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<https://dkgforum.org/>

U.S. Forum Connection

The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International

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YOU Need the National Legislative Seminar

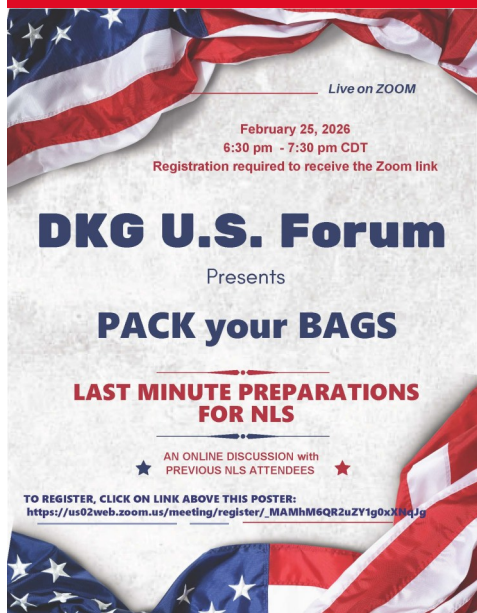
The DKG U.S. Forum National Legislative Seminar (NLS) is rapidly approaching and **NOW** is the time for YOU to register. The biennial event is scheduled for March 8-11, 2026, in Alexandria, Virginia and on “the Hill” in Washington, D.C. **Registration is open** on the Forum website until March 3, 2026: <https://www.dkgforum.org>.

Why should YOU attend? Feeling skittish about speaking out these days? Wondering if advocacy has meaning in these uncertain times? NLS can lift and motivate you. NLS features exciting speakers to inform participants about current educational issues and inspire them to take a stand. Micaela Pond, representing WE of Action VA., will inspire and empower attendees with practical strategies and insights in her presentation, “Advocacy in Uncertain Times.” Mark Liebermann of *EdWeek* will provide an update on the Department of Education—its funding and pending legislation. Kirsten Kern of the League of Women Voters will help us understand various new voting legislation and challenges. Natalie Dean, American Federation of Teachers, will explore both the promise and concerns surrounding A.I., highlighting safeguards for which we must advocate. Susan Dixon, DKG California, will discuss the new Social Security law and give training on advocacy for the long haul. DKG members from four states will share information and experiences with school choice and voucher programs.

You will also have the opportunity to network and skill build with DKG women from around the country. Past participants have described NLS as “transformative.” Dr. Liz Tarner, Beta Delta Virginia, has attended every NLS since its inception in 1998 and continues to find it “one of the most engaging and informative professional experiences offered through DKG. “ So will YOU.

Your U.S. Forum Steering Committee has put in many, many hours to make the National Legislative Seminar a meaningful and purposeful event, to include fun as well as learning and opportunities to SPEAK OUT to Congressional members from your state. Alexandria, Virginia, Old Town, is a beautiful and safe historic center for our NLS adventure.

ALL that is NEEDED is for YOU to BE THERE! Register today and be part of “making a difference” in education and in DKG. <https://www.dkgforum.org>. We are excited to have you join us!



U.S. Forum Adopts Resolutions

U.S. Forum Guidelines, adopted in August 2025, require that resolutions be brought to the vote of the Forum membership (all DKG members residing in the United States or Puerto Rico) within three months of submission, either at a convention/conference meeting or at a virtual meeting. On February 16, 2026, the U.S. Forum held its first virtual meeting. Attendees deliberated and voted to adopt three resolutions.

Q: What is the Resolution adoption process?

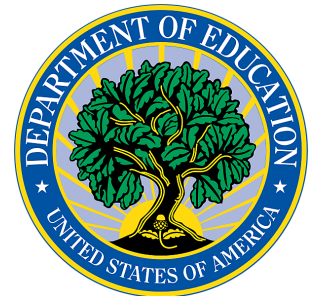
A: Resolutions may be submitted by any U.S. Forum state organization, chapter or individual member. Once submitted, a Resolutions Review Committee examines the resolution for (1) alignment to DKG and U.S. Forum goals and purposes; (2) adherence to neutrality guidelines (ie., non-partisan); and (3) evidence of reputable source documentation. Those criteria having been met, the resolution is brought to vote by the membership at a General Forum meeting, such as the one held this February.

