

MICROFILM DIVIDER

OMB/RECORDS MANAGEMENT DIVISION

SFN 2053 (2/85) 5M



ROLL NUMBER

DESCRIPTION

1438

2007 HOUSE EDUCATION

HB 1438

2007 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Bill/Resolution No. **HB 1438**

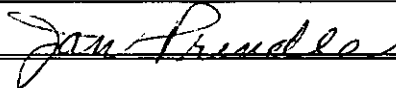
House Education Committee

Check here for Conference Committee

Hearing Date: **22 January 2007**

Recorder Job Number: **1518**

Committee Clerk Signature



Minutes:

Representative Mark Dosch, District 32, introduced the bill to legislate the start of school to the week after Labor Day. **(Testimony Attached.)** Of the many reasons for starting after Labor Day, the most important is family.

Representative Hunsakor: There are a couple of concerns that I have. What about dual credit? Colleges open their doors in August and that could be problem. The second concern has to do with AYP. This would shorten the number of days we have to prepare for that battery of tests.

Representative Dosch: I guess it boils down to a few days between making the grade and not making the grade on these tests. I call that into question. I would hope that a few days or one week is not going to make a difference on that.

Representative Herbel: I appreciate the concern about the quality family time. At the same time if we start school late, you are going to lose Christmas vacation time which also gives you the opportunity to have some of that quality time.

Representative Dosch: In talking with several people on this, there are some days that could be given up. President's Day is when a lot of people go skiing so you don't want to mess with that. There are a lot of other days during the course of the school year that could be taken and you don't have to make it all up during the school year. You could take one or two days off

Christmas vacation. You can add one or two days at the end of the school year. A few days into the summer would not matter too much.

Representative Francis Wald, District 37 testified in favor of the bill. I encourage you to support the bill to start school after Labor Day. Having raised and educated 3 children in Dickenson in both public and private settings, it was always a handicap when families planned vacations. It is time to address parents' requests rather than administration. We ought to accommodate the tax payer in this area rather than some special interest groups. I would highly encourage this committee to give favorable consideration to starting school after Labor Day.

Representative Herbel: As far as getting ready for football, etc. If we move the school year back are you suggesting we move the athletic season as well? In the past it has been difficult to do that.

Representative Wald: I think we could do that. Maybe we ought to have more emphasis on academics and less on athletics.

Senator Elroy Lindaas, District 20, testified in favor of the bill. It has been said that this bill is a greed-driven ploy by the tourism industry. It has been said it is anti-education. I wish to refute those claims. On November 17, 2006, there appeared an article in the Minot Daily News saying "starting school after Labor Day would cause problems." In the article they listed a few reasons why it would be a good idea. The first and largest paragraph was devoted to the impact on sports. When someone says it takes away local control, I would say that has already been given to the ND Activities Association. I appreciate that high school sports are a wonderful activity and lessons learned on the playing field are valuable. However, sports should not drive the academic schedule. If sports were taken out of this equation, there would not be this discussion. It is said it takes a few days to get the students into a productive

learning mode. I submit that factor is true whenever the school years begin. The vacation in regards to temperature is far better in August than early June. The young folks that work summer jobs have to quit in mid August, often leaving employers short handed and projects delayed. August is the time that most families take a well earned vacation. Family vacations create memories and strengthen those bonds. Most of us think our summers are too short anyway without giving up the last half of August. When our children left for school in August, I always felt a sense of loss. Do not look upon this movement as a greed-driven ploy by tourism industry but rather a preference that people want a full complete summer vacation. With our very short summers people want to spend the time with their families or leisure. The paper also took a poll. As of November 17 it shows that 77% of those polled wanted to start school after Labor Day. It is good for our economy, the tourist industry and, most of all, our ND families.

