

U.S. FORUM CONNECTION #132, DECEMBER 2014

This publication is intended for your information about issues important to education, women and children. How you choose to use the information included here is up to you.

This free newsletter is sponsored by the United States Forum of The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International. The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International is an organization of leading women educators with over 80,000 members. Delta Kappa Gamma members wishing to subscribe to this FREE newsletter should send a request to the editor Angela O. Bedenbaugh at Bedenbaugh.Angela@gmail.com. We urge you to share this newsletter with other interested individuals who are not members of Delta Kappa Gamma or members who do not subscribe to this publication.

IN THIS ISSUE

SOCIAL SECURITY

NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MUSEUM COMMISSION IS NOW LAW

WHAT TO EXPECT IN THE NEW CONGRESS

NEW U.S. FORUM WEB SITE

SOCIAL SECURITY

It is expected that several bills which would affect Social Security benefits of retirees will be filed shortly after the new Congress convenes. The reason these bills can be filed so rapidly is that they have already been written but were not acted on in a past session of Congress. Two major issues affecting Social Security benefits which will be addressed are changes in the Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA) tax and how the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) is calculated.

FICA is a tax imposed on the wages of both employers and employees and provides funding for the Social Security Trust which dispenses Social Security benefits. This tax was imposed on the first \$113,700 of gross wages in 2013 and the first \$117,000 in 2014. (There is no FICA tax on dividends or earnings other than wages.) One proposed change would be to tax all wages with no cap. This would affect only the very wealthiest wage earners who make up about 1% of the working population and would appreciably increase the amount of money in the Social Security Trust Fund, thus prolonging its viability.

COLA changes the benefit paid to Social Security retirees every year based on changes in the economy. The COLA for 2015 is somewhat lower than it has been in the past due to laws passed in the 2013-14 session of Congress. It has been estimated that the recent change reduced retiree benefits about \$70-80 a month from what they would have been under the old system.

NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MUSEUM COMMISSION IS NOW LAW

One of the actions that the lame duck session of Congress took was to pass legislation which would establish an eight member bipartisan commission to produce recommendations for the governance, organizational structure, fundraising, operations

and location of a National Women's History Museum in Washington, D.C. President Obama has signed the bill into law. The commission will have 18 months to produce its report which will then be submitted to Congress. Presumably the commission will be appointed in January.

DKG members in North Dakota, Nebraska, New York, Oklahoma, Utah and Wisconsin were extremely helpful in moving this legislation to its eventual passage in the Senate. The museum staff has acknowledged DKG as a group which greatly aided in the effort to get the legislation passed.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN THE NEW CONGRESS

Two areas of education which will be addressed in the new session of Congress are changes in No Child Left Behind and changes in the Higher Education Act. We will have to wait to see exactly what changes will be proposed. Topics which have been mentioned are school choice and federal funding. It is anticipated that there will be a number of bills filed early in the new Congress which would impact education.

NEW U.S. FORUM WEB SITE

The U.S. Forum has a new web site which is <http://www.usforumdkg.org/> The site has some information about the next National Legislative Seminar which will be held in 2016. In the future the registration form and other information about the seminar can be found there.

FORUM FACEBOOK PAGE LINK

For those of you desiring discussion of legislative topics there is a U. S. Forum Facebook page online at <http://www.facebook.com/DKG.US.Forum>

FORUM WEB SITE: <http://www.usforumdkg.org/>

CONTACT ADDRESSES FOR GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

U.S. GOVERNMENT CONTACT INFORMATION can be obtained through Congressional Switchboard [1-866-327-8670](tel:1-866-327-8670) [this is a toll free number]. You can contact your Congressman and Senator through this number without paying long distance charges.

<http://www.house.gov/> for members of the House of Representatives <http://www.senate.gov/> for members of the U.S. Senate
White House [1-202-456-1111](tel:1-202-456-1111)

FIVE CONSTITUENT CONTACTS WILL CAUSE A LEGISLATOR TO PAY SERIOUS ATTENTION TO A GIVEN ISSUE.