

## U.S. FORUM CONNECTION #67, JULY 2009

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 140,000 United States members. Delta Kappa Gamma members wishing to subscribe to this FREE newsletter should send a request to [Angela.Bedenbaugh@usm.edu](mailto:Angela.Bedenbaugh@usm.edu). We urge you to share this newsletter with other interested educators who are not members of Delta Kappa Gamma or do not subscribe to this publication.

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### SEX DISCRIMINATION AT THE OLYMPICS

Women will not ski jump in the Winter Olympics in Vancouver in 2010. A justice at the British Columbia Supreme Court has ruled that failing to hold a ski jumping competition for women constitutes discrimination but there's nothing Canadian courts can do about it. Fifteen women sued the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympics because the Vancouver games are men-only when it comes to ski jumping. The women argued that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms bars gender discrimination by government agencies and groups performing government functions.

Justice Lauri Ann Fenlon ruled that the committee is governed by the anti-discrimination language in the Canadian Charter, but that is not responsible for the exclusion of women from the ski jumping competition and is powerless to change that decision. "The IOC [International Olympic Committee] made a decision that discriminates against the plaintiffs," Fenlon wrote. "Only the IOC can alleviate that discrimination by including an Olympic ski jumping event for women in the 2010 Games." Fenlon added that the Canadian charter does not apply to a non-Canadian entity such as the IOC

Based on a statement issued after the ruling, the IOC is not inclined to change its position. "While we are pleased that the Games can now proceed as planned," the statement reads, "we strongly disagree with the court's analysis that the IOC acted in a discriminatory manner." It repeats the IOC's explanation for the decision not to include women's ski jumping in the 2010 Winter Games: "Our decision was based on technical issues, without regard to gender." Those technical issues include the number of women ski jumping at an elite level and the number of countries competing in the sport. IOC officials have argued that too few women and countries compete to justify Olympic competition. Fenlon addressed that directly in her ruling: "If the IOC had applied the criteria for admission of new events to both men's and women's ski jumping events," she wrote, "neither group would be competing in the 2010 Games." Men's ski jumping has always been part of the Winter Olympics and remains by virtue of tradition. That "grandfathering" of the men's event, while excluding a women's event, "discriminates against the plaintiffs in a substantive sense," Fenlon concludes.

Ski jumping is the last Winter Olympics sport closed to women. "I just don't know why this is the last step, why it's so hard to take," says Anita DeFrantz, a former Olympic rower and a veteran IOC member from the United States. "There are women athletes there who deserve to show their skills and accomplishment, as the men do, on the Olympic platform." The ruling means that **the ski jumper who holds the distance record on the K95 "normal hill" in the Vancouver Olympics will not get to compete at the games. Lindsey Van, 24, of Park City, Utah, has jumped farther than any man on the Olympic hill. Van will watch on television as men try to beat her record at February's games.** She's looking ahead to 2014, but she's not sure she can last that long in the sport given the lack of financial support for non-Olympic athletes. "When you get into a sport of this caliber at a high level, people are making money through sponsors," Van says. "But it's hard to get a sponsor if you're not in the Olympics." In Canada, there's concern that the ruling leaves the Olympics there on soft moral ground. "If these were black Canadians and Jewish Canadians being excluded from the event, it

would be intolerable," says Margot Young, who teaches constitutional and equality law at the University of British Columbia. "We should raise questions about what is going on at the Olympics." The Vancouver Organizing Committee had supported the inclusion of a women's event in the 2010 ski jumping competition. In a statement, committee CEO John Furlong said, "We will continue to do everything we can to help these athletes achieve inclusion in future Games."

### **FDIC INSURANCE ALERT**

Remember that if you have over \$100,000 invested in an FDIC insured institution, the amount over \$100,000 is not covered by FDIC insurance after 12/31/2009.

