



A weekly newsletter on North Carolina General Assembly news relevant to the North Carolina tourism industry

## NCTIA Welcomes General Assembly



The NC General Assembly gavelled in the 2023-2024 legislative biennium on January 11 for a ceremonial swearing-in session. The 170-member Legislature returns on January 25 when it will begin its lawmaking work in earnest.

However, NCTIA lobbyists have been told by key legislators that committees and floor votes will not likely start until February.

“We have a very straight-forward legislative agenda that we believe will resonate with legislators,” said NCTIA Executive Director Vince Chelena. “School districts should respect state law, protect the summer calendar and occupancy tax, and expand [tourism’s workforce development projects already showing success.](#)”

Chelena said he feels optimistic about conversations he and NCTIA lobbyists have had with legislators in the last few months.

The 2023 legislative session is likely to last well into the summer months with an adjournment likely in August.

## School Calendar Plaintiff’s Op-Ed

*The following op-ed was written by Dominique Morrison, the Union County parent and small business owner suing the Union County School Board for its illegal approval of a school start date August 2023 in defiance of state law. [Click here to read the entire op-ed published by the Charlotte Observer on January 17.](#)*

Almost every little girl dreams of getting a pony. That was my dream, and at age 6 my parents got me one. I’ve since spent my whole life surrounded by horses. It seemed almost inevitable that I would work in that environment as an adult. I started teaching riding at age 12 and never stopped.

I grew it into a thriving business, and now own Honeysuckle Riding Academy in Monroe. June, July and August are my favorite months of the year. Camp season!

When I found out that the Union County school board adopted a calendar that starts the school year earlier than state law allows, I was at first heartbroken, then sick to my stomach. The sick feeling came when I realized how much money my small business will lose. That’s why I decided to be part of a lawsuit against the school system.

By adopting that calendar, the school board basically took August from small business owners like me who operate summer camp programs. For me, the funds brought in during August help support my business through the winter, and horses cost a lot to feed during the winter months.

The camps are also important because they allow us to offer lessons during the year at a much lower rate than most to those who may not be able to afford horseback riding otherwise.

Due to the loss of income from August camps, it’s not just the horses that will feel the negative impact. So will my children. The loss of this income will take a personal toll. To make up for the financial loss I will have to find time to do extra activities on the farm. This calendar change will take time away that I would spend with my two children and my husband.

As a small business owner I rely heavily on the Union County public school system calendar. Parents were sent a tentative schedule and start date for 2023 to vote on in November 2022. The Aug. 9, 2023 start date was not even mentioned in that survey.

In making my camp schedule for 2023, I went by the law and what I saw on that survey from Union County schools. As a result, I face losing a minimum of 75 potential campers in summer 2023.

*[Click here to read the entire op-ed by Dominique Morrison.](#)*