



For Immediate Release

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Overwhelming Support for the post-Labor Day School Start Date

RICHMOND –Recognizing the Virginia’s vibrant travel industry and its significant economic contribution to the Commonwealth, lawmakers from across Virginia gathered today in support of Virginia’s post-Labor Day school start date.

Findings from a public opinion poll conducted by SurveyUSA confirm that an overwhelming majority of Virginians support the post-Labor Day school start date.

“This poll is further evidence that a majority of Virginians believe that the school year should start after Labor Day,” noted Senator Norment. “I agree with their judgment. Overturning the school start date law will negatively affect thousands of families and result in nothing more than curtailing our state’s economically critical summer tourism season at its peak.”

The poll indicated an overwhelming majority of Virginians support the current school calendar. Sixty-four percent are satisfied with the current September-June calendar. Only twenty-nine percent support a change to an August-May academic calendar.

“I support Virginia’s long standing tradition of starting the school year after Labor Day,” remarked Senator Louise Lucas (D-Portsmouth). “Restaurateurs, hoteliers, attractions and their neighboring businesses are all working hard through the end of the summer. Virginia’s \$18.2 billion tourism industry generates critical funds to support teacher salaries and the education of all Virginia students.”

“In my experience the dollars generated by tourism and related economic activity are critical to the state funding that has helped to provide the quality education for all students in Virginia Beach and Chesapeake,” added Delegate Ron Villanueva (R-Virginia Beach, Chesapeake).

Responding to claims that an earlier start date offers academic benefits to students, legislators highlight statistics indicating that Virginia is a national leader in academic excellence. Norment pointed out that fifty-seven percent of the schools receiving the 2012 Virginia Index of

Performance Awards and sixty-six percent of the schools that won the 2012 Governor's Award for Educational Excellence began the school year after Labor Day.

Delegate Chris Peace (R-Hanover) remarked, "I appreciate the intent of the Governor in proposing this change. However, as a Hanover County elected official, I join with my locality in pointing out the harm in loss costs to Hanover in sales tax revenues generated by major tourist attractions and loss of employment opportunities to many Hanoverians."

Virginia's students are nationally recognized among high achievers, ranking #3 in the percentage of students who take Advanced Placement classes in high school and who received a three or higher. Similarly among states with a 60% or greater participation in the 2011 SAT, Virginia students scored 5th in the nation.

"The value of summer offerings such as internships, summer camps, summer jobs and visits to historical sites and museums should not be lost in the mix," added Senator Frank Wagner (R-Virginia Beach). "These are all enriching experiences that add to the top notch education Virginia students receive and prepare them for successful careers."

Complete results of the poll conducted by SurveyUSA may be found [on-line](http://www.vhta.org/associations/6246/files/PollPrint.pdf):
<http://www.vhta.org/associations/6246/files/PollPrint.pdf>.

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The Virginia Hospitality and Travel Association (VHTA) is the unified voice for the restaurant, lodging, travel and hospitality suppliers associations. The association creates value for members by promoting the legislative interests of the industry, providing cooperative marketing, educational opportunities and protecting free enterprise.

Merged in 1993, the Virginia Restaurant Association, Virginia Hotel-Lodging Association, Virginia Travel Association and Virginia Hospitality Suppliers Association continue to evolve as "One Strong Voice for Tourism" throughout the Commonwealth, better known as the Virginia Hospitality and Travel Association.