Additional testimony IN FAVOR OF HB 1138 (Attached):

Bill Shallhoob, chairman, Tourism Alliance Partnership

Randy Hatzenbuhler, president, Theodore Roosevelt Medora Foundation

Cole Carley, Fargo-Moorehead Convention & Visitors Bureau

Sara Otte Coleman, ND Department of Commerce – Tourism Division

Nicki Weissman, executive director of the ND Hospitality Association

Dave MacIver, president of the ND Chamber of Commerce

Marie Effertz Hanson, president of the ND Nature and Rural Tourism Association

Teri Theiel, executive director of the Dickenson Convention & Visitors Bureau

Teri Onsgard, director of sales, Fargo Moorhead Convention & Visitors Bureau

Julie Rygg, executive director, Grand Forks Convention & Visitor Bureau

Kyle Blanchefield, owner, Woodland Resort

Sandy Clarke, ND Farm Bureau, testified in favor of HB 1438 although many of our farmers and ranchers are still harvesting and hauling hay in August. Agriculture has a shortage of farm labor and starting school after Labor Day will allow children of agricultural producers to help out on the farm and at the same time other students could continue to work for a longer time period.

Representative Hunskor: Isn't it a trade off. Farmers need kids as much in the spring as the fall.

Clarke: Both time frames are important but harvest issues are more hectic than spring planting. There was a time in our school year when parent teacher conferences were held at night not during the day and there might be flexibility.

Peter Luvis, from Hillsboro, testified in favor of the bill. The last week in August is very precious. Everybody wants it. I think the family should have it. The weather in the last week of August is always better than the last week of May or the first week in June. The last week in August is a wonderful week for grain harvesting in wet years and for family trips in dry years. Either way, the whole family needs to be involved. I realize the football season has a program and games need to be played. Spring sports could certainly benefit from a longer season. Changing school calendars is not easy. Compromises can be made. My kids are grown and my wife has died—all I remember is the family trips.

Robert Harms, ND Hospitality Association, testified in favor of the bill. The bill sets the right policy for our state. The hospitality industry relies in a large part on young people to serve our customers. Approximately 2,500 young people ages 14 to 18 join the workforce each year after school ends. ND puts tourism among its top economic sector. These young people have to provide labor at farms, ranches, hotels, cafés gas stations.

Chairman Kelsch suspended the order of testimony in order to allow a student who needed to get back to classes to testify.

Makala (unintelligible), student, eighth grade student at Wachter Middle School, testified in **opposition** to the bill. I do not want to have to go to school until the middle of June.

Vice Chairman Meier: We appreciate your testifying. You did a very nice job. What are some of the reasons you oppose this bill.

Makala: It is harder to sit through the springtime as soon as it gets warm outside I want to go outside.

Representative Hunskor: Do you think it's true in May or the early part of June that you would get as much out of your classes as you would in August or September.

Makala: I do think that's true. When it becomes summertime, I really want to go outside.

Vice Chairman Meier: Have you visited with your fellow classmates on this subject.

Makala: I asked my science class and they all said the same.

Chairman Kelsch: Thank you very much for testifying for us. I know it is difficult, especially for young people and we thank you.

Testimony In favor of HB 1438 (as listed previously) continued with Dave McIver.

Opposition:

Bev Nielson, ND School Boards Association. (Testimony Attached.)

Representative Herbel: If 76% want a start after Labor Day, are school boards seeing pressure from the public?

Nielson: We are heard that from any of our school boards.

Representative Hanson: How many schools in ND start after Labor Day?

Nielson: One, Marmot. (An elementary school without athletics.) Most start the third week of August.

Doug Johnson, ND Council of Higher Educational Leaders (Testimony Attached.)

Representative Mueller: What is your experience when family says they have a planned vacation the first week of school?

Johnson: We accommodate them by asking students to do some of their school work in advance or making it up later.

Dean Bard, representing the small organized schools, testified in opposition to the board.

We see this every year. We wish we could accommodate the business community but in the interest of local control we cannot. This decision is best made by the school district itself.

Schools are free now to start after Labor Day. They are not doing it. Obviously there must be a good reason for that. There is a recommendation that came from the P-16 Task Force to extend the school year by three days. It's going to be a challenge without being committed to starting after Labor Day.

