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Sen. Goodman's Uniform School-Start Date Bill to Be Heard in Committee

JEFFERSON CITY— Students, families and teachers would benefit under a bill Sen. Jack Goodman, R-Mt. Vernon, recently introduced. Senate Bill 1114, which will soon be heard in committee, requires that public schools not start any earlier than the Friday prior to the last Monday in August. Missouri law requires that students receive 174 days of instruction. If schools open for the 2006-2007 school year on Monday, Aug. 28 and close on May 25, 2007, there would be 195 weekdays between the start and end dates, leaving plenty of time for a full school year.

“A uniform school-start date protects families’ ability to take summer vacations, be involved in sports and summer camps and take advantage of other important non-classroom learning opportunities,” Goodman said. “Student attendance will increase as parents are relieved of the burden of choosing between their children’s education and these other vital activities.”

Goodman also believes there will be financial benefits for the entire state. According to a study conducted by the University of Missouri and the Department of Economic Development, state and local tax revenues decreased by more than \$1.58 million per day after schools opened in 2004. A later start date would maintain state and local tax revenues, and enable school districts to spend less on such operating expenses as student transportation, air conditioning, electricity and school-provided lunches.

“We have a responsibility to provide our children with the best education money can buy. This cost savings would allow us to do that by freeing up more money to go toward teacher’s salaries, classroom supplies and educational programming,” Goodman said.

Also, students would have more time to develop personal responsibility through summer jobs, and teachers would not have to miss out on opportunities to supplement their own incomes or further their education during the summer months. These advantages, among others, have persuaded seven nearby states, including Iowa, to enact a similar uniform start date.

“This legislation does not encroach on local control, because school systems would still set their own holidays, workdays, seasonal breaks and testing weeks,” Goodman said. “To further address this issue, we have provided a mechanism for school districts to opt out of the uniform start date with voter approval.”

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