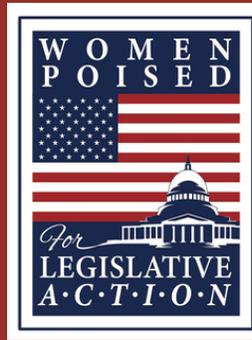


US Forum Connection



In this issue:

- US Forum Info,
- NLS Can't Miss Event,
- Current Legislation,
- Federal Student Loan Info,
- Subcommittee News,
- NLS Registration.

US Forum

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US Forum Mission

The mission of the US Forum is to serve the interests and concerns of its members.

a. The emphasis is on sharing information and ideas and exploring solutions to identified issues.

b. Participating US Forum members can engage with the issues of concern of all members at the US Forum sessions during international conferences and the international convention.

(US Forum Guidelines, 2021)

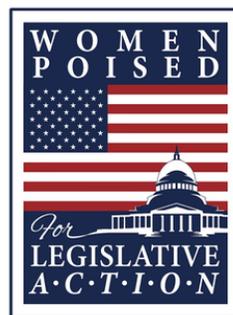
Advocacy Statement

The US Forum is dedicated to being an advocate for women, children, and education by implementing actions which enable change and improvement in social institutions, systems, legislation, and practices that impose hardships or impact negatively on individuals, groups, or families.

**DKG US Forum invites you to the
National Legislative Seminar.**

March 10-13, 2024
Washington D.C.

Learn to make a difference.
Speak up, stand up, soar!



Mark your 2024 calendars for an exciting opportunity to enhance your advocacy skills, learn from experts about federal legislation related to education, women, and children, speak with your legislators, and visit key historical sites in Washington, DC. **REGISTER NOW!!** (registration form included on page 6)

Why the National Legislative Seminar, 2024 is a “Do Not Miss” Event!



Now is a great time to make your plans to attend the US Forum National Legislative Seminar on March 10-13, 2024 at the Holiday Inn National Airport Hotel in Alexandria, VA. This meaningful event includes the opportunity for DKG members to participate in an inspiring Wreath Laying Ceremony at the tomb of the unknown soldier in Arlington Cemetery. If you have not taken part in this ceremony in the past, be prepared to be awed!

In addition to the Wreath Laying Ceremony, here are just a few of the additional features of the 2024 National Legislative Seminar that will make this a long-remembered experience for you and your fellow DKG members!

- You will have an opportunity to meet with fellow DKG members from across the country to learn about and discuss critical issues, especially mental health, that are facing educators.
- You will meet experts on the topics that have been identified by DKG members as their priorities for action in 2024.
- You will learn how to effectively engage with YOUR representatives to the US Congress and have the chance to meet with them and their staff in Washington, DC.
- You will become better prepared to inform your state members about the legislative process and pending legislation related to women, children, and education.
- You will gain skills to strengthen your chapter and state policy or legislative committees, so all members are better informed.
- You will have an exciting time visiting your favorite attractions in Washington, DC!



[REGISTER HERE!!](#)

**CANT
WAIT**

Join Us!

**DON'T
MISS
OUT!**

Legislation to Watch

House of Representatives:

HR 4259-Think Differently about Education: This bill, introduced by Rep. Molinaro, (NY), was approved 39-0 by the House Committee on Education and Workforce mark-up, and now goes to the floor of the US House for consideration. If the bill passes, schools would be required to notify parents of students with disabilities that they can invite people with additional knowledge or expertise to participate in individualized education program meetings. These individuals can be people who know the student personally, or who have expertise regarding the special education services that would be appropriate for this student.

H.R.882-The American Teacher Act was introduced into the house 2/08/2023 by Representative Wilson (FL). The bill establishes grants to states and local communities to increase the minimum salary of public-school teachers to \$60K. The act also authorizes a national campaign to promote the value of the teaching profession and encourage secondary and college students to consider teaching as a profession. The bill has been referred to the Committee on Education and the Workplace.

Senate:

SB 3019-A bill to develop and disseminate accurate, relevant, and accessible resources to promote understanding about Native American and Tribal Histories: This bill was recently introduced (October 2023) by Sen. Tina Smith (MN). It has been referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

S. 3006-A bill to ensure comprehensive wraparound services for families impacted by substance use disorders, and for other purposes: This bill was introduced by Senator Markey (MA) in October 2023. The bill was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health Education, Labor, and Pensions. There are no cosponsors for this bill at the present time.

S.766- The Pay Teachers Act was introduced by Senator Sanders (VT) on 3/9/2023. This bill will raise the annual teacher salaries to no less than \$60K. In this bill there are significant federal investments in public schools and in support staff. The bill will also triple Title 1-A funding and funding for Rural Education programs, increase grants and joint ventures with organizations who prepare teachers for the profession, and support funding for special education, SEED, and the School Leader Incentive Program. The bill has been referred to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

What's Happening With Federal Student Loan Repayment?

Now that the pause in Federal Student Loan repayments due to COVID-19 has ended, borrowers will once again face repayment schedules and interest rate charges related to the expense of earning a college degree. As of October 2023, the household budgets of millions of Americans will need to be adjusted to allow for the expense of monthly payments to loan servicers, resulting in a cutback of other expenditures. Despite several efforts by the Biden administration to provide financial relief to 43 million student loan borrowers, a recent Supreme Court ruling, ([Biden v. Nebraska](#)), ended any expectation for a reduction of student loan debt at this time.

