



GOP seeks to mandate 180 school days a year

[By B.J. Reyes](#)

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Jan 22, 2010

Mandating a minimum number of instructional days for public school students would take furloughs off the table in contract negotiations and get students back in school, Republican House members contend.

The six-member GOP minority unveiled its legislative package yesterday with a focus on ending school furloughs through legislation and creating more jobs.

"It's all about our kids and it's all about jobs," said state Rep. Gene Ward (R, Kalama Valley-Hawaii Kai). "Those are the two things that we've got to focus on."

A centerpiece of the package is a proposal to mandate a minimum of 180 instructional days per year.

Public school students already are facing 17 days of lost instructional days from furloughs that were negotiated into public worker contracts as a cost-cutting move by the state.

Having a minimum number of days, GOP members said, will require the Department of Education to place a priority on funding instructional days and take the possibility of furloughs out of the equation during contract negotiations.

"Political will is going to be necessary to do that," Ward said.

House Speaker Calvin Say said Democrats also had introduced a bill for a minimum number of days at the request of a constituent from Maui.

"We'll see how far it goes," said Say, (D, St. Louis Heights-Wilhelmina Rise-Palolo Valley). "But overall, when you do mandatory instructional days, it mandates that we come up with the resources to pay for it, and that's the other issue that we have to address."

On job creation and the economy, Republicans pledged to oppose tax hikes and push legislation that would benefit small businesses, including measures to streamline the permitting process for "shovel-ready" projects.

Find this article at:

http://www.starbulletin.com/news/20100122_GOP_seeks_to_mandate_180_school_days_a_year.html

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.