### **MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT – the Doughnut Hole**

In any one year, the Medicare Part D drug benefit gives you initial coverage up to \$2,700 in 2009. There's a gap in coverage when you pay 100 percent of your costs before coverage kicks in again. This gap is known as the "doughnut hole." It works like this: Once your total drug costs (what your plan has paid based on the full cost of prescription drugs, plus your deductible plus your copays) exceed \$2,700, Medicare will cover no more of your prescription drug costs in that year until you've spent an additional \$1,650 in 2009 out of your pocket. If you reach this limit, catastrophic drug coverage kicks in automatically and your plan will pay 95 percent of your remaining prescription drug costs until the end of the year. For example, the Medicare prescription drug benefit through provider X has a \$300 deductible and pays 80% of prescription drugs over that amount. A person regularly has prescription drugs which retail for \$500/month would incur \$6,000 in prescription drug expenses during a calendar year. The person pays \$300 deductible and \$100/month for about 5 months (a total of \$800). After 4.8 months the person would have to pay \$500/month for 3.3 months at which time the catastrophic drug provision kicks in and the person pays \$25/month.

**BREAKING NEWS --** In a surprise move that will please millions of Medicare beneficiaries, President Obama announced plans to cut in half the prescription drug expenses of those who fall into the Part D coverage gap, universally known as the [doughnut hole](#). They would only pay **50 percent of the cost of brand-name medications** in the gap instead of the 100 percent they must pay now. The new benefit is expected to be part of health care reform legislation that Congress will consider later this fall. **If passed, it will likely go into effect in July 2010.** This unexpected shrinking of the doughnut hole, which affects about 26 percent of Part D enrollees, is the result of a deal between the White House and the pharmaceutical industry. All drug manufacturers agreed to donate half the cost of their brand-name and biologic products (but **not generic drugs**) to people in the gap, at no cost to the government. The formal announcement of the deal came today at the White House, where Obama flanked by Democratic senators Max Baucus, Mont., and Chris Dodd, Conn. AARP CEO A. Barry Rand said the agreement, "will help close the notorious doughnut hole in Medicare Part D." **INTERESTING NOTE: 80-90% OF THE PRICE PAID FOR NONGENERIC PRESCRIPTION DRUGS IS PROFIT.**

For specific information about various Medicare Part D prescription drug plans go to [www.PlanPrescriber.com](http://www.PlanPrescriber.com)

### **HEARING AID ASSISTANCE TAX CREDIT ACT**

H.R.1646, S.1019 Hearing Aid Assistance Tax Credit Act - Amends the Internal Revenue Code to allow a nonrefundable income tax credit of up to \$500 for the purchase of a qualified hearing aid for an individual who is either: (1) age 55 or older; or (2) is claimed as a dependent of the taxpayer. Denies such tax credit to any taxpayer whose modified adjusted gross income exceeds \$200,000. giving a \$500 tax credit per hearing aid for children and seniors. Comment: Since digital hearing aids cost \$1500-\$2000, a \$500 tax credit is a help, but doesn't cover it all

### **MONEY FOR MODERNIZATION, RENOVATION, REPAIR OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS**

**H.R.2187** Grants to State educational agencies for the modernization, renovation, or repair of public school facilities.

5-14-09 Passed the House of Representatives by a 275-155 vote  
5-18-09 Received in the Senate and Read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

### **REDUCING THE STUDENT TO SCHOOL NURSE RATIO**

H.R.2730 seeks to amend the Public Health Service Act to authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services to make grants to eligible States for the purpose of reducing the student-to-**schoolnurse** ratio in public secondary schools, elementary schools, and kindergarten. This bill has been referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce

For on-line information on specific bills go to <http://thomas.loc.gov/>

### **CONTACT ADDRESSES FOR GOVERNMENT INFORMATION**

**U.S. GOVERNMENT CONTACT INFORMATION** can be obtained through Congressional Switchboard 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

**STATE GOVERNMENT CONTACT INFORMATION** can be obtained through <http://www.emailyourgovernor.com/> Information available at this site allows contact with governors, members of the state legislature, state supreme court, congressional delegation and state agencies such as the Education Department, Attorney General, Motor Vehicles Department and Voter Registration.

### **INFORMATION ON HOW YOUR CONGRESSMAN VOTED ON KEY BILLS**

<http://projects.washingtonpost.com/congress/110/bills/>

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

Archival copies of the U.S. Forum Connection can be found at <http://ocean.otr.usm.edu/~w305514/HomePage.htm>

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