

## Restore and Sustain Federal Investment in International Education

---



**Ask: We urge Congress to:**

- 1. Restore critical funding for State Department international education and exchange programs and support continued funding as part of FY2026 appropriations.**
  - a. \$741 million for the State Department’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA).**
  
- 2. Preserve vital international education programs at the Department of Education and support continued funding as part of FY2026 appropriations.**
  - a. \$91 million for the Education Department’s Title VI and Fulbright-Hays programs.**

### **Restore Critical State Department International Education and Exchange Funding and Support Continued Funding for FY2026**

On February 12, the U.S. State Department announced a temporary 15-day funding pause for all international education and exchange programs. Today, funds have yet to be fully restored to such proven academic programs as the Fulbright Program, the Gilman Scholarship, and the Critical Language Scholarship Program. The freeze has also severely impacted EducationUSA, a global network that promotes U.S. higher education to prospective students around the world. **Use your congressional authority to urge the State Department to release all committed federal funds to all ECA program grantees.**

International education and exchange programs have received strong bipartisan support in Congress for many decades, beginning with passage of the Fulbright Act in 1946. The abrupt cessation of funds for these programs has caused untold harm to the health, safety, and welfare of individuals and organizations at every stage of the grant pipeline. **More than 3,500 American youth, students, and professionals are abroad right now without the vital financial stipends needed for their livelihood.**

But it is not enough to simply restore funding. **The public needs assurances that future funding will continue for these essential programs.** As expressed by Robert M. Gates, former director of the Central Intelligence Agency and U.S. Secretary of Defense, “We cannot begin to understand other countries and deal with security challenges around the world if we don’t have leaders—not just in government but in other sectors as well—who understand those cultures and the history and something about those nations’ interests. And the best way that people can get a foundation for that is by having both direct experience and studying it in school.”<sup>1</sup> **We urge Congress to continue its longstanding bipartisan support for these programs and appropriate the following allocation for FY26:**

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/Robert-Gates-study-abroad>

- **U.S. State Department’s ECA Programs: \$741 million.**  
We urge Congress to provide **no less than the FY24 funding level (\$741 million)** for ECA programs. As detailed above, these critical programs are essential in fostering global understanding that is essential to our nation’s strength and security.

## **Preserve Vital Education Department International Education Programs and Support Continued Funding for FY2026**

On March 11, the Trump administration eliminated 50 percent of the staff at the U.S. Department of Education, **including all staff with the Office of International and Foreign Language Education that oversees Title VI and Fulbright-Hays international education programs.** We urge Congress to protect the Department’s vital international education programs, which are distinctly different from State Department programs. They also have received strong bipartisan support in Congress for many decades. First authorized as part of the National Defense Education Act of 1958, and then later enshrined within the Higher Education Act of 1965, Title VI international education programs at U.S. colleges and universities ensure American students graduate with global expertise especially in less commonly taught foreign languages and critical world areas.

Furthermore, the Department’s Fulbright-Hays programs, authorized by the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, send current and prospective educators overseas to strengthen foreign language and area studies expertise to be applied in U.S. classrooms and lecture halls, helping educate the next generation with these skills.

According to the office of the U.S. Trade Representative, “roughly three-quarters of world purchasing power and over 95 percent of world consumers are outside America’s borders.”<sup>2</sup> U.S. employers seek employees with international business, language, and cultural competencies to help strengthen the U.S. economy in today’s evolving and increasingly competitive global markets in places like Africa and Latin America.

Continued support and funding is needed to ensure U.S. colleges and universities produce graduates with the global skills necessary for future workforce success. **We request Congress appropriate the following allocations for FY26:**

- **U.S. Education Department’s Title VI and Fulbright-Hays programs: \$91 million.**  
For FY 2026, we urge Congress to provide **\$91 million in total funding for the Department of Education’s Title VI (\$80 million) and Fulbright-Hays programs (\$11 million).** This amount constitutes a **6 percent increase over the FY2024 enacted level** to account for inflation.

### **NAFSA Contact:**

Jill Allen Murray, Deputy Executive Director, Public Policy  
[jill.allen.murray@nafsa.org](mailto:jill.allen.murray@nafsa.org)

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/intl-economy>