

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
April 4, 2005

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TEXAS VOTERS WANT SEPTEMBER 1ST OR LATER SCHOOL START DATE

April 4, 2005 (Austin, Texas) - A recent statewide survey shows an overwhelming majority of Texas registered voters support a school start date of September 1 or later and the majority also support school districts having the option to lengthen the school day and shorten the school year.

The Texas Interested Citizens Statewide Voter Opinion Survey, conducted by The Eppstein Group, found that 67 percent of the state's registered voters favor requiring all Texas public schools to begin their school years after Labor Day or during the first week in September.

Fifty-four percent of those polled favored allowing local school districts the option to lengthen the school day by 15 to 30 minutes to give students the option of a longer summer vacation or more flexibility with school breaks.

The survey also shows that Texas voters believe the quality of education in public schools is the single most important issue facing the state.

Tina Bruno, executive director of Texans for a Traditional School Year said she was not surprised to hear Texans support a September 1 or later school-start date. "Survey after survey shows Texans support a later school start date and do not support the trend in Texas to begin school early in August."

The majority of the 42,000 respondents to the web based school calendar survey sponsored by the School Start Date Task Force also supported a September 1 or later school start date, with the greatest number of respondents supporting a post-Labor Day school start.

A 1999 Texas Poll showed the majority of Texans supported a uniform school start date for all Texas public schools and the majority thought the school year should begin around September 1, again with the greatest number of respondents supporting a post-Labor Day school start.

Currently, Texas law prohibits public schools from beginning instruction earlier than the week of August 21. However, the bill also allowed the Texas Education Agency to grant waivers to districts wishing to begin the school year earlier than law recommends.

The statewide telephone survey of 1001 randomly chosen Texas registered voters was conducted February 21 -24, 2005. The survey has a margin of error of +/- 3.2 percent.

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Editor's Note:

- 66 percent of the Metroplex area voters supported a September school start date,
- 62 percent of Houston area voters favored a September school start date,
- 73 percent of San Antonio voters supported a September school start date,
- 55 percent of Austin voters supported a September school start date.