

# **Task Force to Study a Post-Labor Day Start Date for Maryland Public Schools**

## **Materials of Interest February 5, 2014 Meeting**

### **Materials of Interest by Speaker**

**Mr. Ryan Burbey, President, Harford County Education Association**

**Mr. Randy Mickens, Organizational Specialist, Lobbyist Maryland State Education Association**

### **Various Newspaper Articles Concerning Task Force to Study a Post-Labor Day Start Date for Maryland Public Schools**

**“Lowery says school districts need autonomy on start of school year,” Baltimore Sun, January 7, 2014**

Article reports that Dr. Lillian Lowery, stated at the January 7<sup>th</sup> Task Force meeting that local school systems (LSS) should be allowed to determine when to start their school year calendar. She further indicated that LSSs currently have the autonomy to determine when to begin their school year based on the unique needs of their communities and that no one precludes LSSs from starting after Labor Day. She further indicated that today’s weather illustrated the unique needs of Maryland’s twenty-four 24 LSSs; 1/3 of the schools were closed, 1/3 of the schools were delayed, and 1/3 of the schools were open. Dissenting opinions indicated that pushing the start date back would benefit tourism and education through tax revenue; that it was about money. Finally, the article indicated that if the Task Force members support a post Labor Day start date, Del. Healy is ready to sponsor that measure.

**“Critics questions proposed Howard school calendar,” Baltimore Sun, January 10, 2014**

Article provides information regarding the proposed changes to Howard County Public Schools Calendar Changes for the 2014-2015 school year. Parents and teachers are upset with the proposal to eliminate two (2) half days before the Thanksgiving break and moving parent teacher conferences earlier in the month. Furthermore, this calendar change was not what the calendar committee, comprised of more than three (3) dozen administrators, teachers, and community members, had recommended. A Howard County school system spokesperson indicated that attendance data from 2012, which indicated that about ten (10) percent of the student population was absent on the half days, was used to make this decision.

**“Baltimore-area school districts running out of school days,” WBAL-TV, January 22, 2014**

News clip highlighting the possibility of LSSs needing to extend their school calendars to meet the 180-day requirement. Counties mentioned included:

Anne Arundel County: Has used all four (4) of its snow days. Any more school closures will mean a longer school year.

Baltimore County: Has used four (4) of its seven (7) snow days

Carroll County: Has used four (4) of its five (5) snow days

Harford County: Has used four (4) of its seven (7) snow days

Howard County: Has used four (4) of its five (5) snow days

Baltimore City: Does not build in snow days to the calendar. The school system just tacks days onto the end of the year. Baltimore City Public Schools have used five (5) snow days.

**“Let’s stop whining about school snow closures,” The Washington Post, January 23, 2014**

Article reports that some Washington area school districts are under criticism for closing schools as a result of recent snow storms. Many feel that school closures were unnecessary. It is reported that school systems don’t like closing schools as it creates huge scheduling problems. These decisions are made for the safety and well being of students.

**“Days after the snow, school delays continue,” The Washington Post, January 23, 2014**

Article reports that several suburban school systems are continuing to open two (2) hours late because of icy roads and frigid temperatures. Prince George’s County Schools were quoted as choosing to err on the side of caution.

**“Schools out again, but just wait until June,” The Star Democrat, January 23, 2014**

Article reports that Talbot, Caroline, Kent, and Dorchester Counties are closed again with many of the mid-shore counties having had the entire week off due to a combination of weather and the Martin Luther King holiday. Article indicates that many students may not be so happy about this time off come the summer when many LSS calendars will need to be extended to meet the 180-day requirement. Counties mentioned include:

Dorchester County: Five (5) snow days are built into the calendar with the school year ending on June 10, 2014. Including today (1/23/14), the system has used six (6) days. Any additional days will extend the year past June 10<sup>th</sup>.

Talbot County: There are zero (0) days built into the calendar for snow days, therefore, as of today (1/23/14) the end of school has changed from June 10<sup>th</sup> to June 18<sup>th</sup>.

Queen Anne’s County: Has used four (4) of its five (5) snow days. In the past when the school system has used more days, they usually give up scheduled days off such as Presidents Day, spring break, and Memorial Day to make up the difference.

Caroline County: Has used four (4) snow days. Any more snow days and the school year could possibly extend into the week of June 16<sup>th</sup>. A final decision about the last day of school is usually made in late March or early April.

**Chart, December 2013 and January 2014 Inclement Weather Days**

This chart provides information for each LSS regarding the original closing date, the number of days built into their calendars for inclement weather, and the number of days each LSS has been closed in December and January of this academic year.

**Calendar Information Regarding School Year Start Dates Across the United States of America**

**2011-2012 School Start Dates Map**

This map indicates the following:

- States where majority of schools begin prior to August 15<sup>th</sup> : **Eleven (11) [one (1) with enforced law]**
- States where majority of schools begin August 16<sup>th</sup> to August 31<sup>st</sup> : **Thirty (30) [five (5) with enforced law]**
- States where majority of schools begin September 1<sup>st</sup> or later: **Nine (9) [four (4) with enforced law]**
- States with **Actively Enforced** School Start Date Law: **Ten (10)**

## **States with School Start Date Laws – Updated July 31, 2012**

Document lists the states that have school calendar laws and provides a brief summary of each law. Please note that there are five (5) more states listed on this document than indicated on the map. This discrepancy is because two (2) of the five (5) have waiver provisions that are widely used, thus the law is not actively enforced; one (1) does not go into effect until the 2014-2015 school year and does not allow a school to start before the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday in August; another one requires all schools to start on the same day and that date is set by the State Department of Education and that state starts before August 15<sup>th</sup>; and the last state just enacted the “Flexible School Calendar Act,” which states that schools may not begin earlier than fourteen (14) days before Labor Day.

## **Required School Days, Instructional Hours Required Yearly and School Start Dates**

For purposes of this Task Force, members should pay attention to the final column which provides data for each state on the 2011-2012 Start Dates per market Data Retrieval. This column is broken down into three subcategories for each state: percentage of schools that start prior to August 15<sup>th</sup>, percentage that start August 15<sup>th</sup> – August 31<sup>st</sup>, and those that start after September 1<sup>st</sup>. It is the supporting data for the aforementioned map.

## **Follow Up to State Calendar Requirements in States Reported on in Documents provided by Mr. Thomas Noonan, CEO, Visit Baltimore**

At the end of the January 7, 2014 meeting, one Task Force member questioned the accuracy of the Texas report provided by Mr. Noonan, indicating it was her understanding that Texas schools had one of the earliest start dates in the country. As a result, the following documents have been provided to give clarification on the current regulatory requirements for each of the states mentioned in the reports shared.

### **Report Title: “An Economic Analysis of the Changing School Start Date in Texas”**

Report Date: **December 2000**

**State(s) Studied:** Texas

**Report Conclusion:** Uniform School Start Date for Texas was recommended

**Current Regulations Require:** “School District many not begin instruction for students for school year before the fourth Monday in August.” Exceptions include: beginning instruction before the fourth Monday in August if the district operates a year-round system. There are several caveats pertaining to school enrollment, financing with local funds at multiple campuses, multiple campuses undergoing comprehensive reform; and a majority of students at multiple campuses are educationally disadvantaged. (Regulations included in packet)

### **Report Title: “South Carolina Early School Start Dates and the South Carolina Travel and Tourism Industries: An Analysis of Economic & Tax Revenue Impacts”**

Report Date: **August 2002**

**State(s) Studied:** South Carolina

**Report Conclusions:** Earlier school start dates have been associated with lower tourism activity in August and schools are incurring higher utility costs in August.

**Current Regulations Require:** “...opening date for students must not be before the third Monday in August except for schools operating on a year round modified calendar.” (Regulations included in packet)

**Report Title: "Impact of a Uniform School Year on Florida's Economy"**

Report Date: **January 2003**

**State(s) Studied:** Florida

**Report Conclusions:** It was determined that there was not any currently available data that indicated starting schools later would benefit the state's economy and the committee recommended against enacting uniform school start date or calendar at this time.

