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<https://dkgusforum.org/>

US Forum Connection

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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.

JOIN THE MEMBERS OF THE US FORUM STEERING COMMITTEE FOR LEGISLATIVE UPDATES, A REVIEW OF THE 2024 NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SEMINAR, AND THE ELECTION FOR THE 2024-2026 STEERING COMMITTEE.

DKG INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION
FRIDAY, JULY 12TH
NATIONAL HARBOR, MD

Meet the Candidates

At the U.S. Forum session on Friday, July 12th in National Harbor MD, all attendees will elect members of the U.S. Forum Steering Committee. The elected candidates will serve during the 2024-2026 biennium. The following members have placed their names in nomination for positions on the Steering Committee and provided a statement regarding their interest in serving on this committee. Nominations from the floor will also be accepted during the session.

US Forum Chair Candidates



Pat Bennett-Forman (Washington State)

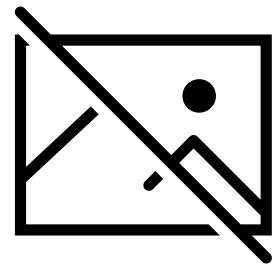
Having attended over 15 US Forum sessions at International Convention and Conferences and three National Legislative Seminars, I have solid working knowledge of the responsibilities and goals of the Forum. I am an ardent supporter of member advocacy, have trained individuals in components of effective advocacy for ten years, and demonstrated leadership skills as past state president of the Washington State Organization. I believe the Forum has an essential role to play in revitalizing DKG and wish to contribute to the success of the Forum in that regard. I am a competent practitioner in collaborating and building consensus, both skills necessary for leading the Forum to demonstrate to members and non-members its relevancy as a spokesperson for educators.

Jacqueline Brown-Williams (North Carolina)

No Photo Provided

Recently retired after 40 plus years in the classroom, I continue my work as an Educational Consultant. My primary focus has been encouraging disadvantaged and disenfranchised girls and women to seek out post-secondary and career opportunities. I would like to represent women of all ages in their endeavor to create positive change for themselves, their families, and communities.

My role as an Educational Consultant began with my selection by the U.S. State Department to provide workshops and seminars in developing countries throughout Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and China. During this time, I assisted in the development of educational and entrepreneurial experiences for girls and women. This is what I propose to share with the DKG US Forum.



Meet the Candidates

Northeast Regional Representative Candidates



Ranae Beyerlein (Michigan)

In keeping with my DKG sponsor and mentor, Elaine Christiansen, honoring her legacy, I want to be more involved with the US Forum, utilizing skills I've acquired in advocacy and leadership. Service for DKG International includes:

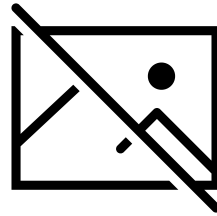
- Education Excellence Committee in 2014-2016
- Attendance and participation at all US Forum meetings at the International Conventions and Regional Conferences
- Chicago in 2008: Dissertation Award
- Volunteer at Traverse City, Michigan and Detroit

DKG Michigan:

- Women in the Arts co-chair 6 years
- Second and First Vice President
- President: 2019 to 2021
- Executive Secretary 2021-2024

Political & Advocacy Experience:

- Reviewed and recommended candidates for local school board and state elections
- PhD: Educational Leadership
- Trained as political lobbyist, worked as volunteer lobbyist for MEA/NEA in Lansing, comfortable speaking with elected officials.
- Bargained 10 contracts (lead for 5) for teachers, paraprofessionals, and adjunct faculty, focusing on key features for women educators.



Sharon Scheidegger (Ohio) No Photo Provided

This year was my first year and I truly enjoyed the experience. I was able to meet a lot of DKG members and have my first true taste of being an advocate for Education. I would love to have a larger role in this to help others in DKG know more about being an advocate for change in what we believe in. I would also like to bring a larger voice to Capitol Hill next year.



Sharon L Welch (District of Columbia)

My involvement in the US Forum activities has been both inspiring and deeply rewarding. This year, I had the wonderful opportunity to actively participate in Delta Kappa Gamma Society International's National Legislative US Forum in Washington DC. The diverse range of activities provided the opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals, share ideas, and collaborate on projects that aim to address critical issues affecting key women educators and students in our educational system. One of the most impactful experience was participating in conversations with US Legislators and attending Congressional Hearings focused on educational policies on the political agenda. As I enter my first year of doctoral studies in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, I see the opportunity to serve as the Northeast Regional Representative, as a chance to apply what I've learned at the National Legislation US Forum and the skills I will develop in my doctoral studies to build a network of US Legislators and Education Policy Analysts who can support the DKG initiatives to further support improvements in our educational system, promote equitable changes in education, and meet the diverse needs of all students and educators we serve

Meet the Candidates

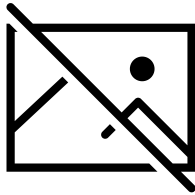
Northwest Regional Representative Candidate

Breanna (Bre) Schwandt (South Dakota)

As a newer Delta Kappa Gamma member, I have not served in any US Forum activities. I am appointed to serve as the Second Vice President Role in my chapter. As a member, I am trying to do everything I can to be active not only in my local chapter but Delta Kappa Gamma as a whole. I am applying to be on the US Forum Steering Committee for the Northwest Region. I can bring a different perspective as my chapter is in a rural setting. Being apart of the South Dakota Kappa Chapter, I have been able to work with some wonderful ladies who do everything in their power to promote Women Educators, our Chapter as well as all our communities as we span a large area. I feel my chapter's passion would be beneficial to the US Forum Steering Community.



