

Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans focused on the following legislative efforts during the 2011 Spring Regular Session of the Legislature, and the outcomes are as follows:

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION 2011 - OVERVIEW

### LEVEES

#### Legislation:

**HB 475** This bill added an additional member of the Southeast Flood Protection Authority East to the Non Flood Protection Asset Management Authority. Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans did not take a stand on the bill as originally written.

*Position/Outcome:* Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans opposed Representative Lorusso's proposed amendment that was to direct 20% of proceeds of the revenue from a property tax for levee improvement and give it to the non-flood authority for the management of non-flood assets- land holdings that historically were intended to generate money for flood protection, translating to about \$4.3 million per year.

When Lorusso's amendment ran into stiff opposition by Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans, the New Orleans Business Council and others, lawmakers pushed for a deal between the two authorities. The agreement, which ended up in HB 475, calls for the flood protection authority to pay the non-flood panel \$700,000 this year and next to maintain Lakeshore Drive and to pay approximately \$700,000 per year for two years for a reduced police patrol force.

#### Legislation:

**HB 476**, by Representative Tim Burns would have had a financial negative impact on flood protection funds of approximately \$33 million over the next 9 years, amounting to approximately \$3.7 million per year to be paid to Bohemia Spillway landowners by July 1, 2020. The bill was an attempt by the plaintiffs of the Bohemia Class action to legislatively alter the terms of the agreement with the Orleans Levee district.

#### Position Outcome:

As a result of an email blast sent out by Citizens for 1, and the large number of responses he received from web participants, Representative Burns, in an email message to **Citizens for 1** Chairman, stated he would pull the bill:

Ms. Frierson:

I wanted to follow up on our conversation and confirm that I don't intend to advance HB 476 and it is not on the committee agenda for this Wednesday. While I think the levee board should pay its just debts, it was never my intent to impede flood protection. As you know, I have been a consistent supporter of levee board reform and appreciate your efforts in that regard. Please contact me at \*\*\* if you have further questions.

Tim Burns State Representative

Read *Times Picayune* editorials on HB 475 and 476:

- [Don't revisit failed efforts to raid New Orleans' flood protection funds: An editorial](#)
- [Bills taking resources away from regional levee boards are threats to flood protection: An editorial](#)

### CRIMINAL JUSTICE

#### Legislation:

**HB 1** contains the state budget. The Governor presents a budget which then goes through the legislative process.

#### Position/Outcome:

Louisiana Board of Public Defenders advocated for \$40 million to be allocated to the state's Public Defender Districts. In budget year 2010-2011, \$33 million was allocated. In order to insure that judicial services not be interrupted, the state provides partial funding to each of the 41 Districts and local funding sources must be established. In order to meet the increase in the number of jury trials in Orleans Parish and the growing

demands in each of the Districts, Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans, in partnership with Business Council of Greater New Orleans and Crime Coalition of New Orleans, advocated for \$40million dollars to be included in the HB1. \$32.8 million was approved. In addition, \$1.5 million was allocated for FINS cases.

**HB 1** contains the state budget. The Governor presents a budget which then goes through the legislative process. \$27.5 million was proposed to be reduced from the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections Budget.

Position/Outcome

Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans, in coordination with the Business Council of New Orleans and the River Region, Metropolitan Crime Commission, and other members of the Crime Coalition, advocated for the proposed cuts be restored to insure the safe and effective operation of the Department of Corrections. The proposed cuts would have resulted in the unstable operations of the state's prison systems and the introduction of state prisoners to local jails, as well as a reduction of effective Reentry programs. In coordination with Secretary James LeBlanc, Department of Public Safety and Corrections, advocacy efforts to restore dollars were implemented.

All money was restored to the Department of Corrections budget and an additional \$1.2 was allocated for Reentry programs. This includes additional funding for the two existing Reentry portals in New Orleans and Shreveport and the creation of an additional portal in Baton Rouge.

## EDUCATION

Legislation:

**HB 1** contains the state budget. The Governor presents a budget which then goes through the legislative process. Included in the Governor's budget was \$11 million for property insurance for the Recovery School District (RSD) schools in Orleans Parish.

Position/Outcome:

Citizens for 1 approved of keeping the \$11 million in the state budget. When the state (under the RSD) took over the failing schools in Orleans Parish after Katrina, the school facilities which these schools occupied were also taken over, although they were still owned by the Orleans Parish School Board. The RSD, as a state entity, must go through the state Office of Risk Management (ORM) for insurance. Insurance under the ORM is considerably higher than would be paid by going to market for the insurance. It is also more expensive than the Orleans Parish School Board pays for the schools it occupies. To take this money out of the state budget would have cost the RSD schools approximately \$375 per student and would have resulted in teacher terminations and less funds going into the classroom instruction..

The House Appropriations Committee, under chair REP. Jim Fannin, removed the entire amount, and the full House approved HB 1 without any allocation for school property insurance. Working in coalition with the Louisiana Association of Public Charter Schools, Citizens for 1 sent email messages to the Senate Finance Committee under chair SEN. Mike Michot. Senate Finance restored \$8 million to the budget. This amount passed the full Senate and was included in the budget reconciliation with the House. It was understood that the requirement that forces the RSD into the ORM will be reviewed and an alternative process will be considered for subsequent years.

Legislation:

**HB 112**, sponsored by REP. Austin Badon, proposed policies prohibiting the harassment, intimidation, and bullying of a student by another student.

Position/Outcome:

Citizens for 1 supported this legislation and testified in the House Education Committee in favor of the bill. It passed the committee; however, it failed to pass the full House.

Legislation:

**HB 421**, sponsored by REP. Steve Carter would allow businesses that make a major donation to a charter school to have a specified number of seats reserved in that school for the children of its employees and to have minority representation on its board.

Position/Outcome:

Citizens for 1 supported this legislation. It passed the House Education Committee, the full House, Senate Education and the full Senate and was passed into law by the Governor.

Legislation:

**HB 499**, sponsored by REP. Patricia Smith, would prohibit the transfer of certain academically unacceptable and failing schools to the Recovery School District (RSD) on and after November 1, 2011, and instead would require a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE).

Position/Outcome:

Citizens for 1 opposed this bill. It was involuntarily deferred in the House Education Committee and failed to be considered.

Legislation:

**SB 6**, sponsored by SEN. Butch Gauthreaux, would require the RSD and its charter schools to continue to pay for the unfunded accrued liability portion of the employer portion of the Teachers' Retirement System of Louisiana (TRSL) after participation ceases

Position/Outcome:

Citizens for 1 worked in coalition with the Louisiana Public Charter School Association and the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry (LABI) to oppose this bill and testified against it in the Senate Retirement Committee. Amendments were made to limit the liability of the school only to the years in which the employee was at the school and to give the school a right of appeal for the calculations of their liability. The bill passed the committee as amended, was defeated on the Senate Floor. However, it was resurrected, passed by both branches, and sent to the Governor for approval. Citizens for 1 encouraged the Governor to veto the bill, which he did on July 1, 2011. **Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans** was listed as a stakeholder in the [Governor's veto letter](#).

Legislation:

**SB 43**, by SEN. Jack Donahue, would allow chartering authorities an extension, upon request, of the time in which a charter must begin operation from 24 months to 36 months. It also would allow a charter to open sooner than 8 months after approval.

Position/Outcome:

Citizens for 1 supported this bill. The vetting and selection of a charter is a process that takes time. Once a charter is approved, there are other issues such as assignment of facilities and faculty recruitment that can impact the start time of the opening of the school. It passed the House and the Senate and was signed into law by the Governor.

Legislation:

**SB 80**, by SEN. Ben Nevers, would provide for the reorganization of the Department of Education.

Position/Outcome:

Citizens for 1 supported this bill. It provided ways for efficiencies and accountability for the department. It passed the House and the Senate and would be signed into law by the Governor.

Legislation:

**SB 216**, by SEN. Jean-Paul “JP” Morrell, would provide for the creation of community advisory boards for schools in the Recovery School District.

Position/Outcome:

Citizens for 1 opposed this bill as originally presented. The creation of community advisory boards for schools in the RSD would add a layer of oversight that would impede the responsiveness to student needs that have characterized the success of schools. This bill was substantially modified as it made its way through the Senate Education Committee and the resulting bill had the support of the Superintendent of the RSD. The modified bill passed the Senate and the House and was sent to the Governor to be passed into law.

Legislation:

**SB 248**, SEN. Cynthia Willard-Lewis, clarified the process for returning back to the school system those schools that have been transferred to the RSD that are no longer academically unacceptable.

Position/Outcome:

Citizens for 1 opposed this bill. **Conditioning for Success: A Policy Framework to Transfer Schools Placed in the Recovery School District**, a comprehensive plan for the return of schools, was presented by Superintendent Paul Pastorek and approved by BESE at its December meeting. Citizens for 1 had supported this plan and felt that the bill was not necessary. It was not heard by the Senate Education Committee.

[Read Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiative 2011 Legislative Overview](#)