

## Legislative Update May 2023

The purpose of the Legislation Committee is to inform Delta Kappa Gamma members about current or pending issues being brought before the State Legislature or our Federal Congress in regard to children, education and the status of women.

Two of the seven purposes of DKG express the need for members to be up-to-date on and to act upon legislation that effects education and educators.

- Purpose 4: To initiate, endorse, and support desirable legislation or other suitable endeavors in the interests of education and of women educators.
- Purpose 7: To inform the members of current economic, social, political, and educational issues so that they may participate effectively in a world society.

### From NEA:

**Our schools are the centers of our communities—they should be the safest, healthiest places.**

Students learn best when they're feeling their best. But our schools are experiencing a mental health crisis which can't be tackled without more support and resources.

**This Mental Health Month, we're sharing resources to help students and educators. Check out our updated resource hub for a deep dive on mental health, plus strategies for advocacy.**

Educators like you know that we're facing a mounting crisis. Students' mental health needs have been rising for years, and the pandemic only made things worse. Now more than ever, students and educators need solutions—that's why NEA is always advocating for increased support and funding from our lawmakers.

We are also sharing guides, tools, and more to help educators and families. **If we want our schools and our communities to thrive, our students must get the help they need. Take a look at our mental health resources hub to help the educators and students in your life.**

The hyperlinks above will take you to the NEA Resource Page where you will find ideas and links for parents and educators as well as a link for union leadership to help with bargaining for better safety in schools.

### **From NEA:**

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen announced that Congress must raise or suspend the debt ceiling earlier than expected to avoid a catastrophic default. D-day could come as soon as June 1.

The Senate Budget Committee held a hearing on H.R. 2811. The title of the hearing tells the story: “The Default on America Act: Blackmail, Brinkmanship, and Billionaire Backroom Deals.”

**The makers of the bill are demanding cuts in K-12 programs equivalent to eliminating 108,000 educators’ jobs, impacting more than 32 million kids. They also want to end student debt relief and impose new work requirements to limit eligibility for Medicaid and SNAP.**

HR. 2811 would also slash funding for veterans’ health care, jeopardize public safety, and raise costs for families—even as some legislators separately push for trillions in tax cuts skewed to the wealthy and big corporations. [Check out what it would mean in your state.](#)

In meetings on Capitol Hill, NEA’s Board of Directors stressed the need to increase—not cut—education funding. They also urged lawmakers to take steps to prevent gun violence, which the overwhelming majority of Americans support, and confirm Acting Secretary of Labor Julie Su.

### **From NJEA:**

NJEA members Jackie Mancinelli and George Kemery from Eastern Education Association testified on Feb. 16 to the Assembly on **A-5084, a bill that would expand the state’s family leave act to include grieving the loss of a child due to the death of the child, miscarriage, stillbirth or termination.**

In response to the lack of support and resources available to grieving families, Mancinelli and Kemery created a nonprofit called Start Healing Together to help families like theirs. They support educators experiencing pregnancy loss and

infertility and they advocate for rights in the workplace, such as the passage of **A-5084**.

The education profession consists of a 76% female workforce, but current laws often fail to recognize or respect the needs of working women. “My colleague, Jackie, spoke of how her right to paid leave was denied due to ‘not caring for another,’” said Kemery. “Her husband though, under current statutes, would qualify as he would be caring for her. This is an unfortunate truth that needs to be addressed immediately. We are grateful that it is being advocated for by Assemblywoman Speight and the cosponsors of this bill.”

**Assemblywoman Speight and cosponsors of A-5084** have put forth the bill in response to the need to support families in New Jersey that are grieving the loss of a child. The bill will also allow leave in the event that an adoption is unsuccessful or a fertility treatment is unsuccessful, especially in cases like intrauterine insemination and assisted reproductive technology.

Under the “Temporary Disability Benefits Law,” this bill would allow a member to take temporary disability leave benefits up to 21 days following the date of the event which is the reason for bereavement, and up to seven days for events in which the circumstances would otherwise have been covered by disability or family leave.

“Although I carried my son for 8 months, had an emergency C-section delivery, and experienced the postpartum period, the state of New Jersey did not see me as a mother,” said Mancinelli. “In fact, when I asked about paid leave benefits, I was told by a state employee that since I was not caring for another, I was only caring for myself, and I no longer qualified.”

The state of New Jersey is one of just 13 states that offers paid family leave, yet not a single state offers paid leave protection for bereaved parents. New Jersey is working hard to be the safest place in the country to give birth to a baby. However, little is being done for families who are unsuccessful in building their families. The statistics share that 1 in 4 women experience a miscarriage and 1 in 8 couples experience infertility.

Should New Jersey pass the bill, it would be the first state in the Union to codify common sense legislation to protect its mothers and families suffering from pregnancy loss and infertility issues. “I believe that this bill is a foundational step in addressing and protecting this prevalent, yet largely silent health issue.” said Kemery.

“New Jersey has the chance to be a pioneer and advocate for its most vulnerable constituents.” stated Mancinelli. “I hope that our legislators can recognize how powerful this bill can be for our state.”

## **Family and Medical Leave for Education Support Professionals**

Education support professionals shouldn't have to choose between taking care of themselves and their loved ones, or holding onto their jobs.

Many education support professionals (ESPs) are not eligible for unpaid leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) due to the law's provisions. The ESP Family Leave Act would provide them with access to the same FMLA protections that other working families receive. Email members of Congress and ask them to co-sponsor the ESP and School Support Staff Family Leave Act S. 226/H.R. 770

**NJEA's Center for Honesty in Education** has been set up to combat disinformation, regressive policies, and dangerous rhetoric in local school districts by giving our association leaders the tools necessary to forge constructive partnerships with parents and other Community stakeholders, keep partisan politics out of our public schools and – above all – ensure that our members can continue to support our students rebound from the pandemic in a safe and inclusive learning environment. You can learn more about NJEA's Center for Honesty in Education by visiting [www.njea.org/edhonesty](http://www.njea.org/edhonesty)

## **News from local candidates:**

At a Legislative Dinner local legislators talked about school districts who have lost state aid from the S2 bill. Apparently there is transitional aid in the amount of \$20 million dollars that is available and our districts should be told to apply for that money to help with their local budgets.

## **Dates to Remember**

May 30- Deadline to apply for a Vote-By-Mail Ballot by mail for Primary Election

June 5 - Deadline for In-Person Vote-By-Mail Ballot Applications for Primary Election

(by 3 p.m.)

June 2 – 4 -Early Voting Period for Primary Election

June 6 - Primary Election Day

June 6 - Nomination Petition Filing Deadline for Independent Candidates for General

Election (by 4 p.m.)

July 31 - Nomination Petition Filing Deadline for School & Fire District Election Candidates for General Election (by 4 p.m.)

Sept. 23 - Vote-By-Mail Ballots Mailed for General Election

Oct. 17- Voter Registration Deadline for General Election

Oct. 28- November 5- Early Voting Period for General Election

Oct. 31 – Nov. 5- Deadline to apply for a Vote-By-Mail Ballot by mail for General Election

Nov. 6 - Deadline for in-person Vote-By-Mail Ballot applications for General Election

(by 3 p.m.)

Nov. 7 - General Election

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Donna R. O'Malley**