



From the President

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ATA on the Hill

The fifth objective in our Association's bylaws asks that we "provide a medium for cooperation with persons in allied professions." According to our bylaws, one of the ways to achieve this objective is by "maintaining membership in professional organizations in related fields." ATA is a member of or has reciprocal arrangements with a number of organizations, and maintains a particularly close relationship with the Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs (FIT), or International Federation of Translators, and the Joint National Committee for Languages (JNCL), with official representatives to both. You will read more on FIT in my September column. For now, let us take a closer look at JNCL, which is composed of more than 60 member organizations representing approximately 300,000 language professionals.

JNCL is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides a point of reference for the planning of national language policies and the identification of national needs in foreign language-related areas such as foreign language learning, but also translation and interpreting. It is affiliated with the National Council for Languages and International Studies (NCLIS), which is a 501(c)(4) registered lobbying organization. The joint JNCL-NCLIS mission is to give all Americans the "opportunity to learn and use English and *at least one other language*" (emphasis added) and to "promote policies that respect and develop the language abilities of Americans." The JNCL-NCLIS goals are: to unify the language profession; to increase language awareness by the public; and to promote national policies that address the nation and its citizens' needs and capabilities.

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or sloppy use of the local language, translation mistakes can be costly, embarrassing, and even disastrous. ATA can help you find the skilled translator or interpreter you need." The purpose of the presentation was to enlist other

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Now in its second session, Congress is considering an additional dozen related bills. Of these, perhaps the most important is the National Security Language Initiative, which encourages a broad, meaningful language policy to put the U.S. on equal footing with other nations. This initiative enhances our national security, economic competitiveness, international understanding, and educational excellence.

On May 1-3, 2008, JNCL-NCLIS held its Legislative Day and Delegate Assembly in Washington, DC, and ATA was duly represented by its president, who made congressional visits during the Legislative Day and gave a presentation on ATA's public relations initiative during the Delegate Assembly. The purpose of the visits was to convey to the senators and representatives our core message: "In today's global business environment, the stakes are high. From ridiculous headlines to awkward

language organizations, particularly language educators, to act as our advocates. Dr. J. David Edwards, executive director of JNCL-NCLIS, referred to translators and interpreters as the "brain surgeons of the language industry," and our profession was presented as an attractive career for foreign language students and as a major player in the language industry.

ATA has been lobbying on Capitol Hill with the assistance of JNCL-NCLIS for the past several years to promote foreign languages in general and translation and interpreting in particular, and is working hard to overcome the "English only" mentality. ATA is an integral part of a large community of language professionals, and it is in our best interest to cooperate with educators, linguists, researchers, technology developers, and other professionals in the language industry.

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