



# Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans

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### Council for A Better Louisiana (CABL)

#### CABL Applauds Outcome of Special Session

By any measure, this special session dealing with ethics reform was extremely successful. We have been talking about many of these reforms for years but never could get them passed. Now, with support from the public and a new responsiveness by our elected leaders, Louisiana has achieved comprehensive ethics reform. That is a major accomplishment.

While not every proposal made it through the legislative process, CABL believes the core of the governor's ethics package remains strongly intact. Those measures include:

- Comprehensive financial disclosure for elected officials.
- Restricting legislators and other state officials from contracting with the state.
- Comprehensive disclosure of expenditures by lobbyists.
- Closing the loophole that allowed legislators to receive "perks" from lobbyists in the form of free tickets to cultural and sporting events.
- Capping the value of free food and beverages that legislators can receive from lobbyists.

If you compare where Louisiana was before the special session to where we stand today, it's clear Louisiana has come a long way in terms of ethics reforms and transparency. This session should send the message that whatever outsiders might think of our state, the people of Louisiana don't tolerate political corruption and they hold elected leaders to high ethical standards.

Other highlights of the session include:

- Adding provisions for greater transparency of organizations that receive state funds.
- Creating the office of Inspector General in statute.
- Requiring legislative recusal from voting on issues involving potential conflicts of interest.
- Limiting and disclosing contributions to gubernatorial transition committees.
- Increased ethics training for elected officials, candidates and lobbyists.

The call for this special session was extremely comprehensive and included many bills with numerous complex details. For lawmakers there was a great deal of information and potential consequences to digest in a short period of time. Overall, CABL believes the Legislature did a good job of studying these bills, identifying problems and creating a reasonable balance between transparency and the right to privacy.

In the midst of the overall success of the session, CABL was disappointed in the passage of a bill to restructure the state Ethics Board and the failure to prohibit legislators from representing clients before state agencies. We believe the changes to the Ethics Board were too much too fast and more study and evaluation is needed. Prohibiting lawmakers from dealing with state agencies on behalf of private clients is a common-sense reform that should have passed.

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