



Spring 2026

<https://dkgusforum.org/>

U.S. Forum Connection

The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International

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U.S. Forum Steering Committee

Chair:

Pat Bennett-Forman

Area Representatives:

Sharon Welch, NE

Peggy Monroe, SE

Dr. April Coleman, SW

Lynn McNamara, NW

Treasurer:

Linda McCrary

International President:

Dr. Beverly Hall-Maughan

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What's Next after NLS?

Members attending the National Legislative Seminar in March 2026 had specific advocacy goals and topics they addressed with Congress members, including the need for mental health supports for educators, the promotion of legislation that provides dignity in retirement for educators, as well as the need to slow down and research the impact of the Educational Choice for Children Act and the proposed closure of the Department of Education.

Guest speaker Mark Lieberman, a reporter who covers school finance for *Education Week*, described the roller coaster ride for states and schools caused by the many changes in the Department of Education and the proposed budget cuts in the 2026 budget. Though Congress ultimately approved a budget with minimal cuts, Lieberman pointed out that the administration is still asserting "unprecedented control over federal spending," cancelling hundreds of previously awarded grants, temporarily withholding billions of formula dollars and injecting new political priorities into existing programs.

According to Lieberman, the White House draft budget for FY2027 proposes to zero out educator professional development, services to English learners, academic enrichment, before- and after-school programs, support to rural schools, and support to homeless students.

The administration is also reviving its proposal to consolidate programs into block grants for states to spend "largely as they please," including grants for research and training for special educators. While funding for K-12, Title I and special education remain intact in FY2027, cuts are envisioned for Head Start, the Office for Civil Rights, and the Institute for Education Sciences (the evaluation and research arm of the Department). In addition, many (118) offices in the current Department of Education are slated to be transferred to other agencies under interagency agreements.

So, what is next after NLS? Clearly, Forum members will need to be vigilant and continue to advocate with Congress for researching the implications of cuts and changes PRIOR to approval—as is stated in our resolution on the Department of Education (see dkgusforum.org).

References: Mark Lieberman, "Trump Again Proposes major Education Cuts in New Budget Proposal." *Education Week*, April 3, 2026. <https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/trump-again-proposes-major-education-cuts-in-new-budget-proposal/2026/04/>

Mark Lieberman, Matthew Stone and Maya Riser-Kositsky, "The Ed. Dept. is Sending 118 Programs to Other Agencies. See Where They're Going." *Education Week*, March 12, 2026. <https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/the-ed-dept-is-sending-118-programs-to-other-agencies-see-where-theyre-going/2026/03>

LIVE ON ZOOM

Tuesday, June 16, 2026
6:30 – 7:30 p.m. CDT

DKG U.S. Forum
Presents
School Choice:
challenges and opportunities

Join in on a discussion of the Educational Choice for Children Act, how it could affect states and students based on experiences of states with existing universal choice options, and what opportunities it provides for students, educators, and advocates.

Panel of educators from states with current school choice legislation. Plus . . . opportunities for discussion of possible actions by members, chapters and state organizations.

Registration required to obtain Zoom link.

Register here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/nl26SocutTfQOtadOH3IV7w>

U.S. Forum Steering Committee (2026-2028) Nominations

U.S. Forum Operational Guidelines, Articles V, VI, and VII, call for the election of Steering Committee members at a U.S. Forum meeting held during the International Convention. All U.S. Forum members present at the meeting (July 3, 2026) are eligible to vote in the election. Any U.S. Forum member may be nominated for Steering Committee positions and nominations are also taken from the floor.

The following nominations have been received to date for the 2026-2028 U.S. Forum Steering Committee: for chair: Dr. April Coleman (AZ); for SE Regional Representative: Dr. Cindy Dixon (AL); for the NE Regional Representative: Sharon Scheidegger (OH); for NW Regional Representative: Kay Stern (WA); and for SW Regional Representative: Susie Dixon (CA). Interest and background statements have been submitted by each candidate and are printed below. At the July 3 U.S. Forum General Meeting, when elections are held, every candidate, including those nominated from the floor, will have the opportunity to present a brief statement to the attending members before voting begins. Each statement should highlight the candidate's qualifications and outline their vision for the U.S. Forum in the next biennium.



