



Winter 2025

<https://dkgusforum.org/>

U.S. Forum Connection

The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International

In this issue:

- Advocacy Works: Social Security Fairness Act
- March 1st Webinar on Ed Legislation
- New Web Site & Logo
- Legislation to Watch
- Essential Principles of Advocacy

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Advocacy Works: Social Security Fairness Act

Editors' note: Advocacy works! Though it often requires patience and perseverance. Consider the case of the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provisions (WEP), against which DKG members have long advocated reform, as related by Lynn McNamara, Alaska State Organization President.

In literally the next to last moment, on December 21, 2024, the 118th Congress passed the Social Security Fairness Act with strong bipartisan support and President Biden signed it into law on January 5, 2025. The law fully repealed the Government Pension Offset (GPO) enacted in 1977, and the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) started in 1983. The flaws of these earlier laws were apparent from the start, as these provisions of the Social Security Administration Act denied public servants, (including, in many states, educators) the benefits EARNED when they PAID Social Security FICA taxes because of their work as public servants. These provisions, multiplied over years of retirement, have effectively pushed many hard-working seniors to the edge of poverty. The nearly five decades-long grassroots battle to repeal these unfair provisions was recently won when a coalition of diverse activists from many organizations and locations sustained a coordinated focus and worked together to amplify a unified voice for the full repeal of both provisions.

John Pernorio, of the Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA), jump started a revival of interest with a MoveOn petition that quickly gained more than 50,000 signatures. In 2020, during the early months of the pandemic, some state leaders in the Alliance for Retired Americans and other organizations started meeting virtually and continued to invite a leaders from the many organizations who were impacted to join them in what was named the National WEP GPO REPEAL TASK FORCE. By 2021 there were over 60 member organizations meeting in monthly, plus committee, Zoom meetings. During this time, they reached out to the chair of the DKG U.S. Forum, seeking representation from our organization. The petition grew to over 115,000 signatures and was presented to congress by the Task Force at the end of the 117th Congress.

(Cont. p. 2 Advocacy)

LIVE ON ZOOM

Saturday, MARCH 1, 2025
10:30 - 11:30 CST

DKG U.S. Forum
Presents
**The 119th CONGRESS
& EDUCATION
LEGISLATION**

Tennessee State Representative John Ray Clemmons, a well-known advocate for education and educators and popular speaker at Tennessee DKG Conferences, will provide an informative and balanced view of current legislation and executive actions at the National level.

Plus ... opportunities for discussion with other education experts.

Registration required to obtain Zoom link! See info above

<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/cKhZurgUQmyRuJciMn1IQ>

(Advocacy cont. from p. 1)

Across the country, the organizations affiliated with the Task Force convened conventions and worked with state legislative bodies to pass resolutions calling for WEP/GPO repeal. The Alaskan Legislature passed it unanimously. The Task Force organized rallies and lobby days on Capitol Hill. There were field hearings in Louisiana and multiple House hearings for testimony. A National WEP & GPO Movement Facebook page rapidly collected tens of thousands of followers. Task Force members spread the word and continually contacted their Congressional representatives to become cosponsors. Two of us from Alaska lobbied our delegation during the U.S. Forum Legislative Seminar in DC in March 2024. We also sent out Action Alerts on DKG and Forum social media pages.

Because I spoke up about WEP/GPO at the training for incoming officers and during the U.S. Forum meeting in Finland, Darlene Cook (U.S. Forum Steering Committee Chair, 2022-2024) noted my interest and subsequently submitted my name to the Task Force. I started Zooming with them in August of 2023 and was warmly welcomed since Alaska was one of the states most impacted but not yet represented. It seemed that for every task there was someone to take it on, and for every question, someone to find the answer.

This advocacy effort was a win for all Americans and their communities - including educators in numerous states. It demonstrated to me the power of advocacy. Yes, it was hard work, sometimes discouraging because it took so long, but ultimately the coalition Task Force achieved its goals, teaching me that persistence, working in concert with others, and speaking out does make a difference.

I could not have been prouder than when Bette Marifino, the Task Force chair, introduced the bill to President Biden, and he signed it and presented her with the pen. Being a part of this group was an education, an inspiration and the honor of a lifetime. It wouldn't have happened if I weren't a part of DKG and hadn't said "yes" a few times.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Margaret Mead

For more information: <https://www.ssa.gov/benefits/retirement/social-security-fairness-act.html>

SOCIAL SECURITY FAIRNESS ACT & YOU

As of January 1, 2024, public workers, such as first responders, teachers, and many federal employees will be getting the benefits they paid FICA taxes (though denied for years,) now that the Social Security Fairness Act has been signed into law.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

If the Social Security Administration (SSA) has your accurate information, and you are already receiving your own (perhaps partial) Social Security benefits, and or have applied for spousal or survivor benefits due, you will be notified.

