



# Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans

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[Our Reform Initiatives](#)
[Resources & Collaborations](#)
[Archives](#)
[Contact Us](#)

## Media

[Ethics Home](#)
[Highlights](#)
[Resources](#)
[Archives](#)
[History & Status Reports](#)

### *Times-Picayune*

#### **BRIEFING BOOK**

#### **News and views from the Louisiana Capitol**

Thursday, February 14, 2008

#### TOP OF THE NEWS

New Orleans inspector general could get boost in powers

House showdown looms on rules for governor's staff

Judges should adopt tougher financial disclosure guidelines, Senate says

#### AROUND THE CAPITOL

##### Subpoena authority

New Orleans' inspector general's office would gain broader powers to issue subpoenas to further its investigations if House Bill 80 passes the Legislature during the current special session. The measure by Rep. J.P. Morrell, D-New Orleans, passed the House Municipal and Parochial Affairs Committee on Wednesday. Inspector General Robert Cerasoli, representatives of the city and the group Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans testified in favor of the initiative. The inspector general has subpoena powers under city charter, but the state statute would give the inspector more authority to get information from entities outside the parish. Morrell said the bill contains checks and balances to ensure that the subpoenas are issued only after approval from city authorities or district judges, depending on the jurisdiction.

##### Executive decisions

A showdown is looming over whether members of the governor's executive staff -- who work directly in the governor's office and not for any free-standing state agency -- are included in whatever new financial disclosure requirements lawmakers might adopt during the special session. The staff of more than 100 people, including several high-profile aides in the governor's inner circle, is not included in the version of House Bill 1 by Speaker Jim Tucker, R-Algiers, that will come before the full lower chamber today or Friday. And Tucker, an ally of Gov. Bobby Jindal, said he believes any amendment to include all or part of the executive staff members would be out of order. Tucker, as speaker, has the power to determine whether amendments fit within the scope of the call that Jindal wrote for the session. He said he expects several amendments to be offered. The full chamber can overturn Tucker's rulings from the chair by a majority vote. Some House and Governmental Affairs Committee members chastised Jindal legal adviser Jimmy Faircloth this week for not including at least the governor's top aides in the bill. Faircloth noted that Cabinet officers are included. He said Jindal drew a distinction between appointees who hold direct power over decisions and those who merely have influence in the process.

##### Senate archives

The Louisiana Senate has begun putting archived broadcasts of its proceedings on its Web site. The broadcasts of Senate committee hearings and floor action are available beginning with the start of the current special session Feb. 10 at the Internet site <http://senate.legis.state.la.us/>. The Senate previously had provided live broadcasts of proceedings, but no archives. The House of Representatives has provided archived hearings for several years. "Making the archived broadcasts available on-line . . . is a great addition and allows citizens anywhere and anytime to watch and listen to their state government in action," Senate President Joel Chaisson II, D-Destrehan, said.

##### Fair play for judges

With no debate, the Senate passed two resolutions Wednesday calling on the state

Supreme Court to fashion guidelines requiring all state court judges to disclose their incomes, assets and liabilities just as lawmakers are in the process of requiring all public officials to do. The Senate unanimously passed Senate Resolution 6 and Senate Concurrent Resolution 5, both by Senate President Joel Chaisson II, D-Destrehan, urging the court to act. The action by the Senate on the Senate-only measure is final; the concurrent resolution now goes to the House for debate. Some lawmakers have complained that a bill that requires the judges to disclose their assets and liabilities could be unconstitutional because the Constitution vests the state's highest court with the authority to regulate judges' conduct. The House is expected to take up income-disclosure bills Friday: One bill includes judges, one excludes them and a third is aimed at judges only. Gov. Bobby Jindal has said that the judiciary can "opt out" of the bill upon adopting disclosure guidelines just as strong -- or stronger -- than what lawmakers impose on all other elected officials.

#### STAYING IN TOUCH

To contact lawmakers:

-- Senate: (225) 342-2040; fax: (225) 342-0617

-- House: (225) 342-6945; fax: (225) 342-8336

#### TRACKING BILLS

Citizens can find the Louisiana legislative home page on the Internet at <http://www.legis.state.la.us/>. Information on legislators, committee assignments, schedules and bills is available, as well as information on services for people with disabilities. The Public Update Legislative Services Line or PULS Line, is available toll free (Louisiana only) (800) 256-3793 outside Baton Rouge. Legislative staff will answer questions about bills, direct callers to committee information and explain aspects of the legislative process.

#### TODAY'S SCHEDULE

House convenes at 9 a.m.

House committees:

-- None scheduled

Senate convenes at 2 p.m.

Senate committees:

-- Senate and Governmental Affairs, 9 a.m.

-- Judiciary C, upon adjournment

#### QUOTABLE

"I want to know where those free tickets are."

Sen. BUTCH GAUTREAU, D-Morgan City, joking with Senate President Joel Chaisson II, D-Destrehan, on a proposal to end freebies from lobbyists for lawmakers and other public officials.

"You better hurry up (and find them) before we do anything with them."

CHAISSON in a joking response.