**Current Regulations Require:** "...opening date for schools in district may not be earlier than fourteen (14) days before Labor Day each year." (Regulations included in packet)

**Report Title: "Post Labor Day School Start Dates in Tennessee: An Analysis of the Economic and Tax Revenue Impacts on Tennessee Travel and Tourism Industry"**

Report Date: **January 2008**

**State(s) Studied:** Tennessee

**Report Conclusions:** It is anticipated that extending the summer would generate \$189 million in tourist spending, \$73 million in statewide payroll, and create more than 2600 jobs.

**Current Regulations Require:** No regulatory requirements

**Report Title: "Do families vacation more in the summer when school starts after Labor Day?"**

Report Date: **July 2012**

**State(s) Studied:** Minnesota, Virginia, Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa

**Report Conclusions:** Findings indicated families were 50% more likely to take a two (2) night or more trip in August or September if there was a post-Labor Day start date.

**Current Regulations Require:**

- **Minnesota:** "...a district must not commence an elementary or secondary school year before Labor Day..." Exceptions include: districts can begin before Labor Day to accommodate construction projects of \$400,000 or more; if the district has an agreement with a district that qualifies under the construction clause; or if the district agrees to the same schedule in an adjoining state. (Regulations included in packet)
- **Virginia:** "Each local school board shall set the school calendar so that the first day students are required to attend school shall be after Labor Day." The law includes a waiver if the district can certify that it meets one (1) of the four (4) good cause requirements. The good cause requirements include: weather related instances, an instructional program being offered is dependent upon a program in another district that qualifies for a waiver; school district is providing an innovative or experimental program; or a school district is surrounded by other districts that are opening before Labor Day. (Regulations included in packet)
- **Michigan:** "...Schools are prohibited from holding classes before Labor Day." Exceptions include year round programs; intermediate programs that meet certain requirements; and public high schools that operate grades 6-12 at a single site that aligns its curriculum with Advanced Placement courses and ends its second semester concurrently with the Advanced Placement exams. (Regulations included in packet)

- **Wisconsin:** "...No public school may commence the school term until September 1." The school board of a district may apply for a waiver for extraordinary reasons. (Regulations included in packet)
- **Iowa:** "...school shall begin no sooner than a day during the calendar week in which the first day of September falls but no later than the first Monday in December. However if the first day of September falls on a Sunday, school may begin on a day during the calendar week which immediately proceeds the first day of September." (Regulations included in packet )

## **Articles Related to Each of the States Mentioned in the Reports Provided by Mr. Thomas Noonan, CEO, Visit Baltimore**

### **TEXAS**

#### **"Texas schools' later start means big savings on utilities," Pearland News, August 21, 2008**

Article reports that in the first year since a delayed start date, schools have saved millions in August utility bills. School system representatives say some of the savings were erased by extra days in May and June but did not provide figures. Texas Association of School Boards believes that each school district should have a say in setting its calendar. Others argue that school calendars should be driven by academics, not finances..."

#### **"School Start Dates," Texas Association of School Boards, Governmental Relations 2012**

Article summarizes the over two (2) decades long debate the Texas legislature and school districts have been having concerning the authority to set the school year calendar. School districts want to begin in early August to maximize instructional days before statewide assessments, and the tourism industry wants to postpone the start to after Labor Day to maximize summer tourism and student workforce availability. Over the past two (2) decades, the law has continued to flip flop back and forth. It is anticipated that with new assessment and accountability requirements, the legislature will have to look at the positive and negative effects of a late August start date again.

### **SOUTH CAROLINA**

#### **"School start date has no bearing on tourism," the Gaffney Ledger, February 18, 2013**

Article reports that the uniform start date for public schools that went into effect in 2007 has not increased tourism according to a study completed by the Olde English Consortium. That study reported that the occupancy data showed "little correlation exists between school start dates and hotel occupancy in the summer months, and is a net negative." The Executive Director further stated, "We believe that the start dates of schools have no bearing on the strength of the tourism industry and that elected school boards should make that decision representing their community." The report further indicated that the law was changed to boost tourism with little concern for its impact to the students.