Southeast Regional Representative Candidate



Jacqueline Brown-Williams (North Carolina) No Photo Provided

Recently retired after 40 plus years in the classroom, I continue my work as an Educational Consultant. My primary focus has been encouraging disadvantaged and disenfranchised girls and women to seek out post-secondary and career opportunities. I would like to represent women of all ages in their endeavor to create positive change for themselves, their families, and communities.

My role as an Educational Consultant began with my selection by the U.S. State Department to provide workshops and seminars in developing countries throughout Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and China. During this time, I assisted in the development of educational and entrepreneurial experiences for girls and women. This is what I propose to share with the DKG US Forum.

Southwest Regional Representative Candidate

Dr. Heathre Palige (Colorado)

I have contacted the representative to see if I can assist multiple times over the years I have been in DKG but was always told help was not needed. I have spoken before multiple Senate committees advocating for various causes: charter schools, MS. Often I contact representatives when the need arises and I not only vote but attend to legislative concerns as they also arise.



Don't Miss the US Forum Session at the International Convention

If you are attending the International Convention in National Harbor, MD in a few weeks, you will definitely want to attend the US Forum session in the Potomac Ballroom on Friday, July 12th. Beginning at 4:00 pm, the session will feature a welcome from US Forum Chair, Darlene Cook and greetings from International President, Debbie LeBlanc. Elections for the members of the US Forum Steering Committee for the 24-26 biennium will follow. All members in attendance will be permitted to vote for these important positions.

After the election, the Steering Committee will provide a report on their activities during this biennium and a pictorial review of the 2024 National Legislative Seminar will be presented. Don't miss this opportunity to meet the new members of the US Forum Steering Committee and engage with fellow US Forum members! See you on Friday, July 12th!

MANY THANKS FROM THE 2022-2024 US FORUM STEERING COMMITTEE!

It was truly a pleasure to serve the United States members of Delta Kappa Gamma during this biennium and the expertise and support you provided during these two years has been invaluable! The Steering Committee is especially grateful to all the Zoom meeting presenters, International Conference and NLS panelists, Mental Health and Legislative Subcommittee members, and especially, everyone who helped make this year's National Legislative Seminar such a success! We are also very thankful to the members of the US Forum Elections Committee, and the Financial Review Committee. We also wish to thank US Forum Treasurer Linda McCrary (TN) and the Connection newsletter editor, Alyssa Woodley (TX), whose capable efforts have made all these projects possible!

Proposing a Change to the US Forum Operational Guidelines: Your Vote is Important!

At a recent meeting of the US Forum Steering Committee, a decision was made to put forth an amendment to the current US Forum Operational Guidelines, Article VIII, Section D, 1 (2017). This proposed change will be presented, and a vote will be taken from those members who attend the US Forum session during the International Convention in National Harbor, MD in July 2024.

The rationale for this change to the US Forum Operational Guidelines is to provide flexibility and options for future Steering Committees in planning and presenting a National Legislative Seminar.

The language of the proposed amendment is as follows:

I move to amend Article VIII, Section D, 1. Strike "A National Legislative Seminar (NLS) is held in the Washington, DC area in even-numbered years" and insert "A National Legislative Seminar is held during each biennium."

Please plan to join us to participate in the US Forum session that begins at 4:00 pm on Friday, July 12th! Your vote is important! See you then!

Advocating for Educators: Legislation to Watch

Several bills that are directly aligned with issues prioritized in the US Forum Steering Committee's 2023 survey of Delta Kappa Gamma educators are in Congress at this time. Though not an exhaustive list, here is a brief mention of some of the bills to watch.

H.R. 82—Social Security Fairness Act of 2023. This bill aims to repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO). The bill currently has over 300 sponsors and has been assigned to the House Ways and Means Committee.

H.R. 744- Supporting the Mental Health of Educators and Staff Act of 2023. This bill was introduced by Bonamici (OR) and is based on the Mental Health Resolution that was presented and passed at the DKG International Convention in 2023. The bill has been referred to the Subcommittee on Health Action by the House Committee on Energy and Commerce

H.R. 3771- Healthy Minds for a Better Future Act. This bill establishes the Middle School Mental Health Task Force at the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services. The task force must study and report on the resources that are available to secondary school educators and parents for helping students who are experiencing mental health issues. The bill was introduced by Kean (NJ).

H.R. 3669- Expanding Student Access to Mental Health Services Act. This bill authorizes state and local educational agencies to use Student Support and Academic Enrichment grants to improve mental health services for students. Specifically, the bill allows funds to be used for identifying and disseminating best practices for mental health first aid, emergency planning, coordination of services, and telehealth services. The bill was introduced by Allen (GA).

S. 766 PAY TEACHERS ACT. Introduced by Sanders (VT), Chair of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, this bill addresses the nationwide teacher shortage by establishing a baseline wage to teachers of \$60,000 per year. The bill also proposes to provide an additional \$300 million annually for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part D (Personnel Preparation), and further invests in additional programs that diversify and support the quality of the educator pipeline.

S. 2530 Supporting the Mental Health of Educators and Staff Act of 2023. This companion bill to H.R. 744 was introduced by Casey (PA) and is intended to establish grants and require other activities to improve mental and behavioral health among education professionals and other school staff. In addition, HHS may award grants for educator preparation programs and training. Additionally, HHS must conduct a campaign to (1) encourage education professionals and other school staff to seek support and treatment for mental and behavioral health concerns, and (2) disseminate best practices to prevent suicide and improve mental health and resiliency among education professionals and other school staff.

For more information about these bills, or to find out about other bills of interest to you, go to [congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov).