

# Louisiana Federation of Teachers

# Weekly Legislative Digest

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## Poll: Voters say NO to LABI attack

A new poll released Thursday by Lake Research Partners shows significant bi-partisan opposition to the so-called "Paycheck Protection Act," HB 418 by Rep. Stuart Bishop (R-Lafayette) currently being considered by the Louisiana Legislature. The poll - which sampled registered voters of all three political parties across the state - found that by a two-to-one ratio, Louisianans oppose the divisive legislation which would silence the voices of the state's most dedicated public servants, while still allowing for corporations to utilize dues deduction services to collect dollars that would be used for political purposes.

Louisiana Federation of Teachers President Steve Monaghan said the results are evidence that voters see this attempt for what it is: a power grab intended to silence the voices of professionals they like and trust.

"While the wealthy and powerful business lobby is plotting to bring a national union-busting campaign to Louisiana, the people of our state have proven they have a completely different viewpoint," Monaghan said. "Louisiana voters believe unions have a positive impact on wages, salaries, and standards of living; in fact, a majority of those surveyed had a favorable opinion of unions in general."

The poll - conducted in late April 2015 - also expressed voters' overwhelming support for the state's teachers, fire fighters, police officers, nurses, and other public service workers. Teachers and fire fighters received a whopping 90 percent favorability rating from Louisiana families who - according to the poll - view the move to ban public workers from utilizing dues deduction services as unnecessary. Survey results also show that Louisiana voters support the right of public employees to join unions and pay their dues through payroll deduction.

To read more of this story, [please click here](#).

## LABI bigwig shows true colors

We suspected all along that the real motivation for LABI's so-called "Paycheck Protection Act" was to silence the voices of teachers and school employees by making it harder to join and maintain union membership.

Big business swears that's not true. But now NOLA.com columnist Bob Mann found the smoking gun.

LABI's education chair, wealthy businessman Lane Grigsby, was videotaped calling the bill a "fatal spear to the heart" of unions.

"This," Grigsby said, "is where you grab the aorta and you shut it off.

"This is the impetus of it," Grigsby said. "When you cut off the unions' funding, they lose their stroke.

[Click here](#) to read all of Bob Mann's article.

[Click here](#) and [here](#) to fight LABI's assault on public employees.

## COLA lives to fight another day

Thanks to some fancy floor work by Rep. Sam Jones (D-Franklin), a plan to give retirees a 1.5% cost of living adjustment was resurrected by the full House after being rejected by the House Retirement Committee.

Although the bill has 73 co-sponsors in the House, the committee deadlocked at 6-6, and the bill was considered dead. But Rep. Jones asked the full House to direct the committee to send the bill to the floor for a vote. The House voted 64-25 to force the committee to report the bill by May 14.

If enacted, the COLA for retirees would amount to about \$30 a month.

## **Panel okays bill returning RSD schools to Orleans Parish board**

A bill that would require the Recovery School District to return successful schools to the Orleans Parish School Board was approved by the House Education Committee.

Rep. Joe Bouie (D-New Orleans) said that his HB 166 is meant to reinforce the original intent of the act that created the Recovery School District. Schools deemed failures would be taken over by the state for at least five years, after which they would return to local control if their performance improves.

In reality, more than 100 New Orleans schools were seized by the state after Hurricane Katrina. Despite efforts by local citizens, the RSD and Board of Elementary and Secondary Education have dug in their heels at returning successful schools to the Orleans Parish School Board.

It has become a contentious issue in New Orleans, with community groups widely in support of returning schools to local control.

The bill was approved on a 9-8 vote, and moves to the House floor. LFT supports HB 166.

## **Bill banning new schools on waste sites progresses**

A bill prohibiting construction of new schools on abandoned waste sites moved through the House Education Committee after proponents spoke about the dangers that toxic waste poses, even if it is covered with layers of dirt and concrete.

HB 180 by Rep. Joe Bouie (D-New Orleans) arose in response to Recovery School District plans to build a new school in New Orleans on a site that is contaminated with lead, arsenic, mercury and carcinogenic hydrocarbons to a depth of at least 15 feet.

Retired Lt. Gen. Russell Honore and his Green Army appeared at the hearing in support of the bill, which garnered very little opposition. One lobbyist for the Associated Builders and Contractors opposed the bill, saying that it might “put a pall on the building and renovation of schools in Louisiana.”