Q: What does it mean that a resolution is non-partisan and meets neutrality standards?

A: To meet neutrality standards, a resolution may not contain any language that is biased for or against a particular politician, political party, or political persuasion. For example, politicians and political parties may not be named in the resolution. The resolution should use inclusive language that members on the entire political spectrum can concur with. As seen below, the Department of Education resolution takes no stance as to whether the Department should be closed or not (that would potentially be viewed as partisan), but raises questions and concerns and asks for study—which members on all sides can support as reasonable.

Q: Did DKG vote to oppose the closure of the Department of Education?

A: The first resolution, “Regarding the Proposed Elimination of the U.S. Department of Education,” did not oppose nor support the closure of the Department of Education or current Executive Orders. The resolution language noted that since the Department was created by law in 1979 (PL 96-88), it cannot be dissolved without Congressional approval (a new law). The resolution raises concerns about the potential impact of dissolution on low income students, students with disabilities, and rural and immigrant students. Teacher training opportunities, uninterrupted management of student loans and the ability to maintain high and uniform compliance with federal laws across all states are issues of concern to members, as well as accountability for ensuring federal monies go to intended populations.



The resolution requires DKG to (1) **engage members in discussion and study** of proposed legislation, executive orders, research, and expert opinion regarding the consequences and/or benefits of closure, and encourages members to communicate their views about the proposed closure to Congress and others; (2) **request Congress** to authorize a **bi-partisan study** of potential harm and/or benefits prior to implementation of legislation or executive orders that defund or dismantle the Department; and (3) **communicate** to Congress, the Secretary of the Department of Education, and the President its support for full funding of services in defense of equitable, inclusive and well-resourced public education for all, ensuring continuity of minimum standards across all states and territories.

(Continued on page 7: Resolutions)

U.S. Forum Guidelines, the governing document for Forum activities, were amended in August 2025 to include a provision for any Forum member, chapter, state, or Forum Committee to submit resolutions and/or position statements for consideration and vote by Forum members. Proposed resolutions are reviewed by a Resolutions Committee to ensure proposed resolutions comply with DKG purposes and neutrality before bringing it forward for a vote. The resolution submission procedures and form are available on the U.S. Forum website via a link on the Guidelines page: <https://www.dkgusforum.org>.

Cell Phone Bans

Prohibitions on cell phone use now exist in over 30 states with the number rapidly increasing. Bi-partisan legislation has been proposed to provide federal funding to incentivize districts to adopt cellphone restrictions (Cotton, R-Ark, Kaine, D-VA). The bill would provide up to \$5 million to school districts to develop pilot programs researching the long term impact of bans. Another bi-partisan effort to limit cell phone usage in Department of Defense schools was added to the annual defense bill by Senators Slotkin (D-MI) and Banks (R-IN).

Studies indicate that cell phone use is correlated to declining academic metrics. Students are less attentive and more “switched off” while thinking about their phones. Mental health issues, including anxiety, cyber-bullying, and peer pressure, are exasperated by access to cell phones. Data reported by the National



Center for Education Statistics indicate 53% of school leaders find cell phones to have a negative impact on academic performance and full day attendance.

But data also indicates that the success of cell phone bans (and its resultant impact on achievement) depends on how well bans are enforced. 18 states allow access in lockers or backpacks; eight ban them only during instructional time. Others provide for bell-to-bell restrictions. More than half of teens say they check their phones during the day—even if there are bell-to-bell restrictions. To see benefits from cell phone restrictions districts need to be more consistent and stricter according to a Brookings Research study. Others suggest alternatives to bans that would put phones on “academic mode” during the day.

Cell phone bans in schools is one issue that seems to have garnered support across the board, young and old, liberal and conservative. It remains important to monitor whether these bans truly lead to the positive outcomes suggested by the limited research conducted to date and to identify the conditions under which they are most effective.