Efforts to provide relief from student loan debt are ongoing, however, and recently some borrowers have received cancellation of their debt under the [Public Student Loan Forgiveness](#) program. This program impacts approximately 53,000 Americans who are current public sector workers and have been making at least 10 years of monthly payments.

Additionally, 51,000 borrowers, who have been in repayment for at least 20 years, are getting relief thanks to a recount of their past payments. The administration has found that these borrowers already qualified for student loan forgiveness but were missing out because of past administrative errors.

And nearly 22,000 borrowers who have a total or permanent disability have now been approved for an automatic debt discharge through a data match with the Social Security Administration.

The [U.S. Department of Education Federal Student Loan](#) website has many helpful resources to provide information and support for borrowers. Examples of these include avoiding scams, locating affordable repayment plans, understanding the role of a loan servicing agency, and ways to recover from default. There is also a financial aid virtual assistant who is ready to help at any time!

SUBCOMMITTEE NEWS

NEWS FROM THE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE SUBCOMMITTEE

The US Forum Legislative Update Committee meets monthly to study and discuss education-related state and federal legislation. In August, committee members discussed Senate Bill 766, The Pay Teachers Act.

Committee member, Sheila Gaiser (CA) shared information on this topic from the 2023 NEA Annual Report, [Educator Pay Data](#). According to this report, the salaries of experienced educators in the US in 2022 increased about 2% from the previous year. In comparison with workers in other professions, who received an average 4% increase over the previous year, this was significantly less.

In addition to the overall percentage reported for teacher salaries nationwide, the average pay for educators who teach in rural communities is significantly lower than that of teachers in urban areas.

The states with the highest average teacher salaries include New York (\$80K), Illinois (\$70K), Michigan (\$70K), Pennsylvania (\$70K), and Washington, (\$69K). The states with the lowest average teacher salaries include Florida, South Dakota, West Virginia, and Mississippi

NEWS FROM THE MENTAL HEALTH SUBCOMMITTEE

The US Forum Mental Health Committee met on September 13 for the purpose of brainstorming ideas for webinars to promote mental health for educators. Bev Johns (IL) chaired the meeting. Committee members at the meeting included Debbie Pajula (MI), Pat Bennett-Forman (WA), Darlene Cook (OR), and Nancy Sheng (WA). A lively discussion followed about Zoom programs to promote mental health.

The following programs were selected for presentation to members:

Forest Bathing (offered in early October). Forest Bathing is taken from the Japanese practice of shinrin-yoku. The idea behind this practice is to immerse oneself in nature, take long, mindful walks, focus on embracing all the senses and learn from trees.

Outdoor Education (November 16th 8:00 pm ET). Outdoor Education, modeled on a school program in Norway, Michigan, is designed to get students into nature and away from screens. It has been shown to have significant benefits for both physical and mental health. These programs are conducted with students of all ages, preschool and up, and in all kinds of weather. [REGISTER NOW!!](#)

Emotional Well-being Through Journal Writing (December 5th 7:00 pm ET). Presented by Dr. Cynthia Pittmann, a professor at the University of Puerto Rico, this webinar will help participants use the practice of journaling as a tool for self-care and wellness. Dr. Pittman's session at the 2023 International Conference in Detroit was outstanding. [REGISTER NOW!!](#)

QPR suicide prevention training will be offered by FESS (Family Education Support Services) on Oct 24, Nov 14, Nov 28, and Dec 1, (3:30-5:00 pm Pacific). Registration is free and a certificate is included upon completion of the 90-minute course. The key elements of QPR are **Q = Question** the individual's desire for self-harm, **P = Persuade** the person to seek help, and **R = Refer** the person to appropriate resources. [REGISTER NOW!!](#)

Finally, the committee discussed pending legislation, including **HR 744**, Mental Health for educators, currently in committee in the US congress with five Democratic and five Republican cosponsors. More co-sponsors will help move this legislation along. Members are encouraged to contact their representatives. A companion bill, SB 253, was introduced with bipartisan support in the Senate in June. Mental health appears to be a "hot topic" currently in Congress. Now is the time to contact your representatives and voice your support.

For more information about these upcoming events, please contact Bev Johns, NE Representative to the US Forum. (beverleyjohns@gmail.com)



Registration for DKG US Forum NLS,
March 10-13, 2024

First Name	<input type="text"/>	Last Name	<input type="text"/>
Phone	<input type="text"/>	Email	<input type="text"/>
Address	<input type="text"/>		
City, State or Other	<input type="text"/>		

Registration Fee: please mark your choice below

March 10-13, 2024: \$340, (meals included)

One day Commuter fee: \$170, (meals included)

Date of attendance:

**Holiday Inn National Hotel/Crystal City: \$129/night, King or 2 Queens; \$20 hotel parking/night
Call 1-800-972-3159; the free shuttle to and from Reagan National Airport**

Booking begins October 31, 2023

Booking Code is: DKG

DKG State and Chapter	<input type="text"/>		
State Officer	<input type="text"/>	Chapter Officer	<input type="text"/>

How many NLS Events have you attended before this one?

Special/Dietary/Physical Needs

Emergency Contact Name	<input type="text"/>	Phone Number	<input type="text"/>
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Registration form must be received by February 23, 2024

Send the registration form with check made out to *DKG US Forum* to:

Linda Perl, Registrar

5910 N. 52nd Place, Paradise Valley, AZ 85253

Credit card registrants use this link: <https://dkgusforum.org/nls-wash-dc-registration>