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U.S. Forum Connection

The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International

In this issue:

- It's Time to A.C.T.I.V.A.T.E.
- What it means to be non-partisan
- A.I. Successes and Concerns
- Education Funding
- Tracking Education Policy
- Legislation to Watch

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Jan. 2027

Courageous conversations:

Advocating with the "opposition;"

Encouraging and including diverse opinions in DKG;

Finding common ground.

It's Time to A.C.T.I.V.A.T.E.

By Dr. April S. Coleman, Chair, U.S. Forum Steering Committee

The 2026 election season is over, but our work continues! Elected officials are meeting with their colleagues and constituents to make plans for the upcoming legislative session, identifying bills they want to propose and support, clarifying their strategies for success. DKG members should be doing the same at the local, state and national level. Now is not the time to rest. Ladies, it is time to **A.C.T.I.V.A.T.E.**

A - **Analyze** the election outcomes and acknowledge your power to implement changes.

C - **Choose** your cause and create a plan for mobilizing the support of others.

T - **Think** strategically about your cause and what outcomes you want to see.

I - **Identify** sources that will continuously inform you about the issues that you deem important.

V - **Voice** your values and visit the issues that matter the most to you.

A - **Act** with intention and prioritize your time so that you don't get overwhelmed.

T - **Team** up with allies as you transform your concerns into action.

E - **Engage** with your legislators and policymakers, evaluating and expanding your impact as you go.

Your next chapter meeting is a perfect opportunity to start planning how you will A.C.T.I.V.A.T.E. in 2027 and drive the changes you want to see. For a complete checklist of questions and activities to help you prepare for the upcoming legislative sessions, see the Legislative Session Preparation Checklist on the U.S. Forum website under the Resources tab: <www.dkgusforum.org/resources> .

Food for Thought: What it means to be Non-partisan

Editor's note: At a recent meeting members asked if the DKG neutrality policy was still in operation. It is, but the question revealed the need to clarify the difference between being non-partisan (as required by our neutrality policy) and taking positions on issues (as allowed by the U.S. Forum Guidelines). The article below is re-printed with permission from the president of the Washington State League of Women Voters and addresses this issue. It is included here to spark conversation.

Nonpartisan. Not Neutral.

By Karen Crowley, President, LWV of Washington *22 Sept. 2026 /LWVWA*

Every election season, someone asks the same question, usually with a raised eyebrow: "If the League of Women Voters doesn't take sides, why does it have so much to say?" It's a fair question. It's also based on a misunderstanding we'd like to clear up, because the answer is rooted in what democracy requires of people who care about it.

Political distinction

Since our founding in 1920, the League has held this stance: We do not support or oppose any political party or candidate. We don't ask our members who they vote for. We don't fund campaigns. We don't wear party jerseys. We take this commitment to nonpartisanship seriously. It's why our voice carries above the noise of party politics, and why people across the political spectrum have trusted our voter guides and candidate forums for decades. But nonpartisan never meant neutral. And it certainly never means silent.

Being partisan means taking a firm side tied to a political party — prioritizing one group's success and often resisting compromise because the goal is winning for the team.

Being political, in contrast, means engaging with civic life, public policy and the problems a community faces. It means showing up to public hearings, pushing for clean water or defending the right to vote — none of which requires choosing a party. That's the League's distinction: nonpartisan on candidates and parties, unapologetically political on issues.

What this means in practice

We take positions on governmental policy — such as voting rights, environmental protection, education, health care —and do so through study, not allegiance. We follow the policy, not the person or party behind it. Sometimes that position aligns with a party platform; sometimes it doesn't. That's the whole point: We're don't push a team. We evaluate whether a policy serves voters and strengthens democracy.

Nonpartisanship does not require silence about the actions of elected officials. Once elected, a candidate becomes our representative. We have a right — even an obligation — to weigh in on policy decisions they make on our behalf.

The League is not neutral about democracy itself. We are pro-voter and pro-democracy, and consider the defense of voting access, government transparency and democratic norms a civic duty — not a partisan strategy.