Dr. April Coleman
candidate for
Chair of the Steering
Committee

I attended my first National Legislative Seminar in 2024 and became interested in serving in a leadership capacity for the US Forum after that experience. In 2024, I was elected as South-west Regional Representative and served as vice chairperson of the Steering Committee this biennium. In that role, I also:

- designed and administered a member interests survey to gather data that shaped the activities of the US Forum Steering Committee;
- prepared and presented a US Forum webinar on legislation tracking and advocacy;
- contributed articles to the quarterly Connections newsletter;
- co-planned and facilitated US Forum events for the 2025 International Conference in New Orleans; and
- co-planned the 2026 National Legislative Seminar.

I have also served as legislative chair for DKG Arizonia and with the Arizonia teacher's union. I believe that my active involvement in the US Forum over the last 2 years have solidly prepared me to lead the Forum in the next biennium. I am both humbled and honored by this opportunity to continue to serve.



Dr. Cindy Dixon*,
candidate for SE
Region Representative

Although I have not yet participated directly in U.S. Forum activities, I have a strong history of community engagement throughout my life. I have collaborated with The University of Alabama on important projects, including revitalizing a struggling community, improving public transportation in high-poverty areas after the 2011 Tuscaloosa tornado, and advocating for improvement issues with elected officials at various levels.

As a teacher, I have educated my students about the Constitution, and I am committed to its principles. I am excited to extend my DKG participation through more active involvement in advocacy work. It would be an honor to serve on the U.S. Forum Steering Committee.

I have served as president of Beta chapter, Alabama, for two biennia and as District IV area Director. I was a member of DKG NEXT class of 2022 and have presented at several state and international conventions. I hold a Ph.D. in Instructional Leadership with an Emphasis in Technology Integration, a master's degree in Secondary Language Arts, and a master's degree in Educational Administration. I currently teach middle school English.

Continued from p. 2: candidates



Sharon Scheidegger
(OH) candidate for
NE Regional
Representative

My first forum experience was attending NLS 2024 as the Legislative Liaison for Ohio where I was encouraged to share information on issues in education with DKG members in Ohio and to teach them to use their voice in Washington D.C. I created a blog each month for the Ohio DKG members to stay abreast of legislative issues.

I was honored to be asked to participate on a panel on School Vouchers at the March 2026 NLS Seminar. As part of the discussion, I was able to share the history and growth of vouchers in Ohio. As a teacher in a Title One Charter school it was important for me to share the successes of teachers and the administrative team in a charter program, as well as its challenges.

I have been president of my chapter for the last three years. Raising funds for scholarship has been a goal of the chapter. This last year we raised over \$7500.00 to fund teacher grants, scholarships, and support for girls in middle school looking to learn about STEM.

If elected to the Steering Committee, I hope to bring the message of NLS to each state in the Northeast in hopes of growing awareness and participation in Forum activities and NLS in 2028.



Kay Stern, (WA),
candidate for
NW Region
Representative

I have attended US Forums at the State and International level and find I want to more actively support the work of the Forum. I have served as chapter legislative liaison for over ten years. As the Third Congressional District Coordinator for the "We the People Campaign," I was trained and advocated for civic education in the U.S. House of Representative offices and in the Washington State Senate offices. It is a passion of mine to assure that all children have the right and opportunity to an appropriate education.

I have been a member of DKG since 1976, serving on multiple committees, including collegiate membership, and as president for 2022-2024. I was Area V liaison/director from 2021-2025, serving on state convention and regional planning committees, as well as presenting workshops. I received a Cornet grant to provide a workshop on censorship for our area in 2024. I currently serve as state leadership committee chair. I believe my varied experiences would be beneficial to my role as a Forum representative.



Susie Dixon*, (CA),
candidate for
SW Regional
Representative

I have attended two U.S. Forums in Washington, D.C., where I engaged in national advocacy on behalf of educators and public education. In 2026, I served as a presenter for "The Long Road to Repeal & Building Advocacy that Endures." I also authored the resolution "Protecting Educators' Retirement Security," which was adopted. I am the California DKG Area XIV Legislative Representative and have been the CalRTA State Government Relations Chair and State President. With over 10 years of advocacy experience in Sacramento and Washington, D.C., where I was co-chair of the coalition to pass the Social Security Fairness Act, I remain committed to advancing policies that protect educators, strengthen retirement security, and support lasting advocacy efforts. I currently am a member of the Senate Social Security War Room under Senators Warren and Wyden.