U.S. Forum News

Elections 2026-2028 Biennium

Nominations are now being accepted for all U.S. Forum Steering Committee positions for the 2026-2028 biennium. Applications are found on the U.S. Forum website/ About Us: dkgusforum.org. Applications are due by May 1, 2026.



The U.S. Forum Steering Committee is charged with the coordination and implementation of Forum goals and activities. Members of the Steering Committee plan workshops, conferences, and webinars to inform DKG members of relevant legislation and issues in education. You can be part of the Steering Committee, gain leadership and advocacy skills and collaborate with others in your region.

Writing to Your Legislator or Congressional Member

Thank you to Lynn McNamara, NW Regional Representative on the U.S. Forum Steering Committee and Alaska State Organization President, for her very well thought-out workshop on February 11, 2026, entitled “Crafting your Written Testimony.” Below are some highlights from that presentation.

1. Written testimony is a powerful tool for influencing public policy and making your voice heard. Written testimony is persuasive writing. Preparing a written document will help you focus and organize your thoughts for in-person meetings or phone calls, as well as being the body of email communications or testimony in a hearing. When left with your legislator, written testimonies are a powerful reminder of what is important to you.
2. Tailor your message to your audience. Know your legislator’s interests and legislative work. Find similar bills that your legislator has supported, if possible, or stories that he/she can relate to. Understand the pros and cons and differing points of view so you can briefly address them in your comments.
3. Find an issue that matters to you, that is worthy of your efforts. Back up your passion with stories and facts that help persuade the reader/listener to your position. Recognize that it may take time to get your legislation passed into law.
4. Remember the key components of effective testimony: put your best self forward in your credentials. Clearly and succinctly identify your issues and include a bill number (if there is one). Explain how this issue impacts you, your family, coworkers or community with authentic and sincere stories. Back up your stories and position with verifiable facts from reliable sources. And don’t forget to ASK or tell the legislator what you want done!
5. Keep your written document to one page, follow up on your ASK and, before your meeting, PRACTICE so you aren’t reading the paper but can speak it in a professional and persuasive manner.

Legislative Priorities and Issues Brief

By Dr. April Coleman, SW Region Representative

When we surveyed members in 2025, you told us that the number one priority was educator mental health with teaching and learning conditions a close second. Without issuing another survey, we are confident that our current priority is minimizing the negative impact of the campaign to “Return Education to the States” which will affect both educator mental health and teaching and learning conditions. Do you know what returning education to the states will mean for your local schools? Have you engaged with your state’s department of education to find out? As we prepare for NLS ’26 it is imperative that we identify how the current administration’s plan to return education to the states will impact the rights of all children to a free and appropriate education. Here’s what we all need to do:

- ◆ Make sure your state is represented at the National Legislative Seminar in March.
- ◆ Meet with members of your state’s department of education to understand what steps they are taking or need to take to ensure the continuity of a free and appropriate public education for students in your state beyond the current budget year.
- ◆ Meet with your state legislators and your Congressional Delegation to understand their position on the proposed changes to the Federal support of public education.
- ◆ Join us on Capitol Hill on Tuesday, March 10, 2026, as we elevate our voices to protect our students’ educational rights and opportunities and to preserve our profession.



Legislation to Watch (and act upon)

Open for Business Again, But for How Long?

by Dr. April Coleman, SW Regional Representative

Following a second shutdown at the end of January, Congress passed a funding bill for all agencies except DHS. That bill provided essentially the same level of education funding for 2026 as in the previous year for Title I, IDEA special education, Title II for professional development, and Title III for English language learners. The bill was signed into law by the president, despite his earlier request for significant cuts. The final legislation doesn't, however, require a halt to efforts to shift Ed Dept. programs to other agencies or prohibit the administration from taking further steps to dismantle the Department, though it does require the Department to consult with Congress on those efforts.

Thank you for your advocacy efforts on behalf of education funding. It works! As you see below there are still bills outstanding PRO and CON on the closure of the Department. You can still make your voice heard on those issues.