Wilfred Volesky, superintendent of the Mandan School District, testified in opposition to the bill. **(Testimony Attached.)**

Representative Hunskor: AYP. In your judgment does starting later impact that?

Volesky: Certainly that's a big factor. We begin testing in October. A lot of things hinge on it but the biggest thing is the outcome of the student's academic performance on those tests.

The earlier you can begin in the fall and the more days you have in preparation for those tests, is certainly something that is very valuable to students.

Chairman Kelsch: Have you had anyone in your community asking to start school earlier?

Volesky: I have only been there a short time but, no, there has been no one. We gave people an opportunity to respond to our proposed calendar but we had no responses.

Al Liebersback, superintendent of the Beulah School District, testified in Opposition to the Bill. **(Testimony Attached.)**

Paul Johnson, superintendent of the Bismarck School District, testified in opposition to the bill. **(Testimony Attached.)**

Kayla Pulvermacher, representing the ND Farmer's Union, testified in opposition to the bill. **(Testimony Attached.)**

Maurice Hardy, representing the Beach School Board, testified in opposition to the bill. **(Testimony Attached.)**

Nick Whitman, NDEA, testified in opposition to the bill. I stand with my colleagues in opposing this bill. As far as local control being a myth, as it currently stands, most calendars are created with the employees who will be working those calendars—that's the 8000 members of the NDEA, who are there in the best interest of the children.

Gerald Christianson, superintendent in Tappen, testified in opposition to the bill. In the interest of brevity, he only stated he was opposed.

Chairman Kelsch closed the hearing of HB 1438.

At a later time on the same day Chairman Kelsch opened discussion on HB 1438.

Representative Mueller: I move a Do Not Pass on HB 1438.

Representative Johnson: I second

DISCUSSION:

Representative Herbel: Proponents of this bill brought in the results of a survey that said 70 – 75% of people surveyed were in favor of starting school before Labor Day. Had the survey said that June would continue through June 10, I wonder what the results would have been.

We saw how the kids that were in here this morning said that they would prefer to start earlier and finish earlier. My concern is this does nothing for the kids. The reality is that ND has the

shortest school year in the nation and that needs to end. Kids are more enthusiastic at the beginning of the year.

Representative Johnson: I support the Do Not Pass. In August tourism starts dropping off. In discussions I had in my district, all except one supported leaving this as it was. One school did begin after Labor Day but went back to an earlier start.

Representative Hunskor: The bottom line is kids come first. I talked to kids and they were nearly unanimous in preferring an early start. They are ready to go to school in August. In May they start a downward slide. Another consideration is preparation for the AYP.

Representative Sukat: I will vote no on this motion. I agree that kids come first but I must speak for business. They are the ones that pay the bill. We live in a world of change and this change could come about. It is not a good policy to discredit the wishes of business and industry in the state.

Representative Mueller: I understand Representative Sukat's concern. This will end up creating a lot of different changes. The expansion of the school year should happen. We are going to have to cut some vacation days. Christmas would be a tough one. We need to look at priorities and that's education.

Representative Haas: There are a lot of misconceptions we use to rationalize leaving things as they are. Every one will adjust and the kids will not suffer. We have a reluctance to change. Dual credit institutions would find a way to make this work. It's one of the most important recruiting tools universities have. There is also nothing sacred about not going beyond Memorial Day. We cannot lock into tradition. We need to look at reasonable alternatives.

Chairman Kelsch: Where were those 70% answering the survey today. We saw only special interest groups. The only citizen who testified was a student and she was against the

early start. Right now nothing precludes school starting earlier. It is up to individual districts to establish their start dates. Medora school district has not pushed to change their start date to after Labor Day. Dual credit would change. I'm not sure colleges would work together and it is too difficult for students to make up classes if they miss them.

Representative Sukat brings up a good point, but there were business and industry representatives on the P-16 Task Force and the start of the school issue was not brought up as an issue by them.

Representative Haas: They were interested in taking a hard look at the quality of the work force. This item was not discussed.

Representative Herbel: I do not believe I would spend more money in ND if school started later. I will determine how much money I have to spend and spend it at different times of the year. I think this would have a more positive impact in MN. I don't think it has the economic impact suggested.

Chairman Kelsch: (Speaking to the organizational representatives in the audience.) Please canvass your membership and suggest to them that they have an option to start later and it may be a good thing to consider.

A roll call vote was taken: Yea: 12, Nay: 1, Absent: 0

The Do Not Pass on HB 1438 prevailed.

FISCAL NOTE
 Requested by Legislative Council
 01/17/2007

Bill/Resolution No.: HB 1438

1A. **State fiscal effect:** *Identify the state fiscal effect and the fiscal effect on agency appropriations compared to funding levels and appropriations anticipated under current law.*

	2005-2007 Biennium		2007-2009 Biennium		2009-2011 Biennium	
	General Fund	Other Funds	General Fund	Other Funds	General Fund	Other Funds
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Expenditures	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Appropriations	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

1B. **County, city, and school district fiscal effect:** *Identify the fiscal effect on the appropriate political subdivision.*

2005-2007 Biennium			2007-2009 Biennium			2009-2011 Biennium		
Counties	Cities	School Districts	Counties	Cities	School Districts	Counties	Cities	School Districts
\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

2A. **Bill and fiscal impact summary:** *Provide a brief summary of the measure, including description of the provisions having fiscal impact (limited to 300 characters).*

No fiscal impact.

B. **Fiscal impact sections:** *Identify and provide a brief description of the sections of the measure which have fiscal impact. Include any assumptions and comments relevant to the analysis.*

No fiscal impact.

3. **State fiscal effect detail:** *For information shown under state fiscal effect in 1A, please:*

A. **Revenues:** *Explain the revenue amounts. Provide detail, when appropriate, for each revenue type and fund affected and any amounts included in the executive budget.*

No fiscal impact.

B. **Expenditures:** *Explain the expenditure amounts. Provide detail, when appropriate, for each agency, line item, and fund affected and the number of FTE positions affected.*

No fiscal impact.

C. **Appropriations:** *Explain the appropriation amounts. Provide detail, when appropriate, for each agency and fund affected. Explain the relationship between the amounts shown for expenditures and appropriations. Indicate whether the appropriation is also included in the executive budget or relates to a continuing appropriation.*

No fiscal impact.

Name:	Gary Gronberg	Agency:	Public Instruction
Phone Number:	328-1240	Date Prepared:	01/19/2007

Date: 22 Jan 07
Roll Call Vote #: 1

2007 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE ROLL CALL VOTES

BILL/RESOLUTION NO. HB 1438

House Education Committee

Check here for Conference Committee

Legislative Council Amendment Number _____

Action Taken Do Not Pass

Motion Made By Mueller Seconded By Johnson

Representatives	Yes	No	Representatives	Yes	No
Chairman Kelsch	✓		Rep Hanson	✓	
V Chairman Meier	✓		Rep Hunskor	✓	
Rep Haas	✓		Rep Mueller	✓	
Rep Herbel	✓		Rep Myxter	✓	
Rep Johnson	✓		Rep Solberg	✓	
Rep Karls	✓				
Rep Sukat		✓			
Rep Wall	✓				

Total Yes 12 No 1

Absent 0

Floor Assignment Mueller

If the vote is on an amendment, briefly indicate intent:

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE (410)
January 22, 2007 2:56 p.m.

Module No: HR-14-0983
Carrier: Mueller
Insert LC: . Title: .

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE

HB 1438: Education Committee (Rep. R. Kelsch, Chairman) recommends DO NOT PASS
(12 YEAS, 1 NAY, 0 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). HB 1438 was placed on the
Eleventh order on the calendar.

2007 TESTIMONY

HB 1438

Madam Chair and members for the Education Committee for the record my name is Mark Dosch District 32 Bismarck. I come before you today to voice my support for this bill.

My oldest son Isaac graduates from high school this year. The planning to head off to college is well under way. Next year at this time he will be far away from home.

It seems like only yesterday that we walked him into that kindergarten class, excited, a little nervous. But the next years seemed to fly by. Where has the time gone? The time we had together as a family now seems so short. The time at the lake together not nearly enough. The campouts with the Boy Scouts too few.

Kids today seem to grow up too fast. The pressures of life are put upon them at an earlier and earlier age. Kids are tore in multiple directions between school, clubs, sports and other extra activities. Families are too busy to eat meals together, much less spend quality time together.

Even summers are crowded now with traveling teams of every sort. Summer camps for basketball, football, baseball, soccer, and music. Even summer school fills their schedule taking classes so they can take AP classes during the regular school season.

Between all this, our family actually had two weeks together out of the entire summer. Are we really doing what is best for our kids?

Although I believe there are many good reasons for starting after Labor Day, there is none more important than for the family.

For those of you who have already sent your kids out into the world, you know what I mean. Time is so short.

When making this decision to support this bill or not, I hope you ask yourself just one question. If you had to do it all over again, would you want to spend more time or less time with you kids? My first child hasn't even left the house yet, and I know how I would answer that question.

Thank you for your time and I respectfully ask for your support of this bill.

1438
22 Jan 07

North Dakota

Tourism Alliance Partnership

P.O. Box 2599
Bismarck, ND 58502
(701) 355-4458
FAX (701) 223-4645

MEMBERS

- Basin Electric Power Cooperative
- Bismarck-Mandan CVB
- Buffalo City Tourism
- Destination Marketing Association of North Dakota
- Devils Lake CVB
- Dickinson CVB
- Fargo-Moorhead CVB
- Fort Abraham Lincoln Foundation
- Grand Forks CVB
- International Peace Garden
- Lewis & Clark Fort Mandan Foundation
- MDU Resources Group, Inc.
- Municipal Airport Authority of the City of Fargo
- ND Aeronautics Commission
- ND Cowboy Hall of Fame
- ND Rural and Nature Tourism Association
- ND Tourism Division
- Newman Outdoor Advertising
- Norsk Hostfest
- Odney Communications Group
- Select Inn of Bismarck
- Spirit Lake Casino and Resort
- State Historical Society of North Dakota Foundation
- Theodore Roosevelt Medora Foundation
- Woodland Resort, Inc.

Testimony of Bill Shalhoob
Chairman, Tourism Alliance Partnership
HB 1438
January 22, 2007

Madame Chairwoman and members of the committee, my name is Bill Shalhoob and I am here today representing TAP as its chairman and myself as the managing partner of the Select Inn Bismarck. I am here asking for your support for HB 1438, the post Labor Day school opening bill.

This is a familiar issue for many of us. After our narrow loss last session, one of my goals as TAP's chairman was to assess the feeling of North Dakotans to see if we were in step with fellow citizens on this issue. To that end, we commissioned a scientific poll which was conducted by DH Research last September. The results of the poll, which has a plus or minus in accuracy of 4.9% and is attached to my testimony, reinforced the fact that we are exactly in sync with the majority of citizens. The important number is that without those respondents that held no opinion 76% of North Dakotans favor a post Labor Day school start. This number cuts across all age groups and all is equal in feeling in all parts of the state. Based on these results, we felt we had to bring the issue forward again and have tried to raise its visibility to a level that matches the measured desire of the people of North Dakota.

I have four firm beliefs on this matter. First, since 11 states already have some form of Labor Day opening and eight others, including North Dakota, are considering it, it is not impossible or world ending to implement the concept. Eleven other state's administrators and school boards have found a way. I believe our administrators and board members are just as bright as their counterparts in these eleven states and will find an acceptable way to implement the change. Second, learning is learning. I cannot accept the concept that it is easier or harder to learn in August vs. June. If spring or summer learning is impossible why do we bother with May terms, summer school or continuing education programs that are scheduled between May 20 and August 20. Good teachers and students will have meaningful classroom experiences any time of the year. Third, as a parent and now a grandparent, I find the current schedule nonsensical. Last year we had to be back in Bismarck to prepare for an August 23rd school start. We lost eleven days of potential vacation time only to take a long weekend at Labor Day. And fourth, a day in August is three times as valuable as a day in May or even early June for vacations and for business. The weather is much more predictable and much more conducive to travel. Yes, there is an economic benefit for the tourism industry. I see a 33% drop in my business starting the weekend before school is scheduled to open. These prime lost days would be meaningful for a small North Dakota business like mine and many others like me. Given all of the reasons to pass this bill, the economic benefit of adding more tax revenue to the treasury is simply the icing on the cake.

Madame Chairwoman and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to testify. I urge your support for HB 1438 and would be happy to answer any questions.

Tourism Alliance Partnership
School Start Research Results
November 14, 2006

Conduct of Study

Between September 25 and September 29, 2006, DH Research conducted 400 telephone interviews with residents across North Dakota. The overall margin of error for this study was $\pm 4.90\%$.

Executive Summary

- ❖ Of those with an opinion about the school start date in North Dakota, nearly three-fourths (71%) would prefer to have school begin after Labor Day.
 - Of the total respondents,
 - A majority (62.25%) of residents would rather have the school year start after Labor Day.
 - One-fourth (25.75%) preferred an August start date.
 - Twelve percent did not have an opinion.

- ❖ Of those with an opinion about legislation requiring North Dakota schools to begin after Labor Day, over three-fourths (76%) would support the legislation.
 - Of the total respondents,
 - Two-thirds (66.00%) of residents would support legislation requiring North Dakota schools to begin after Labor Day.
 - More than one in four (29.75%) would strongly support it.
 - One-sixth (16.25%) would support it.
 - One-fifth (19.75%) would somewhat support it.

- ❖ One-fifth (21.00%) would not support legislation requiring that schools begin after Labor Day.
 - Less than one in 10 (8.75%) would somewhat oppose it.
 - Five and one-half percent would oppose it.
 - Five and one-half percent would strongly oppose it.

HB 1438
22 Jan 07

Testimony of Randy Hatzenbuhler
Theodore Roosevelt Medora Foundation President
HB 1438
January 22, 2007

Madam Chair and Members of the Education Committee,

I am Randy Hatzenbuhler, president of the Theodore Roosevelt Medora Foundation. I ask you to support HB 1438 to have school begin the day after Labor Day. I believe this bill is a win-win-win.

Others from the tourism industry will provide information that will explain the economics of this bill and how it benefits the tourism industry. I concur that the bill is clearly good for tourism. An independent survey done in August 2006 strongly indicates that North Dakotans want this change. 76% of the people who had an opinion on the subject said they would support legislation to have school start after Labor Day.

In the past 15 months I met with Joint Powers Associations and School Boards in Dickinson, Jamestown, Valley City, Fargo, Minot, Tioga and Washburn. Usually, I was able to sit in on 30 to 60 minutes of their business meeting. It was interesting to observe that individually many representatives found merit to the legislation. They raised three consistent points of concern with this legislation shown below:


- 1. Starting after Labor Day would make it impossible for dual credit opportunities for high school students. **Response:** Higher education will want to solve the needs of their student / "customers." Is there any reason to doubt that they would not be able to solve it?
- 2. Local control is absolutely necessary. **Response:** Local control is a myth. The list of things that are not within the local control for schools is lengthy. Foundation aid, requirements for curriculum, issues related to No Child Left Behind, class schedules set by ITV are just a few things that are not controlled locally. Why has the school starting date become the mantra for local control when it comes to the education system?
- 3. This decision should be made by educators. **Response:** The decision should be made by those interested in education. Parents and businesses are extremely interested; their voices simply are not being heard. Who makes the decision is irrelevant so long as it benefits all involved, particularly the students.

I am convinced that the opposition to this legislation sincerely wants what is best for the students. As do I. It is very possible that the greatest beneficiary of this legislation will be education. There will be greater economic resources and human resources for education. There is tremendous time and energy spent just in setting school calendars. How would that time be spent if it was not necessary?