- To receive updates on the process and to create an account (if you haven't done so), visit www.ssa.gov/my_account.

Due to understaffing in the Social Security Administration and recalibrating their data bases to remove WEP and GPO provisions from their calculators, calculating benefits will take time. CONTACTING THE ADMINISTRATION BY PHONE WILL BE DIFFICULT!

- Use the following site to view benefits: <https://www.ssa.gov/forms/ssa-10-html>.
- Retirees who were unaware of their eligibility or who never applied should contact Social Security as soon as possible.
- To schedule an appointment online go to www.ssa.gov/apply. Or by phone 1-800-772-1213. The best times to call is near the BEGINNING OF THE DAY OR NEAR THE END OF THE DAY.

PLEASE GET THE WORD OUT TO ALL OF YOUR TEACHERS BOTH RETIRED AND ACTIVE TO SEE IF THEY QUALIFY FOR THE BENEFITS DUE THEM UNDER THE SOCIAL SECURITY FAIRNESS ACT!

New U.S. Forum website

Look for the launch of a newly designed website for the U.S. Forum in February 2025. Under the leadership of NE Regional Representative Sharon Welch, the U.S. Forum Steering Committee has redesigned its web site and invites you to check it out. <https://www.dkgusforum.org>

In addition to information about the Forum and upcoming Forum events, the site contains up-dates on education and other related bills currently introduced to Congress with information on bill status, sponsors, and current progress in the legislative process.

The site also provides resources – often from DKG state organizations – to build member skills as advocates, such as how to contact your legislator, tracking legislation, effective e-mails and other communications, and face-to-face meeting preparation. Links to other organizations that might present background and information on bills are also provided.

Follow the web site to learn about Forum events, especially the National Legislative Seminar in Spring 2026, and the workshops being held at the New Orleans International Convention in July 2025. Learn about and participate in Steering Committee work, including the amendments to the U.S. Forum Guidelines, election procedures, and consensus process.

Note: we are also present on the DKG International Face Book page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/145222607211>)

and the U.S. Forum Face Book page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2269724846587657>)

U.S. Forum News



Pre- 2024



New logo 2025

From “Readiness” to “Action” : the U.S. Forum logo journey

Have you noticed the change in the U.S. Forum logo? We have gone from “poised” to “advocating,” and we have added the DKG U.S. Forum name to the logo. Why make these changes? The answer is two-fold and reflects a desire to more accurately represent the mission of the U.S. Forum and its connection to the DKG International Society.

By adding the words “DKG U.S. Forum” to the logo, we clarify the “ownership” of those working on legislative action. We identify the actors. This addition insures that people, including legislators, who see the logo understand that it is DKG women from the U.S. Forum who are engaged in advocacy work. Letting others know what DKG and the U.S. Forum stand for, promotes our message to the public, particularly to those educators on behalf of whom we act.

The second change replaces the word “poised” with “advocating.” The word “poised” suggests preparedness and is a passive word. While we certainly see preparation for effective advocacy to be an essential component of Forum activities, the Forum mission and purpose #4 of DKG (see box) clearly call for members to be ACTIVE advocates, speaking our for educators, education, and women and children’s issues. Not just poised or ready to act but actively doing so.

The new logo speaks to the mission of the U.S. Forum and its integral link to DKG. The Steering Committee members encourage you to share this new logo when you share Forum events and to discontinue use of any prior logos.

*DKG Purpose #4:
to initiate, endorse, and support
desirable legislation or other
suitable endeavors in the
interests of education and
of women educators;*

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.