I would be honored to take my work to the Forum, facilitating workshops and advocacy training sessions and continuing the recent work to not only make the Forum a visible but also vital component in actualizing DKG purposes.

* Cindy Dixon and Susan Dixon are not related.

First Impressions & Lasting Impact: A First-Timer's Experience at the NLS

Attending the Delta Kappa Gamma National Legislative Seminar in Washington, D.C. for the first time was an experience I will not soon forget. As educators, we often advocate within our classrooms, schools, and communities, but this opportunity allowed me to step into a national conversation and see firsthand the power of our collective voice.

The most meaningful part of this experience was meeting with legislators on both sides of the aisle. Walking into those conversations, I was unsure what to expect. However, I quickly realized that despite differing political perspectives, there was a shared and genuine concern for the well-being of both students and educators. The topic of mental health consistently emerged as a priority—highlighting the growing recognition of the challenges faced in our schools. It was both reassuring and impactful to see that our voices as educators are not only heard but valued in these discussions.

Another highlight of the forum was the opportunity to sit on a panel discussing school vouchers and school choice in the state of Florida. It was both humbling and empowering to share perspectives from our local context while engaging in thoughtful dialogue about the broader implications for public education. The conversation was respectful, insightful, and reinforced the importance of continued advocacy.

Equally impactful was the chance to connect with fellow Delta Kappa Gamma sisters from across the country. Each conversation offered a new perspective, yet so many of our experiences were deeply aligned. Whether discussing classroom challenges, leadership roles, or advocacy efforts, there was an undeniable sense of unity and purpose. It was a powerful reminder that we are part of something much larger than ourselves.

As a first-time attendee, I left Washington, D.C. feeling energized, informed, and more committed than ever to advocating for education. The Legislative Seminar reinforced the importance of using our voices, not only for our students, but for our colleagues and communities as well.

I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to represent our chapter and look forward to continuing this important work together.

Nikki Frenette
Delta Gamma Chapter, FL



For more information and pictures of the National Legislative Seminar 2026, see the U.S. Forum website: <https://www.dkgusforum.org>. Then click on the NLS 2026 page.

Check out the YouTube video, "Women Advocating for Action," made by first timer Lienne Hill, GA, to get full picture of the important work of advocacy that takes place at NLS and plan to join us in 2028.

Legislation to Watch (and act upon)

It is sometimes boring and frustrating to see how little progress is made on legislation, but as we have learned from our colleague Susie Dixon at NLS 2026, advocacy for legislation is not a sprint; it’s a marathon. That means we have to track the progress (or lack thereof), continue to stay in touch with our legislators, and work to gain allies who will support our advocacy efforts.

As we look at the proposed legislation below, we will see some impact of our advocacy efforts. Note that in addition to Oregon Representative Suzanne Bonamici’s bill on mental health support for educators HR 4120 (a reintroduction of a bill the Forum lobbied for in 2024—HR 744), Senator Tim Kane (VA) has introduced a companion bill in the Senate, S 4468.

The 119th Congress is in full swing and based on the responses received from the Member Issue Survey, we believe these are the current Federal Bills to Watch. If you would like to read the language of a bill or if you want to track its progress, please go to www.congress.gov . You can also use that address to share your views with your Congressional representatives.

House Committee on Education and the Workforce/Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions 2/1/2026

Bill Number	Bill Title	Sponsor	Introduced	Status
Bills in favor of Dept. of Ed Closure HR 369 HR 899 HR 838 HR 847	States’ Education Reclamation Act Terminate Dept. of Ed. Dec. 2026 A PLUS Act (consolidates grants) BLOCK Act (block grants to states)	Rouzer (R– NC) Massie (R-KY) Moolenaar (R-MI) Burchett (R-TN)	1/31/2025	All referred to Committee on Education and Workforce No actions to date
Bills in opposition to the Dept. of Ed Closure HR 869 HRes 94 HR 433	Keep our PACT Act (retains monies for low income intervention programs and special ed) Condemns closure; affirms public schools Dept. of Ed Protection Act	Lee (D-NV) Bonamici (D-OR) Hayes (D-CT)	1/31/2025 2/4/2025 1/15/26	Referred to Committee on Education and Workforce and Committee on the Budget; no action No action to date Referred to Committee
HR 4120	Support the Mental Health of Educators and other School Staff Act of 2025 Same title as HR 4120	Bonamici (D-OR)	6/25/2025 4/30/2026	Referred to Committee on Education & the Workforce; no action Referred to HELP Comm.
HR 6131	Increase the recruitment and retention of school-based mental health services	Chu (D-CA)	11/19/2025	Referred to House Committee on Education and the Workforce
HRes. 1212 (NEW)	Expressing support for the staff of public, school, academic, and special libraries in the United States and the essential services libraries provide to communities, recognizing the	Jayapal (D-WA)	4/23/2026	Referred to House Committee on Education and the Workforce
			(Continued on	page 6)

Legislation to Watch (and act upon)*cont. from p. 5*

House Committee on Education & Workforce/Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions 2/1/2026				
Bill Number	Bill Title	Sponsor	Introduced	Status
HR 7497 (NEW)	Supporting Trauma-Informed Educational Practices Act of 2025	Hayes (D-CT)	2/11/2026	Referred to Committee on Education and Workforce; no action to date.
HR 6186	No anti-semitism in education Act	Fine (R- FL)	11/20/2025	Referred to Committee on Education and Workforce ; no action to date
HR 5478	Preparing and Retaining All (PARA) Educators Act (support schools in recruitment & retention of para-educators)	McBath (D-GA)	9/18/2025	Referred to Committee on Education and Workforce ; no action to date
HR 3262 & HR305	One School/One Nurse Act (Demonstration grants to increase the numbers of school nurses in public elementary and secondary schools.)	Kiggans, (R-VA) Fredrica Wilson (D-FL-27)	5/7/2025	Referred to Committee on Education and Workforce; no action to date
HR 3308	RETAIN ACT (Addresses the teacher and school leader shortage in early childhood, elementary, and secondary education, and for other purposes.)	Stevens (D-MI-11)	05/08/2025	Referred to the Committee on Ways and Means, and in addition to the Committee on Education and Workforce; no action to date
HR 6392 (NEW)	Home School Graduation Recognition Act	Harris (R-NC)	12/03/2025	Placed on Union Calendar; no action to date
HRes 1045 (NEW)	To Eliminate race-based logos, mascots, and names in state ed. institutions	Pallone (D-NJ)	02/09/2026	Referred to Committee on Education and the Workforce; no action
HR 8031 (NEW) S 4216 (NEW)	“Guaranteeing and Upholding Americans' Right to Decide Responsible AI Laws and Standards Act” or the “GUARDRAILS Act”.	Beyer (D-VA) Schatz (D-HI)	3/20/2026 3/26/2026	Referred to Committee on Energy & Commerce Referred to Senate Comm. on Commerce, Science & Transportation
HR 8606 (NEW)	CHARTER ACT—prohibits IDEA funds to for-profit charter schools	DeLauro (D-CT)	4/30/2026	Referred to House Committee on Education & the Workforce

While it can be frustrating to see “no action” on so many bills, it means that the bills are still in committee; hearings have not yet been held. There is still time to provide your input. Click on the links to these bills or go to [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov) website and see where they are in the adoption process.

A. I. Guardrails Will Require Advocacy

As part of her remarks to attendees of the 2026 National Legislative Seminar, guest speaker Natalie Dean who leads the National Academy of A. I. Instruction for the American Federation of Teachers, warned of four risks that demand policy action. Dean spoke of the gap that exists between the rapid use of A.I. and its thoughtful use, viewing it as a professional development issue rather than a technical one.

(1) the widening of the digital divide—the two tiered system that exists between users and non-users means that the very people responsible for policy decisions are often not aware of the issues faced by users.

(2) unprotected data privacy—old guardrails to protect privacy are inadequate for A.I. creating a need for a modern framework more meaningful for the ways in which A.I. is and will be utilized.

(3) algorithmic bias—A.I. developers are often not aware of the bias that enters the “brain” of A.I. creating automatic discrimination; independent detection and regulation is necessary to avoid damaging results, such as in job application scoring, creating curricular materials, or grading student work.

(4) replacing educators—machines should not be allowed to replace personal contact; A.I. should augment rather than replace teacher judgement. With appropriate professional development and support, consistent policies and guidance, A.I. can be a tool for educators to generate options for students, replace labor intensive repetitive tasks, and expand the capacity of teachers to address the multiple and varied needs of students.

Consequently, said Dean, common sense guardrails are needed for A.I. to protect safety and privacy, promote human relationships, include educators in the selection and evaluation of A.I. tools, advance its equitable use, give student agency and foster collaborative responsibility with families and communities. To do so, educators need to advocate for the following five legislative priorities:

(1) Fund educator training before implementation not after its adoption;

(2) Modernize data privacy laws by determining what data is needed, how it is to be obtained, processed and retained;

(3) Require transparency through Independent third party assessments or audits, especially of algorithmic bias and protection of student and staff safety;

(4) Protect educator labor rights by extending bargaining rights language to include A.I. use and implementation; and

(5) Require a structured procurement process that includes educator review panels, evaluative frameworks and infrastructure review.

Dean encouraged members to advocate for A.I. guardrails and to be in frequent contact with school boards, legislators, and Congress about the need to establish viable, modern guardrails before damage is done to staff, students, and the public.



Natalie Dean, AFT, presented at NLS March 9, 2026 and is seen receiving her Forum throw blanket as a thank you for an outstanding presentation.



U.S. Forum News



You are invited to

the WORLD FORUM

at DKG International Convention
Aurora, Colorado

JULY 3, 2026 2:30-3:00 PM

Featuring

Dr. Heathre Palige "Social Emotional Learning in Post-Covid Schools"



*Strategies for successful engagement
with stressed, disengaged, isolated
students lacking social skills.*

On behalf of all four DKG Forums (Europe, Canada, Latin America, and the United States), the U.S. Forum is proud to invite all DKG International Convention attendees to join us in listening to a presentation by Dr. Heathre Palige, CO state vice president, as she speaks to the very perplexing and important topic of how to promote Social Emotional Learning skills in our youth of today. Post-COVID students are often lacking in social skills, are isolated, dependent on their phones, disengaged and stressed to an extent that teaching them is impacted. Dr. Palige will address this need in her comments at the **World Forum Meeting on July 3, 2026 at 2:30 PM**. Her remarks will proceed the general U.S. Forum meeting which is scheduled from 3:00—5:00 PM, as are the other Forum groups.

Dr. Palige is a leading Colorado educator. Her dissertation in 2023 was a study on the experiences of educators with social emotional learning (SEL) skills in grades 7-12. Heathre was nominated in 2025 for Teacher of the Year. For the past 5 years she worked as an SEL Coach for a local school district. A community volunteer and proud member of DKG, she serves on the International Editorial Board, and as Colorado State Vice President.

U.S. Forum General Membership Meeting July 3, 2026 3:00—5:00 PM

TENTATIVE AGENDA

All members of DKG in the United States and Puerto Rico are members of the U.S. Forum and therefore eligible to attend the General Meeting of the Forum and to vote on all items of business, including the election of the 2026-2028 U.S. Forum Steering Committee.

Call to Order

Pledge of Allegiance

Attendance Report and Establishment of Quorum

Minutes of the General Meeting for February 16, 2026

Treasurer's Report

Nominations and Election of 2026-2028 U.S. Forum Steering Committee

Consideration of Proposed Resolutions

Annual Report and 2026 National Legislative Seminar Report

Issues Round Table Discussions (as time allows)

The Connection is a publication of the U.S. Forum, The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International. It is published quarterly and distributed to all DKG members in the United States. The U.S. Forum purposes are to inform members and to support desirable legislation in the interests of education and women educators. To submit articles or if you have questions, contact Peggy Monroe, 2024-2026 editor, atdkgu.s.forum@gmail.com.