



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **The NEA Foundation Names New Chair, Two Board Members** *Leadership Emphasizes Expertise, Connections, Diversity and Commitment*

Washington, D.C. -- The NEA Foundation today announced the election of a new chair, Lauri J. Fitz-Pegado, a partner at The Livingston Group, LLC and the former Assistant Secretary at the Department of Commerce in the Clinton Administration, and the appointment of two new members: Lori McFarling, Divisional Marketing Officer for Discovery Education & Domestic Distribution at Discovery Communications, and Kirk Michel, President and Founder of KEMA Advisors, Inc., an investment-banking firm that provides expertise in a wide range of financial disciplines.

“We are pleased to have these extremely talented individuals and advocates for public education, as we continue to grow The NEA Foundation and our work. Importantly, our Board of Directors is a diverse group, whose keen business and multi-sector insights provide us with the ability to be strategic, smart, inclusive, and connected,” said Harriet Sanford, The Foundation’s president and CEO.

At The Livingston Group, LLC, which provides public affairs, government relations and strategic communications counsel to governments, corporations, educational institutions and non-profit organizations, Fitz-Pegado contributes to the development of new business strategies, proposals and presentations and is the Director of the International Relations/Business Development Practice Group. At the Department of Commerce, she served as Assistant Secretary and Director General of the U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service. Appointed by President Clinton and confirmed by the Senate in 1994, she served under the late Secretary Ronald H. Brown, Secretaries Mickey Kantor and William Daley. She was Director for Public Liaison of the first Clinton-Gore Inaugural and advisor on international issues to Democratic Committee Chairman Ronald H. Brown.

Fitz-Pegado is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Washington Government Relations Group. She serves on the boards of the Constituency for Africa and the American and African Business Women’s Alliance. She is a senior advisor and mentor to minorities in international affairs as part of the University of Denver’s International Career Advancement Program and the United Negro College Fund’s International Institute for Public Policy.

"I am very pleased to accept this leadership position at a critical juncture in public education," said Fitz-Pegado. "Through its work and grant programs, The NEA Foundation is advancing student achievement by investing in public education."

A 20-year Discovery veteran and highly respected industry leader, McFarling is a member of the senior leadership team at Discovery, who oversees all partnership, outreach, professional development, marketing, and public affairs activities for the company's Education division. Previously, McFarling was Chief Operating Officer for Animal Planet and Discovery Kids Media.

She serves in several industry leadership roles as a member of the National Cable & Telecommunications Association (NCTA), the Cable & Telecommunications Association for Marketing (CTAM), Women in Cable & Telecommunications (WICT), and the Association of Cable Communicators (ACC). In 2005, she received the industry's highest honor, the prestigious Vanguard Award for Marketing, and was named to the "Wonder Women" class of television executives in 2006.

"I am delighted to be using my knowledge of education, television, new media and entertainment to help the NEA Foundation take its support of public education to the next level," said McFarling. "At Discovery, our commitment to helping people explore their world and satisfy their curiosity means that we create and provide engaging digital resources to schools and homes to make educators more effective, to increase student achievement, and to connect classrooms and families to a world of learning. My membership on this board is a natural extension of this very important work."

Kirk Michel has significant experience as an Investment Banker and Commercial Banker to small and medium sized companies, Fortune 100 Corporations, and real estate developers, as well as to state and federal governments and governmental agencies. Additionally, Michel co-raised and co-managed a debt and equity real estate investment fund, which invested in over \$100 million of multifamily housing product. Michel participates on the Board of Directors of several private companies and PharmaBio Serv, Inc., a publicly traded company.

"As a financial analyst and investor I know that one of the most important investments an entity can make is in its human capital, and nowhere in this country is the potential and the need greater than in public education," Michel said. "By lending my expertise and connections to The NEA Foundation, I believe that I will be making an important contribution that will result in more educators having access to the tools and information they need to ensure that all students are inspired and equipped to succeed in a rapidly changing world."

"Our board members translate their passion for our mission in many different ways," Sanford said. "At times an ambassador, advocating for our cause and at times a strategic thinker, offering advice and assistance, each of our members is a trusted expert and highly valued resource." The NEA Foundation's new board members will become active in September. They typically serve two three-year terms, she added, and play a critical role in shaping the success and direction of the organization.

Through its partnership with educators and business leaders, the NEA Foundation advances student achievement through a variety of grants programs and awards to educators. Since 1999, the Foundation has awarded more than 1,800 individual grants totaling \$5.9 million to individual and teams of educators. Last year the NEA Foundation awarded more than 200 grants totaling more than \$2 million dollars.

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**About The NEA Foundation**

*The NEA Foundation is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization created in 1969 by the members of the National Education Association and sustained by contributions from educators, corporate sponsors, and other supporters of public education. The Foundation offers grants and programs that support educators' efforts to close the achievement gaps, increase classroom innovations, salute excellence in education, and provide professional development. For more information, visit [www.neafoundation.org](http://www.neafoundation.org).*

*The NEA Foundation's Board Members are: Louis G. Lower II, Chair, President & CEO, The Horace Mann Companies; Lauri Fitz-Pegado, Vice-Chair, Partner, The Livingston Group; John I. Wilson, Secretary-Treasurer, Executive Director, National Education Association; R. Joseph Bower, CPA; Mark Howard Chichester, Executive Director, Aspen Institute's Socrates Society; Deborah A. Cowan, Senior Vice President in Finance, Radio One, Inc.; Therese Crane, Senior Education Advisor, Infotech Strategies; Christopher Gardner, President & CEO, Gardner Rich & Company; Lionel C. Johnson, Senior Managing Director; GWI Consulting; Nita Jones, Representative, NEA Board of Directors; Herb Levitt, Representative, National Council of Urban Education Associations; Elizabeth Lisboa-Farrow, President & CEO, The Oliver Group, Inc.; Jessica Mendoza, U.S. Olympian; Larry Nelson, Director of Global Citizenship, Sun Microsystems, Inc.; Ambassador Pete Romero, CEO, Experior Advisory; Harriet Sanford, President & CEO, The NEA Foundation; Reg Weaver, President, National Education Association; Kevin Welner, Associate Professor, University of Colorado; Jessie Woolley-Wilson, President, K12, Blackboard, Inc.*

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