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## Giving Kids A Real Summer

**By RANDY DAVIS**  
**Special to the Press-Register**

A recent Press-Register editorial was right on the money in its call for lawmakers to put politics aside and quickly pass legislation that creates jobs and increases revenue, so we'll have more money to fund our public education system.



As a state representative, I am filing legislation that does just that. Working with a coalition of both Republican and Democratic legislators, I will be the primary sponsor for a bill that will create 4,500 full-time jobs across the state while providing an economic boost to Alabama of more than \$300 million.

The bill, known as the Flexible School Calendar Act, will create a 12-week summer vacation for all K-12 public education students.

It also will give local school systems the option of shortening the length of the school year by increasing the length of the school day — as long as students receive the 1,080 hours of instruction they are currently offered.

Of course, all school calendars will still require the vote of the local school boards.

According to the Education Commission of the States, seven states currently require school districts to offer a set number of instructional hours per year and leave the length of the school year up to local school boards.

When looking at instructional hours offered to students, Alabama is leading the nation. Only five states require students to attend more hours of school per year than we do.

The longer summer vacation for Alabama students will increase the tourist season by 20 percent, generating an estimated \$260 million annually in additional tourism revenue and creating about 4,500 full-time jobs across the state.

By setting the school year to begin no earlier than two weeks before Labor Day and ending by Memorial Day, schools will be eliminating about 10 August school days from their calendars. This move will reduce cooling costs for schools by approximately \$14 million.

Additional savings will vary, based on the length of the school year adopted on the local levels.

By increasing the length of summer vacation, school districts will also have greater opportunities for remediation and enrichment programs during the summer months, while still providing students with enough time to enjoy a meaningful summer vacation and return to school refreshed and ready to begin a new school year.

In addition, the longer summer vacation will also provide teachers with increased opportunities to earn advanced degrees and new certifications and time to prepare for the upcoming school year.

Because teachers will be teaching the same number of hours regardless of the length of the school year chosen by the local school boards, teachers' pay will remain unchanged.

Research, case studies and data clearly show that when the school year begins does not impact academic performance. Under this plan, students will actually gain instructional time prior to state assessments, college entrance exams and Advanced Placement testing.

To put the value of this bill in perspective, consider this: The Flexible School Calendar Act would pump more than \$300 million into the Alabama economy each year — as much as the economic impact of the Iron Bowl and all the rest of the Auburn and Alabama home football games combined.

The Flexible School Calendar Act will work for students, teachers, school budgets, job creation and the economy.

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