It has been suggested that the short time closures of the government recently seen may be the "new way of doing business" in this Congress. Which agency will be effected next? Social Security Administration? Education Department? Justice Department? It behooves us to be vigilant and aware of potential issues in the future.

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 (NEW)	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 6718 (NEW)	To amend definition of professional degree in Higher Ed Act of 1965	Bacon (R-NE)	12/15/2025	Referred to Committee
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 894	Expressing support for strong public education in history and civics as essential to preserving founding ideals of democracy	Costa (D-CA)	11/19/2025	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
HR711	Fair Act of 2025 (prohibits federal agencies and federally funded entities from discrimination or establishing preferences (quotas, # goals, timetables) on the basis of race, color or national origin in contracts/employment)	Tiffany, R-WI-7	1/23/2025	Referred to Committee on the Judiciary, on Oversight, AND Gov. Reform 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
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
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
HRes 1045 (NEW)	To Eliminate race-based logos, mascots, and names in state ed. institutions	Pallone (D-NJ)	02/09/2026	Referred to Committee

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.

(Continued from page 2: Resolutions)

Q: The second resolution, “Regarding the Passage of the Educational Choice for Children’s Act (2025),” seems to oppose parent choice in education. Is that so?

A: The resolution recognizes and supports the role of parents as key decision makers regarding the education of their children. It supports further expansion of school choices within the public school system to meet the needs of all students. But data from states such as Florida, Tennessee, and Arizona finds that funds intended for students in poverty have been diverted from public schools without any accountability as to their use by voucher programs. Moreover, research on the academic outcomes of services funded through vouchers or scholarship programs is often mixed or nonexistent.

Q: What does the DKG resolution on Educational Choice call for?

A: It (1) **affirms** DKG’s support for a strong, high-quality and well funded system of public education as the backbone to a healthy and sustainable democracy. (2) It calls on members to **seek information** related to the management and accountability of programs funded by tax credits and scholarships under HR 833 and PL 119-21 (One Big Beautiful Bill)., and (3) **examine** the quality of education provided by government funded private schools. (4) The resolution calls on members to **advocate** with legislators for the **postponement** of PL119-21 until further study has been completed on the financial impact on traditional public schools. (5) Finally, the resolution asks members to encourage legislators to **recognize** the importance of decision-making based on research and statistics when considering tax supported private schools, with insistence on financial and academic accountability.



Q: I thought HR 82, the Social Security Fairness Act settled retirement concerns for educators. Why another resolution?

A: Resolution author Susie Dixon, CA, pointed out that proposals making their way

through the current Congress cut Social Security benefits, delay cost-of-living adjustments, raise the retirement age, and weaken defined-benefit pension programs. It is within the purposes and goals of Forum members to support a retirement system that is both secure and adequate. This resolution recognizes that not only have members earned a secure retirement through years of public service but threats to retirement security undermine recruitment, retention and the future of public education.

This resolution calls on the Forum to (1) **support** legislation protecting and strengthening educator retirement benefits; (2) **urge Congress** to oppose actions that reduce earned benefits or weaken pension systems, and support policies that ensure financial security and dignity for educators in retirement; and (3) to **educate and inform** members on retirement security issues and policies that honor educators’ service.

All three of these resolutions were adopted by members attending the February 16, 2026 U.S. Forum General Meeting by significant margins. The Forum Steering Committee, the Resolutions Committee, and the sponsors of these resolutions will now develop implementation plans to enable implementation of the resolutions. They will also be discussed at the upcoming National Legislative Seminar in March 2026. Copies of the resolutions are available on <https://www.dkgusforum.org>.

Advocacy Updates and Legislative Alerts

While generally legislation moves at glacial rates, there are times when things heat up, creating short timelines for submitting input to your Congressional representatives. If you would like to receive advocacy updates and legislative alerts via e-mail, please let your Forum Steering Committee know. We will add you to our contact list. You can complete the form on the website (<https://www.dkgusforum.org>) or **Email your request to:** dkgu.s.forum@gmail.com

Subject line: Advocacy Updates Contact List

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, at dkgu.s.forum@gmail.com.