistic resources as a country."

Others who testified in opposition included Reps. Sam Farr (D-Calif.), Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), Xavier Becerra (D-Calif.), and Sheila Jackson-Lee (D-Texas).

Six of the subcommittee's eight Democratic members attended the hearing, and of these, all opposed the English-only bills and several made mention of indigenous languages. Rep. Dale Kildee (D-Mich.) cited the valuable contributions of Navajo and Mohawk code-talkers during World War II. Rep. Pat Williams (D-Mont.) noted that several tribes in his state, the Crow in particular, continue to raise children bilingually. And Rep. Patsy Mink (D-Hawaii) expressed concern that English-only legislation would imperil efforts to revitalize Native Hawaiian, which her state made a co-official language (along with English) in 1978.

Only 4 of the panel's 10 Republican members attended, and all raised serious questions about the need for English-only legislation. Advocates for English Plus plan to meet further with these members and to mobilize letters from their constituents in hopes of strengthening these doubts. These Republicans include the subcommittee's chairman, Randy "Duke" Cunningham (Calif.), Steve Gunderson (Wisc.), Michael Castle (Del.), and Mark Edward Souder (Ind.). If two of these Republicans voted no, the English-only bills would likely be defeated in subcommittee.

This optimism was somewhat tempered, however, by increasing support for English-only bills among other House members. Rep. Emerson now claims over 200 cosponsors for H.R. 123. To pass legislation in the House, 218 votes are required. In addition, the House Republican leadership remains strongly in support of these measures, apparently having decided to exploit English-only as a partisan issue (something it has rarely been in the past).

The subcommittee has scheduled another day of hearings on Nov. 1, at which time non-members of Congress will be allowed to testify. At this writing, however, no list of witnesses has been agreed upon. Meanwhile, Senator Ted Stevens (R-Alaska), has announced plans to hold English-only hearings in the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee before the end of this year. And there are unconfirmed reports that the House Judiciary Committee, which shares jurisdiction over the English-only bills, plans hearings as well.

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Most observers do not expect formal votes on this legislation, either in committee on the House or Senate floors, until sometime next year, when the English-only issue is expected to figure in Presidential politics.

—James Crawford  
JMCRAWFORD@delphi.com

## 25.2 OPPORTUNITY FOR WORK IN GUATEMALA

At the 1995 Mayan Languages Conference in Guatemala, the leader of the Uspantek linguistic community asked if there were any linguists interested in working on Uspantek. The community is in the early stages of preparing bilingual educational materials and would be very interested in any type of linguistic research, especially descriptive studies. Uspantek is the native language of Rigoberta Menchu, winner of the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize. It is the only tone language in the K'ichean family of Mayan.

Anyone interested (especially graduate students searching for a dissertation topic) should get in contact with Rusty Barrett (Dept. of Linguistics, Univ. of Texas, Austin, TX 78712) for more information. (E-mail: rustyb@ccwf.cc.utexas.edu; tel: 512/323-2761). Or they can contact the Uspantek community directly at the following address:

Miguel Angel Vicente Mendez  
Comunidad linguistica Uspanteko  
Uspantan, Departamento Quiche  
GUATEMALA, Central America

## 25.3 ALASKA SYMPOSIUM ON ATHABASKAN & NA-DENE PREHISTORY

The April 4-6 1996 meeting of the Alaska Anthropological Association in Fairbanks will include a symposium entitled "Topics in Athabaskan and Na-Dene Prehistory" to be held on Saturday April 6th. One of the keynote speakers at the 1996 conference will be Victor Golla of Humboldt State University, the specialist in Pacific Coast Athabaskan. We invite papers on aspects of Athabaskan and Na-Dene prehistory at early time depths as well as in the proto-historic/historic periods. We anticipate a program that is broadly interdisciplinary and that will reflect:

- 1) the emerging corpora of lexical data from numerous Athabaskan and Na-Dene languages and the progress being made in the reconstruction of Proto-Athabaskan and Proto-Na-Dene;
- 2) the expanding ethnographic data sets, especially in the form of narratives;
- 3) the theoretical debates that draw upon the broad geographical distribution of Subarctic archaeological sites that are plausibly Athabaskan, or the recent work on the archaeology of the coast of Southeast Alaska; and
- 4) the potential for resource materials on and for Na-Dene peoples that can contribute to the perpetuation of these languages and cultures.

We are seeking papers from disciplines such as archaeology, ethno-history, linguistics, folklore, physical anthropology and education

that can contribute to this discussion. We also welcome participation by tradition bearers of the Athabaskan and Tlingit cultures. Most papers will be 20 minutes including brief discussion. We anticipate having a period for general discussion. Limit your abstract to 100 words and send it in on disk. Deadline for receipt of abstracts is February 1, 1996

For further information contact:

James Kari  
Alaska Native Language Center  
PO Box 757680, University of Alaska  
Fairbanks, AK 99775-7680.  
email: ffjmk@aurora.alaska.edu  
phone: 907/474-6585.

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#### 25.4 NSF LINGUISTICS PROGRAM NEEDS TEMPORARY DIRECTOR

The National Science Foundation is seeking applicants for a one-year appointment as Program Director for Linguistics, to serve in that position while the current Program Director, Paul Chapin, is on sabbatical leave. The appointment will be approximately from August 1996 to August 1997, with exact beginning and ending dates to be negotiated.

The Program Director for Linguistics is responsible for administering the review of research proposals in linguistics and the language sciences which are submitted to NSF, for recommending and documenting actions on the proposals reviewed, for dealing with administrative matters relating to active NSF grants, and for maintaining regular contact with the research community and providing advice and consultation to persons requesting it.

Applicants must have a Ph.D. in linguistics or a related discipline, and must be active in scientific research on language. Six or more years of research experience beyond the Ph.D. is required for appointment as Program Director. Salary is negotiable, and is comparable with academic salaries at major U.S. institutions.

Please direct inquiries and expressions of interest to Dr. Paul G. Chapin, Program Director for Linguistics, Suite 995, National Science Foundation, 4201 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22230. Phone: 703/306-1731. E-mail: pchapin@nsf.gov.

Qualified persons who are women, ethnic/racial minorities, and persons with disabilities are strongly encouraged to apply. NSF is an Equal Opportunity Employer committed to employing highly qualified staff that reflects the diversity of our nation.

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#### 25.5 CORRESPONDENCE

Mam Speakers?

>From Dan Early (dearly@metolius.cocc.edu) 1 Nov 1995:

I am a cultural anthropologist working with the defence in a criminal case involving Mam speaking Indian immigrants from the San Marcos area

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who are living in Oregon. I would appreciate communicating with anyone who has experience with this language or information and ethnographic information on this group. Thanks!

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