

Frankfort discussions initiated by Glasgow parents

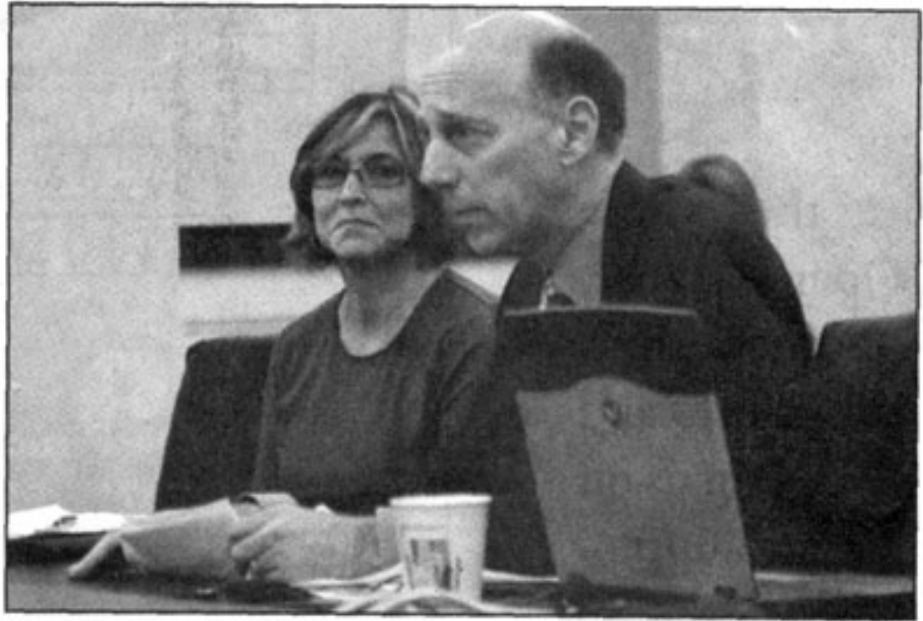
"We clearly have the beginning of bi-partisan support for "Save our Summers,""

Dr. Barret Lessenberry

On December 4, the Kentucky effort of "Save Our Summers," made its way to Frankfort and saw what local parents Monica Froedge and Dr. Barret Lessenberry feel was a positive step in the right direction.

Dr. Lessenberry spoke in the capital annex to a panel of more than 25 state Senators and Representatives from both sides of the political isle.

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Speaking to the Interim joint committee on education: Monica Froedge and Dr. Barret Lessenberry detail their research and support for having a beginning school start date for late August and consistent for all Kentucky schools.

PHOTO / JEFF JOBE



State Representative Jim DeCesare: Thanks Monica Froedge and Dr. Barrett Lessenberry for their hard work in researching the overwhelming benefits to the state's education system to coordinate a later start date.

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Lessenberry detailed the inconsistent school start dates for the state and how this is not conducive to a level playing field for educators in state testing. He quantified the problems for several of the earliest school systems in not being in compliance with the federal 'No Child Left Behind' law requirements of parental notification of school testing results prior to school start.

The 15 minutes that Dr. Lessenberry spoke he appeared to have the attention of the joint committee members present and offered a brief insight on the estimated millions that could be saved by a later August start date. Savings have actually been seen in 13 states who have stepped up in simply mandating the consistent late August start date. Lessenberry endorses keeping all decisions for education at the local level as they are the professionals, but this consistent start date requirement must be established here to make sure the process is fair. With competition as it is in the educational field that some schools try their best to get a jump on others with the earliest start date possible. The legislation Lessenberry requests simply states a traditional start date of no earlier than the 4th Monday in August. The most recent publication showed that the state of Texas has saved more than \$50M. The savings were put back into education.

Lessenberry stated that the

financial benefit alone for the school systems is enough to secure the attention of men and women, like the legislators present, who are always looking for ways to get more for value for our educational system.

But the financial benefits Lessenberry spoke of do not stop with the schools alone as it has been quantified by studies performed by the Kentucky Department of Travel Development that a later start date would promote tourism in Kentucky by bringing it more in line with states that enjoy the similar type of tourism we do. "As recent as 2005 a task force established by legislatures such as yourself found that as much as \$30M could be added to the Kentucky tourism market for our parks and local economies if the later consistent start date was endorsed," said Lessenberry. Actual wording from the 2005 Task Force stated, "As other states confront this issue, their research and experiences could provide lessons for Kentucky." Lessenberry said, "Those results have come in and it shows an overwhelming benefit to our educational system. He referenced that the 2 top testing states were states that have a start date that falls after Labor Day and testing scheduled after the holiday break. Lessenberry said, "I am confident that these early start dates alone do not make our children test better, however, it is darn clear it does not hurt any-

ing. The final common sense approach that Lessenberry left the committee with is the overwhelming support that average citizens and families have for the traditional later start date. His research independently shows a strong 80%-90% support and he referenced a July 29, 2006 Lexington Herald Leader state poll results of a 70% approval rate.

After Lessenberry spoke State Representative Mike Cherry, (D) Princeton said, "I am very familiar with the cause you come here today with and have a bill on my desk right now waiting to be filed supporting the cause." He told Lessenberry that he did the finest job he has ever heard on the subject and suggested that he cut a few minutes off it and be ready to come back again. Representative Jim DeCesare, (R) Bowling Green said, "I want to thank Dr. Lessenberry and Mrs. Froedge for coming here today and I too have a bill ready to be filed supporting the legislation."

Lessenberry said, "We clearly have the beginning of bi-partisan support. This issue is too important to allow political party lines to interfere with its progression."