The bill was unanimously approved by the committee. It was supported by LFT.

## **Amended gun safety bill moves forward**

After amending it to ensure that more than one gun safety program could be implemented in schools, the House Education Committee approved HB 446 by Rep. Blake Miguez (R-Erath).

As originally written, schools would have the option of initiating a gun safety class. But if they chose to have a class, it would have to be the Eddie Eagle program created by the National Rifle Association.

As amended, schools will be allowed to choose the Eddie Eagle program or an equivalent, age and grade appropriate, firearm accident prevention program.

The bill was unanimously approved and sent to the House floor.

## **Committee fails to hear charter, voucher bills**

Two bills by Rep. John Bel Edwards (D-Amite) aimed at reining in charter school approvals and vouchers were passed over by the House Education Committee.

HB 21 would prohibit the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education from approving Type 2 charter schools if the local district had denied the application, and the district has a designation of “A” or “B.”

HB 340 would restrict which children could attend kindergarten on vouchers. It would ensure that kindergartners eligible for vouchers can only get the state tuition money if the public school they would attend is rated “D” or “F.”

Both bills have been rescheduled for Tuesday, May 12.

## Revenue bills aren't big enough to fill the hole

(Reprinted from The Louisiana Budget Project's *Daily Dime*.)

The Legislature's effort to craft a balanced budget that doesn't include devastating cuts to colleges and universities took a big step forward on Thursday. But even though lawmakers approved 11 measures that would bring in an estimated \$670 million next year, it wasn't nearly enough to fill all the holes in a budget that faces a \$1.6 billion shortfall. As [Melinda Deslatte of the AP reports](#),

*"It's definitely not enough, but it's more than what was in the governor's executive budget, so we've been able to reduce the cuts," said Ways and Means Committee Chairman Joel Robideaux, R-Lafayette, whose committee handles tax bills. Other tax proposals were passed that aren't expected to provide new money for next year but could raise revenue in later years: a \$200 million cap on the film tax credits Louisiana certifies each year and changes to an oil and gas tax break for horizontal drilling that would lessen the value of the tax exemption as oil and gas prices increase. The measures go next to the Senate, where they are expected to run into resistance. They're short of the more than \$1 billion that Senate leaders say is needed to plug holes in next year's budget, and they don't match Jindal's guidelines for what he'd support.*

But for a chamber that has long been reluctant to buck the governor and the state's powerful business lobby on tax policy, Thursday's moves signaled a possible breakthrough. And much work remains. [As The Advocate reports](#), Senate President John Alario and others say they need more revenue to avoid additional cuts to state services that have already been cut deeply during the Jindal years.

*In an interview after the House's votes, Alario called the money approved "a start" but added, "We're obviously short of the goal we need to get to. We hope the House might reconsider and get us some more."*

## The week ahead...

**Monday:** House Appropriations: HC112 (Jim Morris/Budget controls for FY15-16); HB1 (Fannin/State Budget); HB617 (Jim Morris/CA to Prohibit removing/transferring money from funds).

House Civil Law: HB61 (Carmody/CA on tuition/fee flexibility for higher ed); HB412 (Jim Morris/CA dedicating 1% state sales tax to K - higher ed)

Senate Finance: SB54 (Broome/Prohibition on suspension K-3); SB260 (Broome/OGB Organization)

**Tuesday:** House Education: HB21 (Edwards/Charter School limitations); HB333 (Bishop/GRAD Act); HB340 (Edwards/K-Voucher limitations); HB411 (James/CA Admission standards); HB537 (P.Smith/RSD Property return); HB648 (Schroder/Access to standardized tests); HB653 (M. Johnson/Instruction time exemptions)

House Gov. Affairs: HCR90 (Foil/Constitutional Convention); HB31 (Richard/Veto Session Opt Out); HB651 (Gaines/Motor Auto Voter); HB246 (Hensgens/BESE Ethics); HB626 (Ivey/BESE COI); HB600 (Geymann/APA Provisions); HB137 (Havard/Privatization Review Act). \*\*ANYTHING not covered on Tuesday will roll to Wednesday

**Wednesday:** House Education: HCR18 (MFP); HB113 (Barrow/Assessments Prohibition); HB373 (Geymann/State Standards); HB672 (Harris/State Standards)

**Thursday:** House Retirement: SB20 (Long/Retire to Rehire rules for teachers)