This year, the League of Women Voters of Washington has taken public positions opposing state ballot initiatives we believe would strip protections from vulnerable children and undermine successful state policy, and we support requiring the highest earners to pay their fair share toward education, health care and working families. None of this is about which party wrote an initiative. It's about what the initiative would actually do.

Standing firm without picking sides

The line between 'political' and 'partisan' isn't always where our critics claim. Those who oppose reforms the League supports sometimes call our advocacy 'partisan' to try to limit our influence. The accusation won't silence us. That same clear-eyed confidence guides how we work with others. Partnering with another organization to co-host a voter registration drive, work in a coalition or share the stage at an event does not compromise our nonpartisanship, even if that partner has endorsed a candidate. What matters is whether the partnership itself stays focused on the shared issue. Each League's board weighs that, considering local conditions and community trust.

In fact, today's issues warrant deep, authentic coalition work. We are stronger and more effective when we can work together to speak with one voice.

continued on pg. 3 LWVWA

LWVWA continued from p. 2

The League's bright line remains: We will not organize or lead an effort built explicitly to support or oppose a candidate or a party. Everything short of that is a judgment call, made locally.

Bold, loud and still nonpartisan

This moment calls us to be bold enough to name issues, loud enough to be heard without apology, nimble enough to mobilize quickly — all while remaining scrupulously nonpartisan. Those aren't contradictions. They're part of the same muscle the League has flexed for 106 years.

Nonpartisan never meant passive. This discipline lets us fight harder for voters. We don't check our voice at the door to prove we're fair. We stay fair so that our voice means something. That's the deal we made in 1920, and it's the deal we're keeping now.

Successes and Concerns of AI Integration

by Dr. Cindy Dixon, U.S. Forum SE Region Representative

Supporters of artificial intelligence (AI) in education highlight its potential to save time, differentiate instruction, draft lesson plans, and improve effective communication. These applications make AI an attractive option for technology integration. Yet the AI tools that simplify an educators' work also have limitations that can create challenges and call for diligent oversight.

In casual conversations, educators excitedly share new ways they are using AI. Planning for retirement? Ask AI to identify a suitable retirement date and outline the steps to take. Need to translate text or adapt it for readers with different skill levels? Provide the text and clear instructions. Creating a flyer to inform families about an upcoming event? Share the relevant information and an image, then choose a style. With clear instructions, AI can quickly provide a useful starting point for such tasks.

AI's convenience, however, can encourage overreliance. Users may trust that AI-generated content is authentic and accurate, even though AI can produce information that is inaccurate or misleading while appearing credible. Data privacy presents another concern. Educators may inadvertently enter or share students' names, photos, jersey numbers, and other identifying information when creating posters or social media content.

A.I. can produce information that is inaccurate or misleading while appearing credible.

Academic integrity warrants similar care. Relying on AI-generated work without considering the ideas themselves can cause educators to limit student opportunities to think critically and develop their own perspectives. Teachers who substitute AI materials for their own knowledge and professional skills may reduce the authenticity of their work. For both students and teachers, questions remain about copyright, plagiarism, and appropriate use of AI generated materials. Students' excessive reliance on AI may further limit the development of critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills.

On February 12, 2026, Alabama legislators approved Joint Resolution 51, establishing an AI and Children's Internet Safety Study Commission. After the governor's signature, Act 2026-218 authorized the commission to examine how AI relates to children's online safety, potentially informing future legislation. Alabama's Commission on Screen-Based Instruction is also surveying teachers and parents about students' technology use. Although the survey is not specific to AI, the survey explores the benefits and risks of screen use in public schools.

Other states are responding, as well. West Virginia House Bill 5205 would direct the State Board of Education to create model policies for technology and AI use in public schools. California has regulated AI use in K–12 education since 2025, adding student privacy protections through Assembly Bill 1159 in 2026. Additional laws scheduled for 2027 and 2028 will expand protections for children and require AI literacy education in curriculum standards. In total, thirty-four states are currently considering legislation on student privacy and AI implementation.