## **MINNESOTA**

### **“Area Boards Want State OK to Start School Before Labor Day B.P Smith, Lawmakers Back Early Start to Improve Academics,” Belle Plaine Herald, January 28, 2014**

Article reports that a group of Minnesota school districts are pushing for legislation to permit them to begin before Labor Day. They believe students would benefit academically from the increased time in class to improve their academic performance and prepare for statewide exams. Smith supports a district’s right to start school year as it sees fit and not by a formula that was partially rooted in an agrarian tradition. Furthermore, Senator Kevin Dahle was quoted as saying, “I believe local school districts, with community input, should have the final say in those decisions.” Others also have indicated that they believe at-risk students will significantly benefit academically from an earlier start.

### **“Minnesota’s school start date spurs fights,” Star Tribune, January 20, 2013**

Article reports that more schools across Minnesota are petitioning to begin their school year before Labor Day. This action is causing dissent between the tourism industry and the school leaders who want students to have more academic time to prepare for state and national exams. Fifty-nine (59) school districts have won approval to have one or more of their schools start before Labor Day that is up from twenty-one (21) in 2003. Edina Superintendent was quoted as saying, “being locked in an agrarian calendar is not going to serve our state well, I recognize the value of tourism. But we have to put our kids first.”

## **VIRGINIA**

### **“VA. Senate panel protects post-Labor Day school law,” The Roanoke Times, February 14, 2013**

Article reports that the Senate Education and Health Committee rejected two (2) House Bills that would have allowed school districts to determine when their school calendar can begin. It was reported that this year, seventy-eight (78) of Virginia’s one hundred and thirty-two (132) or 59% school divisions have waivers to open school before Labor Day.

### **“Delegates offer new approaches to Labor Day school Debate,” Richmond Times Dispatch, Monday, February 3, 2014**

Article reports that two delegates have offered alternative paths to give schools flexibility from Virginia’s mandate that schools start classes after Labor Day. The House Education Committee advanced three (3) proposals with two (2) taking a very different approach to flexibility. These proposals include:

- 1) Allowing schools to set their own start dates but requires LSSs to give students a five-day weekend for the Labor Day holiday;
- 2) Allowing schools the option to shift to a year round calendar; and
- 3) Allowing a division to open a school early if that school has failed to achieve full accreditation, the entire division could set its own calendar if more than 15% of all of its school have failed to achieve full accreditation

## **WISCONSIN**

### **“Lawmakers Propose Changes in Mandatory School Start Law,” WUWM News Radio, June 26, 2013**

Article reports that some Republican lawmakers want public schools to set their own start dates. Rep. Jim Ott indicated that, “current state mandate means public schools hold classes well into June when students can miss out on jobs and camps.”

Furthermore, he indicated that school superintendents are requesting to have the flexibility to determine their school calendars. Those against this change come from Wisconsin’s tourism community expressing concerns over lower restaurant sales and fewer family vacations.

### **Neighborhood News Service Milwaukee, September 16, 2013**

Article reports that Milwaukee Public Schools and districts across the state are supporting bills to allow school districts to begin their school year before September 1<sup>st</sup>, pitting the tourism industry against the school systems. School system officials believe that students need more academic time to prepare for state and national tests. Tourism supporters argue that there has been more valuable family time, more tax revenues, and more seasonal jobs for students. Seventeen (17) school districts won state approval to start school prior to Labor Day.

## **Information Regarding Maryland Occupancy Rates**

### **“Maryland hotels improve revenue, occupancy rates in 2012,” The Baltimore Business Journal, March 28, 2013**

Article reports that the Maryland Office of Tourism Development indicated that Maryland hotels and inns saw more business in 2012. Lodging revenue across the state increased 3.4% in 2012 and the demand for rooms increased 1.3%. Washington County made the largest gains with a 9.3% increase in room demand, 12.1% increase in room revenue, and 11.1% increase in hotel occupancy. Allegany, Calvert, Charles, and Montgomery Counties were the only ones that saw drops in demands for rooms.