

Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans focused on the following legislative efforts during the 2014 Spring Regular Session of the Legislature, and the outcomes are as follows:

LEGISLATIVE SESSION 2014 - OVERVIEW

LEVEES

In the election of September 30, 2006, voters overwhelmingly approved— by 81%— the constitutional amendment creating the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authorities: two politically independent levee districts and units of local government. Voters put public safety first to create constitutional protection for two metro-area flood protection authorities, and to keep them out of politics, particularly out of gubernatorial politics.

In the 2014 legislative session, the challenges we faced to sustain the political independence of our two regional flood authorities were daunting.

Shreveport area Senator Robert Adley, R-Benton, introduced several bills with different objectives in the session, but the overall thrust of his legislative package was consistent to undermine the carefully crafted independence of the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority, both its East and West Bank arms.

Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans took strong positions against Senator Adley's Senate Bills 79, 629, and 553.

SB 79, authored by Senator Adley, under the proposed law would have given the governor, any governor, the ability, in his sole discretion, the unilateral right to declare a levee board member neglectful of their duties or in violation of "state law" and remove them with no mechanism to have the person clear their name and be reinstated in an expedited way. Further there is no criterion for doing so as defined in state law.

Outcome: The bill passed the Senate Transportation, but Senator Adley never introduced it for a vote to the full Senate which is usually the case when the votes are not there for passage.

The current law remains intact. Under current law, the Flood Protection Authority boards have the power to remove a board member and can only remove a board member who neglects his duties or who misses three consecutive board meetings. In such an event, the governor shall remove the board member if, and only if, the board requests.

SB 629, authored by Senator Adley, under the proposed law would have moved the flood protection authorities from Article VI, the "Local Government" section of the Louisiana Constitution, to Article IV, the "Executive Branch" section. By explicitly placing them "within the executive branch of state government," SB 629 would have put the governor in control of our two metropolitan-area flood protection authorities.

Outcome: Senator Adley had the bill filed and on the agenda of the Senate Transportation, Highways, and Public Works committee that he chairs, but he didn't bring it to a vote of the committee so it died in

committee. This often happens when the vote of the committee or the full Senate is not in favor of the bill.

SB 553, authored by Senator Adley, would have given the Governor control of the two flood protection authorities (SLFPAs- E&W) powers that have been governed exclusively by approval of the Attorney General. SB 553 would have removed SLFPAs from procedures appropriate to local government entities and instead subjected them, retroactively, to contract procedures for state agencies, requiring approval from both the Governor and Attorney General.

Outcome: SB 553 passed the Senate Transportation, Highways and Public Works Committee and the full Senate, but died in the House Civil Law Committee, chaired by Representative Neil Abramson of New Orleans.

Conclusion

Approximately 20 bills filed in this year's legislative session sought to derail the lawsuit by the east bank levee authority, the lawsuits filed by Jefferson and Plaquemines parishes, or to give the Governor the ability to directly control the independence and makeup of the boards of the flood protection authorities east and west, all were defeated but one. Senator Allain's SB 469, which provides an avenue for killing the coastal erosion lawsuit by the SLFPA-E against 97 oil and gas companies, was signed into law by Governor Jindal. From the outset, Citizens for 1 has taken no position on the lawsuit. It is in the courts and the courts will decide.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

SB 445, sponsored by Senator A.G. Crowe and supported by Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans, City of New Orleans, Mayor's Office, New Orleans City Council, and Bureau of Governmental Research.

Effective December 31, 2014 the first judgeship that becomes vacant by death, resignation, retirement, disqualification from exercising any judicial function pursuant to order of the Supreme Court, or removal during the term of office shall be abolished the following day.

The second judgeship will be abolished when the one of the above conditions are met. In addition, the law requires the allocation of any funding from the City of New Orleans for the judgeships to be allocated for juvenile services within the city of New Orleans upon abolishment of those judgeships.

Position/Outcome:

Passed in both the Senate and House, with amendments, that enabled the Bill to become effective August 1, 2014. Signed by the Governor to become Act No. 466 on June 4, 2014.

Monitoring will follow to insure that funds will be allocated for juvenile services in Orleans Parish.

ETHICS AND GOOD GOVERNMENT REFORM

Civil Service Reform – In 2013, CFI began meetings with the City’s Service and Innovation Manager on the city’s Civil Service and HR Transformation Initiative, with its goals to transform Civil Service into an efficient and highly effective office. In April 2014, CFI joined with community leaders, representing civic, business, universities and other organizations at a Press Conference with the Mayor in support of the City’s Great Place To Work Initiative, aimed at enhancing hiring, careers, pay, processes, and training for civil service employees. CFI testified in support of the civil service reforms at hearings before the Civil Service Commission and showed its support in local media presentations.