The issues around A.I. demand that DKG U.S. Forum members stay abreast of current trends, legislation, and debate to appropriately communicate with legislators in a timely and effective manner. Member positions have the potential of making a significant impact on the outcome of this critical educational debate.

Around the Forum . . .

Education Budget Issues in the United States 2027

by Sharon Scheiddeger, U.S. Forum Northeast Representative

Budget concerns have long dominated discussions in school districts nationwide and will remain a priority for years to come. Schools now face belt-tightening budgets more than usual. The proposed FY 2027 budget, still in limbo, calls for a 10% reduction in federal funding for education in the amount of $8 billion dollars. District budgets today also face cuts due to decreased student enrollment, caused by lower birth rates, stringent immigration rules and the movement towards private schools using school voucher programs.

Because schools rely on state and federal per pupil allocations, reductions in federal monies can result in significant cuts in programming for students. In order to maintain mandated services, districts are reduced to cutting arts programs and extra-curricular activities. Some schools have been forced to put into place inherently unequal "pay to play" fees for student activities to make up for the loss of funds.

Some schools have been forced to put into place inherently unequal "pay to play" fees.

Ohio public schools receive approximately thirteen percent of their funding from the federal government. Columbus City School District, the state's largest district, faces a fifty-million-dollar shortfall and has already cut staff and bussing for high school students. Its deficit-reduction efforts include closing schools and moving students into other buildings, creating an increase in the student-to-teacher ratio for the coming school year.

Ohio schools receive funding from the federal government, state government and from local property taxes, with property taxes providing approximately forty to fifty percent of their budgets. Funding equity has been a concern for most of the last twenty years. Critics argue that districts with higher property values receive disproportionately more funding than the more rural school districts or districts who have higher poverty levels and lower property values.

continued on pg. 9 Funding

Tracking Education Policy Across the States – a NW Regional Initiative

by Kay Stern, U.S. Forum Northwest Region Representative



In recent years, many of the most significant changes in education policy and practice have emerged not from Washington, D.C., but from state legislatures. Issues such as school choice, parental rights, school funding sources, and related policy concepts are being debated and adopted in state capitals across the country.

The U.S. Forum is adapting to this shifting landscape by examining new ideas, policies, practices, and legislation emerging from a variety of state-level sources. To better track developments across the Northwest Region, a regional US Forum discussion group is being formed for state US Forum representatives, state legislative committees, and each state president's designee.

The Northwest Region includes Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. This diverse group of DKG members is expected to bring thoughtful perspectives and productive discussion to current education issues.

The discussion group will examine legislative issues, emerging trends, interest groups, and state experiences related to education policy. These conversations may help inform new resolutions, support existing resolutions, evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of proposed legislation, and strengthen regional unity in support of accessible, effective, and accountable education for all students.

The Forum will continue to monitor federal issues, provide advocacy training and experience, and offer webinars on current topics. Please visit dkgusforum.org for bill tracking, upcoming events, and information about receiving the Forum *Connection* newsletter. For questions about the NW discussion group, contact Kay via the Forum web site Contact Us tab.

Legislation to Watch (and act upon)

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.

DKG U.S. Forum Adopted Resolution on the Closure of the Department of Education

On February 16, 2026, the DKG U.S. Forum adopted a resolution regarding the proposed elimination of the Department of Education. The resolution neither supports nor opposes closure but expresses concerns about protecting vulnerable students, maintaining federal education funding, ensuring uninterrupted student loan administration, and preserving accountability. The resolution calls for member education and discussion, a bipartisan congressional study before dismantling the Department, and communication with Congress supporting continued educational services.

There are currently four bills before the House that directly relate to the resolution because they would transfer significant federal education responsibilities. Although the Forum has not formally opposed the individual bills, its resolution provides a basis for reviewing their potential consequences.

Proposed Reorganization of the U.S. Department of Education

The four bills introduced in Congress which would transfer responsibilities currently administered by the U.S. Department of Education to other federal agencies:

H.R. 9610 – K–12 Education: Transfers certain elementary and secondary education responsibilities to the Department of Labor.

H.R. 9611 – Higher Education: Transfers certain higher education responsibilities to the Department of Labor.