One of my favorite quotes is "There is nothing more wasteful than creating efficiencies in tasks that don't need to be done." No matter how efficient or effective any one school is, in setting its school calendar, it is inherently inefficient because every school must school currently do so. It is a task that doesn't need to be done.

I urge you to make the courageous decision to support HB 1438. This is one that two years from now, we will look back and say, families won, education won, and business won.

Respectfully,



HB 1438
20 Jan 07

Testimony of Cole Carley
Fargo-Moorhead Convention & Visitors Bureau
Co-founder: ND Tourism Alliance Partnership
House Bill 1438
January 22, 2007

Economics trumps Education.
Tourism versus Teaching.

That's how some people would position this bill. It's not true. That is not the way it is. Everyone connected with this bill and everyone I know in tourism is a staunch supporter of education. People in our industry know that there is no better investment we can make in the future of North Dakota than education. This bill has nothing to do with the quality of education.

There are, we admit, some economic reasons for this bill. But this is also about North Dakota families and what they want.

We also wish to be quite clear that we are not advocating any limits to the size of the school year. Attendance days are obviously the rightful responsibility of local school districts and the Department of Education. Our industry supports only the idea that school should begin after Labor Day. Control of curriculum and class days should be left to the discretion of educators and their boards.

Others may say that this is an attempt to circumvent local control of schools. Not so. Local control of the school year is something that has been, for some years, a myth. And outside of a legislative hearing, many administrators would confirm that.

The fall athletic season and joint-powers agreements and external events have more to do with the school calendar than quality of education.

We also think that most administrators are more concerned about a possible disconnect between K-12 and the college year, because of dual-credit classes for high school students and the start of summer sessions for continuing education teacher credits, not local control.

Let's talk first of all about economics. It would mean millions of dollars for North Dakota businesses that are a part of the tourism industry, one of the state's largest economic generators. And every million in revenue means \$50,000 in sales taxes going to the general fund, not to mention other taxes that would bring higher yields. July and August are the peak months for tourism and family travel: Our version of Christmas for retailers. Currently, attendance at our major attractions and festivals drops like a rock in mid-August because of early school starts.

This affects not only the businesses themselves but the availability of workers at both the high school and college level. Students earning money during the summer see a precipitous drop in their earning ability shortly after mid-August.

The economic impact of a post-Labor Day start date in Minnesota has been estimated more than three-quarters of a billion dollars.

As a result of Michigan adopting a post-Labor Day school start, the University of Michigan estimates that tax revenue generated by this legislation is \$4 million conservatively as a result of over \$70 million in additional direct travel allowed by a delayed school start date.

The economic effect is unquestionable. The question is: How big?

But economics isn't the only reason to approve this bill. The other is families.

From a family perspective, vacation planning is getting squeezed more and more between early-summer camps, clinics, or other events and school starts that have pushed into mid-August.

Giving families all of August to schedule vacations will provide busy moms, dads, and kids more time to enjoy time together. Two-career couples have found it increasingly difficult to match work schedules and school starts to allow for family vacation time.

In September, the Tourism Alliance Partnership commissioned a study of North Dakotans. It asked two questions: When do you want the North Dakota school year to start and would you support legislation to that effect?

The results were:

- 62% of residents would rather have the school year start after Labor Day.
- 26% preferred an August start
- 12% didn't have an opinion

66% of residents would support post-Labor Day school start legislation

Legislators have been pulled this way and that regarding school starts. Here, at last, is a reliable research instrument that shows how North Dakota families feel about the start of the school year. Not tourism people, not school administrators: North Dakota families. Our intention was to take this subject from the "we think/they think" debate and give legislators a credible piece of research, letting you know how your constituents feel, to assist you in making your decision.

This bill is an idea whose time has come. Let's return the Labor Day weekend to real "family event" status instead of an interruption to the new school year. Let's give August back to families and, in the process, help North Dakota's economy as a bonus.

