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### **SEVIERVILLE - State Reps. Richard Montgomery and Joe McCord, Republicans representing Sevier County, are pushing for a later start date for state public schools.**

Rather than trim the mandatory 180 days of school a year so classes start within a week of Labor Day, Montgomery is looking to cut days from teacher in-service days and extraneous holidays like fall break.

McCord and Montgomery, who is chairman of the Traditional School Calendar Committee, cite economic reasons. A later starting point would allow students to work more days in summer which would boost their income and help a tourist area like Sevier County. It also would save school systems money by reducing the number of days they have to run air conditioning.

"I'm for it," Mary Romines, a parent of a Sevier County High student, said. "It doesn't seem like they're out long before they're back in school."

After being contacted by several local business owners, Montgomery said he became aware of problems created by schools starting classes in early to mid August.

Businesses depend on part-time summer workers during the peak tourism season leading up to Labor Day, he said. That can leave businesses shortstaffed in a time of the year when they need to maximize profits.

"We feel if we could move [the start-up date] back we could help the businesses [in the tourism industry]," Montgomery said.

Jack Parton, director of schools in Sevier County, agrees. According to Parton, Sevier County already has one of the latest start dates in Tennessee - usually beginning school the third week of August.

"The impact on the school systems and tourism dollars would be a win-win situation," Parton said.

"If we can get the tourists for the whole month of August, that's the idea."

Parton says Sevier County tourism businesses depend not only on students, but faculty as well. Many teachers, administrators and other service personnel fill seasonal positions around the county during summer.

Schools across the state battled heat problems at the beginning of the 2007 school year thanks to a heat wave that struck right as classes were beginning. Some schools even had to suspend start dates because they could not keep down temperatures in classrooms even with expensive air conditioning.

Montgomery says a later start date could save hundreds of thousands of dollars in a school system - money that can put back into the classroom.

Parton and Montgomery both feel that tweaking the school calendar will have only positive impact for students and a tourist-driven economy.

Both say parents complain about short summer vacations for their children and the large number of holidays and no-school days holidays that cause working parents to use vacation days at work to take care of their children.

McCord's primary concern with the current calendar system is the effect it has on parents.

"There's no more school days [in the current schedule] than the old one. There's just more vacation days," McCord said.

McCord said he hears many complaints from people in similar situations, which is one of the reasons he has supported the bill the last three years.

Montgomery and the Tradition School Calendar Study Committee hope to meet Dec. 19.