

News Release

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Post Labor Day to June 7 School Calendar Keeps Spring Break

Legislation aimed at creating a post-Labor Day to June 7 school calendar for Texas public schools seems to be just what Texans ordered. According to a recent on-line survey sponsored by the School Start Date Task Force formed by the state Comptroller Carol Keeton Strayhorn, Texans support a later school start date, fewer holidays during the school year and an end date in late May or early June.

Over 42,000 responses to the poll were logged. Over half of the respondents identified themselves as teachers. Twenty-nine percent of respondents identified themselves as parents.

The school calendar parameters detailed in House Bill 2 would require school districts to slightly reduce the number of holidays offered during the course of the school year. However, this condensed calendar would provide ample days for school districts to offer a Thanksgiving vacation, two weeks for Christmas vacation and a full week for Spring Break. The calendar is very similar to the school calendar used successfully by states boasting the top academic programs in the nation.

Economic analysis shows the numerous short holidays and the early to mid-August school start dates are costing Texans \$790 million annually. Proponents of starting school later say this money could be used to increase teacher salaries, provide additional services to school children or provide earlier academic intervention programs to our at-risk students.

“The biggest complaint about the proposed school calendar is it infringes on administrators’ local control,” said Tina Bruno, executive director of Texans for a Traditional School Year. “When you are spending taxpayer dollars you should be more worried about fiscal responsibility than you are at retaining some perceived power.”

Legislative sponsors of the new school calendar proposal say the move could save districts about \$90 million in non-instructional costs. It would also allow Texas

businesses to increase summer revenue and collect more sales tax dollars to help better fund public education in the future without imposing higher taxes on Texans.

In a letter to the School Task Force members, TEXAN Power president Luis de la Garza explained that it not only takes more energy to keep a classroom full of children at a constant 75 degrees, but the cost of electricity per kilowatt hour is greater in August than in September, May or June.

School officials with Tulsa, Oklahoma Public Schools say a similar change in calendar saved school district \$500,000 which they used to hire additional teachers.

Bruno said regardless of the school calendar, children receive services from the school district for 180 days. She added that it is much easier for parents to find child care for children during the summer months that will provide educational experiences not offered in the classroom than it is during holidays piecemealed throughout the school year.

“Parents are demanding fiscal responsibility from our school districts,” said Bruno. “We want to see our tax dollars helping our students – not increasing revenue of the local electric company.”

Texans for a Traditional School Year is a non-profit, grass roots coalition of parents, teachers, administrators and businesses concerned about the negative impact the early August school start date and the year-round school calendar have on our children, families and teachers. To learn how to join the fight, go to www.traditionalschoolyear.org or call 210-479-3106.