Inspector General - CF1 supported Inspector General Ed Quatrevaux for another term. CF1 advocated for continued funding for the State IG’s office; this passed the legislature, and participated as panelist at the national IG’s Conference in New Orleans. CFI also attended meetings on issues related to the Independent Police Monitor.

Sewerage and Water Board - CFI supported the charter change for the S&WB by helping to educate the public about the referendum and to inform the public about the need for qualified candidates when the new governance law (SB 47) takes effect in January 2014.

Court Consolidation – CFI along with other civic organizations and individual advocates with common interest in court consolidation became a part of The New Orleans Court Consolidation Working group focused on Traffic, Municipal and 1st and 2nd City Courts. The working group examined the evidence presented in the multiple reports by the Office of the Inspector General, The Public Financial Management, Inc. (PFM), and The Bureau of Governmental Research on the structure of the court system in New Orleans, which documented the inefficiencies with the local court system. Orleans Parish is the only parish in the state with so many separate municipal-level courts, support for which is legislatively mandated. New Orleans has the only court in the state devoted exclusively to traffic cases. New Orleans City government and the citizens are faced with significant new burdens on the City’s revenue base and severe reductions in City services and/or tax increases. The OIG report recommended merging of the Municipal and Traffic Courts, estimated to save the city of New Orleans \$2.5 million. The working group took the position that legislative action was needed to provide structural improvements and operational efficiencies with a focus on Traffic and Municipal Courts and that merging Traffic Court into Municipal Court would allow for the elimination of redundant administrative and clerical services.

Outcomes: Citizens for 1 supported HB 1206 by Representative Walt Leger, which passed and established that the Courts would be consolidated in 2017, and established a taskforce to study and provide for recommendations related to the reduction in judges through attrition and to establish the methods and procedures to effectuate the consolidation of the New Orleans Traffic Court and the New Orleans Municipal Court. The task force will work in conjunction with the Judicial Council of the Supreme Court and the National Center for State Courts. The task force will submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the speaker of the House and the president of the Senate, no later than thirty days prior to the start of the 2015 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature.

The working group will monitor the workings of the Task Force and offer its input to the proceedings, as well as develop a strategy to educate the public on its progress and on court reform issues in general.

EDUCATION

The Education agenda for the 2014 legislative session significantly focused on the derailment of Common Core State Standards and PARCC, the assessment tool which was developed by educators of some 14 states, including Louisiana.

Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans supports Common Core State Standards, which are more rigorous and require critical thinking. Our students will be keeping pace with students across the nation and will be prepared to compete nationally and globally.

These standards are goals that will raise expectations for what students should be learning in math and English.

Student progress and achievement will be measured against students nationwide.

Common Core State Standards were adopted by the Louisiana State Legislature in 2010. Louisiana joined 46 other states in adopting these standards, which were not developed by the federal government, but at the request of the governors.

EDUCATION BILLS 2014

HB 1-Amendment-Geyman- (HB 380- Geyman-required funding approval to spend money on PARCC or any other similar national test) stated “no fund appropriated herein to State Activities shall be expended for contracts for college and career readiness testing unless the Department of Education has issues a Request for Proposal for such contract in accordance with the Request for Proposal process”.

Position/Outcome: Citizens for 1 opposed this amendment which would deny funding for testing unless the DOE issues an RFP – passed in House, was not heard in the Senate.

HB 127- Provided for the election of the state Superintendent of Education

Position/Outcome: CF1 opposed this bill. It failed in the House.

HB 381- Geyman- Created a Student Standards Commission to develop state standards for required subjects for public school students.

Position/Outcome: CF1 opposed this bill. It failed in the House Education Committee.

HB 556-Henry- Prohibited implementation of Common Core State Standards and provides for implementation of prior standards.

Position/Outcome: CF1 opposed this bill. It failed in the House Education Committee.

HB 953-Leger- Would delay the impact of Common Core State Standards and PARCC testing on school and teacher accountability until 2016-2017.

Position/Outcome: CF1 did not take a position on this bill. The Governor vetoed HB 953.

HB 1271-Leger- Provided allocations of certain local tax revenue to building renovation and replacement purposes in certain school districts.

Position/Outcome: CF1 supported this bill (previously HB 941) that was signed by the Governor and became Act 543.