House Committee on Education and Workforce			
Bill Number	Bill Title	Bill Sponsor	Introduced
HR305	To authorize the Secretary of Education to carry out a grant program to assist local educational agencies with ensuring that each elementary and secondary school has at least one registered nurse on staff.	Fredrica Wilson, D-FL-27	1/9/2025
HR369	States' Education Reclamation Act of 2025 to provide for the elimination of the DOE and for other purposes	David Rouzer, R-NC-7	1/13/2025
HR581	To assist States in carrying out projects to expand the child care workforce and child care facilities in the States, and for other purposes.	Josh Harder-D-CA-9	1/21/2025
HR711	To provide for equal protection of the law and to prohibit discrimination and preferential treatment on the basis of race, color, or national origin in Federal actions, and for other purposes.	Thomas Tiffany, R-WI-7	1/23/2025
HR728	To amend the Head Start Act to include TANF, SSI, SNAP, WIC and federal housing assistance as eligible public assistance.	John Garamendi, D-CA-8	1/24/2025
HR811	To establish a competitive grant program to support the establishment, expansion, or enhancement of youth mentoring programs for eligible youth, and to provide for social and emotional learning, employability skill development, career exploration, work-based learning, and other youth workforce opportunities.	Janice Schakowsky, D-IL-9	1/28/2025
HR838	To allow a State to submit a declaration of intent to the Secretary of Education to combine certain funds to improve the academic achievement of students.	John Moolenaar, R-MI-2	1/31/2025
HR847	To repeal certain formula grants under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and use such funds to award block grants to States, except as otherwise appropriated by Congress.	Tim Burchett, R-TN-2	1/31/2025
HR869	To require full funding of part A of title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.	Susie Lee, D-NV-3	1/31/2025
HR896	To direct the Secretary of Education to award grants to State educational agencies for the purpose of implementing, administering, and evaluating programs that provide tutoring to students in elementary and secondary schools, and for other purposes.	Mikie Sherrill, D-NJ-11	1/31/2025
HR899	To terminate the Department of Education.	Thomas Massie, R-KY-4	1/31/2025
Senate Committee on Education Labor & Pensions			
Bill Number	Bill Title	Bill Sponsor	Introduced
S169	A bill to assist States in carrying out projects to expand the child care workforce and child care facilities in the States, and for other purposes.	Amy Klobuchar, D-MN	1/21/2025
S235	A bill to direct the Secretary of Labor to enter into contracts with industry intermediaries for purposes of promoting the development of and access to apprenticeships and related pre-apprenticeships for secondary school students.	Martin Heinrich, D-NM	1/23/2025

Essential Principles of Advocacy

The DKG Constitution outlines in Purpose 4 the essential responsibility of members “to initiate, endorse, and support desirable legislation or other suitable endeavors in the interests of education and of women educators.” DKG members are expected to advocate to meet our purposes. But “advocacy” is often a scary concept; we are unsure of what is required or if we have the skills or initiative to be advocates. Educators are often hesitant to speak before other adults and are often very shy about speaking up to “people in power.”

But advocacy is a Super Power for DKG members. Your ideas and input are valued and desired by legislators. They need to hear from you. To be most effective, DKG members need to apply the essential principles of advocacy.

First, you need to be knowledgeable about the issue or bill you wish to address. You do not have to be an expert, a lawyer, a legal scholar, or a paid advocate, but you should know the language in the bill and its impact. Or, if there is no bill about your issue yet, you need to know the facts that support having such legislation. Knowing facts that make this issue important to you are critical to being a persuasive advocate.

Second, you need to know a little bit about the person to whom you are communicating. Is your issue one of their passions or unknown to them? Are they already co-sponsors of the bill? What are the legislator’s party affiliation, committees they serve on in Congress, and legislative priorities? What is the legislator’s voting record? Who is the staff assistant working on your area of interest? Knowing this information will help you to fashion your statements to meet the needs of the listener as well as communicate the position you are advocating.

Third, you need to know the essentials of clear communication to the decision maker: stating your credentials, what your position is, why the issue is important to you (your story), the facts supporting your position and exactly what it is you want the legislator to do. Using concise and direct language, visual appeal, and engaging examples will enhance the power of your presentation (whether it is in-person, as an e-mail, video conference or testimony to a committee).

In the resources section of the U.S. Forum website are manuals and other materials that detail these essentials, provide sample templates, and describe chapter programs that engage members in advocacy activities in non-threatening ways. Zoom webinars scheduled over the next year will provide in-depth understanding and practice so that members can be truly SUPER when they speak out. Members are encouraged to visit the web site and attend these training sessions. Workshops at the International Conference will also empower participants.

Advocacy Updates and Legislative Alerts

While generally legislation moves at glacial rates, there are times when things heat up, when there are 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.

Email your request to: dkgu.s.forum@gmail.com
Subject line: Advocacy Updates Contact List
Give your name, state and best email address for reaching you.

The Connection is a publication of the U.S. Forum, 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.