H.R. 9604 – Tribal Education: Transfers certain Native American education responsibilities to the Department of the Interior.

H.R. 9609 – Student Aid: Transfers federal student aid responsibilities to the Department of the Treasury.

Legislative Status — October 12, 2026

On July 15, 2026, the House Committee on Education and Workforce considered all four bills in a full committee markup and voted to order each reported with amendments. Committee approval does not constitute passage by the full House. No subsequent House floor passage or Senate action was confirmed in the records reviewed for this update.

Congressional Outlook and Member Action

Congress may consider these bills during the lame-duck session following the November 3 elections. Bills not enacted by the end of 2026 generally must be reintroduced in the 120th Congress.

DKG members are encouraged to stay informed, review the potential effects on public education, and communicate their views to Congress, consistent with the Forum's adopted resolution.

Contact congressional offices: https://5calls.org/

House Committee on Education and the Workforce/Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions 10/2/26

Bill Number	Bill Title	Sponsor	Introduced	Status	Why It May or May Not Be Moving
HR9604	**Less Bureaucracy, Better Tribal Education** Transfers and repeals Dept. of Ed. functions related to tribal education and job training to the Department of Interior.	Owens, R-Ut-4 1 cosponsor House Education and Workforce 7/15	7-9-26	Committee vote of 20 yeas to 15 nays to "order to report (amended)" to the full House on 7-15-16.	MOVING IN HOUSE. Part of the Republican-led "Less Bureaucracy, Better Education" package and backed by the Administration. It passed committee 20–15, showing majority support. Next hurdle is House floor scheduling; Senate passage would be more difficult without bipartisan support.

continued on page 6

Legislation to Watch (and act upon)

cont. from p. 5

House Committee on Education and the Workforce/Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions 10/2/26

Bill Number	Bill Title	Sponsor	Introduced	Status	Why It May or May Not Be Moving
HR9609	**Less Bureaucracy, Better Student Aid Act** Transfers Dept. of Ed. functions related to federal student aid to the Department of the Treasury	Walberg, R-Mi-5 1 cosponsor House Education and Workforce 7/15 House Energy and Commerce 7/9	7-9-26	Committee vote of 19 yeas and 16 nays to "order to report (amended)" to the full House on 7-15-26.	MOVING IN HOUSE. A leadership-backed bill in the same 10-bill package. Committee approval gives it momentum, but the close party-line vote and limited bipartisan sponsorship could slow it on the House floor and especially in the Senate.
HR9610	**Less Bureaucracy, Better K-12 Education Act** Transfers to the Dept. of Labor all functions of the Sec. of Dept. of Ed. related to Elem. And Sec. Act of 1965, including Titles I, II, III, IV, V, and VII, including ELL, migrant, rural, community schools, teacher training, and more, codifying the inter-agency agreements made by executive order.	Harris, R-NC-8 1 cosponsor House Financial Services 7/9 House Natural Resources 7/9 House Oversight & Government Reform 7/9 House education and Workforce 7/9, 7/15	7-9-26	Referred to House Committee on Education and the Work Force; Committee vote of 19 yeas to 16 nays to "order to report (amended)" to the full House on 7-15-26	MOVING IN HOUSE. Advances a major Administration priority to shift federal education functions. Committee Republicans approved it despite Democratic opposition. Floor time and the need for Senate support remain significant hurdles.
HR 9611	**Less Bureaucracy, Better Higher Education** Transfers to the Dept. of Labor all functions of the Secretary of the Dept. of Ed. for multiple offices and programs related to higher education, including TRIO, historically Black colleges, and others.	Harris, R- NC-8 1 cosponsor House Education and Workforce 7/9 7/15 Markup	7-9-26	Committee vote of 20 yeas to 16 nays to "order to report (amended)" to the full House on 7-15-16.	MOVING IN HOUSE. Included in the majority's coordinated Department of Education restructuring package and approved in committee. Its broad transfer of higher-education programs is controversial, which may make Senate passage difficult.
S4028	**Open Books, Open Doors Act** Expands equitable access to developmentally appropriate literacy materials, programs, and family engagement in reading, especially in underserved communities	Kim, D-NJ 0 cosponsors Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions 3/9	3-9-26	Read twice and referred to the HELP Committee; no action signee.	NOT MOVING. Referred to the Senate HELP Committee with no subsequent action. It has no cosponsors and is sponsored by a Democrat in a Republican-controlled Senate, giving committee leaders little incentive to prioritize it.
HR7691	**Fight Book Bans Act** Provides grants to local educational agencies to cover the costs of challenges to books and curriculum in public elementary and secondary schools.	Frost D-FL-10 3 cosponsors House Education and Workforce 2/25	2-25-26	Referred to House Education and Workforce Committee; no action signee	NOT MOVING. Referred to committee with no markup. It is a Democratic bill with very limited co-sponsorship in a Republican-controlled House, and book-ban policy is politically contentious, making majority committee action unlikely.

Continue on page 7: Legislation

Legislation to Watch (and act upon)

cont. from p. 6

House Committee on Education and the Workforce/Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions 10/2/26					
Bill Number	**Bill Title**	**Sponsor**	**Introduced**	**Status**	**Why It May or May Not Be Moving**
S4504	**Full-Service Community School Expansion Act of 2026** Improve the full-service community school programs grants.	Van Hollen, D-MD. 14 cosponsors Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions 5/12	5-12-26	Referred to HELP Committee; no action since.	NOT MOVING. It has 14 cosponsors, but they are Democrats/independent and the bill would substantially expand federal funding. With Republican control of the Senate and no bipartisan sponsorship, HELP Committee action is unlikely unless negotiations broaden support.
S4431	**Time for Completion Act** Requests comprehensive student achievement data in higher ed	Barasso R-WY 3 cosponsors Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions 4/29	4-30-26	Referred to HELP; no actions to date	POSSIBLE, BUT STALLED. Sponsored and cosponsored by Republicans, so it is better aligned with the Senate majority than the other stalled Senate bills. However, HELP has not acted, suggesting it is a lower priority or awaiting committee time/possible inclusion in a larger higher-education package.
HR 10868	**Protecting Students from Sexually Explicit Materials Act** Prohibits federal dollars for use in providing sexually explicit materials to k-12.	Fuller, R – GA	10-22-26	Referred to House Committee on Education and the Work Force	NOT MOVING. Bill is consistent with the policy objectives of Executive Order 14190,

Congressional Update: More Legislation That Matters to DKG Members

By Susan Dixon, DKG U.S. Forum Southwest Representative | October 2026



As the 119th Congress approaches its conclusion, several legislative proposals deserve the attention of Delta Kappa Gamma (DKG) members. From the future of the U.S. Department of Education to Social Security, Medicare, voting rights, and emerging classroom issues, congressional decisions could have significant implications for educators, students, retirees, and their communities. The DKG U.S. Forum maintains a nonpartisan and objective approach to legislative monitoring. Our responsibility is to provide accurate, timely information so members can understand proposed legislation, consider its potential impact and take such action as they deem appropriate.

Proposed Reorganization of the U.S. Department of Education

See the discussion above (pages 6-7) on the Proposed Reorganization of the Department of Education and the status of the Congressional bills related to the Forum resolution. The resolution encourages members to study potential consequences, communicate their views to Congress, and support a bipartisan congressional study before dismantling the Department. At this time, members need to be alert to actions that may be taken in the lame duck session between the election and the beginning of the 120th Congress. Members are encouraged to contact their legislators with their opinions and the points taken in the resolution regardless of election outcomes.

continued on page 8: Dixon

Legislation to Watch

(Dixon, cont. From page 7)

Additional Education Issues to Watch

School Choice and Tax Credits: Federal tax legislation enacted in 2025 established a scholarship-granting organization tax credit, with implementation beginning after 2026. State participation and the relationship between private-school scholarships and public education funding warrant attention.

Cell Phones in Schools: H.R. 2700 addresses restrictions on student cellphone use, while H.R. 1275, the Focus on Learning Act, emphasizes research and pilot programs involving mobile-device-free learning environments.

Artificial Intelligence: Emerging federal proposals address AI literacy, student privacy, responsible classroom use, academic integrity, and educator preparation.

Educator Mental Health and Food Insecurity: Proposals addressing educator well-being, school mental-health resources, and access to school meals remain important to student achievement, attendance, educator retention, and school communities.

Federal Issues Affecting Members and Retirees

Social Security Solvency: Congress continues to examine proposals addressing Social Security's long-term financial stability, including possible commissions to recommend changes. Members should monitor whether special commission or fast-track procedures could limit public participation, congressional amendments, and open debate.

Social Security Fairness Act Implementation: Following repeal of the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO), implementation remains important to retired educators. H.R. 7361, the No Tax on Restored Benefits Act, proposes excluding certain restored Social Security benefits from federal taxable income. Introduced February 4, 2026, it was referred to the House Ways and Means Committee.

Medicare and Health Care: H.R. 2045 proposes adding dental, vision, and hearing coverage to Medicare. Medicare Part D prescription-drug costs negotiated drug prices, Medicaid funding, and health-care coverage also warrant monitoring.

Voting Rights: The SAVE Act (H.R. 22) and related proposals address documentary proof-of-citizenship requirements for federal voter registration. The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act (H.R. 14/S. 2523) proposes changes to federal voting-rights protections.

Looking Ahead: Staying Informed and Engaged

Following the November 3rd elections, Congress may consider additional legislation during its lame-duck session. Bills not enacted before the conclusion of the 119th Congress generally must be reintroduced in the 120th Congress.

Effective advocacy begins with understanding the issues. The DKG U.S. Forum will continue tracking significant legislation and providing timely updates and alerts, allowing members to evaluate developments and communicate with elected officials when they believe action is appropriate. An informed membership strengthens thoughtful discussion and helps ensure educators' perspectives remain part of the national conversation.

To contact your congressional representatives, visit **https://5calls.org/** or **www.Congress.Gov**.

Thank you to Susan Dixon, SW Region Representative, chair of the Legislation Tracking Committee and the following Forum members who have volunteered to serve on the committee: NE Lynn Mason (MI); SE Peggy Monroe (TN); NW Elaine Harris (OR); and SW Leslie Valentincic (TX).
Tracking committee work entails following identified pieces of legislation as it progresses through Congress and providing a brief status report and summary for inclusion in U.S. Forum publications.

More Around the Forum

Continued from pg. 4 Funding

Every state in the country facies budget issues stemming from declining state and federal funding. Rising costs for salaries, goods and equipment, and fuel compound these challenges. In the time frame from 2013 to 2023 schools have faced expense increases of approximately nineteen percent while revenues have declined.

In a nationwide Powerschool poll of 1,801 educators earlier this year, 37% of respondents reported that budget cuts affect professional development opportunities; 26% said that curriculum is suffering; 24% indicate their school district has already made cuts to their extracurricular programs. The good news is that only 4% have reported cuts in their district school meals programs.



Federal and state funding cuts have forced schools to find more creative ways to increase their budgets. Districts are exploring new programs to attract students, such as new technology programs. Some schools have expanded their preschool programs, begun to offer attendance incentives to increase their enrollment numbers and, correspondingly, increase allocations.

One area receiving increased federal funding is money for charter schools. Many districts and states are investigating options for providing district-supported charter schools.

What should we do as citizens concerned for school funding? We should maintain awareness of the school funding mix and understand how it is achieved for each state as well as how that funnels down to our local school districts. Remain vigilant about your local school district and their funding issues and spending decisions. Make sure to contact local, state and federal government representatives to voice your support or displeasure about legislation that affects school districts in your community and in your state.

Remember that because DKG is not a union, its members can often receive a more open reception from legislators and decision makers than other groups. They are eager to receive your stories and learn about the local impact of federal and state decisions on their constituents. Can your chapter host a program to learn about funding? Plan actions to contact legislators? Support your local schools in their funding crises?

DKG U.S. Forum: Women advocating for legislative action.

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 the editor, at **www.dkgu.s.forum@gmail.com.**